



Paving the Way

Guidance for Yogis at Interview

A TALK BY

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TRANSLATED BY

Vajirāvudhā



Paṇḍitārāma Publication

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Guidance for Yogis at Interview

New yogis are those who are just now becoming familiar with meditation. Although they have listened to the basic meditation instructions, some can neither practice well nor speak well about their practice. Others can practice well but cannot describe how they have practiced and what they have experienced. Having seen such difficulties occur from time to time, Sayādaw-gyi wants to share a few words of guidance — words which pave the way for yogis to overcome these difficulties. That is, a method for describing one's practice and experience to the teacher.

AT THE VERY MOMENT

The basic meditation instructions the yogis have heard are those given by the late, most venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw. Mahāsi Sayādaw concluded the instructions by summarizing how to note, beginning with the primary object. He explained that in terms of the Buddhist scriptures, mental and physical phenomena are occurring all the time at the six 'sense doors'. How they occur is that in the moment the eye sees something, the eye and the visible object are physical phenomena, while seeing and knowing are mental phenomena. Furthermore, in order to see the mental and physical phenomena arising at that moment as they really are, he gave the instruction to note 'seeing' at the very moment seeing occurs.

In just the same way, in the moment of hearing, the ear and sound are physical

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phenomena, while hearing and knowing are mental. He taught the yogis to note 'hearing' at the very moment of hearing in order to know the mental and physical phenomena involved.

EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

Mahasi Sayādaw explained how to observe in the moment of smelling, tasting, touching; thinking, reflecting and planning, as well as bending, stretching, leaning, tilting one's head, lifting, moving and placing, even down to the smallest movement. He spoke in everyday language easily understood even by those yogis with little theoretical knowledge of the practice. Even so, difficulties occurred when it came to putting the instructions into practice. Furthermore, as Sayādaw-gyi mentioned earlier, some know how to meditate but are not able to describe their experience. Some can't speak easily because they

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are in awe of their teacher, or of their immediate surroundings. Those yogis who by nature don't speak much encounter even more difficulty. Thus the teachers have to take the yogis by the hand, so to speak, and explain to them again and again in simple terms how to observe the main object, how to note it and know it. Next, how to note other objects, such as thinking and planning, feelings and general objects such as seeing, hearing and so on, each time they occur.

LOOKING AND SEEING

Look at something. Tell me what it is. If you look, you'll see. If you see, you'll know. You will be able to say what it is you see. If one doesn't look, one won't see. If one doesn't see, one won't be able to say what it is. 'Looking' doesn't just mean taking a quick glance or looking without paying attention. Only when one looks closely

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and carefully at something will one see. Only when one sees it will one be able to say what it is. Here, to observe the rising is to pay attention to it, applying *sati* (mindfulness) and wisdom (*paññā*) in order to know the object. In everyday language, the yogi is being told to look. But this doesn't mean to look with one's eyes. It means simply to look with the mind. Thus, to be able to say what something is, there are two parts involved — looking and seeing. Only when these two are present will one be able to say, "It's this." To note the rising is to look at it. One is being told to look. Once you look, what do you see? What is the rising? One must describe it as one sees and knows it. Only when these two parts are present will one be able to say what it is. After noting the rising, if one doesn't describe it as one has seen it, but instead goes off on a tangent, talking about this and that, that's not correct.

OBSERVING THE WHOLE RISING

It is important to be able to say how one observes the rising of the abdomen from the very start until the end. When the breath starts to enter the body, the abdomen expands, or rises. It continues to rise as one breathes in. When the in-breath comes to an end, so does the rising. Therefore, it says in the texts that when noting the rising, "*Sabbakāyapatisamvedī*," — one should experience the body as a whole. This doesn't mean to observe one's entire body. It means to experience, from start to finish, the whole series of physical phenomena such as stiffness, tension and movement which occur when the in-breath causes the abdomen to expand. That is what is meant by "experience the body as a whole."

"*Sabbakāya*" means the whole group of physical phenomena, all the physical phenomena. The texts explain "*sabba*" as

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"ādimajjhapariyosāna," or "beginning, middle and end." These three parts as a whole, the beginning, middle and end, are what is meant by *"sabba,"* or "whole." If we divide the whole rising into parts, there is a beginning, a middle and an end. These three parts as a whole are what the Buddha referred to when he said, *"Sabbakāyapatisamvedī,"* — "one should make a practice of knowing the body as a whole, of understanding the body as a whole."

