



WISDOM ACADEMY

Introduction to the Manual of Insight

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Lesson 6:

Purification of Understanding *Dukkha*

Reading:

Manual of Insight, pages 284–289, 379–391

Manual of Insight

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The Progress of Vipassanā Knowledges Through the Stages of Purification

Purification of Conduct – *sīlavisuddhi*

Purification of Mind – *cittavisuddhi*

Purification of View – *ditthivisuddhi*

1. Knowledge of Discerning Mental and Physical Phenomena – *nāmarupaparicchedañāna*

Purification by Overcoming Doubt – *kankhāvitaraṇavisuddhi*

2. Knowledge of Discerning Conditionality – *paccayapariggahañāna*

3. *Vipassanā* Knowledge by Comprehension – *sammasanañāna*

(1st *vipassana jhāna*, 1st rolling-up-the-mat-stage of practice)

4. *Vipassanā* Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away (immature)– *udayabbayañāna*

(2nd *vipassana jhāna*, with 10 Corruptions of Insight – *upakkilesa*/ pseudo-*nibbāna*)

Brilliant light *obhāsa*

Rapture *pīti*

Tranquility *passaddhi*

Resolution *adhimokkha*

Energy *paggaha*

Happiness *sukha*

Knowledge *ñāna*

Mindfulness *sati*

Equanimity *upekkhā*

Delight *nikanti*

Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What is Path and Not Path

Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way

(Includes mature Arising and Passing Away, 3rd *vipassana jhāna*)

5. *Vipassanā* Knowledge of Dissolution – *bhangañāna*

(*suññyata*: emptiness, 2nd rolling-up-the-mat-stage of practice)

6. *Vipassanā* Knowledge of Fear – *bhayañāna*

7. *Vipassanā* Knowledge of Danger – *ādīnavañāna*

8. *Vipassanā* Knowledge of Disenchantment – *nibbidāñāna*

9. *Vipassanā* Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance – *muñcitukamyatāñāna*

10. *Vipassanā* Knowledge of Re-observation – *patisaṅkhāñāna*

(3rd rolling-up-the-mat-stage of practice)

11. *Vipassanā* Knowledge of Equanimity toward Phenomena – *sankhārupekkhāñāna*

(4th *vipassana jhāna*: likened to the mind of an *arahat*)

12. *Vipassanā* Knowledge Leading to Emergence – *vutthānagāminīñāna*

13. *Vipassanā* Knowledge of Adaptation – *anulomañāna*

14. Change of Lineage Knowledge – *gotrabhūñāna*

Purification by Knowledge and Vision

15. Path Knowledge – *maggañāna* (1st stage of enlightenment, realization of *nibbāna*)

16. Fruition Knowledge – *phalañāna* (absorption in *nibbāna*)

17. Knowledge of Reviewing – *paccavekkhanañāna*

18. Attainment of Fruition – *phalasamāpatti* (sustained absorption in *nibbāna*)

19. The Higher Paths and Fruitions (2nd – 4th stages of enlightenment)

Disappearance

When insight knowledge develops to the next stage, you will no longer see objects arising but only passing away. You will think that they are dis-

appearing faster and faster. A meditator will also see that the noting minds disappear one after the other. When the rise of the abdomen is noted, for example, you will clearly see how the tiny movements of rising instantly disappear and how the noting mind, too, vanishes very quickly. So you see that moments of both the rising movement and your awareness of it disappear one after the other. You will clearly see this for all other objects, as well, such as the falling of the abdomen, sitting, bending, stretching, stiffness, and so on: each object and your awareness of them disappears moment by moment, one after the other. Some meditators even find that there are three things arising and passing away in sequence: a sense object, their awareness of it, and their knowledge of that very awareness. But it is sufficient to observe that objects and the mind that notes them disappear in pairs.

When noting becomes clear enough that you can see both sense objects and your awareness of them disappearing in pairs, you will lose the illusory sense of conceptual forms or shapes, such as the form of your body, head, arms, legs, and so on. You will only experience instantly disappearing phenomena. As a result, you may feel like your practice has become superficial, is not as good as it had been before, or that there are many gaps in your noting. But that is not actually the case. It's only that the mind naturally delights in concepts of solid form, and so it cannot feel comfortable when those concepts are absent.

