

Considering the Truth

by

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Preface

Acharn Sujin and friends were invited again for Dhamma discussions in Vietnam by Tam Bach and other Vietnamese friends in February 2017. Friends from Thailand, Australia, Taiwan and myself joined this journey. Sarah and Jonothan were assisting Acharn and they gave us all many helpful reminders and explanations about the reality appearing at the present moment. In Vietnam Tran Thai made the travel and accommodation arrangements for us.

Before the sessions in Vietnam, there were a few days of Dhamma discussions in Thailand, in Nakorn Nayok, a place outside Bangkok. Here we could meet old friends from Thailand, U.S.A. and Italy. Vincent from Taiwan joined us with his wife Jane and their eleven-year-old daughter Nana. We discussed details of cetasikas, mental factors that accompany citta, such as contact, feeling and concentration. Knowing more details helps us to see that citta and cetasikas that arise together condition one another. Nobody can cause the arising of particular realities, they are all dhammas devoid of self. We also discussed the factors leading to enlightenment. Without the proper conditions, enlightenment cannot be attained.

In Vietnam the sessions took place first in Saigon where we met many friends who attended sessions at former occasions. The listeners had numerous questions which were profitable for all of us. After Saigon, the sessions were held at a very special place in Hoi An, namely at the newly constructed resort An Villa of Tran Thai and Tiny Tam. It is a “home-stay” and it has the friendly atmosphere as we find it in a family home, a Dhamma home, and here we spent delightful hours of discussions.

Acharn reminded us many times that only listening and reading is not enough. We should deeply consider the truth of Dhamma. In this way understanding can grow. The development of understanding should be very natural. We should not imagine that we have to go to a special tranquil place or engage in special actions in order to have more understanding. Understanding can be developed in the midst of akusala. It does not matter what types of realities arise, they are all just conditioned dhammas.

Chapter 1

The reality of this moment

In our daily life we are quite occupied with all the chores we have to do, with our work, with our social life. We meet people and talk to them and we are absorbed in the stories they tell us. We find our thoughts, speech and actions very important and we take them for self. But the Buddha taught that there is no person, no “I” or “you”, only ever-changing realities. If we truly understand this, we shall know the meaning of “living alone”, without the idea of a person or self.

Before we heard the Buddha’s teaching of non-self or anattā, we found it quite normal to believe: “I see, I hear, I think”. Seeing, hearing and thinking arise, but there is no person who sees, hears or thinks. They are realities arising because of their appropriate conditions. They are present for an extremely brief moment and then they fall away, never to return. How could they be a self or how could they belong to a self?

We read in the *Visuddhimagga*¹ (XV, 15 in the section on the āyatanas, sense-fields) about conditioned realities:

“...they do not come from anywhere previous to their arising, nor do they go anywhere after their falling away. On the contrary, before their arising they had no individual essence, and after their falling away their individual essences are completely dissolved. And they occur without power (being exercisable over them) since they exist in dependence on conditions...

Likewise they should be regarded as incurious and uninterested. For it does not occur to the eye and visible object, etc., ‘Ah, that consciousness might arise from our concurrence’. And as door, physical basis, and object, they have no curiosity about, or interest in, arousing consciousness.

On the contrary, it is the absolute rule that eye-consciousness, etc., come into being with the union of eye with visible object, and so on. So they should be regarded as incurious and uninterested...”

As Acharn often reminded us: “Before seeing there is nothing, and after seeing there is nothing”. Seeing does not come from anywhere, it arises for an extremely

¹ This is an Encyclopedia composed by the commentator Buddhaghosa who lived in the fifth century A.D.

brief moment when there are the right conditions and then it falls away, never to return.

When we stayed in Nakorn Nayok, before going to Vietnam, we had a valuable experience, listening to the discussion of Vincent and Jane's daughter Nana with Acharn, Sarah and others. We can really learn from an eleven-year-old child. Nana was very happy to have bicycle rides with Sarah and Jonothan in the early morning. Nana began to take an interest in the Dhamma and when questions were posed to her, she deeply considered these before she answered.

Nana asked Acharn: "What is most important in life?"

Acharn answered: "Right understanding of whatever appears. Do you understand what is there now? Seeing, hearing? You are without understanding, but you think that you understand. Seeing sees, is it you that sees? Can you see your father?"

Nana answered that this is just thinking. Nana said that she did not like it when her dad was angry with her. She came to understand that her daddy was not real and that there was just thinking about him being angry. Sarah asked her what the problem was: her dad being angry or thinking and feeling unhappy. Nana answered: "Thinking and feeling unhappy".

Sarah asked: "Is it good or not good when you are angry?"

Nana said: "Not good."

Sarah asked her whether she could prevent being angry and Nana understood that this is not possible.

These are all basic questions about the real cause of problems we have in life and in our dealings with other people. We tend to forget that in reality our own defilements are the cause of all trouble and not other people or the outward circumstances. We may have intellectual understanding of the truth but when we face contrarious situations or when we have disagreements with people, we tend to forget the truth of realities.

Nana had truly accumulated an interest in the Dhamma and she considered the truth. Sarah explained that some realities are good and some are not good. Nana understood that anger is not good and kindness and helping others is good.

Hearing about basic principles of the Buddha's teachings such as in the discussions with Nana is valuable to all of us. We are forgetful of the truth that a person does not exist. We are taken away by the stories about people and then there are

ignorance and attachment time and again. We cannot be reminded enough of the truth. Acharn said: “We have to begin again and again.”

When someone said that it is so difficult to realize that there is no one, nothing, Acharn answered:

“There is not direct understanding yet. That is why we talk about seeing, so there will be a moment of direct understanding. Even touching now is real, but there is no understanding; no matter how many times there is touching. But when there is understanding, it is intellectual understanding until the moment there is touching with right understanding. We talk a lot about realities but there is not yet a moment of understanding of what is real as not self.”

I said to Acharn: “It is so helpful that you explain all the time about this moment. This moment of touching or this moment of thinking. The present moment. Until there is direct understanding of that by conditions.”

This understanding does not arise by anyone’s will. Otherwise it is wrong, because there is the idea of “I”. The idea of “I am doing something, I am concentrating on an object, I am being aware.” If this is not clearly understood there is no way that the idea of self can be eradicated. We forget that it is not “I” who studies Dhamma, who is listening to the Dhamma, who learns about realities.

Sarah asked Nana: “Why is there the idea of my mommy?”

Nana: “Thinking.”

Sarah: “Why is there the idea of my mommy, not my daddy?”

Nana: “Thinking.”

Sarah: “Thinking and memory.”

Remembrance (*saññā*) is a mental factor (*cetasika*) arising with every citta. There could not be thinking of a person or a thing without remembrance assisting the citta that thinks.

We have to listen more to the right friends who explain the teachings and we have to carefully consider what we hear again and again, so that there will be intellectual understanding (*pariyatti*) of what appears at the present moment. Intellectual understanding can condition direct understanding of the truth (*paṭipatti*). There should be no expectations as to when direct understanding will arise, it depends on conditions, nobody can cause its arising.

When people visited the Buddha he would ask them whether seeing is permanent or impermanent. We read in the “Kindred Sayings on Sense” (IV, Ch III, § 82, the World) that a monk said to the Buddha:

“ ‘The world! The world!’ is the saying, lord. How far, lord, does this saying go?”

The Buddha answered:

“It crumbles away, monks. Therefore it is called ‘the world’. What crumbles away? The eye... objects... eye-consciousness...”

It seems that seeing can stay, but it arises because of eyesense and visible object, just for a moment and then it falls away. It is the same with hearing and the other sense-cognitions. We tend to cling to an idea of the whole body that exists, that is sitting, standing, walking or lying down. When we take the body as a whole it seems to last and we believe that we can manipulate it. There are only elements arising because of their own conditions, there isn’t anybody who can cause their arising. They appear one at a time through one doorway at a time. When we look at the body, only visible object appears, when we touch it only tangible object appears such as hardness or softness, heat or cold. These are realities, not concepts of a whole. There is no body that is sitting. Realities can be directly experienced when they appear one at a time, without having to think about them, whereas concepts cannot be directly experienced, they are just objects of thinking. When understanding of realities is being developed, the whole world crumbles away, including the body, and the person. There is nothing left.

Some cittas are result, some are cause. Rebirth-consciousness (paṭisandhi-citta) is the first citta arising in life and it is the result of a good or a bad deed (kusala kamma or akusala kamma) committed in the past. Birth as a human is the result of kusala kamma. Birth as an animal or birth in a hell plane is the result of akusala kamma. Seeing, hearing and the other sense-cognitions arising in the course of life are also cittas that are result (vipākacittas), they experience pleasant objects or unpleasant objects. On account of what is experienced, akusala cittas or kusala cittas arise that experience the object in an unwholesome way or in wholesome way. These are cittas that are cause, they can motivate unwholesome or wholesome deeds that will bring their results accordingly.

Only one citta arises at a time and every citta is accompanied by several mental factors, cetasikas, that each perform their own function while they experience the same object as the citta. Some cetasikas are beautiful (sobhana), some are akusala and some are neither.

Attachment (lobha), aversion (dosa) and ignorance (moha) are akusala cetasikas that have been accumulated during countless lives and, thus, they can condition the arising again of attachment, aversion and ignorance. Each kusala citta is accompanied by the beautiful cetasikas of non-attachment (alobha) and non-aversion (adosa), and it may be accompanied by understanding, paññā, as well. Cetasikas are a condition for citta and citta conditions cetasikas. The understanding of conditions is essential for understanding the nature of anattā. Nobody can cause the arising of any reality, its arising depends entirely on conditions.

Citta and cetasika are realities that are mental, in Pali: nāma. They experience an object. They are different from physical realities, in Pali: rūpa. There are twenty-eight kinds of rūpa, but only seven kinds appear all the time in daily life. They are: visible object, sound, odour, flavour, and the three tangible objects of solidity, appearing as hardness or softness, temperature, appearing as heat or cold, and motion, appearing as motion or pressure. These rūpas condition citta and cetasikas just by being the object they experience. The rūpas that are the sense-bases are essential conditions for the sense-cognitions. Seeing-consciousness could not arise if there were no eyesense, hearing could not arise if there were no earsense, all sense-cognitions need their own physical base. The sense-bases themselves are classified along with the seven sense objects as gross rūpas², even though they are not experienced directly by those who begin to develop the Path. They can only be experienced through the mind-door.

We are so used to thinking of self and what appears to the self. The Buddha taught what is real at this moment, like seeing, hearing and thinking. They arise and are present for such a short time, we cannot imagine how short.

When there is some understanding of the reality at this moment, such as seeing that appears now, we can begin to understand what reality is. Seeing is a mental reality, nāma, that experiences what is visible. It seems that we immediately see people. This shows us that cittas arise and fall away extremely rapidly, succeeding one another. Seeing that sees visible object is one moment and thinking of people is another moment, different from seeing. Seeing is vipākacitta, the result of kamma, and thinking is kusala citta or akusala citta. One may think wisely or unwisely, depending on accumulated conditions.