MAKING FULL EFFORT

Therefore, when noting "rising," one must follow it with the mind from the very smallest beginning of the rising. The mind must get to the rising. As the abdomen rises, one has to focus one's mind on the rising movement. One's observation should stop at exactly the same moment as the rising stops. At the start of one's

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practice, the beginning, middle and end of the rising aren't yet obvious. Even so, the teacher tells the yogi to note with special effort so that they become apparent. The question arises, "Why do the meditation teachers ask beginners to do what they can't yet do? Is there some benefit to asking them to do the impossible?" The teacher does that as an indirect way of getting the yogis to make the necessary effort. If the teacher were to ask for less, saying, "Just observe whatever you can, it's okay," the yogis would practice superficially. In that case, their meditation would end in the same way. Their meditation would be over simply because the number of days designated for the retreat was up. Their retreat would be finished, but that's all.

WHAT IS 'RISING'?

Thus, with the aim that the yogis make careful, concentrated effort, the teachers instruct the yogis to pay full attention. Only when the mind is steadfast, placed completely on the abdomen at the moment the rising occurs, will full concentration be gained. When one notes, one should have the attitude, "I'm going to observe the whole rising, from the very start to the very end." Later, one comes to be able to do this.

In the interview, starting yogis must be able to describe how they observed the rising, from the very start to the very end. Can you note it or not? Does the mind observe the object head-on, directly, or not? Can you note the entire process, or not? One has to be able to express this in the interview. If one can note, what does one see? What does one find? Having focused on an object, one should not fantasize about other

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things. It is not necessary to speak about other objects seen or found. What is important is to speak about the object which one has observed in a focused, concentrated way. One needs to be able to describe the rising.

Working with the main object, if one can't even say what its form and position are, then our work of meditation becomes meaningless. Therefore the teacher has to tell the yogis how to describe their meditation experience so that the practice will be accurate and meaningful. One must be able to answer the question, "When noting 'rising,' can you follow the rising closely from the beginning to the end? Or can't you?"

If you can follow it, then say you can. If you can't, say you can't, of course. If you can follow it, what do you see? Do you see the abdomen? Do you see its position of rising? Or, do you see stiffness? Tension? Movement? One should be able to report in this way.

THREE KINDS OF PHYSICALITY

Experientially, there are three parts to anything physical. These three are physical appearance or form, physical position and essential physical quality or true nature.

If we focus our mind on the abdomen in an ordinary way, the form of the abdomen is apparent. The shape or form of the abdomen is called its 'appearance'. The whole body is a physical form. The abdomen which is one of the body's parts is also a physical form. This is also called 'appearance.'

'Position' refers to the position of the abdomen. How is it situated? Is it deflated or is it expanded? Is it collapsed? The abdomen is in some kind of position or other. When one breathes in, the abdomen rises or expands. It is in an expanded position. When the breath goes

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out, the abdomen falls, collapses or becomes deflated. It is in a collapsed position. In Pāli, this is called “ākāra”. “Ākāra” means “situation,” “position” or “manner.”

For example, what is the position of the hand? How is it placed? Is it closed into a fist? Is it stretched open? As for the position of the body, is it sitting? Standing? Walking? Lying on a bed? Or what? These are all positions. Now, is the abdomen in an expanded position? A collapsed position? If one looks carefully and intently, before one is able to see the true nature of physical phenomena, one can see their form or shape. One comes to be able to see this. One can also see their position, such as that of the abdomen being expanded.

Seeing shape and position are not wisdom. One has to penetrate form and position, going beyond those to reach the stiffness, tension,

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vibration and movement that really exist in the moment of rising. These are called 'essential physical qualities,' or 'true nature.'

Telling the yogis to observe the rising as it occurs is asking that they look to see what it is. Is it just the abdomen? Or, is it just the rising position? What quality is there, among the qualities mentioned above? Is there stiffness? Tension? Vibration? Movement? One must be able to say. If one observes carefully, one will be able to see the true nature. But when reporting, one shouldn't say what one imagines. One should say what one has seen. What one says based on imagination is not one's own knowledge. One's own knowledge is what one knows, having looked and seen for one's self. For example, look at this. When I ask, "What do you see?" how will you reply? It's a pen, you'll say. Why can you say it's a pen? Because you see it. Why do you see it? Because you look.