In any case this condition is an indication of progress in practice. When your meditation practice is immature, you first perceive concepts of solid form or shape when you note seeing, hearing, touching, and so on. But at this level of insight meditation, you perceive the instant disappearance of phenomena first. In other words, you experience insight knowledge of dissolution first; the sense of solid form will only return when you deliberately evoke it. Otherwise, due simply to uninterruptedly noting, your awareness will remain attuned to the ultimate reality of the dissolution of phenomena. Thus you verify that the saying from sages of old is true:

When conventional reality emerges, absolute reality submerges;
When absolute reality emerges, conventional reality submerges.

Although your awareness will have become extremely clear at this point, it may seem like there are gaps between successive moments of awareness. This is because you are starting to become aware of the life-continuum that

occurs between cognitive processes (*vīthi*). For example, when you note an intention to bend or stretch the arm, you may find that the movement of bending or stretching seems to be delayed for some time. This means that your awareness has become sharp and powerful. In this case, you should also note any distinct objects that arise at the six sense doors.

After your practice gains momentum due to noting the main objects, such as the rise and fall of the abdomen, sitting, and so on, you should note any obvious objects that arise, such as any sensations in other parts of the body, seeing, hearing, and so on. If your awareness becomes less precise or accurate while noting in this way, or if thoughts begin to interfere, or if you feel exhausted, return to just noting the primary objects of rising, falling, sitting, and so on. When, after a while, your practice again gains momentum, return to noting whatever arises. A meditator should let his or her practice proceed in this way some of the time.

Once you are able to extend, without strain, the range of objects that you note and observe, you will clearly see that whatever you see or hear instantly disappears and that two consecutive moments are not connected but are separate units. This is “understanding things as they really are.” As a result of this, however, things may seem blurry or hazy when you look at them. A meditator is likely to worry: “I think something is wrong with my eyesight; it’s getting dim.” But nothing is actually wrong with your vision. It’s just that your awareness is discerning each individual moment of seeing separately, which causes conceptual forms to blur.

At this point, as well, a meditator will continue to be aware of mental and physical phenomena even if he or she stops trying to practice. You may not even be able to fall asleep when trying to, but you will instead feel alert and awake day and night. There is no need to worry about this, as it will not harm your health in any way. A meditator should simply continue practicing energetically. When your insight becomes powerful enough, it will seem as if your awareness pierces objects.

Disillusionment

When you deeply understand that both objects and the mind that notes them instantly disappear, you will tend to reflect: “Nothing lasts for the twinkling of an eye or a flash of lightning. They are indeed impermanent. Previously I was simply ignorant of this fact. Everything that has happened

in the past must have also disappeared in this way. Everything that happens in the future will disappear in this way, too.” Note these reflections.

You may also occasionally reflect on how unstable and incessantly vanishing phenomena are, thinking: “Clearly, we are able to enjoy ourselves due to ignorance. To realize that phenomena instantly disappear is truly terrifying. Each time they disappear could be the moment of my death. To have come into existence and to have to continue existing endlessly is really horrible. How dreadful to make such great effort in order to be well off in a situation in which everything constantly vanishes. How appalling it is that these instantly disappearing phenomena continue to occur, now and in a new life. That we are all subject to aging, sickness, death, distress, worry, lamentation, and so on is truly frightening.” Note this mental state of reflection without fail.

At this stage of practice, a meditator generally feels helpless, dejected, and languid, being frightened by mental and physical phenomena that disintegrate so quickly. You have no enthusiasm or joy, and you tend to feel sad. There is no need to worry. This indicates that your practice is improving according to the usual development of the meditation process. All you need do is remain equanimous by noting any reflections and other objects that arise. If you do so, you will soon overcome this stage. Otherwise, being long caught up in these reflections while feeling displeasure, a meditator might become so afraid that he or she cannot stand it. This kind of fear based on displeasure is not insight knowledge. Therefore note all these reflections without fail so that fear based on displeasure cannot arise.

