

MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

(For Loving-kindness Meditation and Vipassana Meditation)

By U Silananda

[The instructions given here are for those who want to practice meditation for an hour or so. So detailed instructions are given only for sitting meditation and walking meditation.]

To practice meditation, you have to look first for a suitable place. A suitable place is a place which offers you the necessary seclusion for your meditation. You may find secluded places in nature. However, when you are meditating inside a house, you have to look for the place which is most suitable for meditation and you will then use this place for meditation each time. You may want to put up a statue or a picture of the Buddha, some flowers, a candle or some incense to assist your meditation, but these items are not so important as is the necessity for a secluded place where you will always practice your meditation in the future.

SITTING MEDITATION: POSTURES

To begin your meditation, please be seated in a comfortable posture, preferably in cross-legged position, and keep the upper portion of your body erect, but not stiff or tense. One of the two kinds of cross-legged position is recommended, namely, the half lotus position or the easy posture, which some teachers call "Burmese posture". In the half lotus position one leg is put on top of the other, but in the easy posture one leg is put in front of the other, thus the pressure on either leg is minimized. If the any of the cross-legged position is still too difficult for you, you may take any sitting posture which is most comfortable for you. Because some comfort is necessary to continue the practice of meditation, you may even sit on a cushion, a chair or a bench. Though the cross-legged position is the ideal position for meditation, you have to decide for yourself in which position you can maintain your meditation best. Important in all sitting positions is that you keep the upper portion of your body erect.

FORGIVENESS AND LOVING-KINDNESS

Teachers of meditation suggested that we ask forgiveness from those whom

we may have offended by deed, speech or thought; forgiving others and ourselves also clears our minds of ill-will. The practice of loving-kindness is also beneficial in that it calms our minds down so that we can go into *Vipassana* meditation smoothly. So, before we practice *Vipassana* meditation, we will practice forgiveness (which consists of asking forgiveness from others, forgiving others and forgiving ourselves), and loving-kindness meditation.

We practice forgiveness to remove any guilt feelings. Sometimes you did something wrong to somebody by body, speech or in mind and then you have this feeling of guilt. Especially, when you are meditating, you want to keep your mind pure but these thoughts come to you again and again and spoil your meditation. Like cleaning the slate, you first ask forgiveness from others. This is one aspect. The other aspect is to forgive others. There may be somebody who has done something wrong to you and you have some anger or grudge against that person. You have to get rid of this anger or grudge, too. In order to practice loving kindness fully, you must be able to send thoughts of loving-kindness to all beings without exception. But if you cannot forgive some people (including yourself), you will not be able to practice loving-kindness meditation fully. So, loving-kindness and forgiveness go together. And thirdly, you forgive yourself. Sometimes, you find it more difficult to forgive yourself than to forgive others. If you cannot forgive yourself, you will not be able to practice loving-kindness to yourself; and if you cannot practice loving-kindness to yourself, it is very unlikely that you can practice it to other beings.

Therefore, before entering *Vipassana* meditation, you have to practice forgiveness; after that you practice loving-kindness meditation.

Loving-kindness is a kind of love, i.e., love without attachment, craving or lust. It is a wholesome and genuine desire for the well-being of all beings including ourselves. So when you practice loving-kindness and wish for your own happiness, saying, "May I be well, happy and peaceful", this should not be interpreted as selfishness because, in order to send out thoughts of loving-kindness to others, we have to generate these thoughts first in ourselves. Also, when you send thoughts to yourself, you can take yourself as an example. That means, when you say, "May I be well, happy, and peaceful," you think, "Just as I want to be well, happy and peaceful, so do all other beings. So may they also be well, happy and peaceful." To be able to practice loving-kindness towards other beings, you first have to practice loving kindness towards

yourself. Then you send your thoughts to other beings. You can send these thoughts in different ways. You can send thoughts to all beings by location. You can send loving-kindness to all beings in this house. By "all beings" we mean not only human beings, but also animals, insects, etc. Then you send loving-kindness to all beings in this area, in this city, in this county, in this state, in this country, in this world, in this universe, and last, to all beings in general. When you say the sentences to yourself, please, mean them and try to see and visualize the beings you mention as really well, happy, and peaceful, and your thoughts of loving-kindness reaching them, touching them, embracing them and making them really well, happy, and peaceful. It will take about fifteen minutes.