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You looked because you were asked to do so. You looked, and you saw it. First of all, you saw what it is. If you observe clearly, you can differentiate its color, whether silver, gold, white, yellow, red and so on. Together with its visual appearance, its position and its true nature become apparent. It's not right if you look but do not see. Therefore, in order to know how to look and how to describe what you see, Sayādaw-gyi has provided a few principles to pave the way.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

In the moment of rising, can you observe the main object closely or not? If you can, what do you know? Just as one must say what one knows about the rising, so too one must be able to describe the falling. In the moment of falling, from the very start of the falling until its end, one must be able to observe how the abdomen

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starts to collapse with the smallest beginning of the outbreath. As one continues to exhale, the abdomen slowly continues to deflate. When the exhalation stops, the collapsing of the abdomen also comes to an end. The falling of the abdomen is connected with the outbreath. As soon as one starts to exhale, the abdomen starts to deflate. When the exhalation stops, the falling movement also comes to an end. When one notes the falling, can one observe it, following it carefully from the very start until the end, or not? One must be able to answer this question. What quality, what form do you come to know? Do you just know the shape of the abdomen? Or do you know the abdomen's position of being collapsed and deflated? What quality do you observe? Relaxation? Stillness? Movement? Stiffness? Tightness? Vibration? It is very important to be able to answer.

THINKING AND IMAGINING

The mind is not something that stays where one puts it. Therefore, while one sits and observes the main object of rising and falling, various types of thinking and planning arise. The mind leaves the object of observation and moves about. It does what it wants. Various thoughts occur, both good and bad. Both clean and dirty, various thoughts arise. If that happens, what should one do? Note them right away, of course!

Various fantasies can arise. If they arise, can you note them? Or, can't you? One must be able to note them. When you note a fantasy, does the mind continue to fantasize? Does it come to a halt? Does it disappear? Does the mind go back to the original object one was observing? One must be able to say.

• Report imagination,
how noted and what known.

When a beginning yogi observes the main object, making it an anchor for the mind, existing feelings (*vedanā*) are not apparent at first. Just thinking and imagination appear. At the start of practice, one is not aware every time there is thinking. Sometimes one is aware of thinking and sometimes one isn't. If one is aware of it, one has to report it. So that all kinds of thoughts do not arise, one must focus on the main object and follow it closely.

FEELINGS (VEDANĀ)

When one has sat for a while, after one sits for five, ten or fifteen minutes, small feelings of discomfort arise in one's body. Just as comfort

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and discomfort occur in one's body, so too in the mind various kinds of pleasant and unpleasant feelings gradually arise. If something has arisen, one must observe it. But when reporting, don't use the word '*vedanā*.' When there's itchiness, say, "itching," when aching, "aching," when numb, "numbness," when tingling, "tingling." It's better to use ordinary language to describe sensations. Let's say that while observing rising and falling, one place starts to ache. It has arisen. Here it has started to ache. We didn't do anything to make it ache. It is aching on its own. Due to 'bad' contact, unpleasant feeling arises. The yogi focuses, noting "aching, aching, aching." That is observation of *vedanā*. What happens to this ache? Does it ache more? Does it stay the same? Does it decrease, or disappear completely?

If it aches more, say it aches more. If it stays the same, say it stays the same. If it decreases, say

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it decreases. If it becomes weak, say it becomes weak. If it goes away completely, say it goes away completely. One must be able to say that. It starts to itch somewhere. It doesn't itch because we made it itch. It itches by itself. What is one's job? To note, "itching." What happens? Does the itchiness increase? Stay the same? Start to decrease? Go away completely? One has to be able to say. These are examples. Sayādaw-gyi is paving the way for you.

• **Report about all feelings,
how noted and what known.**



DHAMMAS

Besides the various thoughts and feelings that can arise in one's body and mind while one is observing the main object, sights, sounds, smells, tastes and all sorts of touches can also arise, followed by craving, wanting to harm and laziness. Then, restlessness, worry, doubt, criticizing, remembering, knowing clearly, paying attention, delight, satisfaction, peace, calm, ease of meditation and many other objects can also arise.