In between instances of noting, you may have thoughts that find fault, such as: “These mental and physical phenomena are no good, because they constantly vanish and do not last. It is depressing to see how they have continuously arisen since the beginning of this life without ever coming to an end, and that they create all kinds of forms and shapes although they do not exist. Striving hard to gain happiness and well-being feels so miserable. A new existence is undesirable. It is depressing to be subject to aging, sickness, death, distress, worry, grief, and lamentation. This is all suffering and devoid of peace.” You should not forget to note these kinds of reflections.

Sometimes, it will seem like every phenomenon that you note and the mind that notes them are terrible, harsh, useless, disgusting, rotten, decaying, and fragile. At such times, even though you note mental and physical phenomena as they arise, you will no longer feel pleased with them. You will clearly see them to be passing away every time they are noted, but you

will not be as enthusiastic about this as before. Instead, you will feel weary of phenomena. As a result, you will become lazy about noting. But you will not be able to help being aware. It is like being forced to travel on a filthy road, wherein every step arouses disgust and disillusionment.

Thus when you consider human life, you will understand that you cannot exist without these incessantly vanishing mental and physical phenomena. So you won't see anything delightful in becoming a man, a woman, a king, a rich person, or a celestial being. These instead will inspire disenchantment and disillusionment.

Looking for relief

Because you feel so weary of phenomena every time they are noted, it will seem as if the mind is struggling to escape from them. With the desire to be liberated from the conditioned phenomena, a meditator may think: "It would be so nice if there were no such thing as seeing, hearing, touching, thinking, sitting down, standing up, bending, stretching, and so on. I wish I could escape from those things or go somewhere where they don't exist." Do not fail to note such thoughts.

At other times, a meditator may wonder: "What can I do to escape from these phenomena? Continuing to note them seems like deliberately contemplating vile things. Everything I notice is disgusting. It would be nice not to have to notice them at all." Of course, you should note these mental states of wondering and thinking.

Based on such reflections, some meditators even try to avoid noting at this point and put off practice. But mental and physical phenomena such as seeing, hearing, knowing, the rise and fall of the abdomen, sitting, bending, stretching, thinking, and so on will not stop arising; they will continue to appear as always. They continue to be apparent to meditators as a result of their intensive insight practice. Awareness of phenomena simply continues of its own accord. A meditator will be encouraged by this, considering: "Even though I'm not trying to note, I keep noticing phenomena that arise anyway; my awareness of them just keeps going. So just avoiding practice won't help me get away from them. It's only when I note these phenomena, as they are, and realize their three characteristics that I won't worry about them and will be able to note with equanimity. That's what will lead me to the experience of nibbāna, where none of these exist. Only then can I realize liberation." Once you are able to appreciate your own experience in this

way, you will carry on with your practice. Some meditators do not come to this conclusion by themselves. However, once their teachers explain their experience to them, they can carry on with their practice.

Some meditators will experience unbearable pain when their practice gains this kind of momentum. Do not despair. The true characteristics of unpleasant sensation are actually becoming obvious to you as pain (*dukkhato*), disease (*rogato*), an ulcer (*gaṇḍato*), a thorn (*sallato*), unprofitable (*aghato*), afflictions (*ābādhato*), and so on. Note the pain until you can overcome it.

Those who do not encounter severe pain may experience one of the forty qualities of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, or not-self whenever they note. Even though their practice is going well and their thoughts do not wander, they will tend to think that their practice is no good or feel that objects and the mind that notes them are not concurrent. Actually it is simply that you are so eager to realize the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self nature of mental and physical phenomena that you cannot feel satisfied with your practice. As a result, you may often change your posture. For example, when you are sitting you feel like you want to walk; when you are walking, you want to sit down again. You feel agitated and want to rearrange your arms and legs, move to another place, or lie down. You cannot manage to stay in your place or posture for very long and keep changing. Do not feel frustrated!