When practicing forgiveness, fold your hands up, and say,
If by deed, speech or thought,
Foolishly I have done wrong,
May all forgive me honored ones,
Who are in wisdom and compassion strong.

I freely forgive anyone
who may have hurt or injured me.

I freely forgive myself.

Now you can practice loving-kindness meditation. When practicing loving-kindness meditation, repeat the following sentences silently to yourself, about ten times each.

May I be well, happy, and peaceful.

May all beings in this house be well, happy, and peaceful.

May all beings in this area be well, happy, and peaceful.

May all beings in this city be well, happy,
and peaceful.

May all beings in this county be well, happy,

and peaceful.

May all beings in this state be well, happy, and peaceful.

May all beings in this country be well, happy,
and peaceful.

May all beings in this world be well, happy,
and peaceful.

May all beings in this universe be well, happy,
and peaceful.

May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful.

May suffering ones be suffering free
and the fear-struck fearless be.
May the grieving shed all grief,
and all beings find relief.

Loving-kindness can also be practiced by way of persons, as follows:

May I be well, happy, and peaceful.

May my teachers be well, happy, and peaceful.

May my parents be well, happy, and peaceful.

May my relatives be well, happy, and peaceful.

May my friends be well, happy, and peaceful. May the indifferent persons be
well, happy,
and peaceful.

May the unfriendly persons be well, happy,
and peaceful.

May all meditators be well, happy, and peaceful.

May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful.

May suffering ones be suffering free
and the fear-struck fearless be.
May the grieving shed all grief,
and all beings find relief.

After you have sent thoughts of loving-kindness to the whole world and all beings, you practice *Vipassana* meditation.

SITTING MEDITATION: VIPASSANA

Breaths as Main Object

Now focus your attention on the breaths; keep your mind at the tip of the nose, or at the entrance of the nostrils. When you breathe in, be mindful of the in-breath for the whole duration, or from the beginning to the end. And when you breathe out, be mindful of the out-breath for the whole duration, or from the beginning to the end. In-breath and out-breath each last about four or five seconds. Be really mindful of the breaths. You may feel a sensation of the air at the tip of your nose or in your nose. Be mindful of it. And concentrate on the nature of breath, the moving nature or the supporting nature of breath, rather than the shape or form of the breath. Try to see the in-breath and out-breath as two separate things, not just one and the same breath going in and coming out. Do not let your mind follow the breath into your body or outside the body. Your mind is like a gatekeeper standing at the gate, taking note of people going in and coming out. Do not force or strain yourself. Just calmly be mindful and watch the breaths. You may make a mental note when you breathe in and when you breathe out, as "in", "out," "in", "out." Making mental notes, or labeling, is just to help you keep your mind on the object; if it interferes with your meditation, you don't have to do it, but just be mindful of

the object. What is important in this meditation is mindfulness of the object at the moment, and not the notes you make.

If your mind can be on the breaths only, that is very good. However, mind has a tendency to wander quite often. So, if, in the course of keeping your mind on the breaths, your mind wanders or goes out and you are aware of it, do not feel guilty, or be upset; just be mindful of its going out. Or you may say to yourself, "going out, going out, going out," two or three times and then go back to the breaths.

If you see something or someone in your thoughts, be mindful of seeing, or say to yourself, "seeing, seeing, seeing," until that object disappears from your mind; then go back to the breaths.

If you hear somebody talking in your thoughts, be mindful of hearing or say to yourself, "hearing, hearing, hearing," and then go back to the breath.

If you talk to someone in your thoughts, or if you talk to yourself, be mindful of talking, or say to yourself, "talking, talking, talking," and then go back to the breaths.

