

namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa
Homage to that Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully and Perfectly Awakened One.

Dukkha, and Contemplating Dukkha

by Achan Naeb Mahaniranon

*May I prostrate and offer respects to the venerable monks
and all the respectful audience—*

The subject that we will talk about today is, “Dukkha, and Contemplating Dukkha”: How do we contemplate dukkha to be correct? Because the development of vipassanā is to look at **dukkha**.¹ However, some people who still have no understanding about that which concerns vipassanā thus understand that vipassanā is developed for the purpose of getting happiness (*sukha*). On that account, regarding what I said, that vipassanā is to look at dukkha or to contemplate and understand dukkha, you might be wondering what is it that makes us look at dukkha, and what’s good about dukkha? And why should we look at it? And about contemplating dukkha, how do we contemplate so it is correct according to the evidence and rationale displayed in the Buddha’s² teaching?

That being the case, before knowing what is dukkha, first we ought to learn about how many kinds of dukkha are there, in order to know what kind of dukkha we look at in vipassanā. We can summarize **dukkha** in four or five kinds:

1. **dukkha-vedanā**— is the dukkha of the initial stage, which is a bit coarse, easy to see and to look at, and everyone can see it. Everyone has encountered it already. Dukkha-vedanā is the body not feeling well and the mind not feeling well. I think everyone already knows and is aware of what body-unpleasantness and mind-unpleasantness is.
2. **saṅkhāra-dukkha**— is the dukkha due to relieving. Saṅkhāra-dukkha or sabhāva-dukkha may be either counted as one or as separated. If they are separated in two, sabhāva-dukkha is the third category.
3. **sabhāva-dukkha**— is the five aggregates (five *khandha*) that consist of arising and falling away, changing all the time.
4. **dukkha-lakkhaṇa**— is the dukkha of the Common Characteristics [of component things] (*sāmañña-lakkhaṇa*), which consist of anicca, **dukkham** and anattā, that is, impermanence, suffering and nonself.³ The Common Characteristics have four stages:

Anicca has four stages:

<i>anicca</i>	<i>aniccalakkhaṇa</i>
<i>aniccanupassī</i>	<i>aniccavihārī</i>

Dukkha has four stages:

<i>dukkha</i>	<i>dukkhalakkhaṇa</i>
<i>dukkhanupassī</i>	<i>dukkhavihārī</i>

And anattā has four stages:

<i>anatta</i>	<i>anattalakkhaṇa</i>
<i>anattanupassī</i>	<i>anattavihārī</i>

5. **dukkha-sacca**— is the four kinds of dukkha mentioned above.

¹ Suffering or unsatisfactoriness. On the ordinary level this means obvious suffering such as physical pain. On the deepest level, “dukkha” refers to the unstable, changing nature of all mental and physical phenomena, even the most pleasurable. From this perspective it can also be defined as “oppression” or “stress” (generated by constant change). That’s why even pleasant feelings are unsatisfactory and not worthy of being wanted. When we speak of dukkha as a feeling it is said that “happiness” or “pleasure” is nothing else but a decrease in dukkha.

² Buddha: the Awakened one.

³ Or *momentariness, oppression/stress, and insubstantiality/impersonality/uncontrollability*.

If we ask: “Which kind(s) of dukkha does vipassanā look at among these four?” The answer is that it sees all of them, i.e., it must understand them all. If we know all of them, we see the Noble Truths (ariya-sacca-dhamma), because the truth (sacca) which is the end of the path, the final destination of everyone among the Buddha’s assemblies⁴ is **dukkha-sacca**, i.e., it is directly in the **Noble Truths**, about which everyone already knows that these **Noble Truths** are the Buddha’s wish, which he wants all beings to understand and see. Therefore, if we ever reach **dukkha-sacca**, we will have to realize the Four Noble Truths—this is to understand dukkha with the **understanding of insight** (*vipassanā-paññā*).

How does dukkha-sacca differ from the other types of dukkhas?

If you ask: “How does dukkha-sacca differ from dukkha-vedanā, saṅkhāra-dukkha, sabhāva-dukkha and dukkha-lakkhaṇa?” It is not like this; *the various kinds of dukkha are all included in dukkha-sacca*. What’s more, we should understand regarding the teaching of the Buddha either in the Tipitakā⁵ or, much more, in the 84,000 dhammas, that they are all within the Noble Truths, they are all interrelated. There’s nothing at all beyond or apart from the Noble Truths, because the Teaching of the Buddha has no other kind of aim whatsoever. Its only aim is to allow us to know the Noble Truths, because the Noble Truths are the heart of the Buddhist dispensation. The intention of all the teachings within the Buddhist dispensation is only to allow all beings to reach or realize the Noble Truths. Therefore, all the types of dukkha that have been explained are comprised within dukkha-sacca.

The aim of the development of vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna:⁶ What is the purpose?

When we speak about the subject of *practice* we must comprehend about the objective, the final destination of such practice: What is its purpose? Its purpose is **the realization of the Noble Truths**; which is a result that allows the practitioner to go beyond the whole mass of dukkha. We must build a correct understanding first: The purpose of the development of Satipaṭṭhāna (the Foundations of Mindfulness) is to reach the Noble Truths; the whole practice procedure follows this meaning.