A meditator lacks satisfaction because he or she rightly understands that there are no pleasurable conditioned mental and physical phenomena. At this point, you think that your noting is no good. You will not yet be able to note with equanimity, as you will be when you attain the next insight knowledge, knowledge of equanimity toward phenomena. Try your best to practice without constantly changing your posture and to remain in one posture for a long time. After a while, you will be able to practice calmly again. If you practice with patience and persistence, your mind will grow clearer and clearer, until all the agitation and dissatisfaction disappear.

INSIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF DISSOLUTION

At this point one will no longer be able to observe the arising and the middle part (presence) of phenomena, and one will no longer see them as a continuous process of phenomena that flow like a stream of water. This means that mental and physical phenomena no longer appear as a constant and coherent process. Mental images of solid forms and shapes no longer arise. If one bends or stretches the limbs, for example, one no longer has

mental images of the form and shape of an arm or a leg as was previously the case. Instead, each time an object is observed, one only sees its constant disappearance or dissolution. This is how insight knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅgañāṇa*) begins to develop.

The following passage explains how insight knowledge of arising and passing away matures into the insight knowledge of dissolution:

With insight into arising and passing away, which is free from obstacles and constitutes the correct path of insight practice, a meditator becomes aware of the true characteristics of all phenomena. By repeatedly discerning mental and physical phenomena and confirming impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self, his or her insight becomes sharp. The appearance of phenomena is very swift. Eventually, a meditator will no longer notice their arising, their presence, the continuity of processes, or the appearance of solid forms in stages. Instead, mindfulness will only register their passing away, vanishing, disappearance, and cessation.⁵⁸¹ In this way, contemplation of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassanā*) arises out of the meditator's realization of the arising and passing away of phenomena.⁵⁸²

The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* explains in detail how insight knowledge of dissolution develops. I will just mention a few key points here.

Insight and counter-insight

Observing an object and seeing its dissolution constitutes the insight called “knowledge of dissolution.”⁵⁸³

The phrase “observing an object” refers to seeing an object vanish or pass away. The phrase “seeing its dissolution” refers to seeing the dissolution of the first insight that observed the object vanishing or passing away. This is knowledge.⁵⁸⁴

According to these quotes, one sees the dissolution of phenomena when one observes the present moment phenomena involved in the rise and fall of the abdomen, sitting, standing, walking, bending, stretching, seeing, hearing, thinking, and so on. Then one also sees the dissolution of that

very observation. Thus, anytime one is aware of an object, one sees both the object itself and the mental observation of it dissolving in turn. This is insight knowledge of dissolution.

The mind, taking a physical phenomenon as its object, arises and passes away. One sees the disappearance of both the physical phenomenon and the mind that observes it. The same is true when the mind takes a feeling, perception, mental formation, or consciousness as its object. After seeing the dissolution of the object, the dissolution of the noting mind is contemplated in turn.⁵⁸⁵

When one observes the physical phenomena involved in the rise and fall of the abdomen, sitting, bending, stretching, eye-sensitivity, visible form, and so on, the moment they occur, one sees that they vanish, disappear, or pass away. This understanding of the disappearance of the observed object is called “the first insight knowledge of dissolution” (*paṭhamabhaṅgañāṇa*). Afterward, one sees that the first insight knowledge of dissolution itself also vanishes. This is called “the second insight knowledge of dissolution” (*dutiyabhaṅgañāṇa*) or “counter-insight” (*paṭivipassanā*), since it in turn observes the dissolution of the observing mind. Insight knowledge of dissolution includes these two levels of observation.

Similarly, when observing the other aggregates, one sees both the observed object and the mind that observes it very swiftly vanish or pass away. This is the criterion for insight knowledge of dissolution. The phrase “vanish or pass away” refers to the normal dissolution or disappearance of phenomena, and not to some kind of chaotic destruction.

Take note that the commentary says, “. . . mindfulness will only register their passing away, vanishing, disappearance, and cessation” (*khayavaya-bhedanirodheyyeva sati*),⁵⁸⁶ and also says “. . . seeing an object vanish or pass away . . .” (*khayato vayo disvā*).⁵⁸⁷ These statements are worthy of serious consideration. The Pāli texts explain in detail the six sense doors, the six sense objects, the six consciousnesses, and so on in a similar way. The phrase “contemplate in turn” (*anupassati*) is defined in seven ways, which I will explain later in chapter 7.