One may think about someone else with kindness, and this is a cetasika, mettā cetasika, arising with kusala citta. The citta with kindness falls away immediately but since each citta is succeeded by a next one, without a break, kindness is not

² Twelve rūpas are gross because of impinging: the seven sense objects and the five sense-bases. The other sixteen kinds of rūpas are subtle.

lost; it is accumulated from one moment of citta to the next moment so that there are conditions for the arising again of kindness. It is the same with the accumulation of unwholesome qualities. One may think with attachment, aversion and ignorance. These akusala cetasikas fall away with the akusala citta, but they are accumulated from moment to moment so that there are conditions for their arising again.

The Buddha taught about realities and their conditions to help people to realize that whatever arises is uncontrollable, non-self. He spoke time and again about seeing, visible object, hearing, sound and thinking, because these arise all the time. We cannot select what kind of object we shall experience, desirable or undesirable, this depends entirely on conditions which are beyond control. It is not easy to understand different realities appearing one at a time. That is why we have to listen and to consider the realities that appear now, again and again.

During the discussions in Vietnam, someone said that the more she listens, the more confused she becomes. This is not surprising because there were countless lives in the past with ignorance. We should be happy to have an opportunity now to listen to the Dhamma. Ignorance cannot be eradicated by a few moments or even many years of listening. During the discussions we hear again the same things such as explanations of the nature of seeing, hearing or thinking that arise now. However, this is not boring, because it can remind us to consider the present reality at those moments. Did we really consider seeing as being different from thinking of what is seen? We cannot expect to understand the truth of realities immediately. Seeing does not know what is seen, it does not know whether there are people and things present in the room. It just sees. The idea of self, of “I see, I hear” is deeply rooted.

Acharn repeated many times: “Be patient and truthful to seeing now. Otherwise it is not possible to understand directly its arising and falling away.” We have intellectual understanding of the arising and falling away of realities, but when paññā is more developed, it can realize directly their arising and falling away. Then it will become clearer that it is impossible to control realities.

It is in the beginning not easy to know the difference between realities, namely, citta, cetasika and rūpa, and concepts of persons and things we can think of but which are not real.

During the discussions, someone spoke of her child with concern about his opinions as to the eating of meat. She thought that one should not eat meat since animals have to be slaughtered in order to obtain it. Acharn spoke about clinging to an idea of “my child”. Someone may cling to his child and strongly believe that the

child exists. Because of ignorance and attachment, there is an idea of “my child”. The Buddha taught that there is no person, no self. In that sense we can say that we are living alone. We forget that there is no one there, only different cittas, cetasikas and rūpas, conditioned elements. No matter whether there are people around or not, there are just seeing, thinking, thinking of stories, situations.

Sarah said: “No courage to live alone, to understand reality at this moment, no matter the circumstances. No courage to understand what appears now, seeing now, visible object now, kusala, akusala, not anyone who does anything.”

Nina: “I see people, not visible object.”

Acharn: “The ‘I’ comes in very quickly.”

Sarah: “Not enough understanding, not enough courage to live alone, even at that moment of thinking and clinging to ‘I’. There is lobha (attachment) at that moment. It is real, but it is not my clinging, or my thinking, my wrong understanding. Just thinking, citta, cetasika and rūpa.”

Acharn: “Are you alone now? In order to understand realities one does not need so many stories. Consider that which experiences and that which now appears. Dhamma means that which now appears.”

We are all alone. Seeing arises for a moment and then falls away, it is no one. Thinking arises and falls away, it is no one. There can be only one citta at a time, arising and falling away. Where is the person? But, at first there is only intellectual understanding which cannot eradicate the belief in a person. When this has become firmer, there can be more confidence in the truth and it can condition direct awareness of realities appearing now, one at a time. Then it will be understood more clearly that a person does not exist.

We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (Second Fifty, Ch 2, § 63, By Migajāla) that Migajāla addressed the Buddha:

“ ‘Dwelling alone! Dwelling alone!’ lord, is the saying. Pray, lord, to what extent is one a dweller alone, and to what extent is one a dweller with a mate?”

“There are, Migajāla, objects cognizable by the eye, objects desirable, pleasant, delightful and dear, passion-fraught, inciting to lust. If a brother be enamored of them, if he welcome them, if he persist in clinging to them, so enamored, so persisting in clinging to them, there comes a lure upon him. Where there is a lure there is

infatuation. Where there is infatuation there is bondage. Bound in the bondage of the lure, Migajāla, a brother is called ‘dweller with a mate.’ ”

The Buddha said the same about the other objects experienced through the other sense-doors and the mind-door. Even if that person would live in solitary places, he is still called “dweller with a mate”, because craving is the mate he has not left behind.

The Buddha explained that when there is no clinging to those objects, the lure fades away:

“When there is no lure, there is no infatuation. Where there is no infatuation, there is no bondage. Freed from the bondage of the lure, Migajāla, a brother is called ‘dweller alone.’

So also with regard to savours cognizable by the tongue, and mind-states cognizable by the mind...

Thus dwelling, Migajāla, a brother, though he dwell amid a village crowded with brethren and sisters, with lay-brethren and lay-sisters, with rājahs and royal ministers, with sectarians and their followers,- yet is he called ‘dweller alone’. Why so? Craving is the mate he has left behind. Therefore is he called ‘dweller alone’.”

Chapter 2

Against the stream of common thought

A friend asked: “What is understanding?” This is a basic question and I tried to answer this: “It is the opposite of ignorance. Now there is ignorance of many things. We think of cups, of food with attachment. We know that there are many moments of attachment and these are always accompanied by ignorance. We learn that seeing does not see people or things, that that is already thinking. This shows how fast cittas arise and pass away. We are misleading ourselves all the time.”

Our friend thought that there was a choice to be made and because of this either understanding would arise or attachment and aversion. I answered: “There is no choice, there is no one who can choose or select anything. It just happens by conditions. They are all realities, it does not matter what arises. We should not try to change realities; some we would rather not have. They are all dhammas and understanding can understand them little by little.”

Acharn explained that one should be truthful to the truth, and understand the present moment. One should not think: “What can I do to cling less to the self.”

All that appears naturally can be object of right understanding. When clinging to the self appears, it can be known as just a dhamma, arisen because of conditions. It is difficult to really see the difference between the world of concepts and ideas and the world of realities such as seeing, visible object, hearing, like, dislike and thinking. Life lasts as long as one moment of citta that experiences one object at a time.

We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (I, VI, The Brahmā Suttas, Ch I, § 1, The Entreaty) that the Buddha, after his enlightenment, contemplated the Dhamma that is subtle and deep, difficult to understand. He thought:

“This that through many toils I have won,
 Enough! Why should I make it known?
 By folk with lust and hate consumed
 Not this a Dhamma that can be grasped.
 Against the stream [of common thought].
 Deep, subtle, fine, and hard to see,
 Unseen it will be by passion’s slaves,

Checked in the murk [of ignorance].”

We read in the commentary to this sutta³:

“Living at ease (apossukkatā, lit. “little zeal”) means lack of desire to teach. But why did his mind so incline after he had made the aspiration to Buddhahood, fulfilled the perfections, and attained omniscience? Because as he reflected, the density of the defilements of beings and the profundity of the Dhamma became manifest to him. Also, he knew that if he inclined to living at ease, Brahmā would request him to teach, and since beings esteem Brahmā, this would instil in them a desire to hear the Dhamma.”

We read that then Brahmā Sahampati entreated the Buddha to preach the Dhamma. The Buddha surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha and saw beings who were easy to teach and who were difficult to teach. He answered Brahmā Sahampati, making known his inclination to teach.

The Dhamma is subtle and deep, difficult to understand. It goes “against the stream of common thought”. The idea of self is deeply ingrained. We believe that a self sees, hears or thinks, is attached or has aversion. That is why the Buddha taught for forty-five years so that people would understand that what is taken for a person or self is only citta, cetasika and rūpa that arise because of their proper conditions.

During the sessions we discussed birth and death. We believe: “I was born and I will die”, but what was born? Not the “I”, only citta, cetasika and rūpa. The first moment of life cannot be by anyone’s will, it has conditions to arise. Life goes on by conditions, from moment to moment. When we see life in a conventional way, we think of a whole lifespan that is ended by death. But in order to understand the truth, we have to consider life from moment to moment. For example, when seeing arises, life is seeing, and this arises and falls away immediately. After seeing there may be thinking with attachment or aversion and these are always accompanied by ignorance. Sometimes understanding may arise. All these are different moments that are gone immediately. So are birth and death, there is birth and death of citta at each moment. This is the only way to really understand the truth of life.

Some people are afraid of death but the dying-consciousness (cuti-citta), the last moment of this life, falls away and is succeeded immediately by the following citta that is the rebirth-consciousness (paṭisandhi-citta) of the next life. There is nothing to fear, cittas arise and fall away, succeeding one another extremely rapidly. The

³ As given in the translation by Ven. Bodhi in the “Connected Discourses of the Buddha”.

change from one life to another life occurs without there being time to think about it. Even now, the next moment can arise in another plane of existence.

Sarah reminded us: “Hearing, considering, understanding and sharing that understanding of dhammas as anattā is by far the most useful way to spend this life which may come to an end at any time.”

The arahat has no more conditions for rebirth since all defilements have been eradicated. Summarizing the three kinds of death: death in conventional sense which is the end of a lifespan, momentary death (khanika maraṇa) which is the falling away of every citta that has arisen, and final death (samuccheda maraṇa) of the arahat.

Considering life at this moment, the momentary birth and death of citta, helps us to see what is really true, different from conventional ideas one may think of but which are not real. The Buddha taught realities by way of many different aspects so that we would understand that there is no person, no self, only citta, cetasika and rūpa.

In Hoi An, in the resort An Villa where we stayed, the Dhamma discussions were held on a veranda under a roof, close to a swimming pool. During the discussions, I saw people catching a snake by the side of the pool. I was so absorbed in the “story” about the snake that I was forgetful of realities. It is helpful to remember that many visible objects appear one after the other, all different because of different conditions. This leads to thinking of shape and form and the concept of a snake. The snake is not a reality, but the thinking is. It is essential to know the difference between concepts and realities.

Rūpa is different from nāma. Seeing is nāma and visible object is rūpa. Rūpa does not think, remember, feel, like or dislike. It is important to learn the different characteristics of nāma and rūpa. If they are not distinguished from each other, we are bound to take whatever appears for self.

Citta and cetasika are different types of nāma. Every citta experiences an object, it is the “leader” in experiencing an object. Only one citta arises at a time and it is accompanied by several cetasikas, mental factors, which assist citta in cognizing the object.