If you speculate about something, be mindful of speculating; if you analyze something, be mindful of analyzing; if you make judgments, be mindful of making judgments. In *Vipassana* meditation, you pay just bare attention to the object, without any additions of your own, as "beautiful", "ugly", "good", "bad", etc. Or, in other words, you take the object as it is, without subjective additions of your own.

If you remember something in the past, be mindful of the remembering, or say to yourself, "remembering, remembering, remembering" or "thinking, thinking, thinking," and then go back to the breaths. If you think of the future and make plans, be mindful of it, or say to yourself, "thinking of future, thinking of future, thinking of future," or "planning, planning, planning," and then go back to the breath.

If you become lazy, be mindful of your laziness, or say, "lazy, lazy, lazy." The laziness will go away after some moments, then go back to the breaths. If you feel bored, be mindful of boredom, or say to yourself, "bored, bored, bored," until boredom goes away, then go back to the breaths. If you have resistance,

be mindful of it, or say to yourself, "resisting, resisting, resisting." When resistance disappears, go back to the breaths.

If you have thoughts of attachment or greed or lust, again do not feel guilty, but be mindful of these thoughts, or say to yourself, "attachment, attachment, attachment," or "greed, greed, greed," or "lust, lust, lust," until they disappear and then go back to the breaths. If you are upset or angry for any reason, just be mindful of that anger, or in other words, make that anger the object of meditation. Concentrate on your anger, or you may say to yourself, "anger, anger, anger" or "angry, angry, angry" or "upset, upset, upset." After some moments, the anger will disappear and when it has disappeared, go back to the breaths.

If you want to swallow your saliva, first be mindful of the intention or desire to swallow, saying to yourself, "intention, intention, intention," or "desire, desire, desire." And when you have gathered the saliva in your mouth, be mindful of the gathering, or say to yourself, "gathering, gathering, gathering." When you swallow it down, be mindful of swallowing, or say to yourself, "swallowing, swallowing, swallowing," then go back to the breaths.

If you have an itching sensation, do not scratch it right away. Concentrate on the place of that itching and be mindful of it, saying to yourself, "itching, itching, itching." In most cases, itching will go away after some time. When it goes away, return to the breaths. Sometimes, the itching will not go away, but will even become more intense. In that case try to be with it, taking note of it and be aware of it, as long as you can. If you think you cannot bear it any longer, you may scratch. But before scratching, be mindful of the intention or desire to scratch; and when you move your hand to the place where you experience the itch, be mindful of moving. Move your hand slowly, following the movement with mindfulness. When your fingers touch the place, say "touching, touching, touching." When you scratch, say "scratching, scratching, scratching." When you take the hand back, say "taking, taking, taking" or "moving, moving, moving." When your hand touches your lap, the knee or the other hand again, be mindful of touching, or say to yourself, "touching, touching, touching." Then go back to the breaths.

If you have painful or unpleasant feelings in the body—numbness, stiffness, or heat—focus your mind on the place of these feelings and be mindful of them. If you have pain somewhere in the body, focus on the place of that pain,

and be mindful of that pain, or say to yourself, "pain, pain, pain." You will have to be very patient with painful feelings. Pain will not easily go away. You have to be patient and be mindful of it. It may go away or it may become more acute. Stay with it as long as you can. Actually pain is a very good object for meditation. It is a strong object. Your mind is pulled towards the place where there is pain. So be mindful of it and try to see it just as a sensation, an unpleasant sensation. And it is important that you do not identify pain with yourself, so do not say to yourself, "it is *my* pain" or "*I* feel pain." There is just the pain, just the sensation. If the pain becomes so intense that you think you cannot bear it any longer, you may ignore pain altogether and go back to the breaths, or you may make movements or change posture to ease pain. But when you make movements or change posture, first note the intention to change, or be mindful of the intention to change and then make movements slowly, one at a time, following each movement with mindfulness. And when you have made the changes, go back to the breaths.

So the breaths are the home object of your meditation. Whenever there are no other objects to be mindful of, you just continue with being mindful of the breaths. If there are more prominent objects, then you take note of them, be aware of them, or be mindful of them, and then go back to the breaths. Do not use force, do not strain yourself, just calmly watch the objects, take note of them, or be mindful of them. Do not try to forcefully push distractions or emotions or feelings in the body away, just watch them and let them go by themselves.