Transfer to another object, transformation of insight, and powerful advertizing—these are counter-insight into knowledge of dissolution.⁵⁸⁸

In this line, “transfer to another object” refers to a shifting of awareness from the disappearance of the observed object to the disappearance of the mind that observes it. The phrase “transformation of insight” means that a meditator’s insight changes so that he or she only sees the disappearance of phenomena. The meditator no longer sees the arising of phenomena, as he or she did during the previous insight knowledge of arising and passing away. The term “powerful adverting” means that the mind-moment that adverts to each phenomenon is powerful enough to detect the disappearance of the observing mind immediately after the disappearance of the observed object. When a meditator’s insight is characterized by these three factors, it can be taken to be insight knowledge of dissolution.

Note that the first and third of these three factors are successive mind-moments in a single mental process of observation. If the first mind-moment properly adverts to an object, then the following mind-moments can properly observe it.

“Transfer to another object” means that one sees the disappearance of an object, such as a physical phenomenon and so on, and then sees the disappearance of the very mind that observed the disappearance of the object. Thus one’s attention transfers from the first object to the second one. “Transformation of insight” means that one’s insight stops perceiving the arising of phenomena and becomes focused only on their disappearance. “Powerful adverting” means that one’s power of observation is so strong that one can see the disappearance of an object and immediately afterward see the disappearance of the mind that just observed the disappearance of the object.⁵⁸⁹

Note that here the term “immediately afterward” means immediately after the first mental process. The second moment of adverting can only actually occur after an interval of the life-continuum consciousness. The phrases “transfer to another object” and “immediately afterward” should be understood to mean that a single object should only be observed once, and not several times in succession. It is also not necessary to observe each and every phenomenon involved in a single action in order to enumerate or classify them all. Instead, one should focus on observing those phenomena that are most obvious. It is not necessary to individually observe each

successive mind-moment of a single mental process.⁵⁹⁰ One should just observe the process as a whole.

Inferential knowledge

One should not try to observe past or future phenomena, or phenomena that are not distinct. One should just be aware of obvious phenomena that are arising and passing away in the present moment. Meditators should remember these points very well.

Observing the present, one is certain that both [past and future] are the same. Deeply focused on disappearance, thus is knowledge of dissolution.⁵⁹¹

The first line of this verse means that based on those objects that one empirically experiences one can be sure that conditioned phenomena in the past and future also vanish. One may reflect: “Conditioned phenomena of the past have vanished, and in the future they will vanish, too, just as these phenomena that I am currently experiencing do. All of these phenomena have the same nature.” Thus the ancient sages have said:

With a purified vision of the present,
One infers those past and future to be alike.
One infers that conditioned phenomena disappear
Like dew-drops when the morning sun comes up.⁵⁹²

Thus one should begin one’s insight practice by observing the phenomena that are arising and passing away in the present moment and not those of the past or future. Once one empirically observes the present phenomena clearly, inferential understanding of past and future phenomena will arise naturally by itself. This is all that is required with regard to past and future phenomena. So do not deliberately attempt to observe past or future phenomena.

Mature knowledge

At the mature level of insight knowledge of dissolution, one can see observed objects and the mind that observes them continuously

disappearing, like the continuous popping of sesame seeds in a skillet, the patter of bursting bubbles from raindrops striking a pond, or a constantly shifting mirage. The *Visuddhimagga* says⁵⁹³ that the Buddha aimed the following verse from the *Dhammapada* at meditators whose experience is like this.

If one sees the world as a bubble,
If one sees it as a mirage,
One won't be seen
By the King of Death.⁵⁹⁴

When with insight knowledge of dissolution one sees each object disappearing, one won't be subject to ignorance, craving, clinging, kamma, rebirth, or the aggregates. Since there are no aggregates for a new life, there is no death. By gradually passing through the stages of insight knowledge, beginning with insight knowledge of dissolution and culminating in knowledge that is the fruit of arahantship, one will absolutely experience no more rebirth and consequently no more death. The line "one won't be seen by the King of Death" refers to this fact.

THE THREE ASPECTS OF DISILLUSIONMENT: INSIGHT KNOWLEDGES OF FEAR, OF DANGER, AND OF DISENCHANTMENT

Insight knowledge of fear

At the peak of insight knowledge of dissolution one clearly realizes that mental and physical phenomena vanished in the past, are vanishing in the present, and will also vanish in the future. As a result, conditioned phenomena begin to appear fearful. At this point insight knowledge of fear (*bhayañāṇa*) arises.

By realizing that conditioned phenomena have vanished in the past, are vanishing in the present, and will also vanish in the future, one attains knowledge of fear [of phenomena].⁵⁹⁵

At that time the mind will see the frightening or fearful aspect of conditioned phenomena that vanish with each noting. Also those objects that

one reflects upon will be seen as frightening or fearful. Thus the noting mind will not be as willing, joyful, and enthusiastic as it was during the stages of insight knowledge of arising and passing away and insight knowledge of dissolution. Instead one will feel unhappy or dismayed. This fear doesn't feel like the kind of fear that frightening ghosts or enemies arouse. It is merely feeling disheartened or distressed due to truly understanding how frightening things really are.

Is knowledge of fear really frightening? Of course not. Actually, it is simply feeling sure that past conditioned phenomena have vanished, present phenomena are vanishing, and future phenomena will vanish.⁵⁹⁶

Insight knowledge of danger

When insight knowledge of fear matures, it is followed by insight knowledge of danger (*ādīnavañāṇa*). At this point one will not see any of the conditioned phenomena that one observes or reflects upon as pleasant, good, or substantial. Instead whatever one observes or reflects upon will be experienced as unpleasant, detestable, and harsh.

The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* describes the insight knowledges of fear and danger in four sections. The first sentence of the first section is as follows:

The arising [of phenomena in this life] is fearful and, based on that, is seen to be dangerous. This understanding is called knowledge of danger.

The second sentence of the section replaces “arising” (*uppādo*) with “occurrence” (*pavattaṃ*) in the same formula. “The occurrence of phenomena” refers to the constant vanishing of previous phenomena and arising of subsequent phenomena. With each noting this process of mental and physical phenomena is seen as fearful due to its constant appearance. Thus the second sentence says:

The occurrence [of phenomena] is fearful and, based on that, is seen to be dangerous. This understanding is called knowledge of danger.

The remainder of the first section continues in this way, repeating the same observation with regard to other aspects of phenomena. The other aspects that it identifies as fearful are: sign as having a solid form, shape, or substance, accumulation of wholesome actions (*āyūhanā*), relinking, destination (*gati*), first arising or generating (*nibbatti*), reappearance (*upapatti*), birth (*jāti*), old age (*jarā*), sickness (*byādhī*), death (*maraṇa*), grief or lamentation (*soka*), and anxiety (*upāyāsa*). Note that the term “sign” refers to the belief that phenomena such as the rise and fall of the abdomen, sitting, bending, stretching, seeing, hearing, and so on possess a solid form, shape, or substance.

The second, third, and fourth sections of the Pāḷi passage have a parallel structure to that of the first section. The same fifteen aspects of phenomena are mentioned, but rather than being identified as fearful, the second section identifies them as unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), the third section as worldly (*sāmiṣa*), and the fourth section as conditioned (*saṅkhāra*).

Whenever one experiences only the disappearance of observed objects and the mind that notes them, one sees them as fearful. When one reflects on the first arising of these mental and physical phenomena in this life, one sees it as fearful. Seeing and understanding it in this way is called “insight knowledge of fear” and “insight knowledge of danger.” This is how these insight knowledges arise. Even without deliberately reflecting on occurrence, sign, and so on, one can still see phenomena as fearful by simply observing or noting them.

The first five of these fifteen aspects—arising, occurrence, sign, accumulation of wholesome actions, and relinking—are key meditation subjects for insight knowledge of danger. The other ten aspects are simply synonyms for the first five, but the Buddha mentions them here because some people use these synonyms to describe their experience. Initial arising and birth are included in arising and relinking; destination and reappearance are similar in an ultimate sense to occurrence; and the six aspects from old age through anxiety are included in sign. So it is enough to simply observe the first five aspects of phenomena from this list.

According to the commentary, the first section of the passage refers to the development of insight knowledge of fear, while the other three refer to the insight knowledge of danger:

Seeing the fifteen aspects as something to be feared is knowledge

of fear, while seeing them to be unsatisfying, worldly, and conditioned is knowledge of danger. It should be regarded thusly.⁵⁹⁷

Once one sees the existence of these fifteen aspects as fearful, unsatisfying, worldly, and conditioned, one may consider the opposite possibility: “A state of nonarising, nonoccurrence, as well as the absence of conditioned phenomena, illusory impressions, volitional actions, and relinking is free from danger and misery. This is happiness and peace, free from the cords of sensual desire and defilements.” This is why the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* says:

One understands peace thus: “Nonarising is peaceful.”

One understands peace thus: “Nonarising is pleasant.”

One understands peace thus: “Nonarising is free from sense desire.”

One understands peace thus: “Nonarising is nibbāna.”⁵⁹⁸

Insight knowledge of disenchantment

When one’s knowledge of danger matures, it will be followed by insight knowledge of disenchantment (*nibbidāñāṇa*). At this point one has understood the flaws of phenomena, so one feels weary whenever one observes or reflects on them. Even thinking or fantasizing about them one merely feels weary of and fed up with them. The *Dhammapada* describes how this insight knowledge develops as follows:

“All created things are impermanent”

Seeing this with insight,

One becomes disenchanted with suffering.

This is the path to purity.

“All created things are suffering”

Seeing this with insight,

One becomes disenchanted with suffering.

This is the path to purity.

“All things are not-self”

Seeing this with insight,

One becomes disenchanted with suffering.
This is the path to purity.⁵⁹⁹

We can understand these verses as follows: with the inferential insight (*anvayavipassanā*) that occurs spontaneously as a result of mature, empirical insight knowledge of dissolution, a meditator sees that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. Then seeing the danger and defects with his or her insight knowledge of fear and insight knowledge of danger, the meditator grows weary of and fed up with the unsatisfactory nature of conditioned phenomena. This is the path to purification.

However, according to the *Mahāṭikā*, the verses should be explained in this way: with his or her preliminary knowledge by comprehension and later insight knowledges of arising and passing away and so on, and higher insight, a meditator sees that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. Then seeing the danger and defects with his or her insight knowledge of fear and insight knowledge of danger, the meditator grows weary of and fed up with the unsatisfactory nature of conditioned phenomena. This is the path to purification.

The three insight knowledges of fear, danger, and disenchantment actually only differ in degree. They are the immature, intermediate, and mature forms of the same understanding of the imperfection of conditioned phenomena. Due to this, for some meditators who experience insight knowledge of fear, the insight knowledges of danger and disenchantment follow immediately or within a short time. For those meditators who proceed to higher stages of insight knowledge very quickly, only one or two of these three insight knowledges will be distinct.

The sages of old said that knowledge of fear has three names. Insight is called “knowledge of fear” when all conditioned phenomena are seen as fearful, “knowledge of danger” when fearful phenomena are seen as flawed, and “knowledge of disenchantment” when flawed phenomena are seen as wearisome. Also, [the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*] says that these three knowledges are the same in an ultimate sense and only differ in name.⁶⁰⁰

INSIGHT KNOWLEDGE THAT DESIRES DELIVERANCE

As a result of knowledge of disenchantment, a person becomes weary, tired, and sick of [all conditioned phenomena] and does not attach, stick, or fasten his mind to any of the three existences, four modes of birth, five destinations, seven stations of consciousness, or nine spheres of beings. Instead, one wishes to get free or get away from all conditioned phenomena . . . Knowledge that desires deliverance (*muñcitukamyatāñāṇa*) then arises in one who has no more attachment to any conditioned phenomena and wishes to escape from them all.⁶⁰¹