Cittas can be classified in many ways and one of these is the classification by way of “jāti” (literally birth or nature). Cittas can be of the following four jātis: akusala, kusala, vipāka (result of kusala kamma or of akusala kamma) or kiriya (inoperative, neither cause nor result). Each citta is accompanied by several cetasikas.

Some cetasikas accompany every citta, some accompany cittas of the four jātis but not every citta, some accompany only akusala citta and some accompany only kusala citta.

Citta and its accompanying cetasikas are closely associated and they condition one another. The cetasikas which accompany the citta arise together at the same physical base, experience the same object as the citta, and they fall away together with the citta. The cetasikas which accompany citta are of the same jāti as the citta they accompany. When the citta is kusala, all accompanying cetasikas are also kusala, even those kinds of cetasikas which can arise with each type of citta. When the citta is akusala, all the accompanying cetasikas are akusala. Feeling, for example, is a cetasika which accompanies each citta. When there is pleasant feeling, it can accompany kusala citta or akusala citta rooted in attachment, but its quality is different in each case.

When generosity arises, there is no person who is generous, generosity is a cetasika performing its function while it assists the kusala citta. When attachment arises, there is no person who is attached, attachment is a cetasika performing its function. Citta is the principal, the leader in experiencing an object and the cetasikas that experience the same object as the citta perform each their own function while they assist the citta.

Seven cetasikas arise with every citta, no matter whether it is kusala, akusala, vipāka, or kiriya (inoperative, neither kusala, akusala, or vipāka). We have read about these cetasikas, the “universals” (sabbacittasādhāraṇa), in the text books and we have studied them, but while we were in Nakorn Nayok we had an opportunity to discuss about them in more detail. We were reminded that they are realities appearing in daily life, conditioned dhammas that are not self. It is beneficial to consider their true nature again and again.

Contact, phassa is mentioned first among the seven “universals”. It is not physical contact, but it is mental. It accompanies the citta and contacts the object so that citta and cetasikas can experience the object for an extremely brief moment. Contact is mentioned first because without contact there would not be the experience of any object. When seeing arises it is accompanied by contact that contacts visible object. When hearing arises it is accompanied by contact that contacts sound. At first we may believe that there can be seeing and hearing at the same time. But they arise at different bases and experience different objects, thus, from different conditions. They are different realities.

One may like to experience a specific object, but it is impossible to cause phassa (contact) to contact such or such object. This reminds us that there is no self who can select an object.

Feeling is another cetasika that accompanies every citta. Sometimes feeling is pleasant, sometimes unpleasant, and sometimes indifferent. When contact contacts an unpleasant object such as a disagreeable odour, there is likely to be unpleasant feeling arising with the akusala citta after smelling-consciousness has fallen away. Smelling-consciousness is accompanied by indifferent feeling. When contact contacts a pleasant object such as a beautiful sound, there is likely to be pleasant feeling arising after hearing has fallen away. Seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting are always accompanied by indifferent feeling, but the vipākacitta that is body-consciousness is either accompanied by unpleasant bodily feeling or by pleasant bodily feeling. These feelings are mental, but they are called bodily feeling because they accompany body-consciousness. They are also vipāka, conditioned by kamma.

It is difficult to distinguish between feeling that is vipāka and feeling that is akusala. When painful bodily feeling arises, unpleasant feeling that accompanies akusala citta rooted in aversion may arise immediately. We find feeling very important but mostly we are ignorant of realities. People wish to have pleasant feeling all the time but it falls away immediately. Sometimes it accompanies kusala citta such as citta with generosity, but mostly it accompanies citta rooted in attachment.

The following sutta reminds us of the diversity and complexity of feelings. We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (IV, Kindred Sayings about Feeling, 2. The Chapter on Solitude, § 12, The Sky), that the Buddha said:

“Just as, brethren, divers winds blow in the sky – some winds blow from the east, some from the west, some from the north, some from the south, winds dusty, winds dustless, cool winds and hot winds, winds soft and boisterous – even so in this body arise diverse feelings – feelings pleasant, feelings painful, also neutral feelings.”

The Buddha then speaks about a monk who has understanding and awareness of all kinds of feelings and is without defilements.

When feeling appears it can be understood as a conditioned dhamma devoid of self. Nobody can choose what kind of feeling arises, it is beyond control.

Another cetasika that accompanies every citta is concentration or one-pointedness (samādhi or ekaggatā cetasika). It focusses on the object that citta experiences and

it performs this function for an extremely brief moment. It is the condition that citta knows only one object. There are actually six worlds: the world of experiencing visible object, of experiencing sound, of experiencing odour, of experiencing flavour, of experiencing tangible object and of thinking. The conditions for citta experiencing an object through one of the six doorways are different and this makes it clear that there is no self who coordinates all that is experienced.

Concentration or samādhi is of many degrees and it is developed in samatha in order to suppress the “hindrances”⁴; it is one of the jhāna factors leading to the attainment of jhāna (absorption). It is also one of the eight Path factors leading to enlightenment. It focusses on the nāma or rūpa that appears at the present moment, so that paññā can know it as it really is, as impermanent, dukkha and anattā.

Remembrance, saññā, is another cetasika accompanying every citta. It remembers and marks the object that is experienced at that moment so that it can be recognized later on. The translation of saññā as memory or remembrance should not mislead us, saññā is not remembrance as we understand it in a conventional way. It is a cetasika that arises for an extremely short moment together with the citta and the other cetasikas it accompanies. It performs its function of recognition or marking the object experienced by the citta it accompanies. Without saññā there could not be any thinking about pleasant and unpleasant objects.

One may be attached to a pleasant object with happy feeling. Attachment and happy feeling fall away immediately but saññā remembers this happy feeling. This leads to more and more clinging to happy feeling. Saññā conditions attachment. Since saññā accompanies every citta while it performs its function, it has the same object as the citta and, thus, its object can be a reality, a nāma or rūpa, or a concept.

The recognition of a person or a thing, which are concepts, is the result of many different processes of citta and each moment of citta is accompanied by saññā. Because of many moments of saññā, we can follow the trend of thought of a speaker or we ourselves can reason about something, connect parts of an argument and draw conclusions. All this is not due to “our memory” but to saññā, which is not self but only a kind of nāma. What we take for “our memory” or “our recognition” is not one moment which stays, but many different moments of saññā which arise and fall away.

There are several aspects to akusala saññā and kusala saññā. Akusala saññā leads to taking realities for permanent (nicca-saññā) and for self (attā-saññā).

⁴ The hindrances (nīvaraṇa) are: sensuous desire (kāmacchanda), ill-will (vyāpāda), sloth and torpor (thīna-middha), restlessness and worry (uddhacca-kukkucca) and doubt (vicikicchā).

Jonothan said: “Attā-saññā accumulates, it influences the way the world is seen now.”

We think of people and things, of the world in conventional sense, and we forget that in reality there are only citta, cetasika and rūpa that are gone immediately after they have arisen.

When saññā accompanies kusala citta, it is kusala. Firm saññā that is kusala is mentioned in the “Atthasālinī” (I, Part IV, Chapter I, 121) as a condition for the arising of sati of the level of satipaṭṭhāna. It states that the proximate cause of mindfulness is firm remembrance (saññā) or the four applications of mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna). There can be mindfulness of the nāma or rūpa which appears because of firm remembrance of all we learnt from the teachings about realities of daily life. We can learn by reading and by discussing. When we are reading, we should not forget that the Buddha’s words pertain all the time to whatever appears right now. Listening is mentioned in the scriptures as one of the most important conditions for the attainment of enlightenment, because when we listen time and again, there can be firm remembrance of the Dhamma.

Mindfulness is different from remembrance, saññā. Saññā accompanies every citta; it recognizes the object and marks it, so that it can be recognized again. Mindfulness, sati, is not forgetful of what is wholesome. It arises with sobhana cittas. But when there is sati which is non-forgetful of dāna, sīla, of the object of calm or, in the case of vipassanā, of the nāma and rūpa appearing at the present moment, there is also kusala saññā which remembers the object in the right way, in the wholesome way. Saññā accompanying insight which remembers in the right way the reality that appears, as non-self, is anattā-saññā.

Apart from contact (phassa), feeling (vedanā), concentration (samādhi or ekaggatā cetasika) and remembrance (saññā), there are three more cetasikas among the “universals” accompanying every citta: volition (cetanā), attention (manasikāra) and life faculty (jīvitindriya). They condition every citta and also the other cetasikas that they accompany. When conditions are understood more it will become clearer that all realities are anattā.

Apart from the seven “universals”, there are other cetasikas that accompany cittas of the four jātis of kusala, akusala, vipāka and kiriya, though not every citta. These are the six “particulars” (pakiṇṇakā) and among them are “thinking” (vitakka) which touches the object so that citta can experience it, effort or energy (viriya) and decision (adhimokkha). Seeing does not need thinking and effort for the

experience of visible object, but the citta that succeed it in the same process and still experience visible object, although they do not see, need these “particulars”⁵.

Akusala cetasikas such as attachment (lobha), aversion (dosa) and ignorance (moha) only accompany akusala citta. Sobhana (beautiful) cetasikas, such as non-attachment (alobha), non-aversion (adosa) and understanding (paññā) accompany sobhana citta.

All cetasikas are realities occurring in daily life, they are not merely textbook terms. They condition citta and they condition each other and when we truly consider their functions it becomes clearer that there is no self who can control realities. All the classifications of realities given by the Buddha have as their aim helping beings to understand that each reality that appears is non-self.

⁵ The other particulars are: sustained thinking (vicāra), enthusiasm (pīti) and wish-to-do (chanda).

Chapter 3

The inner and the outer sense-fields

I was talking with Alberto, a friend from Italy, about accumulated tendencies. Accumulations have such a strong impact and we are overwhelmed by them at times. I am worried, for example, about many things I have to do in daily life and I am thinking about how to act. Alberto reminded me that we always take accumulated tendencies for self.

Acharn said: “We always forget that all are dhammas. We are concerned about ‘myself’. Thinking, ‘how can I do this, what about me tomorrow morning’. Develop understanding, it does not matter what is arising. It is gone completely.”

We were discussing conceit (*māna*), what conceit is and when it arises. Acharn made it clear that if we name it and keep on thinking about it, it is already completely gone. The present reality is not conceit at such a moment. We are just speculating about what happened in the past instead of knowing the characteristic of the present reality. She brought us back to the present moment by saying that there is seeing right now. Seeing sees visible object which is there, accompanied by the four great Elements of solidity, cohesion, temperature and motion.

When we consider *rūpas*, physical phenomena, we may see them by way of science, in a conventional way, but in reality they arise and fall away each moment. We think of the body as a whole, but what we take for our body are in reality many groups or units, consisting each of different kinds of *rūpa*, and the *rūpas* in such a group arise together and fall away together. *Rūpas* do not arise singly, they arise in units or groups.