The Buddha called these '*dhamma*,' or 'natural phenomena,' a term which summarizes all the kinds of objects mentioned above. The Buddha was concise and effective in his use of words. In no other religion outside of Buddhism is such a precise use of words found. Only the Buddha used words in such a way, grouping various natural phenomena together

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as '*dhamma*,' or natural phenomena. These *dhammas* or 'mind-objects' arise.

Let's say that craving arises. What happens when one notes, "Craving"? Anger arises in the mind. What happens when one notes it? One must be able to say. How do you feel? Sluggish. Energy is low. Note it. What happens? There's restlessness. One notes it. What happens? The mind is worried. One notes it. What happens? The mind is scattered. Evaluation, reflection and doubts are arising. One notes them. What happens? Whenever these *dhammas* (mind-objects) arise one must note them.

- **Report all *dhammas* that arise, how noted and what known.**

HOW TO NOTE

WALKING MEDITATION

Likewise, while doing walking meditation, focus on the leg and note "stepping," "right step, left step," or "lifting, moving, placing." At the moment of lifting, can you observe it closely, from the slightest beginning of the lifting until its end, or not? If you can observe it closely, what do you see? Do you see the leg, or the position of lifting up? Or, do you see some quality such as lightness, heaviness, stiffness or pushing? One must be able to say how it occurs.

Therefore, when describing a physical object one must be able to mention one of the following: its form, position or true nature. One must observe carefully in order to be able to say this. If noting "moving," can one observe carefully from the beginning of the moving until its end, or not? If one can do so, what quality does

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one know? Does one come to know the form of the leg? Or the position of stepping forward? In the moment of moving forward, what quality does one come to know? Pushing from behind? Being pulled from the front? One must be able to say what is there. When noting "placing" also, one has to focus continuously from the slightest beginning of lowering the foot until the moment it comes to rest completely on the floor or the ground. When one can follow closely, can one do so continuously from beginning to end, or not? One must be able to say. If one can follow continuously, with the mind falling on the object, what does one know? Does one know the form of the leg? Does one know the position of placing the leg? Or does one know heaviness, lightness, softness, stiffness or tension? One must be able to say what one comes to know.

AS THOUGH IT'S NOT IMPORTANT

This method of reporting which Sayādaw-gyi has created for the yogis is very important. If Sayādaw-gyi says just this much, most people will understand. But if Sayādaw-gyi doesn't explain some points openly and clearly, some yogis will not understand. There are other objects such as bending, stretching, leaning, tilting one's head, sitting down, standing up and so on. Regarding these various acts too, they arise and one observes them. Is one's mind concurrent with the object or not? Does the mind reach the object of observation? If it reaches the object, what quality does one come to know? It is very important to be able to say. One needs to be able to report beginning with the primary object. During sitting meditation, one focuses the mind on the abdomen and observes, starting with the rising

and falling. It is therefore important to be able to report beginning with the rising and falling. It's not right if one merely says one noted the rising and falling and then goes on to talk about other things. For the most part, what Sayādaw-gyi hears is, "Bhante, I noted the rising and the falling. While I was observing the rising and falling..." The yogi then continues to talk about all sorts of other things. If one speaks about other things, instead of accurately describing the main point which should be mentioned, it's as though one doesn't think it's important. Sayādaw-gyi thinks this is not right.

Therefore, so that the yogis can learn to practice and report correctly starting from the basics, Sayādaw-gyi has written some verses in order to pave the way:

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- Tell about the rising, how noted and what known.
- Tell about the falling, how noted and what known.
- Object, noting, what is known: these three points are key.
- Include these three: precisely, clearly, for each object seen.
- Can you follow closely, right when the object comes?
- Steadfastly, concurrently: can you note or not?
- If you can, say what was known, completely, truthfully.
- If you can't, whatever happened, say how noted, known.

THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS

When practicing meditation, every yogi should also understand the three characteristics, or *lakkhaṇā*. *Lakkhaṇā* means characteristic, or distinguishing mark. What are these three?

1. **Individual characteristic**
(*sabhāva lakkhaṇā*),
2. **Momentary characteristic**
(*sankhata lakkhaṇā*), and
3. **Common characteristic**
(*sāmañña lakkhaṇā*).

One must understand these three terms. Among these three, *sabhāva lakkhaṇā* refers to the substance, or unique, individual qualities of mental and physical phenomena.