SITTING MEDITATION: VIPASSANA

Movements of the Abdomen as Main Object

For some people, it is difficult to concentrate on the breath at the tip of the nose. Such people can keep their mind on the abdomen and be mindful of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. When you inhale, the abdomen extends or rises and when you exhale, it contracts or falls. These movements—rising and falling of the abdomen—can be the main object of meditation instead of the breaths. Keep your mind on the abdomen and be really mindful of the rising movement from the beginning to the end, and also of the falling movement from the beginning to the end. Your mind is like a jockey riding a horse, your mind and your abdomen are both moving. You may even put your hand on the abdomen to feel the rising and falling

movements. After some time, you may be able to follow the rising and falling movements without your hand on the abdomen. Here also, you may make mental notes as "rising, falling", "rising, falling", "rising, falling". The rest is the same as for taking the breaths as main object. The only difference is to substitute 'breaths' with 'movements of the abdomen'.

COMMON TO BOTH METHODS

Let your mindfulness be precise, i.e., going concurrently with the objects. Take only one object at a time; take the one which is most prominent and be mindful of it. If you cannot decide which is most prominent, choose just one and be mindful of it. What is important in this meditation is to be mindful of the object at the present moment; so whether you are mindful of the main object or the secondary object, so long as you are mindful, you are doing the right thing. Do not have any expectations, do not expect to experience something strange or to see visions or to get results or even to get concentration. Expectations are good because they motivate us to practice, but when we are right in the practice, they become obstacles to concentration. That is because they are a mild form of greed or attachment which is a hindrance to concentration. So if expectations come up in spite of yourself, do not be irritated by them, but just be mindful of them, or say to yourself, "expecting, expecting, expecting." Then go back to the breaths or the movements of the abdomen. When you practice mindfulness you make effort, mental effort; the effort you make thus must be neither too much nor too little; if you make too much effort, you will become agitated and you cannot concentrate; and if you make too little effort, you will become sleepy and again cannot concentrate. The effort you make must, therefore, be well balanced. If you miss to be mindful and then remember, then be mindful of that missing, or say to yourself, "missing, missing, missing", or "forgetting, forgetting, forgetting." Above all, do not be tight or tense in your mind; be relaxed, and calmly watch, or be mindful, or make mental notes.

WALKING MEDITATION

Having meditated for about thirty minutes or more, you may practice walking meditation. When you practice *Vipassana* meditation, it is important to keep mindfulness with you always. So, when you change from sitting to standing, keep mindfulness with you. Before standing up, therefore, be mindful of the intention to stand up or to get up. You may say to yourself "intention,

intention, intention," or "desire, desire, desire." Then get up slowly, keeping your mind on the whole of your body, or saying to yourself, "getting up, getting up, getting up." And when you are standing, be mindful of the standing position, or say to yourself, "standing, standing, standing."

When you walk, it is better to choose a walking path and stay on it. Walk on it back and forth. When you walk, you walk slowly, keeping your mind on the foot or rather the movements of the foot, being aware of at least four stages of each step. And keep your eyes down always.

In order to make a step, you first raise your foot. Keep your mind on the foot and be mindful of the raising or lifting, saying, "lifting." Then you push your foot forward, or you move your foot forward. Be mindful of that moving, saying to yourself, "moving." When you put your foot down on the floor, be mindful of the putting down, or just say, "putting." Then you shift weight to make the other step. Keep your mind on the whole body and say, "shifting." Then make the next step, being mindful of lifting, moving, putting down, and shifting, making movements slowly. Keep your eyes open and look at the floor about three or four feet in front of you. Do not close your eyes. You may fall if you close your eyes. Keep them a little open and look at the floor, or look down.