The various forms of life referred to in this passage are as follows:

The three existences (bhava) are sensuous existence (*kāmabhava*), fine-material existence (*rūpabhava*), and immaterial existence (*arūpabhava*). *The four modes of birth (yonī)* are birth from an egg (*aṇḍaja*), birth from a womb (*jalābuja*), birth from moisture (*samsedaja*), and spontaneous birth (*papātika*). *The five destinations (gati)* are the hell realms, the animal realm, the realm of hungry ghosts, the human realm, and the celestial realms.

*The seven stations of consciousness (viññāṇaṭṭhiti)*⁶⁰² are: beings that differ in body (*nānattakāya*) and in perception (*nānattasaññī*)—that is, humans and sense-sphere celestial beings; beings that differ in body but are alike in perception (*ekattasaññī*)—that is, first-jhānic Brahmā and beings in the hell realms; beings alike in body and different in perception (*ekattakāya*)—that is, second-jhānic Brahmā; beings alike in body and in perception—that is, third-jhānic Brahmā, Vehapphala Brahmā, and Suddhāvāsa Brahmā; beings of the realm of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatanasaññī*); beings of the realm of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇāyatanasaññī*); and beings of the realm of nothingness (*ākīṇcaññāyatanasaññī*).

The nine spheres of beings (sattāvāsā) are nonpercipient beings (*asañña-satta*), beings of the realm of neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*), and beings of the seven stations of consciousness listed above.

One's knowledge is limited to those realms of existence that one has experienced, so those realms that one is not familiar with cannot arouse either mental defilement or insight in one. However, if one at least develops insight knowledge of disenchantment regarding the three kinds of

existence, one accomplishes insight knowledge. The other forms of life given in the above lists are all included in these three types of existence.

It is natural to wish to leave a place where one cannot enjoy oneself. In the same way, when one has seen conditioned phenomena, which include observed objects as well as the mind that notes them, to be fearful and flawed, it is natural to wish to leave or escape them. Insight knowledge of disenchantment arises very strongly due to this and before long one develops the wish to leave or escape not only from observed objects and the mind that notes them but also from the different existences, modes of birth, destinations, and so on that one reflects upon. This desire for deliverance is called insight knowledge that desires deliverance.

At this point, one wants to give up or get away from all of the phenomena involved in bodily actions (such as walking, sitting, sleeping, bending, stretching, and so on), mental activities (such as seeing, hearing, thinking, noting, and so on), and all forms of existence (human, celestial, female, male, Brahmā, and so on). All one wants is to be free from these phenomena. As a result, some meditators may think that it would be better not to observe or be mindful, as a result of which they may stop noting and observing.

INSIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF REOBSERVATION

Wishing to escape from the fragile, conditioned phenomena that constitute the existences, births, destinations, stations, and spheres, and with the purpose of escaping all those phenomena, the meditator contemplates those very phenomena yet again in terms of the three universal characteristics through the knowledge of reobservation (*paṭisaṅkhāñña*).⁶⁰³

When one is completely free from the illusion that conditioned phenomena are permanent, satisfying, or self, then one experiences nibbāna, the cessation of all conditioned phenomena. At that point no phenomena are able to cause one any more worry or distress. This applies even before complete cessation, let alone after complete cessation.

Therefore if one wants to be free from conditioned phenomena, there is nothing else to be done but to deeply understand the three general characteristics of these conditioned phenomena and to continue with the observation as usual in order to reach an equanimous noting mind. Therefore at the insight knowledge of the desire for deliverance, one must observe

the arising and passing away of conditioned phenomena once again as one did before. Then one is able to see forty aspects of the universal characteristics: ten aspects of impermanence, twenty-five aspects of unsatisfactoriness, and five aspects of not-self. Every time one observes a phenomenon, one sees one of the three characteristics from one of these forty aspects. This understanding is the insight knowledge of reobservation because this observation happens once again.