THE EARTH ELEMENT

(*PAṬHAVĪ DHĀTU*)

Let's say we feel our body. If we touch a bony area, we find the quality of hardness or firmness. If we feel the flesh, we find the quality of softness, squishiness. In the scriptures, this type of matter is called *paṭhavī dhātu*; in English, the earth element. Or, we could simply say earth. Because of its quality of being hard or soft, it is called *paṭhavī dhātu* or the earth element. Only *paṭhavī dhātu*, the earth element, has this quality of being hard or soft. The other elements don't have this quality.

Seeing these qualities, one will say, "That's definitely *paṭhavī*, that's the earth element." Hardness and softness are its individual qualities. These are called *sabhāva lakṣhaṇā*.

THE ELEMENT OF TEMPERATURE

(*TEJO DHĀTU*)

The element of temperature is just the same. Temperature refers to both heat and cold. The element of temperature is called *tejo dhātu* in the scriptures. It is commonly called “the fire element.” One thinks of heat if one calls it the fire element. In fact, the element of temperature does not only include the quality of heat. It also includes the quality of coldness. If we speak of temperature, it is just *tejo dhātu*: heat and cold. The quality of temperature only exists in this “fire element” called *tejo*. It doesn’t exist in the other elements.

Seeing these qualities, one will say, “That’s definitely *tejo dhātu*, the fire element, the element of temperature.”

THE ELEMENTS OF WATER AND AIR (*ĀPO DHĀTU & VĀYO DHĀTU*)

As far as water is concerned, the quality of flowing only occurs in *āpo dhātu*, not in the other elements. Seeing its quality, one will say "That's *āpo dhātu*, that's the water element." *Vāyo* has the quality of stiffness, tension and movement. Only air has these qualities. They don't occur in the other elements. Seeing these qualities, one will say, "That's the air element, that's *vāyo dhātu*."

INDIVIDUAL QUALITIES OF MENTAL PHENOMENA

The mind has the quality of taking an object (as when the 'seeing mind' takes something visible as its object). Contact (*phassa*), a mind-state which arises together with the mind and 'colors' it, has the quality of making contact.

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Feeling, or *vedanā*, has the quality of feeling. Physical and mental phenomena each have their own quality, which is called *sabhāva lakkhaṇā* in Pāli: its own, unique, individual characteristic. One should know that the unique quality of a given physical or mental phenomenon is called "*sabhāva lakkhaṇā*."

MOMENTARY CHARACTERISTIC, OR *SANKHATA LAKKHAṆĀ*

Every individual characteristic has a beginning, a middle and an end, or arising, continuation and dissolution. In Pāli these are called *uppāda*, *thīti* and *bhaṅga*. *Uppāda* means beginning. *Thīti* means heading towards dissolution, existing for a moment. *Bhaṅga* means dissolution, disappearance. In everyday language we could say beginning, middle and end, or in other words, arising, momentary continuation and dissolution.

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Every natural characteristic of mental and physical phenomena, such as hardness, softness, heat, cold, stiffness, tension, movement, knowing an object, contact, feeling and so on, has a beginning, middle and end. Each has a moment of arising, of continuation and of dissolution. The momentary characteristic of all mental and physical phenomena, that is, the characteristic of having a start, middle and end, is called *sankhata lakkhaṇā*.

Physical and mental phenomena that arise due to conditions have a moment of arising, of continuation and of dissolution. These three moments are called *sankhata lakkhaṇā*.

**COMMON CHARACTERISTIC, OR
SĀMAÑÑA LAKKHAṆĀ**

Sāmañña lakkhaṇā means characteristics which are common to all phenomena. Common to all mental and physical phenomena is that having arisen, they disappear. The hardness just mentioned disappears. Softness, heat and cold also disappear. All are impermanent. Stiffness, tension, coolness, melting, flowing and stickiness also disappear. Seeing consciousness, hearing consciousness and seeing contact also disappear. Feelings, for example, being good to see or bad to see, also disappear. All things, having arisen, disappear.

There is no phenomenon which remains, having arisen. Everything disappears. Having arisen, they dissolve. They appear then disappear.