There are four conditioning factors that produce *rūpas* of the body: *kamma*, *citta*, temperature and nutrition. *Kamma* is actually the *cetasika* volition or intention (*cetanā*) that arises with every *citta*. When it is *kusala* or *akusala* it can motivate a good deed or a bad deed that produces result. *Kamma* is a mental activity which is accumulated. Since *cittas* that arise and fall away succeed one another in an unbroken series, the force of *kamma* is carried on from one moment of *citta* to the next moment of *citta*, from one life to the next life. In this way *kamma* is capable to produce its result later on. A good deed, *kusala kamma*, can produce a pleasant result, and an evil deed can produce an unpleasant result. Rebirth-consciousness is the mental result of *kamma*, *vipākacitta*, but at that moment *kamma* also produces *rūpas* and *kamma* keeps on producing *rūpas* throughout life; when it stops producing *rūpas* our lifespan has to end. *Kamma* produces particular kinds of *rūpas* such as the senses.

Citta also produces rūpas. Our different moods become evident by our facial expressions and then it is clear that citta produces rūpas.

Temperature, which is actually the element of heat, also produces rūpas. Throughout life, the element of heat produces rūpas.

Nutrition is another factor that produces rūpas. When food has been taken by a living being, it is assimilated into the body and then nutrition can produce rūpas. Thus, some of the groups of rūpas of our body are produced by kamma, some by citta, some by temperature and some by nutrition. If we see the intricate way in which different factors condition the rūpas of our body we shall be less inclined to think that the body belongs to a self.

There are not only rūpas of the body, there are also rūpas which are the material phenomena outside the body. If we do not study rūpas, we may not notice their characteristics that appear all the time in daily life. We shall continue to be deluded by the outward appearance of things instead of knowing realities as they are.

Seeing sees visible object. Visible object is a rūpa that arises in a group of rūpas. These are the four Great Elements of solidity, cohesion, temperature, motion, and in addition odour, flavour and nutritive essence. Although these rūpas arise together, only one kind of rūpa at a time can be the object that is experienced. When there are conditions for seeing, only visible object is seen. Visible object is conditioned by the other rūpas that arise in the same group. For example, solidity may be hard or soft at different moments and this conditions visible object to be different too at different moments. Different visible objects that appear lead to thinking of shape and form and this again is a condition to think of concepts of persons and things. On account of what is seen, heard or experienced through the other senses, we think of concepts. Gradually we can learn to see the difference between realities and concepts.

When there are conditions for the arising of sati of the level of direct awareness, understanding can know what appears as just a conditioned reality. Acharn also explained that no matter we talk about realities as stated in the teachings, we have to come back to seeing right now, hearing right now.

People have many problems in daily life, they have worries and anxieties, but one should remember Acharn's reminder of "Is there seeing now?" There is seeing time and again and its characteristic can be known when it appears without having to think about it. After seeing has fallen away we often think with attachment, aversion and ignorance about what was seen. These three unwholesome roots (akusala hetus) are the real problems in life. One thinks that the cause of unhappiness is

one's partner, a colleague at work, or the way one was treated by others. But the real cause is the accumulated attachment, aversion and ignorance.

Intellectual understanding (pariyatti) can condition direct understanding of realities (paṭipatti) and in this connection Acharn mentioned that the understanding of the āyatanas (bases or sources) can be a supporting condition for direct understanding.

All realities can be classified as twelve āyatanas, translated sometimes as “sense-fields” (Visuddhimagga, Ch. XV, 1-17)⁶. There are six inward āyatanas and six outward āyatanas. The six inward āyatanas are: eyesense, earsense, smelling-sense, tasting-sense, bodysense and mind-base, including all cittas.

The six outward āyatanas are: visible object, sound, odour, flavour, tangible object and mind-object (dhammāyatana), including cetasikas, subtle rūpas and nibbāna.

Āyatana implies association of realities, and this shows that the teaching of āyatanas is not abstract. Association of dhammas takes place at this very moment, but usually we are ignorant of this. There could not be hearing now if there were no association of sound, earsense and hearing. Different characteristics appear one at a time, and there can be understanding of them. That is the real study of āyatanas.

When we see, hear or think, we believe that a self experiences objects, but in reality there is the association of the inward āyatanas and the outward āyatanas, the realities “outside”. When seeing sees visible object there is the association of eye-sense, visible object, seeing-consciousness and the seven cetasikas that accompany every citta, the “universals”.

Understanding what āyatanas are will help us to know the difference between reality and concept. When touching the body, there is a meeting between tangible object and the rūpa that is bodysense, so that there are conditions for body-consciousness that experiences tangible object. Only for a very short moment, only at the moment these āyatanas associate, namely, mindbase (manayatana which is citta), accompanied by cetasikas (dhammāyatana), tangible object (photabbāyatana) and bodysense (kāyāyatana). They meet for an extremely short time and then they are gone. This reminds us how fragile and insignificant what we take for body is. There is no whole body, it does not exist. It is only an idea we may think of.

Sarah explained that the āyatanas associate for a short moment and that it could not be any other way.

⁶ See also Book of Analysis, Vibhaṅga, II, Analysis of Bases.

She said: “It all shows that there is no self at all involved, no one who can control anything for an instant. Understanding more about these realities and their conditioned nature and ‘coming together’ is the way that understanding develops with detachment and awareness which leads to the abandoning of the idea of self and other defilements. It's the only way. Right understanding leads to the development of direct awareness of what appears now very naturally. If there is any expectation of awareness or expectation of understanding arising now, it shows the deep clinging to the idea of self again, not the detachment which right understanding brings at this moment. It really is the ‘fine point’ or ‘balancing on a pinhead’ of dhammas arising by conditions very naturally and without any expectation of what will arise next. This is the only way that satipaṭṭhāna and the Path can develop. The detail about the āyatana shows the real subtlety and depth of the Buddha’s Teachings.”

Acham said that there should be no expectation for the arising of awareness, but when one has understanding of the āyatana, there will be a condition for that moment unexpectedly. One will understand more and more that all dhammas are anattā. It is most helpful that Acham emphasized the importance of understanding the āyatana. We have read about their classification many times but the truth of these realities should be considered over and over again. “Are there āyatana now?” Acham asked us.

The dhammas of our life arise and fall away, they are dukkha, unsatisfactory or suffering. Someone of the listeners asked what suffering is. He tried to walk slowly and stop thinking in order to have less worry. We are so involved in stories, thinking, “What happens to me, what shall I do.” We forget the real meaning of dukkha the Buddha taught: the arising and falling away of realities right now. Since they fall away immediately, they are unsatisfactory, not worth clinging to. So long as we are involved in stories, thinking of concepts instead of understanding whatever reality appears now, there is no way of solving any problem in life. When we think of suffering and of what we have to undergo in our life we forget that each reality that appears now falls away immediately, even thinking or worry. We need patience to consider all the different realities of our life.

The Buddha, in his previous lives when he was still a Bodhisatta, considered all realities over and over again with endless patience. This was the only way to develop the wisdom leading to enlightenment and becoming the Omniscient Buddha. Acham asked me several times to speak about the three kinds of Bodhisattas, beings destined for enlightenment: someone who will become a Sammāsambuddha, Omniscient Buddha, someone who will become a Paccheka Buddha, Silent Buddha, and someone who is a Savaka Bodhisatta, who is a

“Learner”⁷. In the beginning, I did not quite understand the meaning of Savaka Bodhisatta, but by repeatedly discussing this term I better understood what a Savaka Bodhisatta is and how we can become a Savaka Bodhisatta by developing understanding of realities, even for countless lives.

The Sammāsambuddha has attained perfect understanding of the truth of realities, all by himself, without the help of a teacher. Through his enlightenment, he reached omniscience. The Buddha could attain enlightenment because he developed for innumerable lives direct understanding of seeing which appears at the present moment, of visible object which appears at the present moment, of all realities which appear at the present moment. Direct understanding of realities can only be developed now.

The Silent Buddha, Paccheka Buddha, has also attained enlightenment all by himself, but he has not accumulated wisdom to the same extent as the Sammāsambuddha. He cannot proclaim to the world the truth he has realized.

The Savaka Bodhisatta develops understanding during innumerable lives until the moment of enlightenment. He knows the value of understanding of realities appearing at the present moment.

A moment of understanding is not lost, it is accumulated from moment to moment. Conditions for attaining the first stage of enlightenment, the stage of the “stream-enterer” (sotāpanna) are⁸: association with good people (sappurisa-saṃsevo), hearing the true Dhamma (saddhammassavaṇaṃ), thorough attention (yoniso manasikāro), practice of the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma (dhammānudhammapaṭipatti).

As to “wise attention”, the commentary explains that this is attention to impermanence, dukkha and anattā.

As to the practice of the dhamma in conformity with the dhamma, the commentary states that practice in conformity with the dhamma relates to lokuttara dhamma, and that previous practice is necessary, which is, according to the subcommentary, vipassanā, the development of insight.

The word “practice” is a translation of the term paṭipatti, meaning the development of direct understanding.

⁷ Cariyāpiṭaka-aṭṭhakathā, nidānakathā.

⁸ See “Dialogues of the Buddha”, DN 33.1.11(13)

This phrase is also explained in the commentary to the Mahāparinibbānasutta: “Those who practise a dhamma consistent with the dhamma (dhammānu-dhamma-ṭṭipannā). Those who practise the teaching of insight (vipassanā) which is consistent with the teachings of the noble (ariyadhammassa).”

The teaching of the noble is of the path (magga), or else also the ninefold supra-mundane dhamma⁹.

These are the essential conditions leading to the penetration of the four noble Truths. Gradually the true nature of the realities that appear can be penetrated. As we read, there has to be wise attention to the characteristics of impermanence, dukkha and anattā. However, first of all there have to be right awareness and direct understanding of the realities appearing through the six doors. Nāma has to be known as nāma and rūpa as rūpa. We read, consider and discuss Dhamma just in order to understand the reality of this moment. When a moment of understanding arises, understanding is accumulated little by little. This is the way that paññā can grow to the degree of lokuttara paññā. We need confidence and courage so that we do not become disheartened about the long way we have to travel.

We learn from the statements about the three kinds of Bodhisattas that whatever occurs in life has been conditioned. We can become “learners”, savaka Bodhisattas, by continuing to develop understanding of what appears now with confidence and without expecting anything. We are beginners and what can be understood depends on conditions. Some people seek peacefulness but everything that arises now, also when it is not peaceful, should be known as not self.

We heard a great deal about citta, cetasika and rūpa, which are conditioned realities arising for a short moment and then falling away. They can be considered in our daily life. However, we are inclined to cling to situations, to cling to thinking of other people and “self”. That is not the world of realities. We forget that all that is real now in our life are citta, cetasika and rūpa. Intellectual understanding of what is real can eventually lead to direct understanding, to satipaṭṭhāna.

Satipaṭṭhāna is developed in being mindful of whatever appears so that direct understanding can grow. Mindfulness, sati, is a cetasika that arises only with certain types of citta and lasts for an extremely short moment. Remembering this helps us not to try to control or manipulate this type of cetasika. All that can be done is listening and considering the truth of this moment and understanding it a little more, so that we can become a “savaka”, a learner, who will once attain

⁹ This refers to the eight lokuttara cittas and nibbāna. For each of the four stages of enlightenment there is the magga-citta and the phala-citta, the result of the magga-citta.

enlightenment and full understanding. This is possible, the Buddha taught the way. But when we are hoping or expecting results, there is clinging and this hinders the development of understanding. We shall listen again and again to the truth of seeing, visible object, hearing, sound, and all that is reality. This is the way to have more confidence in the Buddha's teaching of anattā.

Some people wonder why we discuss seeing and hearing all the time. They are realities of daily life that arise and fall away extremely rapidly, but they are unknown. There is seeing now but no one pays attention to it, it falls away in split seconds. What is seen is only what impinges on the eyebase but we think immediately of shape and form and take it for something that stays. Understanding of seeing, visible object and all other dhammas appearing at this moment develops very gradually and hearing about them and discussing them is never enough.

Seeing is an element that experiences an object and visible object is an element that is seen, it does not experience anything. So long as the different characteristics of mental realities, nāma, and physical realities, rūpa, are not distinguished, it is impossible to understand them as anattā. It is not sufficient to merely think that nāma is different from rūpa. Understanding can come to realize the different characteristics of seeing and visible object, hearing and sound, of all mental realities and physical realities, when they appear at this moment.

Sarah explained: "Without even an intellectual understanding of them, there cannot be any understanding of kusala and akusala (wholesome and unwholesome states) and there can't be even a beginning of following the right Path."

People want to know the difference between kusala dhammas and akusala dhammas when they appear in daily life, but first the difference between the elements that experience an object and the elements that do not experience anything should be directly known. Intellectual understanding (pariyatti), when it is firm enough, can condition direct understanding (paṭipatti), as was often emphasized during our discussions.

Chapter 4

The factors leading to enlightenment

In Nakorn Nayok we discussed the thirty-seven factors leading to enlightenment (bodhipakkhiya-dhammas). They are not theoretical terms, they are realities that can be developed in daily life. We should first consider what the meaning is of enlightenment. Acharn said people are usually dreaming about enlightenment as some desirable state, without understanding its meaning. It is actually perfect understanding of the truth. This has to begin by understanding the truth of this moment. She said:

“Most important is understanding this moment, otherwise it is gone without understanding, thus, with ignorance. Each moment in life is gone, by conditions. Without conditions nothing can arise, such as seeing, it cannot arise without eyesense. Just learn in the beginning to understand the reality and to understand that it is conditioned. Know by how many conditions in order to understand that it can never be yours. It is only a reality that is conditioned to arise and nobody can stop its arising. Like now, nobody can stop the arising of seeing. So, there is no you. You think, at the moment of seeing, that you see, but actually seeing is not you. Learn to understand each moment as not me.”

Someone asked: “What conditions knowing that seeing is not: ‘we see’ or ‘I see’?”

Acharn answered: “One just wants to keep the ‘I’, not to abandon the ‘I’. One should not just listen and read, but consider deeply the truth. It takes time. Do not forget that all dhammas are anattā, no exception.”

She explained that people think of “my problem”, but that this is not the understanding of dhammas as anattā.

The factors of enlightenment, bodhipakkhiya-dhammas, are wholesome qualities that, when fully developed, can lead to enlightenment. However, the attainment of enlightenment is entirely dependent on conditions. We can take our refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. The Dhamma as our refuge includes these factors leading to enlightenment. They are the following factors:

- the four applications of mindfulness,
- the four right efforts,
- the four roads to power (iddhi-pāda),
- the five faculties (indriyas),
- the five powers (balas),

- the seven factors of enlightenment (bojjhanga),
- the eightfold Path.

As to the four Applications of Mindfulness, these are all nāmas and rūpas that appear now, no matter under what application they have been classified. Thus, at one moment there can be mindfulness of rūpa, the next moment of feeling, of citta or of dhamma. The application of mindfulness of dhamma includes rūpa and nāma under different aspects. It all depends on sati and paññā what object they take. Sati and paññā are mere dhammas, not self, and they cannot be directed to specific objects. The classification as four applications is given so that people can be reminded that all realities in all situations can be object of mindfulness and understanding. When pariyatti, intellectual understanding of the present reality, is quite firm, it can condition the arising of direct understanding. Direct understanding is developed through satipaṭṭhāna.

As to the four right efforts, we read in the “Dialogues of the Buddha” (Dīgha Nikaya, XXXIII, Sangīti Sutta, D. III, 1, 221):

“Four great efforts (sammappadhānā): Here a monk rouses his will (chanda), makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. He rouses his will ... and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen. He rouses his will... and strives to produce unarisen wholesome mental states. He rouses his will ... and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development.”

The word “will” used here is a translation of chanda. Chanda is also translated as zeal or wish-to-do. There are several kinds of chanda: zeal of craving, of wrong view, of energy, of dhamma. Dhamma-chanda, zeal for the dhamma, is intended here.

Right effort or energy accompanies right understanding of the eightfold Path. It is not self, but a cetasika performing its function. When there are conditions for sati to be mindful of whatever dhamma appears through one of the six doorways, understanding can develop so that the reality that is the object can be seen as a mere dhamma, not self. The accompanying energy performs its function already and there is no need to think of applying effort.

When there is mindfulness of visible object which appears now, seeing which appears now, sound which appears now, hearing which appears now, or any other

reality which appears now, right understanding of the present reality is being developed. This is the most effective way to avoid akusala, to overcome it, to make kusala arise and to maintain kusala and bring it to perfection. At that moment right effort performs its task of strengthening the kusala citta with right understanding so that there is perseverance with the development of understanding of realities.

Effort or energy has nothing to do with effort in conventional sense. Even at the level of pariyatti there has to be wholesome energy, kusala viriya, and right understanding of realities will lead to the four right efforts. At this moment effort, viriya, can maintain the kusala that has arisen. This means it is a support for the arising again of kusala citta.

There are four “Roads to Power”, iddhi-pāda. They are classified among the factors leading to enlightenment. Iddhipāda is also translated as basis of success. They are: chanda (wish-to-do), citta (firmness of kusala citta or concentration), viriya or energy, and vīmaṃsā or investigation, another word for paññā.

The “roads to power” are actually four predominant factors. Whenever we wish to accomplish a task, one of these four factors can be the predominance-condition for the realities they arise together with. Chanda, viriya and citta can be predominant in the accomplishment of an enterprise or task both in a wholesome way and in an unwholesome way, whereas vimamsa, investigation of Dhamma, which is paññā, a sobhana cetasika, can only be predominant in a wholesome way. In the context of the “bases of success”, only the factors which are sobhana are dealt with.

Citta can be a predominance-condition for the accompanying cetasikas, but not all cittas can be predominance-condition. Predominance-condition can operate only in the case of javana-cittas accompanied by at least two roots. All mahā-kusala cittas (kusala cittas of the sense-sphere) and all mahā-kiriyacittas (of the arahat), have the two roots of alobha, non-attachment, and adosa, non-aversion, and, in addition, they can have the root which is paññā, thus, they have two or three roots and, therefore, they can be predominance-condition for the accompanying dhammas. When we accomplish a task with cittas which are resolute, firmly established in kusala, the citta can be the predominance-condition for the accompanying dhammas.

With regard to investigation of the Dhamma, vīmaṃsā, this is paññā cetasika. When we listen to the Dhamma, consider it and are mindful of realities, vīmaṃsā can condition the accompanying citta and cetasikas by way of predominance-condition.

Without the conditioning force of one of the four predominance factors, it would not be possible to attain jhāna.

We read in the “Visuddhimagga” (III,24):

“...If a bhikkhu obtains concentration, obtains unification of mind, by making zeal (chanda) predominant, this is called concentration due to zeal. If... by making energy predominant, this is called concentration due to energy. If... by making (natural purity of) citta predominant, this is called concentration due to citta. If... by making inquiry (vimamsā) predominant, this is called concentration due to inquiry (Vibhanga 216-219)...”

The Bases of Success can also lead to supernatural powers like walking on water, knowing one’s former lives (Visuddhimagga, Ch XII, 50-53).

In the development of vipassanā, right understanding of nāma and rūpa, one also needs the “four bases of success” for the realization of the stages of insight wisdom and for the attainment of enlightenment. The arising of awareness and understanding of realities is beyond control, it is due to conditions. We need patience and courage to persevere studying and considering nāma and rūpa, and, if there are the right conditions, to be aware of them in daily life.

Among the factors pertaining to enlightenment are five faculties, indriyas, sometimes referred to as “spiritual faculties”. These are sobhana cetasikas (beautiful mental factors) included in the “factors of enlightenment” (bodhipakkiya dhammas) that should be developed for the attainment of enlightenment. They are: faith or confidence (saddhā), energy (viriya), mindfulness (sati), concentration (samādhi) and understanding (paññā).

Indriya means principal, or leader. There are several indriyas, but each indriya is a leader, a leader in its own field. Mindfulness is an indriya, a “controlling faculty”, a “leader” of the citta and accompanying cetasikas in its function of heedfulness, of non-forgetfulness of what is wholesome. The five wholesome controlling faculties, the “spiritual faculties”, must be developed in samatha in order to attain jhāna and in vipassanā in order to attain enlightenment. It is our nature to be forgetful of the reality which appears now, but gradually mindfulness can be accumulated. It can even become a “power” (bala). As understanding develops, the accompanying spiritual faculties also develop.

We are so often taken in by thinking of people and situations, and this is with attachment and ignorance time and again. We would wish not to be absorbed, but that is not the development of understanding. Whatever arises, even being ab-

sorbed, is a reality that can be object of right understanding. Acharn often tells us to begin again and again with the development of right understanding.

She said: “There is not yet direct understanding and that is why we talk about seeing so that it will be object of right understanding. Even touching now is real, but there is no understanding, no matter how often we touch. But when understanding arises, it is intellectual understanding, until there will be a moment of touching with direct understanding.”

Among the factors of enlightenment, there are five powers, *balas*. We read in the “Dialogues of the Buddha” (*Dīgha Nikāya*, *Sangītisutta*, IV, *sutta* 26) about four powers, since in this section confidence is omitted. The five powers are: confidence (*saddhā*), energy (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and understanding (*paññā*).

They are unshakable by their opposites. Lack of confidence is the opposite of confidence, indolence is the opposite of energy, forgetfulness is the opposite of mindfulness, restlessness the opposite of *samādhi* and ignorance the opposite of *paññā*. The commentary states that all of them refer to *samatha*, *vipassanā* and *magga* (*lokuttara magga*), and that they can be mundane or supramundane. In the case of *magga*, *lokuttara magga-citta*, they accompany *lokuttara citta* and they are also *lokuttara*. They experience *nibbāna*.

Confidence (*saddhā*) is also one of the powers. We should have more confidence in the power of *kusala dhammas* and this confidence is a condition for their development.

Among the factors pertaining to enlightenment, there are seven factors of enlightenment, *bojjhangas*. We read in the “Dialogues of the Buddha” (*Dīgha Nikāya*, XXXIII, *Sangīti Sutta*, D. III, 2, 252):

“Seven factors of enlightenment (*sambhojjhangā*): mindfulness, investigation of phenomena (*dhammavicaya*), energy, delight (*pīti*), tranquillity, concentration, equanimity.”

Dhammavicaya, investigation of realities, is another term for *paññā*. The enlightenment factors develop together with *paññā* that understands more and more the true nature of *nāma* and *rūpa* that appear at the present moment. All factors develop together and are leading to enlightenment and in that case they are still mundane. When enlightenment has been attained, they are *lokuttara* and *nibbāna* is the object experienced at that moment. When insight is developed, there is also calm. One is not disturbed by unwholesome thoughts about persons and situations

when right understanding of dhammas is developed. One begins to see thinking about them as an impersonal element devoid of self.

Right concentration, *sammā-samādhi*, focusses on the object of *vipassanā* in the right way. When there is mindfulness of one object at a time as it appears through one of the sense-doors or the mind-door, right concentration focusses on that object, and at that moment right understanding can investigate it so that it will be seen as it really is. When right understanding arises, there is right concentration, which is conascent with it.

There are many types of concentration and many levels of it. It is actually the *cetasika* that is one-pointedness, *ekaggatā cetasika*. It accompanies each *citta* and it is the condition that each *citta* experiences only one object. All accompanying *cetasikas* share that same object. When seeing arises, one-pointedness focusses on visible object, and only that object is experienced. When hearing arises, it focusses on sound. Hearing is a moment that is quite different from seeing, they experience different objects. There is no self who can choose what object will be experienced, this is dependent on several conditions. Although there is concentration with each *citta*, usually it does not appear. When *jhāna* is being developed with right understanding of the object which can be a condition to be removed from sense objects, *samādhi* grows until it is access-concentration, *upacāra samādhi*, and attainment concentration, *appanā samādhi*, which is absorption-concentration or *jhāna*.

We can be easily deluded and take for right concentration, *sammā-samādhi*, what is wrong concentration, *micchā-samādhi*. When it is conascent with *lobha*, it is wrong concentration. We are inclined to take *samādhi* for ‘my concentration’, and, therefore, it is important to remember that it is only a *dhamma* conditioned by many different factors. It is conditioned by the *citta* it accompanies and by the conascent *cetasikas*.

The factors of the eightfold Path are among the factors pertaining to enlightenment: right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right thought (*sammā-sankappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

These are *sobhana cetasikas* each performing their own function. One should not just remember their names but they are *dhammas* each with their own characteristic and these can gradually be known when they appear. The factors of the eightfold Path all develop together with right view, *paññā*. It is not “I” who practices, but the factors of the eightfold Path that will come to fulfilment at the moment of enlightenment. The object of the Path factors is a reality such as seeing or visible

object that appears at the present moment. Sammā-sankappa, right thinking, is vitakka cetasika which is sobhana. When right thinking is a factor of the noble eightfold Path it has to accompany right understanding, paññā. Right thinking “touches” the nāma or rūpa which appears so that paññā can understand it as it is.

There are three cetasikas which are sīla, namely: right speech (sammā-vācā), right action (sammā-kammanta) and right livelihood (sammā-ājīva). They are actually the three abstinenances or virati cetasikas which are: abstinence from wrong speech (vacīduccarita virati), abstinence from wrong action (kāyaduccarita virati), abstinence from wrong livelihood (ājīvaduccarita virati).

Paññā can realize that the cetasika which abstains from akusala is non-self, that it arises because of its appropriate conditions. The three abstinenances which accompany cittas of the sense-sphere, kāmāvacara cittas, arise only one at a time. However, when lokuttara citta arises, all three abstinenances accompany the lokuttara citta and then nibbāna is the object. They fulfil their function of path-factors by eradicating the conditions for wrong speech, wrong action and wrong livelihood.

Sammā-vāyāma or right effort is another factor of the eightfold path. It is viriya cetasika (energy or effort), which strengthens and supports the accompanying dhammas. When it accompanies right understanding of the eightfold Path, it is energy and courage to persevere being aware of nāma and rūpa which appear one at a time through the six doorways. At the moment of mindfulness of nāma and rūpa, right effort has arisen already because of conditions and it performs its function; we do not need to think of making an effort. When we think, “I can exert effort, I can strive”, akusala citta has arisen with clinging to the idea of self reaching the goal. Wrong effort may arise without our noticing it. Right effort, when it accompanies right understanding, supports the other factors of the eightfold Path, but we should remember that it arises because of its own conditions, that it is non-self.

Sati of the level of satipaṭṭhāna is right mindfulness of the nāma or rūpa which appears so that understanding of that reality as non-self can be developed. Mindfulness does not last, it arises just for a moment, but it can be accumulated. Mindfulness and right understanding cannot arise without the appropriate conditions: listening to the teachings as explained by the right friend in Dhamma, considering what one has heard and applying it in daily life. Moreover, all wholesome qualities developed together with satipaṭṭhāna are supportive conditions for paññā. When we learn to be less selfish and develop kindness, thoughtfulness and patience, these qualities support paññā to become detached from the idea of self. Sati that accompanies right understanding of the eightfold Path is a factor of the noble eightfold Path.

One may wonder how, in the development of insight, the faculty of mindfulness, the power of mindfulness, the path-factor right mindfulness and the enlightenment factor of mindfulness can be developed. The answer is: through mindfulness and understanding of the nāma and rūpa which appears right now. There is no other way. Sights, sounds, scents, savours and tangible objects are most of the time objects of attachment, aversion and ignorance. If mindfulness arises and right understanding of the object is being developed, one is at that moment not enslaved to the object nor disturbed by it.

Sammā-samādhi, right concentration, is another path-factor accompanying sobhana citta. Kusala citta which is intent on dāna, sīla or bhāvanā is accompanied by right concentration which conditions the citta and accompanying cetasikas to focus on an object in the wholesome way. Right concentration, which is a factor of the noble eightfold Path, has to accompany right understanding of the eightfold Path.

All these enlightenment factors are not theory. They are realities to be developed. Several factors are the same types of cetasikas but they are shown under different aspects. For example the faculties (indriyas) when developed more can become powers, balas. Then they have become unshakable. When sati has become a power, it can arise any time and at any place, no matter the circumstances. We see that many conditions are necessary for the attainment of enlightenment.

Chapter 5

Everything is dhamma

After our discussions in Thailand, we flew to Vietnam where we first had four days of discussions in Saigon. Among the listeners were many old friends who had been to Dhamma sessions before. They took a great interest in the discussions and posed many questions. It was the time of New Year's celebration, "Tet" in Vietnamese, and it is the custom to give money with one's good wishes for the New Year. People gave money to be spend on charity such as the printing fund for Acharn's books and a few of my books that were translated into Vietnamese. These books were out of print. Friends had also composed a book with collections of Dhamma discussions with Acharn translated into Vietnamese, that were held in Vietnam at several occasions. There were sessions in the morning and the afternoon, and one of the nuns who always listened with great attention remarked that time went by too quickly while attending the sessions.

One of the listeners found it difficult to study Dhamma. She found that she knew just seeing, but she was not mindful of thinking. How could she be mindful?

Acharn asked: "What about understanding? Each word of the Buddha should be carefully studied, like seeing. Without the Buddha's word, it is not possible to understand seeing as not self. Seeing now is taken for 'I see'. Consider whether this is a reality which is not self. Right understanding has to develop right now."

She explained that seeing is not that which is seen. We should be truthful and patient in order to understand seeing now. Truthfulness and patience are perfections that should be developed together with paññā, they are indispensable. Otherwise there are no conditions to know directly the arising and falling away of each reality that appears. She often referred to the perfections¹⁰ that should be developed together, because without these there can never be the eradication of ignorance, attachment and other defilements. We should learn more about realities so that we shall have more confidence in the Buddha's teachings. Without the accumulation of the perfections, it is impossible to understand what appears now. One follows ignorance and attachment all the time. The perfections support paññā. We need courage and energy so that we shall not be discouraged when the development of understanding is so slow. Mettā, lovingkindness, is a condition to

¹⁰ The perfections are liberality (dāna), good morality (sīla), renunciation (nekkhamma), wisdom (paññā), energy (virīya), patience (khanti), truthfulness (sacca), determination (aditṭhāna), loving kindness (mettā) and equanimity (upekkhā).

be concerned for others and to think less of ourselves. The perfection of determination is indispensable so that the development of paññā can continue.

Acharn said that just considering the words: “Life is so short” can be a perfection, because one understands that the best moment in life is hearing, understanding whatever appears now. The perfection of truthfulness means being truthful to reality now as non-self. Acharn said: “One has to consider one’s blindness and the great understanding of the Enlightened One. Consider, consider, consider so that there would be understanding gradually. There is ignorance after seeing, but it is unknown all the time.”

Acharn said that the moment of listening to the Buddha’s teachings is paying respect to him. Each of his words is most valuable, just one word like ‘dhamma’. There is nothing except dhamma. Each word is very deep and subtle. Whatever is real and appears at the present moment through one of the six doors, the sense-doors or the mind-door, is dhamma. She explained:

“Right now there is just thinking about seeing. Who knows what seeing is. It has already arisen and fallen away. Without conditions, nothing can arise, like seeing. Without the eye, base seeing cannot arise. One has read before that all dhammas are anattā, which means no self.”

We have heard many times those words said by Acharn, but actually one should not forget that they are not Acharn’s teaching, but the teaching of the Buddha. He explained all the conditions for the dhammas that arise. We have read about these in the textbooks, but we have not deeply considered them when they occur in daily life now. That is why we appreciate reminders of realities. It is true that when there is no understanding at the moment of seeing, there is always an idea of “I see”. We may not expressively think that it is self that is seeing, but the idea of self is still there. Ignorance cannot know it, but when a moment of understanding arises, it knows when there is an idea of self that is thinking or acting. It is not eradicated until one has reached the first stage of enlightenment, the stage of the sotāpanna (streamwinner). That is why Acharn reminded us that we should listen and consider the Buddha’s words “on and on and on, until one becomes enlightened.”

Enlightenment seems far away, it is actually perfect understanding. However, there can be a beginning of understanding of the reality that appears at this moment, be it sound, visible object or whatever appears now. Paññā has not been sufficiently developed so as to distinguish the reality that experiences and the reality that does not experience. Seeing is nāma, it experiences visible object, and visible object is rūpa, it does not experience anything but it can appear. Seeing could not arise if there were no visible object and no eyesense which is another rūpa. Nāma and rūpa

have different characteristics and as long as these are not distinguished from each other we take all that occurs for self. When paññā is more developed it can realize the difference between nāma and rūpa. This is not a matter of remembering that this is nāma (a mental reality) and that is rūpa (a physical reality), but we should consider the characteristic of the reality that appears now. When hardness appears its characteristic can be gradually understood as a reality that does not know anything, without having to think about it. When seeing appears it can be understood as a reality that experiences visible object.

After our sessions in Saigon, we went to Hoi An where we stayed in An Villa, a resort with eight rooms adjacent to a swimming pool. It is very suitable for Dhamma discussions. There is space for many people who come to Dhamma sessions. They can be seated under a roof as a protection against rain and sunshine. We were the first guests staying here and we attended the inauguration ceremony. Photos were shown picturing how the idea originated for a Dhamma home. A committee was formed by Tran Thai, Tiny Tam, family members and friends to execute their plans. After the ceremony, there was a party at the poolside and delicious springrolls and other snacks were served. The service given by the attendants who cleaned the place and took care of our rooms was with so much kindness and thoughtfulness. Every day the breakfast menu was different and prepared with the utmost care. Hang helped me every day with difficult steps, and besides this she had early morning ocean swims and she baked black bread for breakfast. Staying in An Villa was an unforgettable experience to us since it really is like a family home. One always wants to return there.

Every day we went out for luncheon to a different restaurant and all these places had lush tropical gardens full of flowers, or they were situated at the riverside. Vincent helped me with great patience as we were walking along to these places, waiting to let the quick walkers pass.

During the discussions, both in Saigon and in Hoi An, the Vietnamese listeners were very keen to learn more and they posed many questions. Someone asked: “How can we figure out what is citta and how can we have more kusala cittas? Which citta is kusala and which akusala? What is the right Dhamma?”

People think of making merit by releasing animals at the Pagoda. It is very difficult to know when the citta is kusala citta and when akusala citta. Cittas arise and fall away very rapidly and kusala cittas alternate with akusala cittas. Acharn would say: “Only paññā can know”. It cannot be known by paññā that is still weak. Usually we think of what is seen, heard or experienced by the other sense-doors but the kusala citta or akusala citta that follows is not known. They do not appear until there are conditions to understand this moment directly. Without listening to the

Dhamma, it is not known that often our deeds and speech are motivated by clinging to the idea of self. Acharn said:

“Even moving one’s hands is motivated by akusala citta. How can this be known without direct understanding? No one can force oneself to have understanding of citta right now. When the moment of experiencing is not known as not self, how can one know the exact moment of kusala citta and of akusala citta? Do not work out: this is kusala, this is akusala. One should rather know the reality which experiences and the reality which is experienced.”

If the difference between nāma, such as seeing which experiences, and rūpa such as visible object that is experienced, is not known, we are bound to take kusala and akusala for self, but they are mere dhammas that arise because of conditions and fall away instantly.

When I listen to a talk by Acharn, enthusiasm (pīti) and happy feeling (somanassa) arise, and these can accompany true appreciation. But, also, I like enthusiasm and happy feeling, and I cling to those very much. It is impossible to disentangle all such different moments of kusala and akusala that are alternating, arising and falling away so rapidly. It is impossible as long as it is not known that whatever appears at the present moment is just a dhamma.

We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (II, 7. The Great Chapter, § 61) that the Buddha spoke about the rapidity cittas arise and fall away. We read:

“But this, brethren, that we call thought, that we call mind, that we call consciousness, that arises as one thing, ceases as another, whether by night or by day. Just as a monkey, brethren, faring through the woods, through the great forest catches hold of a bough, letting it go seizes another, even so that which we call thought, mind, consciousness, that arises as one thing, ceases as another, both by night and by day.”

Citta is called by different names such as mano (mind) or viññāna (consciousness). Citta does not become another one when it ceases. This is merely an expression to show how rapidly it arises and falls away.

People sometimes ask why seeing is mentioned first as object of understanding. In the suttas we can also notice that seeing is mentioned first. It is the most common reality and the most intricate reality. Immediately after seeing what is visible, we cling to shape and form and this leads us to thinking of concepts of the world and all the people in it. We take them for lasting and for self. We should learn the difference between seeing visible object and thinking of concepts such as people

and things. There are no people and things but thinking is accumulated so that we take them for self. Life is just one moment of experiencing an object.

We also discussed meditation. Someone had strange experiences, such as not experiencing his physical body anymore. Some people were wishing for peacefulness. They thought of peace as a state that is lasting for a while. But each moment of citta passes away immediately. At one moment there may be kusala citta, at another moment akusala citta. It is hard to know the difference. Some cittas are cause, such as kusala citta and akusala citta that can motivate deeds that bring result, and some cittas are result such as seeing or hearing. They experience different objects through the eyes, the ears and the other senses. We can easily mislead ourselves as to the present reality. That is why Acharn reminds us often of the characteristics of seeing, hearing, thinking and all other realities. When we find out that the Dhamma can be verified by considering and testing the truth, there will be more confidence.

Calm was discussed time and again during our discussions. Someone asked what the conditions for calm are in samatha. Acharn said: “What is calm? Who can know it? It is not ‘I’. It is a reality arisen because of conditions. It may arise with or without right understanding.”

People talk about calm but it is important to know what it is. It is different from the conventional idea of calm. It is a cetasika arising with every kusala citta¹¹. Kusala citta and thus also calm can arise with understanding or without it. Calm is a reality, not self, but one is bound to take it for self. When the citta is kusala citta, there is calm of citta and cetasikas, there is no restlessness nor agitation at that moment. There is no infatuation with the object which is experienced. However, it is not easy to recognize the characteristic of calm. The different types of citta succeed one another very rapidly and shortly after the kusala cittas have fallen away, akusala cittas tend to arise. Right understanding has to be kept in order to know the characteristic of calm. If there is no right understanding, we may take for calm what is not calm but another reality. For example, when we are alone, in a quiet place, we may think that there is calm while there is actually attachment to silence.

There are likely to be misunderstandings about calm. Someone may think that he is calm when he is free from worry, but this calm may not be kusala at all. There may be citta rooted in attachment which thinks of something else in order not to worry. Or people may do breathing exercises in order to become relaxed. Calm of

¹¹ Calm is in Pali passaddhi. It is actually two cetasikas: kāya-passaddhi, calm of the mental body, the cetasikas, and citta-passaddhi, calm of citta.

cetasikas and calm of citta which are sobhana cetasikas are not the same as a feeling of relaxation which is connected with attachment.

Those who see the danger of attachment to sense objects may want to develop samatha in order to be removed from sense impressions. As was explained many times during the discussions, for the development of samatha, right understanding is needed that knows what wholesome calm is and how calm can be developed with a suitable meditation subject. However this understanding is different from right understanding that knows the present reality as non-self. Those who develop samatha without developing also right understanding of the eightfold Path can be temporarily away from sense impressions but they still take calm for self.

When right understanding of the eightfold Path is developed, calm also develops and it is understood as non-self. Acharn asked whether there is attachment to visible object now. One will not know this by thinking about it; only paññā will really see the danger of attachment. When there is ignorance of realities, there are conditions to be attached again and again. Life is so short and, therefore, one should ask oneself what is more valuable: suppressing clinging to sense objects or developing understanding of realities which will eventually lead to the eradication of ignorance and all that is unwholesome.

In the Buddha's time, people who had accumulated the inclination for samatha would develop it, but after hearing the teachings they would also develop insight, right understanding of realities. They learnt to understand the present moment, be it akusala or calm, even to the degree of jhāna, absorption, as a conditioned reality, non-self.

We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (I, Ch I, The Devas, I, § 10, "In the Forest") that at Sāvatti, a deva asked the Buddha:

"Those who dwell deep in the forest,

Peaceful, leading the holy life,

Eating but a single meal a day:

Why is their complexion so serene?"

The Blessed One:

"They do not sorrow over the past,

Nor do they hanker for the future,

They maintain themselves with what is present:

Hence their complexion is so serene.”

“Through hankering for the future,

Through sorrowing over the past,

Fools dry up and wither away

Like a green reed cut down.”

People spoke about benefits they believed there were in meditation. They found that it helped them in the situation of their work, in the relation with their family. They thought that they had more patience and less aversion. They could stand cold and heat much better and they thought that they had more compassion. However, one may still keep on clinging to oneself. One may cling to patience and calm as states that one can possess. Such moments do not stay. Life is only fleeting moments. The Buddha’s way to eradicate the wrong view of self and all that is unwholesome is developing understanding life after life and one cannot expect an immediate effect.

In the Tipiṭaka we read time and again that the Buddha spoke about the impermanence of seeing, hearing and all other dhammas. Some people think that this is also taught in other religions. We all know that people do not live forever and that all things in life are subject to change. The Buddha did not teach general ideas about impermanence, but his teaching is very precise. He taught about the reality of this very moment that arises and passes away. He taught for forty-five years about what we did not know before. We take it for granted that we see at one moment and then hear or think at other moments, but we are ignorant of the arising and ceasing of one reality at a time. The Buddha taught that the sense-cognitions and also thinking arise in processes of cittas that arise and fall away, succeeding one another. Seeing is only real when it arises, and this shows that what the Buddha taught is not theory, it pertains to this very moment. What arises and falls away, never to return, can that be anyone?

It is most helpful that Acharn reminds us all the time about this moment of touching, this moment of thinking, the present moment. Direct understanding of these realities can arise by conditions, not by anyone’s will. Otherwise there is wrong thinking, because there is the idea of “I”, “I am doing”, “I am concentrating on the object”, “I am being aware”. There is no “I”. Everything is conditioned from moment to moment. We forget all the time that it is not “I” who is studying the Dhamma, not “I” who is listening, not “I” who learns about realities.

Chapter 6

What is most valuable in life

Sarah said: “The development of satipaṭṭhāna can be now, no need to wait. Because there is visible object now, there is seeing, hearing, no need to wait, this moment.”

I remarked: “Visible object is not the people here around.”

Sarah said: “It is so helpful to remember that even at this moment actually, when we think that we are with our friends we are so attached to, it is only visible object which is seen now, sound that is heard. There aren't any people, there aren't any friends seen. What is touched is only hardness or softness, nothing special that is touched. It is only thinking that thinks about the people in this room, the people around the table. Just a moment of thinking that is completely gone. Nothing of value at all in life, except the moments of understanding. We mind so much about pleasant feeling, but it does not last an instant. The visible object does not last, just here or there or in Holland, just visible object that does not last, sound that does not last. Just the same, no matter where or when, it just lasts an instant. So the world becomes smaller and smaller, closer and closer, just what appears now, just one citta at a time”.

Nina: “Like Acharn always says to us: ‘There is no one there.’ But when we hear that, we find it a point we did not get yet.”

Sarah: “A reminder: even now only sound is heard and then gone. That is why considering leads to satipaṭṭhāna, to the development of understanding, to the development of the Path. Even at the moment of wise consideration, it is enough. One does not need to think about it that it is so little or that it is not so clear. At that moment, for an instant, it is clear: it is just sound heard, it is just visible object seen. When there is doubt, just doubt, just another passing dhamma, not of any consequence. Begin again and again.”

Jonathan: “We can understand what is seen as just visible object and an idea of people and things follows closely after. We do not need to tell ourselves: ‘no one there, no one there’, because it is not the reality, the situation for us. That is trying to see something we are not capable of experiencing. But what we can experience is what is there, and what is there can be understood as it is. What is not there can't be understood.”

Sukin: “When it is said there is no one there, dhamma is there.”

It is true, dhamma is there. There are always dhammas arising and falling away. There is no person or being, but there are citta, cetasika and rūpa.

In the texts we read about many classifications of cittas, cetasikas and rūpas, and the only purpose of this is helping people to have more understanding of non-self. They are all elements that arise because of their own conditions and fall away immediately.

People keep on thinking of their problems, but they do not understand dhammas. They do not know that citta and cetasikas perform their functions while there is thinking. When we are absorbed in thinking of persons and situations, we forget that the real world is the world of whatever reality appears through one of the sense-doors or the mind-door. We believe that “we” see, or “we” hear, but in reality there are only different cittas performing their functions. We live as it were in the world of a magician who makes people believe in whatever he does.

We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (III, Middle Fifty, 5, § 95, Foam¹²) that the Buddha said:

“Suppose, bhikkhus, that a magician or a magician's apprentice would display a magical illusion at a crossroads. A man with good sight would inspect it, ponder it, and carefully investigate it, and it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in a magical illusion? So too, bhikkhus, whatever kind of consciousness there is... ..it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in consciousness?”

The commentary to this sutta states:

“Consciousness is like a magical illusion (māyā) in the sense that it is insubstantial and cannot be grasped. Consciousness is even more transient and fleeting than a magical illusion. For it gives the impression that a person comes and goes, stands and sits, with the same mind, but the mind is different in each of these activities. Consciousness deceives the multitude like a magical illusion.”

We may at times become discouraged, realizing that understanding is so little. But even one moment of understanding is valuable. It is accumulated so that it can arise again. In this way understanding grows. As Sarah said: “One does not need to think

¹² Translated by Bikkhu Bodhi in “The Connected Discourses of the Buddha”.

about it that it is so little or that it is not so clear. At that moment, for an instant, it is clear.”

I used to think , “I have so little understanding and so much ignorance”. It seems very humble but we have to realize that this can be conceit (māna), we may be clinging to the importance of self. Sarah reminded me: “It is thinking about oneself, rather than considering dhamma as āyatana (sensefield) or khandha, as different realities conditioned at each moment.”

We know that we should learn that whatever is experienced are only conditioned dhammas. Meanwhile we get involved in long stories about people and things which seem to stay. With lobha, dosa, moha and wrong view. But we should remember: it does not matter what arises, it is conditioned already. This is very important. We cannot and do not try to change it. That is the way to learn what dhamma is. It takes a long time.

The thinking, mostly akusala, arises, and we should learn to see it as only a conditioned dhamma. We take thinking for “my thinking”. But even such inclination can be known as a dhamma.

Some people want to follow a method and do everything slowly in order to have more mindfulness. Acharn would always help people to return to the present moment, saying:

“Understand what appears right now. At the moment of hearing, there is no seeing. They arise because of different conditions. In a day there are only different realities arising and falling away. There is touching now, hardness appears, not what is seen. Just begin: that which is seen is a reality, but nobody in it. Begin to understand whatever appears little by little. Just hearing without considering is not pariyatti.”

Acharn reminded us very often, saying: “Be truthful to the truth.” We should carefully consider these words. The truth of life is seeing that appears now, or attachment, unhappy feeling, conceit, whatever appears now. We would rather that akusala realities do not arise, but they are the truth. To be truthful to the truth means developing understanding of whatever appears in order to know it as just a conditioned dhamma, not “I”. Actually, when we are truthful it does not matter what arises since it is conditioned and nobody can change it.

We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (III, The Middle Fifty, § 59, The Characteristic of Nonself)¹³:

¹³ Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi in “The Connected Discourses of the Buddha”.

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Bārāṇasi in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus of the group of five thus: “Bhikkhus!”

“Venerable sir!” those bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

“Bhikkhus, form¹⁴ is nonself. For if, bhikkhus, form were self, this form would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of form: ‘Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.’ But because form is nonself, form leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of form: ‘Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.’

“Feeling is nonself... Perception is nonself... Volitional formations are nonself... Consciousness is nonself. For if, bhikkhus, consciousness were self, this consciousness would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of consciousness: ‘Let my consciousness be thus; let my consciousness not be thus.’ But because consciousness is nonself, consciousness leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of consciousness: ‘Let my consciousness be thus; let my consciousness not be thus.’ ”

Nobody can alter the five khandhas, all conditioned realities, and have them according to his wish.

One of our friends who attended the sessions in An Villa, had just heard that her mother passed away. She continued to listen to the Dhamma but the next day she had to leave earlier to go home. She was reading one of my travel reports “The Cycle of Birth and Death” I had written just after my husband’s passing away. At that time I began to understand more that the world of ultimate realities, citta, cetasika and rūpa and the world of ideas and concepts are quite different. We cling to dear people but actually what we take for a person are only passing realities. The company of dear people gives us pleasure and when they have passed away we lament our lack of this pleasure.

We dwell in our thoughts for a long time on the loss we suffered; many moments of citta think with sadness but these are all gone immediately. There are only conditioned dhammas arising and falling away.

Life is very short and we should know what is most important: developing understanding of the reality appearing now. Acharn reminded us:

¹⁴ Rūpa, physical phenomena.

“Most important is to understand this moment. Otherwise it is gone, gone without understanding. Each moment in life is gone, by conditions. Without conditions, nothing can arise. Seeing cannot arise without eyesense. Just learn in the beginning to understand the reality, understand that it is conditioned. By how many conditions, in order to know that it can never be yours. It is only reality that is conditioned to arise, no one can stop its arising. Like now, no one can stop the arising of seeing. So there is no you. Learn to understand each moment as not me.”

When we learn about the different processes of citta that succeed one another extremely rapidly it becomes clearer that each moment is “gone” very rapidly. We have read about processes of citta in the textbook but it is useful to consider them again and again. Seeing arises in a process of citta and all of them experience visible object. It is preceded by eye-door adverting-consciousness, *cakkhudvarāvajjana-citta*, which just adverts to visible object that has impinged on the eye-door. It is followed by seeing which sees visible object, a *vipākacitta*, the result of kamma. This is followed by two more *vipākacittas*, the receiving-consciousness, *sampaṭicchana-citta*, that does not see but still experiences visible object while receiving it, and the investigating-consciousness, *santīraṇa-citta*. Then the determining-consciousness, the *voṭṭhapana-citta*, arises, an *ahetuka kiriya-citta* (inoperative consciousness without roots) that “determines” the object. It is only one moment of citta that will be followed by seven kusala citta or akusala citta performing the function of *javana*, “going through the object”. There is no self that determines whether there will be kusala citta or akusala citta, this depends entirely on accumulated conditions. Very often akusala citta with ignorance and attachment arise. The sense-door process is followed by a mind-door process of citta after there have been *bhavanga-cittas* (life-continuum) in between¹⁵. Also in the mind-door process kusala citta or akusala citta arise.

When sound appears, hearing arises in another process of citta, in the ear-door process. It seems that sound can be experienced at the same time as visible object, but the eye-door process must have fallen away when sound is heard. This shows that processes of citta follow upon each other extremely rapidly.

Citta succeed one another without interval. The next citta cannot arise if the preceding citta has not fallen away. Because of the unbroken continuity of citta, past lives condition the present life and the present life conditions future lives. Kusala citta and akusala citta fall away immediately but the good and bad qualities are accumulated from moment to moment, from life to life, and, thus,

¹⁵ They do not experience an object through one of the six doorways, and they do not arise within processes of citta. They are *vipākacittas* and they just keep the continuity in a life. They experience the same object as the rebirth-consciousness.

there are conditions for the arising again of kusala citta and akusala citta. There is no self who can cause the arising of kusala citta and akusala citta.

Cittas arising in processes arise in a certain order and nobody can change this order. For example, seeing that arises has to be followed by two more vipākacittas that also experience visible object; these cittas cannot experience sound or any other object.

The processes of cittas experiencing an object through the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the bodysense and the mind-door proceed extremely rapidly from birth to death, and very often the objects are experienced with ignorance and attachment. Thus, countless moments are “gone” with ignorance and in this way we keep on accumulating ignorance. Before we realize it, our life has come to an end. Considering the way processes of cittas proceed all the time can be a condition to develop understanding of the present reality. This does not mean that one has to act in a specific way in order to know the present object; then one is taken in again by the idea of self. Acharn explained that people just want to keep the “I”, not to abandon the “I”.

I am very grateful for all the explanations and reminders given by Acharn, Sarah, Jonothan and other friends. I found the questions posed by our Vietnamese friends very helpful, they made me consider more the realities of daily life.

Listening and reading alone are not sufficient, one should consider deeply the truth. Acharn said that it is a long way and that it is to be followed with detachment. As she reminded us time and again: most important is understanding this moment. This is the beginning of understanding the truth of life.

Understanding, paññā, can be classified in many ways. The following way demonstrates the different levels of understanding:

- understanding based on hearing, suta-maya-paññā,
- understanding based on considering, cinta-maya-paññā,
- understanding based on mental development, bhāvana-maya-paññā.

This was one of our subjects of discussion. The Pali term “suta” means what is heard; we have to listen again and again, a few times is not sufficient. The words “everything is dhamma” that we often hear sound very simple, but we really have to consider the truth. Listening can condition considering the truth so that there will be more understanding. Realities can be considered in daily life, no matter where one is. One should not think that being with many people or performing

one's daily tasks is a hindrance to considering realities. There is no self who considers the truth, it occurs by conditions.

Dhamma is what appears now. The reality that appears cannot be selected. It may be unwelcome, such as strong attachment, great sadness or worry. It does not matter what appears, it is non-self, uncontrollable. We should not forget the words "it does not matter what appears". It is not sufficient to merely think that it is not self. Considering over and over again can be a condition for paññā based on mental development (bhāvana-mayā- paññā), the development of paññā which understands directly the characteristics of realities that appear. At first understanding is not yet firm enough to see them as mere conditioned dhammas. Only the direct understanding of realities can gradually lessen the inclination to take realities for self. Finally it will lead to the eradication of the wrong view of self.