What do the functions of the Noble Truths consist of? Among the Noble Truths, what functions did the Buddha lay down, i.e., how do we carry out the practice of the Noble truths? The Noble Truths are comprised of four: dukkha, samudaya, nirodha and magga, and each Truth has its function:

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| 1 dukkha (suffering/stress) | its function is that suffering must be fully comprehended |
| 2 samudaya (origin/cause) | its function is that it must be completely abandoned |
| 3 nirodha (cessation) | its function is that it must be realized |
| 4 magga (path) | its function is that it must be cultivated in order to arise |

We must understand the functions or duties in this way first. After we have a good understanding of the function/duties of the Noble Truths, then, at the time of practice, we let it take place in accordance to them.

If we ask: “What do we practice?” We practice the contemplation of stress, the abandonment of [its] cause, the realization of [its] cessation, and the prompting of the path [leading to its cessation]. To reach the Noble Truths the practitioners must follow the functions of such Truths, and the practice must be especially designated to the functions, so that it is the correct path.

So may I please ask the listeners to build up an understanding according to this reasoning first.

⁴ The Buddha’s assemblies are four: monks, nuns, and male and female lay disciples.

⁵ Ti-pitaka: the Three Baskets or sections which make up the Buddhist Pāli Canon, namely, the *Suttas* or Basket of Discourses, the *Vinaya* or Basket of Discipline, and the *Abhidhamma* or Basket of Phenomenological Higher Teaching.

⁶ The word “kammaṭṭhāna” has two meanings: 1) *ārammaṇa*, object (of contemplation); and 2) *bhāvanā-vidhi*, the means for mental development. If the word “kammaṭṭhāna” appears with verbs such as “know, contemplate, investigate [the kammaṭṭhāna],” then the first definition is meant. If it appears in phrases such as, “kammaṭṭhāna practice” or “kammaṭṭhāna development,” the second definition applies. Kammaṭṭhāna means “workplace”; the “work” here is the practice of mental development (*bhāvanā*). Specifically, it is the act of causing to arise instances of morality, concentration, and understanding that had never arisen before; and the development of factors of morality, concentration, and understanding that have already arisen in oneself.

The dukkha that must be comprehended: What [kind of] dukkha should we comprehend first?

Following what we have already explained that dukkha is what must be comprehended and which dukkha is it that should be contemplated, from dukkha's five classifications, at the initial stage we must understand dukkha-vedanā first, because just now I also informed the listeners that all dukkha is included in the Noble Truth of Dukkha (dukkha-ariya-sacca). And what I say about contemplating dukkha-vedanā first, why should we contemplate this kind of dukkha first? We should contemplate it first because from the totality of dukkha, dukkha-vedanā is the kind we come up against always; practically all the time and concerning all the postures (iriyā-patha), from opening our eyes upon awakening until finally going to bed, we relieve dukkha-vedanā continually, and even to sleep is to relieve bodily dukkha, too. Thus we should comprehend dukkha-vedanā first.

How can we comprehend dukkha-vedanā?

Through the rationale mentioned above you now know that regarding the contemplation of dukkha, there must be dukkha to contemplate, then we can contemplate dukkha. If there's no dukkha, we cannot contemplate [it].

What the Buddha rendered for contemplation is dukkha, not sukha. Dukkha is a Noble Truth—an actuality, a fact. Happiness/pleasure is not an actuality.

To contemplate dukkha in the easiest way, we have to comprehend dukkha-vedanā first, because dukkha-vedanā arises in ourselves plentifully day after day, innumerable times; we don't know how many times a day we relieve dukkha, how many times we change [posture].

In the practice, as we follow the contemplation, we come to understand how much dukkha-vedanā oppresses and exerts pressure on us.

How is saṅkhāra-dukkha contemplated?

Saṅkhāra-dukkha does not refer to dukkha-vedanā. Saṅkhāra-dukkha refers to 'having to relieve.' When dukkha-vedanā has already arisen, we *have to relieve it*. This relieving is in fact a type of dukkha, too: dukkha has to be relieved continuously.

If we make a comparison, **dukkha-vedanā** is like a **sick person**, and **saṅkhāra-dukkha** is like a **nurse**. When we are always in pain—since we get up we are continually aching—we have to continually relieve dukkha. What we can easily see is that we *have to eat*, we *have to shower*, we *have to defecate*, we *have to urinate*, we *have to sit*, we *have to lie down*, we *have to sit*, lie down, stand, walk, we *have to be changing posture regularly*. All this must be done for the purpose of relieving dukkha. If we don't relieve or alleviate, for instance, if we don't eat, don't lie down, don't defecate, don't urinate, don't change posture, we will be subject to quite a lot of suffering [dukkha; bodily unpleasant feeling], and we could even reach the point of dying. But it's only that we don't understand this, we have not contemplated to comprehend that we have to be relieving dukkha regularly, constantly.

Sitting, lying down, standing and walking means that we have to be changing the posture regularly. This posture changing is the same as to relieve dukkha. We must relieve every posture, but it is just that we are not aware of this. The reason we don't know this is because we haven't contemplated.

This is saṅkhāra-dukkha, like a nurse who has to nurse a patient: have him sit, have him lie down, have him stand, have him walk—the nurse must have the patient do all this. And why? If it's not done in this way it is dukkha, because the patient cannot only sit, only lie down, or only walk. How would it be if the postures wouldn't be changed at all? It would be a whole lot of suffering. Therefore, this changing that we are doing is just to relieve dukkha; we have to go on changing as if nursing ourselves. Yet we don't see the intrinsic nature [of phenomena] (*sabhāva*) existing in this way.

We have never seen dukkha like this whatsoever. Why? Because we lack contemplation of those things that are natural law, which are actualities, which proceed according to what's common to all beings, and because we understand that it's a good thing to have the opportunity to relieve, to change, the postures.