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Three characteristics are relevant to all mental and physical phenomena as universal characteristics. Therefore, in Pāli they are called *sāmañña*; in English, common or universal. Characteristics which are common to all are called common characteristics or *sāmañña lakkhaṇā*. Just as there is the common characteristic of disappearing, having arisen, called *anicca lakkhaṇā* or impermanence, so too the characteristic of being unsatisfactory and unreliable, called *dukkha lakkhaṇā*, is common to all mental and physical phenomena. The characteristic of occurring according to their own nature, the lack of an inherent self, called *anatta lakkhaṇā*, is also common to all mental and physical phenomena.

These three characteristics, *anicca lakkhaṇā*, *dukkha lakkhaṇā* and *anatta lakkhaṇā*, permeate all physical and mental phenomena and are

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common to all. These characteristics are called *sāmañña lakkhaṇā*.

- ***Sabhāva, Sankhata, Sāmañña, 3 Lakkhaṇā.***

ONLY IF ONE NOTES AT THE MOMENT OF ARISING

Among these three characteristics, what we work with is *sabhāva*. The meditation practice we do now is done to know *sabhāva*, the true nature of mind and body. How must we note in order to know the individual qualities of mind and body? We must observe at the moment of their arising. 'At the moment of arising' means that we place our attention firmly on the abdomen. We breathe in. Oh! The abdomen expands, rises. Oh! It really happens. Before breathing in, the rising hasn't

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yet appeared. When we breathe in, however, the rising occurs. 'At the moment of arising' means while it is happening. In common terms, we observe the abdomen while it rises as 'rising.' This means to observe from the start, the smallest hint of rising, until it comes to an end. When we breathe in, what goes in is air. What is air? Just stiffness, tension, vibration and movement. Thus one will know the *sabhāva*, the true nature, of air. It is said, "Note at the moment of arising — only then can one see *sabhāva* for sure." If we don't observe at the moment the rising occurs, we can't know *sabhāva*. We can't even know the shape of the abdomen or its position of being expanded, let alone *sabhāva*. There's no way we can know it.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Therefore, according to the instruction to 'note at the moment of arising', in order to know the quality of physical phenomena, focus carefully on the rising from the very start when the abdomen begins to rise due to the in-breath until the very end. As Sayādaw-gyi has said, "Focus on the rising, follow it closely," that is, focus and note 'rising.' Observe, look. When one can observe *sabhāva* a lot, and therefore the mind falling on the object becomes frequent enough, the strength of one's concentration will become good. Power will be generated. When the power of concentration becomes good, one will no longer see the form of the abdomen nor its position of being expanded. One will go beyond those and come to know the qualities of stiffness, tension, vibration and movement.

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Similarly, at the moment of falling, from the smallest hint of falling until it comes to an end, as Sayādaw-gyi has said, "Focus on the falling, follow it closely." If one follows closely, one goes past the form of the abdomen and its position of being deflated. The abdomen relaxes, becomes still. When a ball full of air is pierced, it loses its tension, moves about and becomes still. One comes to realize that this is the individual characteristic of air. In the same way, when observing the main objects of lifting, moving the foot forward and placing, focus and follow closely from the very smallest beginning of the lifting until its end. You will see some quality. To note at the moment of arising means that when moving the foot forward, one should focus carefully from the beginning of the movement until the moment the foot stops moving forward. When placing also, focus carefully from the start until the moment the downward movement comes to

an end. When the yogi can observe these minor occurrences closely, he or she will come to see the *sabhāva* that exists at the moment of arising.

SEEING SABHĀVA IS UP TO YOU

What will you come to see? Sayādaw-gyi won't give you the answer in advance, but he will show you the method for observing, for looking. As when solving a math problem, the teacher will only show the method for solving the problem and getting the right answer, but won't reveal the answer. The method for solving is what's important. Knowing the method, one has to find the answer for oneself. Sayādaw-gyi has paved the way. Pay careful attention to this.

In just the same way as for the primary objects, one must observe at the moment of bending, stretching, leaning, tilting one's head, blinking one's eyes, closing the eyes, opening

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them, sitting down, standing up ... everything. One has to follow all of these occurrences closely.

In one's body too, at the moments of hardness, of softness, heat, cold, stiffness, tension, movement, aching, solidity, numbness and tingling, if one focuses precisely one will see *sabhāva* precisely. That is the task.