When you reach the end of the walking space, you stop and be mindful of stopping, or say to yourself, "stopping, stopping, stopping." When you want to turn around, be mindful of the desire or intention to turn around, or say to yourself, "intention, intention, intention," or "desire, desire, desire," and then you turn slowly. Be mindful of the turning movement, or say to yourself, "turning, turning, turning." Then walk again, taking note of the different stages in each step, lifting, moving, putting down, shifting, and so on, until you reach the other end of the walking space. Stop there and be mindful of stopping. When you turn around, be mindful of turning around and then walk again. Also, when you walk, you may keep your hands in front or in the back or on the sides. So, you walk back and forth until the end of the walking period.

[Walking meditation is designed to give exercise to the body. When you are practicing for half an hour or an hour, walking may not be necessary. But when you are on a retreat and practice the whole day, your body needs some kind of movement. Hence the walking meditation. At the end of the walking

period, the sitting period begins again. So you go back to the sitting place, walking slowly, making notes, being aware of the different stages and steps. Before lowering yourself down, be mindful of the desire to sit down. Then lower yourself down slowly, keeping your mind on the whole body. When the body touches the floor, say "touching, touching, touching." When you arrange your legs and hands, say "arranging, arranging, arranging." And then, go back to the breaths and be mindful of the in-breaths and out-breaths. This way, you alternate sitting and walking and maintain your mindfulness, trying not to lose it at any moment during the retreat.

During retreats, eating is also done with meditation, for everything has to be done with mindfulness. Even the activities in the bathroom should not escape your mindfulness.

For full instructions for practice at a retreat, please read "PRACTICAL VIPASSANA MEDITATIONAL EXERCISES" by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw.]

SHARING OF MERIT

After meditation, we share merit. It is a good practice to share merit with all beings whenever we have done some meritorious deeds.

Sharing of merit means letting other beings get chance to get merit themselves by having them rejoice at our merit. By rejoicing at our merit, they themselves get merit, and that merit of theirs is what gives them happy results. Our merit does not decrease when we share it; in fact, it increases, because sharing of merit is itself an act of merit which is *dana* or giving. Therefore, sharing of merit is beneficial to both the sharer and the recipient.

Please share merit as follows and say, "Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!" at the end:

May all beings share this merit
which we have thus acquired.
For the acquisition of
all kinds of happiness.

May beings inhabiting space and earth,

Deities and others of mighty power,
Share this merit of ours!
May they long protect the teachings.



FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

This is the *only way*, monks,

for the purification of minds of beings,
for overcoming sorrow and lamentation,
for the disappearance of pain and grief,
for reaching the Path,
for the realization of Nibbana,

namely, the Four foundations of Mindfulness.

What are the four? Herein, monks,

a monk dwells practicing
body-contemplation on the body,
ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful,
overcoming covetousness and grief in the world;

he dwells practicing

feeling-contemplation on feelings,
 ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful,
 overcoming covetousness and grief in the world;

he dwells practicing
 mind-contemplation on the mind,
 ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful,
 overcoming covetousness and grief in the world;

he dwells practicing
 dhamma-object contemplation on dhamma-objects,
 ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful,
 overcoming covetousness and grief in the world.

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CONTINUANCE OF THE TEACHING

Once the Venerable Ananda and the Venerable Bhadda lived at Pataliputta, in the Cock Monastery. In the evening, after the Venerable Bhadda had risen from his seclusion, he betook himself to the Venerable Ananda, and after he had exchanged friendly and polite greetings, he spoke to him:

"What, brother Ananda, is the cause, what is the reason by which, after the decease of the Perfect One, the Good Law does not continue for long? And what, brother, Ananda, is the cause, what is the reason by which, after the decease of the Perfect One, the Good Law continues for long?"

—"Well said, brother Bhadda, well said. Pleasing is your wisdom, pleasing your insight, excellent is your question.

"If, brother, the four Foundations of Mindfulness are not cultivated and not practiced regularly, the Good Law will not continue for long after the decease of the Perfect One. But, brother, if the four Foundations of Mindfulness are cultivated and practiced regularly, then the Good Law will continue for long after the decease of the Perfect One."

(From Samyutta Nikaya, The Heart of Buddhist Meditation, p.141.)

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