If people don't understand the development of vipassanā they will seek for other ways, ways that are *special*. As for natural law, they don't take a look at it at all. They are hungry to see a slew of special (unusual) things come about. Then they are not aware of the things that are natural law. But, in fact, vipassanā must see the law that proceeds ordinarily; it must understand natural law. Not understanding natural law is called “**avijjā**.” Not knowing dukkha is therefore termed “**avijjā**.”

The Buddha said that *avijjā*, that is, unawareness, means **unawareness of the Four Noble Truths**—to be unaware that *dukkha* is a Noble Truth; not knowing *dukkha* is thus *avijjā*. We haven't contemplated at all that we have been nursing ourselves all the time up to this very moment. This condition of having to nurse in this way – is it fit to be called happiness/good feeling (*sukha*)?

This intrinsic nature of *dukkha* that is called *saṅkhāra-dukkha* must exist like this all the time, namely, we must relieve, we must change, regularly, nonstop. This is *saṅkhāra-dukkha*. But why don't we see it? We don't see it because we haven't considered the real causes or rationales, and neither have we watched.

Sabhāva-dukkha—the five aggregates—is *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇā*. These are all intrinsic natural conditions (*sabhāva-dhamma*). These intrinsic natures consist of utter destruction, of incessant change, of a not long-lasting nature. The Buddha regarded them as *sabhāva-dukkha*. Such as when he said, “*pañcupādānakkhandhādukkha*”, i.e. **the five aggregates are *dukkha***. The intrinsic natures must be contemplated; if there were no more intrinsic natures, then all the various forms of *dukkha* would neither exist at all.

Therefore, ***dukkha* is the five aggregates** themselves.

Dukkha-lakkhaṇa is *aniccam*, *dukkham*, *anattā*.

The impermanence of the five aggregates, *aniccam*, has four stages: ***Anicca*, *aniccalakkhaṇa*, *aniccanupassī*, and *aniccavihārī***. The *vipassanā* practitioner, who has penetrated and seen the Three Characteristics, must have reached these four characteristics.

***Anicca* means that the five aggregates are *anicca*. *Anicca-lakkhaṇa* is the various kinds of impermanence of the five aggregates.**

And the one who penetrates and sees that the five aggregates are a *dhamma* which is not long-lasting, that goes on changing, which consists of arising and passing away, etc., is called an *aniccanupassī*.

As to *aniccavihārī*, after we have penetrated and seen in this manner, as a result the heart/mind must penetrate into the object (*ārammaṇa*), that is, the Three Characteristics either through *aniccam*, *dukkham* or *anattā*. Seeing any of the three is the same as seeing all three. The heart/mind of the practitioner has penetrated to stay at that object—impermanence, etc.—it doesn't go anywhere else anymore at all.

When we contemplate frequently, the heart/mind penetrates to stay at that object. The mind that has come into that object is called “***aniccavihārī***,” that is, it penetrates to stay at the direct awareness of the object that is seen as impermanent.

If we penetrate to be at the object like this really, once the heart/mind is already engaged in the object of impermanence, the defilements (*kilesa*) cannot take hold anymore, because it sees the object as being impermanent, unsubstantial and meaningless, so the defilement of taking pleasure in the object cannot arise. It is the same with *dukkha* or *anattā*—any of the Common Characteristics; when any of them is seen, the mind is capable of cleansing the *kilesas* and reach *Nibbāna*.

The three characteristics, *aniccam*, *dukkham* and *anattā*, consist of four stages each,⁷ as we have mentioned before. So the *vipassanā* practitioner must access these four, and then *vipassanā* will proceed to reach the Noble Truths or realize *nibbāna*.

The listeners here already know that the five aggregates are impermanent. In which way are they impermanent? The Buddha laid down ten types of *anicca-lakkhaṇa* (the characteristic of impermanence), consisting of impermanence, not long-lastingness, unsubstantiality, passing away, destruction, and so on. Whoever sees any of these ten kinds is considered as someone who has seen impermanence, that is, *aniccam*.

Aniccam is the impermanence of the five aggregates. The listeners here have already learned that the five aggregates are impermanent, that *anicca-lakkhaṇa* is the impermanency of the five aggregates. How is each aggregate impermanent: How is *rūpa* impermanent? How is *vedanā* impermanent? How is *saññā*

⁷ For instance, in the case of *aniccam*, the four stages are *anicca*, *aniccalakkhaṇa*, *aniccanupassī*, and *aniccavihārī*. They will be explained further down.

impermanent? How is saṅkhāra impermanent? And how is viññāṇa impermanent? Do we know already or not? We know only that the five aggregates are impermanent because we have studied it before.

We think rūpa-khandha is impermanent, why are we able to know that? Because once it has arisen or been born, there's aging, sickness and death, etc. There is change or alteration: it can be gray hair or partial blindness, or whatever, depending on the individual case. This we can understand about rūpa-khandha. However, this way of understanding is *cintamayapaññā* (understanding through reasoning), it is not *vipassanā-paññā* (insight-wisdom), i.e., it's based on considering this and that and then putting it together. We bring the past in, and therefore we remember: "in the past it was like this". Relying on memory and attention we believe that it's impermanent.

But about the impermanence of vedanā, the impermanence of saññā, the impermanence of saṅkhāra, the impermanence of viññāṇa, in which way are these impermanent? Do we see here the anicca-lakkhaṇa? We don't see it. We know, we already know about aniccā/impermanency because we studied and understood before—so we bring in thinking to figure it out.

What is anicca-lakkhaṇa, that is, the characteristic of impermanence?

How is **anicca-lakkhaṇa**, the impermanence of the five aggregates? **We must see this through penetrative insight, we must see it at the moment when the impermanence of the five aggregates is happening really**, and not with the past or the future, because the five aggregates are showing impermanence continuously. Since they are born, they consist of arising and destruction; they arise, they cease, continuously; there is no stopping at all. But we don't see it. Therefore, we have to penetrate to see it, which means to have our understanding comprehend anicca-lakkhaṇa: how is this anicca-lakkhaṇa, this impermanence?

What is aniccanupassī, that is, the seeing of impermanence?

Perhaps we are contemplating, but it can be that we still don't see the impermanence of the five aggregates, i.e., we are developing vipassanā but we still don't see.

Aniccanupassī means that **vipassanā has already arisen. Aniccā must be seen through vipassanā-wisdom; it's not seen or known through memory**. It must be known through the wisdom of mental development (*bhāvanā-paññā*). It's not known by *cintā-nāṇa* or *suttā-nāṇa*. Having heard [or read] doesn't mean knowing or seeing will occur; it's not like that. Aniccanupassī is the seeing itself, it must see through the understanding of vipassanā.

Aniccavihārī is to see the object (*ārammaṇa*) as impermanent

Aniccavihārī is the seeing of impermanence that has been established in direct awareness. The cleansing of defilement will depend on the accumulated perfections (*vāsanā-pāramī*) of the individual, on how long it takes to the point of seeing impermanence. Perhaps we see it at the end of a sermon, or else we must practice for seven months or seven years—it's up to the perfections the individual. When the mind has been established in the object of impermanence, it will cleanse the defilements until reaching the end. Whenever it becomes unblemished through purification, that's when the Noble Truths are reached, and this is the end of vipassanā.

Here we have been talking about aniccā. As to dukkha and anattā, they follow the same pattern of aniccā mentioned above.

All the types of dukkha that have been explained, be it dukkha-vedanā, saṅkhāra-dukkha, sabhāva-dukkha or dukkha-lakkhaṇa, they are all included in dukkha-sacca.

As much as we have explained has been about sacca-dhamma (truth), but to comprehend that dukkha is a truth, a fact (*sacca*) (which means it cannot be changed—relieved, altered—and that the five aggregates are really dukkha in this way), must be truly seen in actuality with wisdom (*paññā*). This will depend on the understanding of each individual when s/he contemplates dukkha according to what has been explained, consisting of dukkha-vedanā, etc. Having access to this understanding is most important.

Regardless of having sighted all the types of dukkha mentioned above or seen impermanence, in the long run we must see dukkha, too. Or if we see dukkha-lakkhaṇa, we must see impermanence, too. Or if we see anattā-lakkhaṇa, we must see dukkha, too. That is to say, we have to see that the five aggregates are

not something good, they have no meaning or essence. All this must be included within dukkha-sacca, and it means that wisdom has comprehended dukkha-sacca, right? Right.

If the person who already has understanding exclusively contemplates dukkha-vedanā sacca, s/he will be able to comprehend dukkha-sacca. How is it comprehended? I mean, from what does dukkha-vedanā arise? Where does it come from? It comes from nāma-rūpa, from the five aggregates. Because there is nāma-rūpa, or the five aggregates, there also has to be dukkha-vedanā. If there were no nāma-rūpa, no five aggregates, no intrinsic nature of dukkha, then would there be dukkha-vedanā? Where would it come from? When we have seen this, can it now be changed? As we *have* nāma-rūpa⁸ already, we [know we] cannot change it. There's no being who can change things to make dukkha-vedanā not arise, because dukkha-vedanā is a reality (fact, truth). The understanding that has comprehended this truth already, knows instantly that it cannot be changed. How could we change things so as to have no dukkha at all? We must keep from having five aggregates—we must keep from having nāma-rūpa—then there will be no dukkha. Understanding (*paññā*) fathoms this immediately. Once it has seen, it knows where dukkha come from. Wisdom knows that dukkha comes from the five aggregates.

When this has been seen, we are directly aware that **this whole mass of dukkha arises due to the five aggregates**, it comes from the five khandhas, and if we are to remedy this, **then we should keep from having five aggregates**. This is according to evidence contemplated with genuine right view.

How do we keep from having five aggregates? From what cause does the condition of having five aggregates come from? When we have already contemplated, we will know that **the cause for the arising of the aggregates are the defilements**, and they [the defilements] are an aiding condition for further birth to pile up increasingly. When defilements exist, the five aggregates must arise. This is how the rounds (*vaṭṭa*) [of death and (re)birth] circulate. There is the defilement of avijjā from which all other defilements are derived. **Avijjā is not knowing** that the five aggregates are dukkha. To understand that the aggregates are sukha causes vipallāsa⁹ to arise.

Therefore, all those who haven't yet comprehended actuality or realized the Noble Truths, do not feel in any way that the five aggregates are dukkha, and so they are content and happy. Everyday we are content with the five aggregates, right? Everyone is somewhat content with their own five aggregates and somewhat content with other people's aggregates, or content in the rounds (*vaṭṭa*), i.e., to circulate in the different objects of the five aggregates, because in this world there's but the five aggregates only. There's nothing whatsoever apart from the five aggregates on which we delight every day, that is to say, we are just content and happy among the five aggregates.

Why are we satisfied? Due to **not knowing** that these five aggregates are something impermanent, unsubstantial, lacking meaning or essence, which proceed to dukkha. **We have never understood things in this way at all.** This is **avijjā**. Accordingly, this generates **tanhā**:¹⁰ **there is wishing for, delight; we crave to get the five aggregates, we want the five aggregates.** There is regret, longing for: we don't want to be devoid of the five aggregates at all. It proceeds like this. Other people or our relatives don't want us to die, we ourselves also don't want to die, and we don't want the people we like, the people we love, to die, it will give us lots of suffering and torment. We still find satisfaction and happiness within the five aggregates, that is, we still desire dukkha (to suffer) to exist. Even if we become blind, or we get any kind of suffering or agony, we still don't want to die. We are dukkha, other people are dukkha, yet we still don't see it. So we still want to be with dukkha, we still see that it's good that the five khandhas exist.

We've seen sick people in the hospital who have to undergo surgery, they have to cut them off one arm or leg, and much more like this; they are in a state subject to difficulty. Once we've seen illness, we've seen it is frightening, terrifying. And why it has to happen like this? Because there are the five aggregates. And why do we submit to tolerate the dukkha and torment? Does it feel good? It's certainly not a nice feeling, but we still want to be alive, we don't want to die, because we still see the five aggregates as good, despite of being troublesome, of being dukkha that must bring us difficulty: we must get sick, and all the various things like that. Still, we don't see how much harm is included within the five aggregates.

And what's the reason why we still cannot see? Because of the power of **avijjā** and **tanhā**. So they find delight. Even if they are put in jail, and have to be killed and are tortured in a dark room, at the time

⁸ "To *have* nāma-rūpa" means that the practitioner's object of contemplation is not a concept anymore.

⁹ *Vipallāsa*: perversion of view. *Sukha-vipallāsa*: perversion of view about happiness.

¹⁰ *Tanhā*: 'thirst'; craving (desire, wanting, liking).

when they are going to be executed, they still feel sorry (for the loss) that they faint. Despite of all that torment, they still don't want to pass beyond the five aggregates. They still want to be in that condition. They still *regret (the loss of) the five aggregates*. This is *tanhā* due to lack of knowledge, which is *avijjā*. *Tanhā* thus causes rejoice: there is craving and lust for the five aggregates.

Rūpa-khandha is compared to a hospital, because a hospital receives hundreds and thousands of sick people. Diverse ailments arise in our bodies. Our body is the place for the arising of sicknesses. It receives all these sicknesses and we nurse and take care of them. Hence, *rūpa-khandha* is compared to a hospital.

Therefore, in those in whom understanding has already arisen, they see things in this way. When we have contemplated and seen in this way already, we see the harm of the five aggregates. But when we still don't see, that's due to the power of **avijjā** and **tanhā**. So we are still rejoicing like this. What are we going to do?

In those in whom understanding has already arisen, who have seen the harm of the five aggregates, in them arises disgust towards *dukkha*, i.e., they get fed up with the five aggregates. They don't desire, they don't find delight in the five aggregates whatsoever. When they see *dukkha*, when they see harm, they become directly aware that, "due to the five aggregates themselves, we have the different *dukkhas* and kinds of harm, and we have to deal with oppression and menace as long as there are still the five aggregates taking place." Moreover, the scriptures compare the five aggregates with an executioner who is raising his sword ready to slash the neck; whenever he brings down the sword, that's when we die.

Those who develop *vipassanā* and see the *dukkha* and harm of the five aggregates, who see the atrocity in this way, their lust and delight towards the five aggregates abates, and feelings according to the progression of insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) arise, by seeing the five aggregates as danger and harm. And disgust arises: the aggregates are seen as *dukkha*, as exceedingly harmful, thus we get fed up with them, and lust and delight subsides.

At that time the heart/mind of the *vipassanā* practitioner wants only to go beyond [*dukkha*]. It really feels that as long as we still have the five aggregates, or as long as the arising of *nāma-rūpa* is still taking place, no matter if we are reborn in the heavens, *rūpa-brahma*, or *arūpa-brahma*, *dukkha* must always follow. It doesn't believe at all it will go beyond (*dukkha*) regardless of whatever world or plane of existence it may go to.

Therefore, those who have understanding (*paññā*) have already seen that the aggregates are *dukkha*, so disgust arises, and there's no delight. *Nibbidā-ñāṇa* (knowledge of dispassion) gives rise to disgust in the five aggregates, i.e., in the *dukkha* and harm of the five aggregates that they have already sighted. At once they recall: "Whenever we have no more five aggregates, that's when we'll go beyond *dukkha*."

But what are we going to do to go beyond the five aggregates? About this feeling of wanting to go beyond the aggregates, according to the meaning in the commentaries, it is stated that, "such feeling has fathomed *Nibbāna* already, that is, it's aiming, it's heading towards *nibbāna*."

And why? Because it has been clearly seen that the five *khandhas* are *dukkha*, are harmful. There's no desire to possess the five *khandhas*. It has been seen that birth, that relinking (rebirth: *paṭisandhi*) is peril. In the scriptures there are a lot of similes concerning this feeling.

It is for this reason only that we can give up defilement, i.e., delight in and lust for the five aggregates. Defilement cannot come in anymore. The more defilement is destroyed, the more harm that is seen, and the more lust and delight that go away each time. It is said in the scriptures that the mind is already facing, already looking, towards *Nibbāna*.

Not having five aggregates is liberation from *dukkha* because among the 31 planes of existence there's not a single one where there are no aggregates. There's only one *place* where there are no aggregates, namely, *Nibbāna*.

Even though before realizing *Nibbāna* by ourselves we still cannot know if *Nibbāna* is something real or not, the mind is already facing in that direction, that is, delight towards the five aggregates has subsided. There's no more delight towards anything, no matter what. The mind has turned to look for what is devoid of the five aggregates—this is called, "facing towards *Nibbāna*."

The more we see that *dukkha* and harm are derived from the five aggregates, that much more will we want to go beyond the five aggregates; each moment the mind will move closer into *Nibbāna*. Why? It moves closer to *Nibbāna* because the defilements have lessened, and *tanhā* also lessens every

time [this is seen]. The mind looks for Nibbāna with more certitude at each moment. When tanhā reaches its final end, that's when Nibbāna is reached.

But as to what I have heard vipassanā practitioners say, instead of seeing dukkha when they are developing vipassanā, **they see sukha, peacefulness and joy (pīti), nice and cool. And so delight arises. Delight towards what? To the five aggregates themselves. Peace, joy, coolness, are all but the five aggregates**—they are not something else at all. There are aggregates that arise with sukha-vedanā, that arise with dukkha-vedanā, and that arise with upekkhā-vedanā. However, the practitioners are only acquainted with the name(s).

When seeing the five aggregates at the moment of experiencing sukha they don't understand that such sukha is the five aggregates, and then they don't want to go beyond the five aggregates, instead they abandon themselves in the happiness and delight in the five aggregates. And so they jump to the conclusion that this kind of sukha is the sukha of Nibbāna.

When it is this way, it is not a cause for the arising of disgust. It does not generate desire to go beyond the five aggregates, nor does it cause the cooling down of tanhā, because, in this case, tanhā—delight in the aggregates—actually increases.

For this reason, those who do a lot of samādhi, or who develop samādhi until attaining jhāna, when they die in the [state of] rejoice of samādhi, they are (re)born in that object (*ārammaṇa*)—which can be rūpa-brahma, arūpa-brahma, etc. This means that in whatever characteristic(s) of the aggregates we rejoice in, we will be reborn in a place where we can get that sort of aggregates. We are born and then we die. We die and then we are born again. We come and go in circles. This is *dukkha-samsāra-vaṭṭa* [the suffering of the perpetual wandering in the rounds (of death and rebirth)].

But when the person who develops vipassanā sees the harm and peril of this, s/he gets completely fed up with the 31 planes of existence. S/he sees that wherever consciousness relinks (takes birth: *paṭisandhi*), **it is like falling into a pit of charcoal on fire**. When this kind of feeling has already taken place, the defilement of finding delight and satisfaction in this and that¹¹ cannot come to seize the person anymore at all.

When understanding sees the truth in this way, then it's understanding that has comprehended dukkha-sacca. It cannot see in any way that in this world there's sukha. It sees that **in this world there's only dukkha, which arises, stays, and passes away**—apart from dukkha there's nothing at all which arises, stays and passes away.

But we haven't comprehended the truth in this way yet, why? Because we still have avijjā covering and enveloping (the heart/mind), thus causing us to be addicted. Avijjā does not allow us to see. Therefore, we ought to and must do an effort to develop understanding in order to give up avijjā, and go beyond dukkha, which is the Buddha's purpose within the Dispensation.

How do we carry out the method of giving up avijjā? We must **generate wisdom**; we must **develop vipassanā** to give rise to wisdom, according to what has been mentioned above. Dukkha is a condition (*dhamma*) that can be seen through understanding; this is the benefit.

Even if the listeners here haven't yet practiced vipassanā or have tried but still haven't seen, please learn about the rationale of the way vipassanā must precede, the feelings/direct awareness that we must have, in order to cleanse the defilements to make the mind unblemished and attain purity. If we see dukkha-vedanā, when we have seen it really in this way, we become directly aware that it is a fact that dukkha-vedanā comes from the five aggregates, and so we are able to comprehend dukkha-sacca. Or by seeing saṅkhāra-dukkha, that we have to relieve and change [position] incessantly, we can also comprehend dukkha-sacca by understanding that it originates in the five aggregates. We comprehend dukkha-sacca in its entirety.

With dukkha-lakkhaṇa it is the same; how can there be the characteristics (*lakkhaṇa*) of impermanence, dukkha and nonself if there are no five aggregates anymore? There cannot be any. So we must probe into the origin of the five aggregates—we must see their harm—then we can comprehend dukkha-sacca.

We ought to learn that the mind must proceed in this way, and that the Buddha teaches to contemplate dukkha, the task is that dukkha must be fully comprehended. But we forget about it and therefore we don't see dukkha.

¹¹ I.e., rejoicing in any of the six (sense-)objects.

Where is dukkha contemplated? We have to **contemplate dukkha-vedanā first**. Where is dukkha-vedanā contemplated so it can be easily seen? The scriptures tell us to contemplate it at the four postures: standing, walking, sitting and lying-down. There is dukkha-vedanā in all of the postures. In one day how many times do we sit, walk, or stand? We must change the posture, right? We will really become aware that we change the posture abundantly. This has to be seen first. This is *satipaṭṭhāna* itself, which is an object that is an aiding condition for the arising of vipassanā, which allows the comprehension of Nibbāna, which is to attain the Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha said that beings don't see dukkha because they haven't contemplated the postures (*iriyā-patha*). The Buddha said it very clearly in this way. Moreover, if anicca-lakkhaṇa, dukkha-lakkhaṇa, or anattā-lakkhaṇa, are not already the object (of observation), we cannot realize Nibbāna. Ten kinds of anicca-lakkhaṇa have been laid down, 25 kinds of dukkha-lakkhaṇa, and five kinds of anattā-lakkhaṇa. All together they are 40. These are the kammaṭṭhānas for vipassanā.

Regarding the objects (*ārammaṇa*) of samatha-kammaṭṭhāna, likewise, there also 40 kinds. If we add them all up they make 80 objects. The listeners might have heard only that there are 40 objects for samatha, but probably don't know about the total of 80 kammaṭṭhānas. However, the Buddha has laid down his kammaṭṭhānas as different kinds; they must operate as separate things. It's not that we do samatha and then vipassanā will arise by itself. If that were the case, then the scriptures wouldn't need to display the objects of vipassanā separately. Therefore, it's appropriate that we must understand this justification, too.

At the time when the Buddha gave a lecture, if there were people who had a lot of [accumulated] understanding (*paññā*) and perfections (*pāramī*), as soon as the sermon was completed they were capable of realizing Nibbāna. Why is this? Because that person's understanding contemplates wholly according to the sermon s/he is listening to, s/he sees the dukkha and the harm of the five aggregates; the defilement of rejoicing with the five aggregates abates at the moment of listening. However, this concerns people who have sharp understanding and perfections; just as they listen, right understanding arises.

Regarding us, sometimes when listening we might understand, but not clearly; or sometimes we don't understand, or we only get the point that these kinds of things exist. But we might not reach a comprehensive understanding due to the large accumulation of defilements we have. If the defilements go far away, at that same time the Noble Truths become increasingly distinct.

Cleansing the defilements to have them removed must correspond to the contemplation of dukkha, contemplating to comprehend dukkha-sacca. When we have seen that dukkha is sacca (a truth, actuality, fact), tanhā comes to an end. When no delight is left, tanhā gives up. When tanhā stops, at that moment nirodha is realized.

The Four Noble Truths are seen when the Path is fully developed, because the Path is the pathway that one walks to reach Nibbāna. Thus, at the moment of reaching Nibbāna, at that moment, the path is already developed. The Path is the understanding that sees dukkha-sacca; it is the true genuine magga-sammā-diṭṭhi (the Path of Right View). Therefore, the numerous dukkhas must all merge in the understanding of insight (*paññā-vipassanā*). When purity has been attained—to be unblemished away from the defilements—defilements don't abide anymore, and the Noble Truths are thus realized.

Regarding the contemplation of dukkha, the instruction is to contemplate the postures. The teachers have called for the contemplation of the postures. Solely seeing dukkha is enough, or by solely seeing impermanence, or anattā, we can reach Nibbāna. The easiest, the most convenient, as for people who have little understanding, is the contemplation of the postures.

Contemplating the postures makes us see the dukkha-vedanā in the old posture, and see the sankhāra-dukkha, the relieving/changing, in the new posture—because the new posture is sankhāra-dukkha, the need to relieve, as with someone who has to nurse a sick person, but is not the sick person himself. The sick person is dukkha-vedanā, not sankhāra-dukkha. Clear comprehension (*sampajañña*)¹²—lifting the hand, looking to the front, looking behind—is not dukkha-vedanā; there is dukkha-vedanā present, but it is not apparent. Like when using the alms bowl, using the pair of robes, or looking down, dukkha-vedanā is not yet really apparent, although it has already arisen, but very mildly, therefore it is not visible at all.

When we have already contemplated dukkha, we will know that we are moving/wiggling all the time. Either moving the body, lifting the hand, turning the head, or whatever we do, it is all done to relieve

¹² *Sampajañña* here refers to the Minor Postures category of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

dukkha-vedanā a bit. Or sometimes we do it in order to **prevent** dukkha-vedanā. For example, when we are hungry we eat to **relieve** dukkha-vedanā, but sometimes when we are not hungry we must bear eating so that dukkha-vedanā doesn't arise [in the future], because we know that when the mealtime has come, although we are not hungry, we have to eat to prevent dukkha-vedanā from arising later on.¹³

Therefore, it's **prevention as well as relieving**. The Sampajañña category *is a lot more* than the Postures category. Sampajañña¹⁴ mainly arises from (the act of) relieving [dukkha] as we move or wiggle. As we move our body, if we observe well, we'll see that we are relieving dukkha-vedanā. Sick people, if they are very sick, they have very strong dukkha-vedanā, and we can see how restless or uncomfortable they are. As they twist to this side and that side, we can know that they are relieving dukkha-vedanā, which is forcing them [to be turning from one side to another]. They move to abate dukkha-vedanā, and if dukkha-vedanā lessens, uneasiness will also diminish.

Therefore, at the time of twisting, of moving around, if we observe it well, we'll notice that we are merely relieving dukkha. Here we will see sankhāra-dukkha: the alteration or change by the postures.

But when practicing we have to put attention (*manasikāra*) on the old posture as well as to the new posture. We have to continually put attention.

An important point that should be understood is that tanhā does not abide in the old posture, because in the old posture dukkha has already arisen. There's no more tanhā, no more rejoice in the old posture. We don't want to have the old posture anymore. Such as when we have been sitting long, we become dukkha: become stiff and aching, then we want to change to a new posture, we want to change into the lying posture, i.e., we don't want to have the sitting posture anymore, we don't rejoice (in it) anymore, due to the arising of dukkha in the sitting-rūpa. But the tanhā that goes to rejoice to the lying posture, i.e., to the new posture, subsequently arises.

Dukkha arises in the old posture. As for tanhā, it stretches out to arise in the new posture; it rejoices in the new posture by seeing it as sukha. We ought to know and understand that the new posture, the lying posture, is **sukha-vipallāsa** (perversion of view about happiness).

If we have no understanding of the practice or do not put attention (*manasikāra*) correctly, we will not be able to keep the defilements away from the new posture at all. As to the old posture, it's the normal thing anyway that tanhā will not abide in it.

But just as irritation or displeasure has entered to abide, that is, dosa (aversion) has entered in the old posture, it will be completely impossible to keep tanhā from going away to the new posture. Skilful attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) is therefore vital in this regard.

All wholesomeness, be it among samādhi or vipassanā, must rely on skilful attention as the main point that will give rise to results, or to understanding. Here the listeners are able to understand already what [kind of] dukkha vipassanā sees, and once it's been seen, what's the usefulness of that.

If there's a lot of samādhi when we are developing vipassanā, then there'll be no dukkha-vedanā. Samādhi causes dukkha-vedanā to not be visible. And sankhāra-dukkha becomes even more invisible because when we are just sitting still, not changing, how would we be able to see that we have to relieve and change the posture? Neither impermanence nor dukkha have been seen yet; our understanding does not see them at all when we are [absorbed] in samādhi, because they are very subtle. To see arising-and-ceasing in samādhi is exceedingly difficult.¹⁵

When we do not see this, what would we see instead? We will see permanence, and will see things as something good. Generally it's like this—when a lot of samādhi has been developed, dukkha-vedanā disappears.

The listeners probably have heard some practitioners say that when dukkha-vedanā arises they strive to make it disappear. What do these practitioners understand? In fact, dukkha-vedanā is satipaṭṭhāna; it is the seat of the attainment of path, fruition and Nibbāna. When dukkha-vedanā arises, they contemplate it to make it disappear. When developing the mind (*bhāvanā*) with the contemplating method of *labeling* or *mental recitation*—making a *mental note*, “this is dukkha” or “dukkha, dukkha”—the aim of the mind is to put attention in order to cause dukkha-vedanā to disappear. This kind of understanding, or this kind of awareness, is wrong understanding, because of the nonself nature of things (*anattā*). The Buddha said

¹³ This is in reference to people who are not allowed to eat after noontime.

¹⁴ I.e., the minor postures.

¹⁵ I.e., impossible.

that we are not able to control. Hence, the feeling of intentionally wanting dukkha-vedanā to disappear is attā [self/control] to the utmost, because they [mis]understand they can cause it to disappear, can make it end. How can they comprehend dukkha-sacca like this? Dukkha-sacca is a truth; we cannot relieve (alter) it in any way.

To contemplate in the manner of mentally reciting, “dukkha, dukkha,” to have such dukkha disappear, is equal to wanting to have satipaṭṭhāna disappear. Vedanā is satipaṭṭhāna.¹⁶ The Buddha explains that by contemplating vedanā, no matter whether it is sukha or dukkha—contemplating whichever of the two arises—we can attain Nibbāna.

But does it make any sense that when mahā-satipaṭṭhāna has already arisen we aim instead at having such mahā-satipaṭṭhāna disappear? Is this correct? When practicing in this way—making dukkha-vedanā disappear with the power of control—they feel they can control. The Buddha said just to look at the arisen dukkha-vedanā; he didn’t instruct to see it with the purpose of making it disappear.

In the Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta the Buddha instructs to contemplate dukkha-vedanā, which is a mental phenomenon (nāma), as it arises, stays, and passes away. Dukkha-vedanā is not permanent, not a self, there is no one capable of controlling it. This is how the Buddha instructs us to contemplate dukkha-vedanā.

Dukkha-vedanā is nāma; it comes from the five aggregates. When we see the dukkha and harm of the aggregates, the need or longing for the five aggregates comes to an end. The more we see the dukkha and harm of dukkha-vedanā, the sooner the attainment of Nibbāna will take place.

If there’s no dukkha-vedanā, then there must be sukha-vedanā; if there’s no sukha-vedanā, then there must be upekkhā-vedanā.¹⁷ There has to be one of them, because vedanā must be associated with each and every kind of (moment of) consciousness (*citta*). From the 89 types of *citta*, there is not a single one that is not associated with vedanā.¹⁸

Therefore, when the practitioner forces dukkha-vedanā to disappear or come to an end, it shows that s/he is displeased with dukkha-vedanā and rejoices with sukha-vedanā. The act of rejoicing and being pleased with sukha-vedanā is nothing else but to be pleased and delighted in the khandhas (*vedanā-khandha*: the aggregate of feeling).

When dukkha-vedanā has been forced to disappear, what will come to replace it then? Sukha-vedanā will arise in place of dukkha-vedanā, by means of the control of a very powerful samādhi, because it makes the person feel happy and satisfied. So how are we to attain purity then?

The listeners should probably have heard a bit of what we have been talking and learning here, if you come across some of this, then you can consider if it is sound or not.

I think I have spoken for a reasonable time already; if you have any more doubts, in order to understand better, please feel free to ask, in that case I will continue to explain.

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for those who see the harm of perpetual wandering

¹⁶ *Vedanānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*.

¹⁷ *Sukha-*, *dukkha-*, and *upekkhā-vedanā*: pleasant, painful and neutral feeling.

¹⁸ Feeling, in Pāli *vedanā*, is one *cetasika* (mental factor or mental concomitant) among the seven *universals*. Feeling accompanies each (moment of) consciousness (*citta*); there is no moment without feeling. The universal *cetasikas* are the mental factors that accompany every *citta*, i.e., without them the act of cognition would not take place.