- **Note at the moment of arising —
only then can one know
Sabhāva for sure.**



THE MOMENT OF ARISING

In the phrase, 'moment of arising', the word 'arising' can be elaborated as appropriate to include everything. In place of 'arising,' if one inserts 'seeing,' we have 'the moment of seeing.' Insert 'hearing,' 'moment of hearing.' Similarly, 'the moment of smelling,' 'the moment of tasting,' 'the moment of touching,' 'the moment of rising,' 'the moment of falling,' 'the moment of sitting down,' 'the moment of bending,' 'the moment of stretching' — everything. 'Arising' is relevant to all phenomena.

If one inserts the word 'heat,' it becomes 'the moment of heat;' 'cold,' 'the moment of cold,' and so on. People who like brevity will expand 'arising' as appropriate, in order to note simply and exactly. Saying this much is sufficient for understanding. This is the task. Sayādaw-gyi has explained a very brief task, that is, to note at the

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moment of arising — only then can one know *sabhāva* for sure. Therefore, if one wants to know mental and physical qualities arising each in their own time, observe at the very moment they arise — the moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, bending, stretching, leaning, tilting one's head, lifting, moving, placing... everything. When sitting down and standing up, there is the intention to sit down, to stand up, to bend, to stretch and so on. If one observes these initiating mind-moments too at the moment of arising, their qualities will become completely apparent.



**ONLY WHEN *SABHĀVA*'S SEEN
WILL *SANKHATA* APPEAR**

Take a look at this [holding up a book]. Focus your attention. If you focus, the form will appear. You will also come to see its position. Seeing the form is the first part. Knowing its position or situation is the second part. Look precisely. You will see. When one comes to know *sabhāva*, having focused at the moment of arising, slowly, bit by bit, knowledge starts to mature. Later, when knowledge is mature, the beginning of *sabhāva*, its continuation and its end, that is, its arising, momentary existence and dissolution, will become apparent. "Only when *sabhāva*'s seen will *sankhata* appear." Without seeing *sabhāva*, *sankhata* will not be apparent. Only when one sees the *sabhāva* of mind and matter through having noted at the moment of arising

will one be able to see its three parts: beginning, continuation and coming to an end.

● **Only when *Sabhāva*'s seen
will *Sankhata* appear.**

**ONLY WHEN SANKHATA APPEARS
WILL SĀMAÑÑA BE SEEN**

Due to seeing *sabhāva*, its arising, momentary existence and dissolution become apparent. Especially when dissolution becomes apparent, one will come to see and know how the object of observation arises, then disappears. One will see its impermanence. One will come to see how it is unreliable. One will also come to see how the object of observation occurs according to its own nature. In particular, if one has not yet seen the ending, if the ending is not yet apparent,

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the common characteristics of all mental and physical phenomena — their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and how they occur according to their own nature — will not yet be seen. “Only when *sankhata* appears will *sāmañña* appear.” One doesn’t need to do anything special to make *sankhata* appear. Just observe at the moment of arising in order to see *sabhāva*. If one sees *sabhāva*, *sankhata* will appear on its own. If *sankhata* appears, *sāmañña* will be seen — that is, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and the way things occur according to their own nature.

If one notes the rising from its minute start until its end one will come to see for oneself.

If one notes the falling from the beginning until its end, following closely; besides that, the arising phenomena within one’s body, appearing, noting, disappearing, appearing, noting, disappearing...one will come to see

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these common characteristics. Appearing then disappearing, being born and then dying: one will see how things perish. What perishes is no good. It is unsatisfactory, unreliable. One will come to see this. One will come to see quite clearly how things occur not according one's wishes but according to their own nature. But in order to see like this, *sankhata* must appear. *Sankhata* appearing means that the compound characteristics of phenomena become clear in one's mind. That is, arising, momentary existence and dissolution: the start, middle and end of the object of observation. In particular, if the last part, dissolution, becomes apparent, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and uncontrollability will appear.

**ONLY WHEN SĀMAÑÑA'S SEEN WILL
VIPASSANĀ KNOWLEDGE ARISE**

When one sees *sāmañña* then *vipassanā* knowledge has begun. 'Vi' refers to how mental and physical phenomena, arising, existing for a moment then dissolving, appear and disappear, how they are unsatisfactory because they arise and disappear and how they are unreliable and uncontrollable. In short, the word 'vi' means the various aspects of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and uncontrollability. 'Passanā' means to see. 'Vipassanā' means the knowledge which can see in terms of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and uncontrollability. That is called 'Vipassanā Knowledge.' "Only when *sāmañña's* seen does *Vipassanā* knowledge arise."

After *vipassanā* knowledge has begun, it gradually matures. When it is complete,

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Knowledge of the Noble Path (*ariya magga nāṇa*) will arise. At that point, one will see for oneself *Nibbāna*, the cessation of both mental and physical phenomena and of all suffering. Only when one realizes *Nibbāna* will one be able to escape the suffering of the Lower Realms (*Apāya*). One has to go to that point. Sayādaw-gyi has paved the way for those who are unfamiliar with the practice to become familiar with it. One has to note with concentration in the way Sayādaw-gyi has instructed. In particular, please report how you note and come to know the primary object. Please say how you note and what you know. One has to say what one has seen, not what one thinks. What one imagines is not one's own knowledge. What one has seen, is. One must also not report 'borrowed knowledge.' Speaking according to what one imagines is not right.

THREE POINTS

To summarize what Sayādaw-gyi has just said, there are only four things which occur in our being: bodily actions, mind, feelings and other dhammas. These can be divided into just three parts: what arises, observation of it and knowing or seeing. There are just these three parts. These three are very important. What arises doesn't do so because one makes it arise. It arises by itself. One's task is to observe and look. What does one come to know or see? One has to be able to report these three parts.

• **Object, noting, what is known:
these three points are key.**

• **Include these three,
precisely, clearly,
for each object seen.**

JUST THE ESSENCE

When there are many yogis, the meditation teacher can't give a lot of time to each one. One should be prepared to report. How much to say? If one divides the day into four parts — morning, midday, afternoon and evening — and reports one good section from each time period, that would be complete. Some yogis are able to report like this. One must prepare because the meditation teacher can't give a lot of time. Of course, if he could, it would be very good.

When reporting, one needs to be concise, choosing just what is substantial and special. One needs to capture the essence without adding anything extra. It is important to understand that this is one's own time and to keep one's report short and to the point. For example, in a debate let's say that one has ten minutes to speak. One

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must complete what one wants to say in that ten minutes. It is the same in reporting. One needs to use time one's time wisely.

- **Don't add fluff, just say the facts, short and to the point.**
- **Be brief, no extras, just the essence.**
- **In reporting, use time carefully.**

May you be able to make effort to reach the right destination, walking the correct path according to the guidance given here. May you be able to practice *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, which expands the mind and increases knowledge, until you each gain a guarantee for your life. May you gain the full benefit of human life, which is so hard to get and of meeting the Buddha's teaching, which is so rare to find.

This *Gift of Dhamma* is
sponsored by

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Lee Liak Mia & Ooi Ah Goay.

In *Loving Memory of*



Mdm Tan Ah Loong
(8/12/1934 — 18/11/2007)



Mr Goh Khoon Wan (Goh Keat Chye)
(1/9/1928 — 28/11/2004)

IMO Mdm Lim Kooi Eng
IMO Mr Tan See Eng
IMO Mdm Phang Seng Eng
IMO Mr Goh Khean Teng
IMO Mr Goh Toh Chong
IMO Ms Goh Fong Yeen
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IMO Mr Bang Kitt Leng
IMO Mr Ooi Sek Cheah
IMO Mr Lee Soon Hin
IMO Mdm Lee Phaik Har
IMO Ms Soon Guet Hong
IMO Chan Swee Aik
IMO Mr Teoh Kheng Leak
IMO Mr Alex Fong Phoay Sam
IMO all departed relative & friends
in many lifetimes.

May the merits accrued from
this Dhamma-dāna be dedicated to them.
May the new existence they have taken
be happy and blissful.
May they walk the path of virtue and wisdom
till suffering ends in Nibbāna.
Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

YOGI'S NOTES

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PAVING THE WAY

1. Tell about the rising, how noted and what known.
2. Tell about the falling, how noted and what known.
3. Report all thinking-planning, how noted and what known.
4. Report all feelings, how noted and what known.
5. Report all *dhammas* that arise, how noted and what known.
6. Object, noting, what is known: these three points are key.
7. Include these three: precisely, clearly, for each object seen.
8. Don' add fluff; just say the facts short and to the point.
9. Be brief, no extras, just the essence.
10. In reporting, use time carefully.

Paṇḍitārāma Shwe Taung Gon
Sayādaw U Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa

