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HOW TO RADIATE GENERALLY USEFUL MEDITATION ON ALL OF THE BEINGS (SABBATTHAKAKAMMA ṬṬHĀNA)

Kundalacara

**Ph.D Research Scholar, Center for Mahayana Buddhist Studies,
Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.**

ABSTRACT:

People continually look for ways to increase their happiness, inner peace and harmony. According to public opinion, happiness is got through wealth, power, and social status. They look for solutions to their problems through their family, jobs, partners, friends, etc. They try to change external conditions in their physical, social and political environment this and that way, because they believe that when the world finally becomes perfect, they become happy and peaceful. Nevertheless they forget that conditions change all the time and unceasingly.



KEYWORDS: Loving-kindness, (*Mettā*), Mindfulness of Death (*Maranasatti*), Perception of Loathsomeness (*Asubhasaññā*).

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of Buddhism is *Nibbāna* (*Nirvāna* in Sanskrit) where all defilements and sufferings physical and mental are absolutely eradicated. In order to attain that there are various ways to practice in Buddhism and all these ways of practice were summarized as Noble Eightfold Path which can be more summarized in *Sīla* (morality), *Samādhi* (concentration) and *Paññā* (wisdom). To follow and practice this Noble Eightfold Path is nothing but meditation since only those who practice meditation can perfectly

achieve these threefold trainings, i.e, *Sīla*, *Samādhi* and *Paññā*. According to Buddhism, meditation is divided into two; Tranquility Meditation (*Samathabhāvanā*) and Insight Meditation (*Vipassanābhāvanā*). Regarding the former, in Buddhism, there are forty meditational objects (not ways or methods) of Tranquility Meditation and these should be described herein in brief. They are ten meditation devices (*Kasiṇa*), ten impurities or loathsome things (*Asubha*), ten reflections (*Anussati*), four sublime states (*Brahmavihāra*), four non-material (*Arūpa*)

realms, one perception (*Saññā*) and one analysis (*Vavatthāna*). The three kinds of Generally Useful Meditation (*Sabbatthakakammaṭṭhāna*), which are presented in this dissertation, include among them. But it must be admitted that the usage "*Sabbatthakakammaṭṭhāna*" cannot be found in early canonical texts, but in *Visuddhimagga*¹ and other commentaries such as *Samantapāsādikā*, etc., In which also, Venerable *Buddhaghosa* deals with just two categories; Loving-kindness (*Mettā*) and Mindfulness of Death

¹ . Vism. I. 96

(*Maranassati*). Moreover, it was also mentioned there that some say the Perception of Loathsomeness (*Asubhasaññā*) too. In others words, the classification of *Sabbatthakakammaṭṭhāna* into two is the opinion of Venerable *Buddhaghosa* and into three is that of others.

Here, *Sabbatthaka* means, "What is generally useful, which can be used every time and everywhere".² According to this interpretation, the last one of these three is not acceptable because it cannot be used at every time and everywhere. With regard to this, Venerable *Nārada* remarked in his "The Buddha and His Teachings" as follow;

"These kinds of corpses were found in ancient cemeteries and charnel places where dead bodies were not buried or cremated and where flesh-eating beasts and birds frequent". In modern days it is impossible to obtain such corpses as subjects for meditation".³

"The ten kinds of corpses were found in ancient Indian cemeteries where dead bodies were not buried or cremated where flesh-eating animals frequent. In modern days finding them is out of question"⁴.

In addition to that it is suitable only for those who possess an intellectual temperament while the other two of *Sabbatthakakammaṭṭhāna* are suitable for all, irrespective of temperament, i.e, for any person who has any kind of six temperaments, namely, Lustful Temperament (*Ragacarita*), Hateful Temperament (*Dosacarita*), Ignorant Temperament (*Mohacarita*), Devote Temperament (*Saddhācarita*), Intellectual Temperament (*Buddhicarita*) and Discursive Temperament (*Vitakkācarita*).

Anyhow, depended on *Visuddhimagga* as a centre, all these three kinds of *Sabbatthakakammaṭṭhāna* will be studied in this essay in three corresponding chapters. And I shall take relevant facts wherever it is necessary. Although this dissertation is not totally perfect, I hope it will be fruitful to some extent for those who are keen to search for knowledge of Buddhist meditation that ancient virtuous and noble persons practiced in their daily life.

CHAPTER ONE

Exposition of Loving-kindness (*Mettā*)

1:1. Radiation of loving-kindness

A person wanting to radiate loving-kindness must consider the evil consequences of anger as well as the benefits of forbearance.⁵

He must consider the evil consequences of anger thus: "An angry person loses the power of reasoning, and owing to his anger, he may commit crime as grave as killing others".⁶ He must also consider the benefits of forbearance thus; Forbearance is a noble practice.⁷ The Buddha regards a man of great forbearance as analogous to an *arahat* who has already discarded all mental intoxicants.⁸ No other *Dhamma* can surpass forbearance in preventing unbeneficial events and miseries and in bringing happiness and prosperity.⁹

1:2. Procedure of Radiating Loving-kindness

The following four persons should not be taken up first in radiating loving-kindness. They are:

- (1) unbeloved ones,
- (2) intimate friends,
- (3) neutral beings, and
- (4) enemies.

² . Ibid. I. 96

³ . B.T. 520

⁴ . Ibid. 530

⁵ .Vism. I. 283

⁶ .A. I. 72

⁷ .D. II. 290, Dhp. 184

⁸ .Dhp. 399, Sn. 628

⁹ .S. I. 250

Loving-kindness should not be also developed first towards beings of opposite sex. It should never be radiated towards the dead. Why should it not be developed first towards un-beloved persons and so on? To regard an un-beloved one as a dear one makes one tired. To be indifferent towards an intimate friend also makes one tired. To show respect and love towards a neutral person again makes one tired. Anger arises in him being thinking of his enemy. Lust arises in him when he tries to radiate loving-kindness towards a person of the opposite sex. Radiating loving-kindness towards the dead will not develop the mind even up to neighbourhood concentration.

1:3. To Whom Should One Radiate Loving-kindness First?

Before radiating loving-kindness to others, one must radiate it to oneself repeatedly as follows: "I want to be happy, be free from pain, be free from enmity, be free from all sufferings both mentally and physically. May I be able to strive for my happiness".¹⁰

Cultivation of loving-kindness should be given priority to oneself in order to develop one's sympathetic consideration for others.¹¹ Setting one as the witness, one considers thus; "As I want to be happy; other beings will also want to be happy; as I want to enjoy longevity, other beings will also want to enjoy longevity; as I want to be free from suffering, other beings will also want to be free from suffering. So, one must cultivate consideration for others."¹²

1:4. Persons to whom one should not Radiate Loving-kindness

1. Persons of opposite sex
2. Dead persons

Lust arises in him who radiates loving-kindness towards a particular person of the opposite sex. Radiating loving-kindness towards the dead will not develop the mind even up to neighbourhood concentration.

1:5. Radiating Loving-kindness to Beloved Ones

After cultivating loving-kindness repeatedly on oneself, one must radiate loving-kindness to one's venerable teachers, other persons as venerable as one's teachers, one's preceptor and other persons as venerable as one's preceptor. And, reflecting on the virtues of their morality, wisdom and other respectable qualities, one cultivates loving-kindness thus; "May this venerable teacher be happy. May he be free from suffering".

In the same way, one must keep on radiating loving-kindness to intimate friends, neither beloved nor unbeloved ones nor enemies.

1:6. How to Radiate Loving-kindness to Enemies

It has been mentioned that after radiating loving-kindness to neither beloved nor unbeloved ones, one must radiate it to an enemy.

When one is about to radiate loving-kindness to an enemy, one shall feel angry if one remembers his offences to oneself. Then one must radiate loving-kindness to the person, i.e., neither beloved nor unbeloved person on whom one has been permeating loving-kindness before. By doing so, he will be able to dispel the anger towards his enemy.¹³ If the anger does not subside, one should reflect on the Buddha's admonition: "One who feels angry and returns his anger upon the enemy, is more low-minded than the enemy. One who can forbear the offence and suppresses his anger towards the enemy achieves the greatest victory".¹⁴

¹⁰ .Vism. I. 284

¹¹ ..Ibid. I. 285

¹² .S. I. 119, Ud. 41

¹³ .Vism. I. 286

¹⁴ .M. I. 232, S. I. 188

And again, if one's anger does not subside yet, one must recall the admirable and lovable physical, verbal and mental qualities of one's enemy to eliminate one's anger. If the enemy does not possess admirable physical, verbal and mental qualities, one should dispel one's anger by developing compassion thus: "this person is born as a human being only in this life. He will be surely reborn in a miserable realm in his future existence".¹⁵

If one's anger still persists, one must overcome it by reflecting on the Buddha's admonition: "An enemy had insulted me with anger. Drive this anger away. Why am I exhausting myself by being angry with him? One may further console oneself by contemplating: "My enemy and I are conditioned by the law of *kamma*"¹⁶ or by following the example of the *Bodhisatta* in *Jātaka* stories: "King of elephant, *Chadanta*, forgave the hunter being shooting him with an arrow to kill him, cut off his tusk and gave it to the hunter.¹⁷ Again the monkey king, the *Bodhisatta*, saved a man who had fallen into a ravine while he had lost his way in search of his missing cow. Although that man hit his head with a stone to kill him, he forgave him and guided him safely to the right way".¹⁸

"When the dragon king, *Bhūridatta*, the *Bodhisatta*, was tortured by the Brahmin snake-charmer in various ways, he forbore the pain and did his best for the charmer's welfare even though he could kill the Brahmin with his scorching nasal air".¹⁹

If one's anger still remains active one must reflect on the benefits of permeating loving-kindness, such as enjoying a sound sleep, waking up peacefully, etc.²⁰

If one's anger still does not subside, one must reflect thus: "Now, am I angry with my enemy's hair? Or, am I angry about his nails? Or, am I angry at the element of extension (*pathavī dhātu*), which exists in every part of his body? Or, am I angry with the element of cohesion (*āpo dhātu*), or the element of heat (*tejo dhātu*), or the element of motion (*vāyo dhātu*), etc.?"

If one cannot analyze the enemy into four elements, one can eliminate one's anger by exchanging gifts with the enemy or if he earns his giving by improper means by giving him presents for one should not receive anything obtained by improper means.

When one can extinguish one's anger towards one's enemy by any means mentioned above, one will feel affectionate towards that enemy just like towards beloved ones, intimate friends and neither beloved nor unbeloved ones. When this happens, one has to radiate loving-kindness towards him repeatedly.²¹

After that, one must make attempts to maintain loving-kindness equally on the four types of person, viz., oneself, intimate friend, neutral person and enemy.

Suppose these four types of persons are staying together when dacoits come and ask them: "Give one of you to us. We will cut his throat and offer his blood as a sacrifice to God". If one wishes to offer oneself of anyone of the remaining three persons, one does not possess unbounded benevolence towards these four types of person equally.

The reason is that when one is willing to give away one of the four to the dacoits, one is being partial to the remaining three as against the one who is going to be sacrificed. Only when can one maintain equal benevolence towards all the four, he is said to have broken all barriers which separate between love and unloved ones, and to have developed impartial loving-kindness towards all beings. At this state, one is said to have attained the neighbourhood concentration, which is called *Upacāra-jhāna*. If one keeps on radiating loving-kindness, one will attain the first *jhāna*, the second *jhāna*, the third *jhāna* and the fourth *jhāna*.²²

¹⁵ .Vism. I. 288, 289

¹⁶ .A. II. 174

¹⁷ .Jā. I. 16, 124

¹⁸ .Ibid. I. 16, 205, 206, 209

¹⁹ .Cp. II. 16

²⁰ .A. III. 15

²¹ .Vism. I. 296, 297

²² .Vism. I. 297, 298

One who has attained *jhānas* can radiate loving-kindness effectively to all beings without specification (*Anodhisopharaṇa mettā*), to all beings with specification (*Odhisopharaṇa mettā*) and to all beings living in all directions (*Disāpharaṇa mettā*).²³

1:7. Radiating Loving-kindness to All Beings without Specification (*Anodhisopharaṇa Mettā Bhāvanā*)

Anodhisopharaṇa mettā means loving-kindness radiated to all beings without specifying them as male, female, etc.

The method of pervading loving-kindness without specification is as follows:²⁴

1. (a) *Sabbe sattā averā hontu* = May all beings be free from danger.
- (b) *Sabbe sattā abyāpajjā hontu* = May all beings be free from mental suffering.
- (c) *Sabbe sattā anīghā hontu* = May all beings be free from physical suffering
- (d) *Sabbe sattā sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu* = May all beings be able to maintain themselves happily.
2. *Sabbe pāṇā averā hontu* = May all sentient beings be free from danger, etc.
3. *Sabbe bhūta averā hontu* = May all existing beings be free from danger, etc.
4. *Sabbe puggalā averā hontu* = May all individuals be free from danger, etc.
5. *Sabbe attabhāva pariyāpannā averā hontu* = May all those who have come into existence be free from danger, etc.

No. (2) (3) (4) and (5) must be pervaded in four ways as shown in No. (1).

Therefore, there are altogether (5x 4=20) twenty ways of *Anodhisopharaṇa mettā bhāvanā*. Although different terms, *satta, pāṇa, bhūta, puggala, attabhāvapariyāpanna*, are used they all mean all beings.²⁵

1:8. Radiating Loving-kindness to All Beings with Specifications (*Odhisopharaṇa Mettā Bhāvanā*)

Odhisopharaṇa mettā means loving-kindness, which is pervaded to all beings specifying them as male, female, noble persons, worldlings, etc.

The method of pervading loving-kindness with specification is as follows:²⁶

1. (a) *Sabbā itthiyo averā hontu* = May all female beings be free from danger.
- (b) *Sabbā itthiyo abyāpajjā hontu* = May all female beings be free from mental suffering.
- (c) *Sabbā itthiyo anīghā hontu* = May all female beings be free from physical suffering.
- (d) *Sabbā itthiyo sukhī attānaṃ Pariharantu* = May all female beings be able to maintain themselves happily.

²³ .Vbh. 642, D. I. 556, Ps. 22

²⁴ ..Ps. 304

²⁵ . Vism. I. 300

²⁶ . Ps. 304

2. <i>Sabbe purisā averā hontu</i>	=May all male beings be free from danger, etc.
3. <i>Sabbe ariyā averā hontu</i>	=May all noble persons be free from danger, etc.
4. <i>Sabbe anariyā averā hontu</i>	= May all worldlings be free from danger, etc.
5. <i>Sabbe devā averā hontu</i>	= May all celestial beings (<i>devas</i> and <i>brahmas</i>) be free from danger, etc.
6. <i>Sabbe manussā averā hontu</i>	= May all human beings be free from danger, etc.
7. <i>Sabbe vinipātikā averā hontu</i>	= May all miserable beings in <i>apāya</i> be free from danger, etc.

All must be pervaded with *mettā* as shown in No (1). Thus, *Odhisopparaṇa mettā bhāvanā* amounts to (7x 4=28) twenty-eight ways

1:9. Disāpharaṇa Mettā Bhāvanā

Disāpharaṇa mettā means loving-kindness radiated to all beings in all ten directions. It is radiated as follows:²⁷

1. (a) May all beings in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, and physical suffering and be able to maintain them happily.
- (b) May all sentient beings in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (c) May all existing beings in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (d) May all individuals in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (e) May all those who have come into existence in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (f) May all female beings in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (g) May all male beings in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (h) May all noble persons in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (i) May all world lings in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (j) May all celestial beings (*devas* and *brahmas*) in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (k) May all human beings in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.
- (l) May all miserable beings in *apāya* in the east be free from danger, mental suffering, physical suffering and be able to maintain themselves happily.

In the same way, one must radiate loving-kindness to all beings in other nine directions – west, north, south, south-east, north-west, north-east, south-west, lower direction and upper direction (in 12 ways in each direction). Those who have not attained *jhāna* can also radiate loving-kindness in this way.

A person who radiates loving-kindness in one of those ways will enjoy the following benefits:²⁸

- (1) He enjoys sound sleep.

²⁷ . Ps. 304

²⁸ . Ps. 304, A. III. 307, Jā.A. II. 49

- (2) He wakes up peacefully.
- (3) He does not have bad dreams.
- (4) He is loved by human beings.
- (5) He is loved by celestial beings.
- (6) He is guarded by celestial beings.
- (7) He is not fallen by fire, poison and weapons.
- (8) He can develop concentration quickly.
- (9) His face is serene and cheerful.
- (10) He dies without bewilderment.
- (11) He will be reborn in the *brahma* realm when he dies.

1:10. Special Notes on Loving-kindness

It is mentioned above that there are 20 ways of radiating *anodhisoppharaṇa mettā* and 28 ways of radiating *odhisoppharaṇa mettā*. So there are 48 ways of radiating loving-kindness without specifying direction. When they are radiated in ten

directions, we get $48+10=480$ ways of radiating loving-kindness. Combining them together, we get $48+480=528$ ways of radiating loving-kindness.²⁹

This method of radiating loving-kindness in 528 modes is described in *Paṭṭisambhidā magga Pāli*. It can be practiced effectively only by those who have attained *jhānas*. “Those who have not attained any *jhāna*, can also practice this method to gain merit by meditation. However, for beginners, it will be difficult even to develop concentration, because the object of meditation is very widespread. Thus, one should develop *jhānas* by radiating loving-kindness to a specified person first, and then to other persons.

According to the method used by the Buddha in pervading loving-kindness to *Pañcavaggi* (group of five ascetics)³⁰ and to the elephant *Nāḷagīri* as described in the Commentaries on the life of the Buddha, *Apadāna* and *Jātakas*,³¹ the best way for beginners is to visualize the person whom he wishes to suffuse with loving-kindness from head to toe and pervade him with intense loving-kindness from head to toe and pervade him with intense loving-kindness by contemplating repeatedly: “ May he be free from danger; may he be well and happy”.

CHAPTER TWO

Exposition of Mindfulness of Death (*Maranassati*)

Mindfulness of Death

Maranānussati means mindfulness of the death of a living being.

2:1. Four Kinds of Death

There are four kinds of death:

1. Death, which is the cutting-off of life faculty limited by one existence.
2. Death, which is the cutting-off the death of an *Arahat*, i.e, the cutting- off the misery of the round of rebirth.
3. Momentary Death, which is the momentary dissolution of the conditioned phenomena.
4. Death in conventional usage in such expression as ‘dead tree’, ‘dead metal’, and so on.³²

Out of these four, one should meditate only the death which is the cutting-off the life faculty. One who wishes to develop his mind should contemplate in seclusion and solitude either by looking at the dead body which lies in a cemetery, or by recalling the dead of a wealthy person. Then he must meditate

²⁹ .Vism. I. 301

³⁰ .Ap.A. 94, 131, Bv.A. 335, Jā.A. I. 91, Jā.A V.330, Vin. IV

³¹ . Jā.A. V. 330, Ap.A. 131

³² . Vism. I. 220

wisely thus: "Likewise, I shall have to die", "Likewise, I shall have to die" or "There is such a thing as death", "There is such a thing as death". This is the proper way of meditation.³³

If one reflects on the death of some beloved one, one will be sad. If one reflects on the death of an unbeloved one, one will be glad. If one recalls the death of someone to whom one is indifferent, one will not be remorseful or agitated. If one reflects on one's own death, one will be frightened. All this happens to one because of the lack of mindfulness, apprehension and knowledge. Therefore, it is very important for a meditator to reflect on death in a proper way.³⁴

Only when a meditator reflects on death in the right way, will he enjoy good benefits such as attaining *Upacāra Jhāna*, being free from *lobha*, *dosa*, etc., truly understanding the nature of death from which no one can escape and being diligent in performing good deeds, etc.

2:2. Eight Ways of Reflection on Death

There are eight ways of reflection on death. They are:

1. Reflecting on death as a murderer,
2. Reflecting on the nature of dissolution of what has arisen,
3. Reflecting on one's own death by seeing the example of an other's death,
4. Reflecting on the various dangers to one's body that can cause death,
5. Reflecting that no one can know in advance when he will die and of what reflecting on the impermanence of existence,
6. Disease he will die,
7. Reflecting on the shortness of life-span,
8. Reflecting on the fact that in the ultimate sense, the life of beings lasts only for a single moment.³⁵

2:2:1. Reflecting on Death as a murderer

One should reflect on death thus: "As a murderer with sword in hand approaches one, saying, 'I will kill you' death also approaches one. As a mushroom bud grows up carrying soil on its top, beings are also born carrying ageing and death."

Moreover, one must also reflect on death repeatedly thus: "As a mass of cloud move forward without stopping for a moment, as the risen sun goes towards its own setting without turning back in the slightest degree from its way, as a water-fall flows down from the mountains without stopping for a moment, man once conceived within his mother's womb also goes continuously towards death without pausing for a moment.³⁶ Again a meditator must reflect thus:

"Just as days and nights gradually pass by, just as the water of streams and rivers dry up day by day in summer, the lives of all beings will gradually come to and end. Just as ripe fruits will certainly fall from trees, all beings will surely die one day. Just as the earthen pots made by potters will break finally, all beings must die finally. Just as the dew on blades of grass vanishes easily because of the heat of the sun, the lives of all beings will be destroyed easily because of the nature of impermanence of life."³⁷

2:2:2. Reflection on the Nature of Dissolution of what has arisen

One should reflect on wholeness and dissolution in pair like this: "In this world wholeness exists so long as dissolution does not overcome it. In reality wholeness without dissolution does not exist," Further, one should also reflect on death thus:

"Health ends in sickness, youthfulness ends in old age, and life ends in death. All beings in the world are followed by the danger of rebirth, always approached by the danger of ageing, oppressed by the danger of sickness, struck down by the danger of death. Just as huge rock mountains which reach up

³³ . Ibid. I. 221

³⁴ . Ibid. I. 221

³⁵ . Vism. I. 222

³⁶ . Ibid. 222, Jā. I. 15, 363

³⁷ . S. I. 146, Sn. 581-582, Jā. I. 11, 79

to the sky roll down crushing and grinding everything in the east, west, south and north, ageing and death also roll down, crushing all beings including kings, princes, Brahmins, merchants, householders, poor men, beggars, etc. No fighting in battles or bribery can win over death.³⁸

2:2:3. Reflecting on one's own Death by seeing the Example of another's Death

One should reflect on death by seeing the example of others' death thus: "In this world, those who have many followers, those who possessed great glory and merit, those who are mighty, those who have great power, those who have wisdom, *Pacceka Buddhas* (the lesser *Buddhas*), and the Fully Enlightened Buddha, all fall into death's power. So how should I be free from it? I will surely die one day."

One should keep on contemplation repeatedly thus: "Although the king Mandātu, because of having great number of followers and immense treasure, were very outstanding, yet death inevitably caught up with them in the end. So how should I be free from death? And I will surely die one day.

Even the possessor of great merit like the rich man *Jotika*, *Jaṭila*, *Ugga*, *Meṇḍaka*, *Puṇṇaka*, *Anāthapiṇḍika*, etc., all died, what need is there (to speak) of a man like me. Even *Vāsudeva* and *Baladeva*, those of great strength, died at last, what need is there (to speak) of a man like me?

Even the second Chief Disciple *Mahāmoggalāna*, who was the foremost among those possessed of supernormal powers, who could shake *Vejayanta* terrace mansion with his foot, died, what need is there (to speak) of a man like me?

Excepting the Buddha, even the Venerable *Sāriputta* who was the foremost one in wisdom fell into death's power too, what need is there (to speak) of a man like me?³⁹

All *Pacceka Buddhas* (lesser *Buddhas*) those who by the strength of their own knowledge and energy destroyed all the defilements, are not free from death, what need is there (to speak) of a man like me?

Even the *Buddha* who is the Supreme Enlightened One knowing all that should be known was not free from death, what need is there (to speak) of a man like me?

2:2:4. Reflecting on the Dangers of the Body

A meditator reflects on death thus: "My body is shared by eighty kinds of worms. They eat various parts of my body. In my body, they are born; they grow old and die, defecate and urinate. My body is shared by many internal worms and is subjected to various diseases; there are also snakes, scorpions and other external dangers. Because of these dangers, I may die anytime."⁴⁰

2:2:5. Reflecting on the Impermency of Life

One reflects on death thus: "The life of beings is bound up with inhalation and exhalation, with the four postures, with cold and heat, with the four primary elements, and with nutriment. Life goes on only when it has a regular functioning of the breath inhaled and the breath exhaled. When the breath going out from the nose does not enter the body or when the breath which has gone inside does not come out again, then one is reckoned to be dead. Again, life proceeds when it gets a regular functioning of the four postures. Through excess of any one of these, the life process is interrupted. And life functions when it has a balanced measure of heat and cold. When one is oppressed by excessive heat, one is liable to die. Again, life can function when it has a balanced measure of the four primary elements. When one of the four elements fails, one will suffer from any kind of disease and die. Life also functions when enough nutriment is at the proper time; not getting food, life comes to an end.

³⁸ . Vism. I. 224, S. I. 136

³⁹ . Vism. I. 225-226

⁴⁰ . Ibid. I. 227, A. II. 20

2:2:6. Reflecting on the Unpredictability of Death

A meditator reflects on the five kinds of unpredictableness of death thus: "All beings can die even in his mother's womb or at the time of birth, or within the life-span or beyond life-span. No one can know at what age, with what disease at what time, he will die; at what place his dead body will be buried and where he will be reborn after his death."⁴¹

2:2:7. Reflecting on the Shortness of Life Span

A meditator should reflect on the shortness of life span thus: "The life span of man in the present times is of short duration. One who lives long can live only a hundred years, or a little more. So, everyone should perform meritorious deeds and take up the noble practice. Anyone who has been born will surely die."⁴²

2:2:8. Reflecting on the Shortness of Life Moment

A meditator should reflect on the shortness of human life thus: "In the ultimate sense, the life moment of a living being is extremely short. The life of a living being lasts only for a single conscious moment. When that consciousness has ceased, that being is said to be dead."⁴³

When a meditator repeatedly reflects on death in any of the ways mentioned above, he will be accustomed to that reflection, and mindfulness will be established with death as its object, the hindrances will be discarded and the neighbourhood concentration of *jhāna* will be attained.

2:3. The Benefits of Reflection on Death

A meditator who reflects on death will gain the following benefits:

1. Being always zealous,
2. Acquiring the concept of absence of delight in all forms of existence,
3. Giving up hankering after life,
4. Condemning evil deeds,
5. Not craving for the requisites of life and lacking stinginess,
6. Contemplating the nature of impermanence, suffering and non-self,
7. Dying without fear and bewilderment,
8. being reborn in a good destination unless he attains *Nibbāna* in this very life.⁴⁴

Therefore, everyone should diligently reflect on death (*Maranassati Kammaṭṭhāna*) which can produce great benefits.

CHAPTER THREE

Exposition of Perception of Loathsomeness (*AsubhasaGGā*)

3:1. Ten *Asubhas*

Asubha means foulness or loathsomeness. Foul or loathsome corpses are called '*Asubha*'. The ten kinds of *Asubha* are:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>Uddhumātaka</i> | = a rotten and bloated corpse two or three days after death; |
| 2. <i>Vinīlaka</i> | = a discoloured corpse which becomes brownish black; |
| 3. <i>Vipubbaka</i> | = a festering corpse with cracked skin and pus oozing out; |
| 4. <i>Vicchiddaka</i> | = a corpse which has been cut into two or three pieces; |
| 5. <i>Vikkhāyitaka</i> | = a corpse which has been gnawed and eaten by dogs, crows, vultures, etc; |

⁴¹ .Vism. I. 228-229

⁴² . Ibid. I. 230, S. I. 145, A. II. 19

⁴³ . Vism. I. 230, Nd. I. 39

⁴⁴ . Vism. I. 231

6. <i>Vikkhittaka</i>	= a corpse which has been mangled and scattered and into pieces;
7. <i>Hatavikkhittaka</i>	= a corpse which has been cut and mutilated by knife, axe, etc., and thrown away as fragments;
8. <i>Lohitaka</i>	= a bloodied corpse;
9. <i>Puḥuvaka</i>	= a worm-infested corpse and
10. <i>Aṭṭhika</i>	= a skeleton. ⁴⁵

3:2. The Procedure of Contemplating the Loathsomeness of a Corpse

There are ten ways of meditation on loathsomeness depending upon various conditions of the corpse. Here, the way of meditation on loathsomeness of the body will be described.

A meditator first seeks the place where the corpse lies. When he hears that there is a swollen corpse that has been thrown away at such and such a place, he should not go to that place at once. The reason is that he may encounter ogres or wild beasts there. He should inform his intention to some reliable person such as a well-known *bhikkhu*. By doing so he can receive his help if he encounters danger.⁴⁶

When he goes to the corpse, he should contemplate the object of meditation, which he used to contemplate, holding a walking stick to ward off danger (from jackals, etc., noting the path as he goes). He should not approach the corpse against the wind. If he has to go against the wind, he should cover his nose with the corner of his robe. When he arrives at the place where the corpse lies, he should not sit against the wind; neither should he sit with the wind nor near the head or feet of the corpse. He should sit by the side of the corpse neither too far nor too close to the feet and the head of the corpse. He should sit neither too far nor too near, neither too close to the feet nor too close to the head of the corpse.

After sitting at a suitable place, he notes the trees, the stumps, the bushes, the stones, the anthill, etc., which lie around the corpse, and differentiates them from the corpse. He should note in pairs such as “this is the corpse and that is the tree: this is the corpse and that is the tree stump, this is the corpse and that is the stone”.

He should then group the disgusting nature of the corpse in six ways: (1) by its colour (*vaṇṇa*), (2) by its sign (*liṅga*) (3) by its shape (*saṅghāna*), (4) by its direction (*disā*), (5) by its location (*okāsa*) (6) by its limitation (*pariccheda*). How?⁴⁷

The meditator should characterize the corpse thus: “This is the body of one who is black or white or yellow skinned (*vaṇṇa*). This is the body of one who was in the first phase of life, in the middle phase or in the last phase (*liṅga*)”. As to the shape of the corpse, he determines thus: “This is the shape of its head, this is the shape of its neck, this is the shape of its stomach, this is the shape of its navel, this is the shape of its hips, this is the shape of its thigh, this is the shape of its calf, this is the shape of its feet (*saṅghāna*)”. He should define it by its direction thus: “There are two regions in this corpse, that is, the upper region from the navel upward, and the lower region from the navel downwards”. In other way, he can define it thus; “I am in the north direction, the corpse is in the south direction (*disā*)”. He should define it by its location thus; “Here are the hands, here are the feet, here is the head, here is the middle part (*okāsa*)”. He should define it by its limitation thus: “This body is delimited below by the soles of the feet, above by the hair of the head, and all round by the skin: the space so limited is filled up with thirty-two impure parts of the body (*pariccheda*)”.

If he fails to develop the perception of loathsomeness by contemplating the corpse in six ways as mentioned above, he should reflect on the corpse in five more ways; by its joints (*sandhi*), by its aperture (*vivara*), by its low parts (*ninna*), by its high parts (*thala*), and by its all sides; these are the elbow-joints in the backbone, these are the thigh-joints, these are the knee-joints, these are the ankle-

⁴⁵ . Vism. I. 170

⁴⁶ . Ibid. I. 173

⁴⁷ . Vism. I. 175-176

joints. With respect to apertures, he should define thus: "These are apertures between the hands, below the legs, inside of the belly, in the ears. He should determine the closing or the opening of the eyes, and the closing or the opening of the mouth (*vivara*). As to the low parts (*ninna*) he should determine whatever place in the body is low, whether it is the eye-socket, or the mouth-cavity, or the gullet. As to the high parts (*thala*), he should determine whatever place in the body is high, whether it is the knee, or the breast, or the forehead. With respect to the whole body of the corpse (*samanta*) he should determine thus: "This is the swollen corpse; this is the swollen upper part of the corpse; this is the swollen part of the stomach".⁴⁸

These are the ways to contemplate the nature of loathsomeness of the corpse which has lasted for two or three days after death.

After being swollen and bloated, the corpse becomes red, white, brown and black in patches on the skin. The fleshy parts become red; the parts where the pus has gathered become white; and the remaining parts generally turn brownish black. At this state, the corpse is known as *Vinilaka*.

Then cracks appear in the skin of the corpse with the pus oozing out of the cracks. The corpse is now known as "*Vipubbaka*".

If the corpse has been cut into two or three pieces, it is known as "*Vicchiddaka*".

If the corpse has been gnawed and mangled by dogs, vultures and crows, it is called: "*Vikkhāyitaka*".

If the corpse has been mangled and scattered into pieces by dogs, vultures, and crows it is called "*Vikkhittaka*".

If the corpse has been mutilated and cut by knife, axe etc., and thrown away as fragments, it is known as "*Hatavikkhittaka*".

If the corpse is smeared by blood all over the body, it is called "*Lohitaka*".

If the corpse has become worm-infested, it is known as "*Puḥvaka*".

When the corpse has been reduced to a skeleton, it is known as "*Aṭṭhika*".

While a meditator is contemplating the disgusting nature of the corpse, he may have the illusion that he corpse stands up, towers over him and chases him. She may be so frightened that he may become insane. Therefore summoning up his courage and controlling his mind with mindfulness, he should reason thus; " As inanimate things such as the rock, the ant-hill and the tree do not move and remain stationary at their places, even so the corpse does not stand up, does not move and does not chase a person. In reality, it is merely the object of meditation on loathsomeness which appears in his imagination".⁴⁹

3:3. How to Contemplate the Loathsomeness of a Living Body

The method of contemplating the loathsomeness of a corpse mentioned above can be used for contemplating the loathsomeness of a living body such as swollen living body, pus oozing living body, and bloody living body. In reality, a living body is as foul as a dead body. People, who are clouded by the darkness of ignorance, regard the body to be desirable, lovely and pleasant because the body is decorated with various adornments. But by nature the body is an aggregate of bones, tendons, flesh which are knitted with a wet skin and covered by integument. It is also a resort of multitudes of worms, abode of disease, and the basis of suffering. The excrement, urine, mucus of the nose, saliva, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat oozing out from the nine doors and from the hairy sockets of a living body are as repulsive as those which are not yet flowing out. If the body is not adorned with various beautifying means, it will be seen as impure, smelling and loathsome and there is no difference between the body of a king, a beggar and a body of an outcast. If the body is skinned and the flesh exposed, it will be quite a job to drive away vultures and crows, which come to gnaw it.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ . Vism. I. 177, Vism. T. I. 193

⁴⁹ . Vism. I. 178-179

⁵⁰ . Vism. I. 186

If one can reflect on the truly repulsive nature of the body for just a short moment while cleaning the impurities of one's body, one will surely gain many benefits.

According to the Myanmar saying "the merit which can be attained by going once to a funeral in order to reflect on the repulsive body is equal to the merit which can be attained by going ten times to a monastery in order to make the act of charity and to observe the moral precepts." Every Buddhist must try to realize the repulsive nature of the body by attending funerals.

3:4. How to Meditate on a Skeleton

The practice of meditation on the skeleton means reflecting on the repulsiveness of the bones, those that are one of thirty-two parts of the body. This kind of practice is called *aṭṭhika asubha kammaṭṭhāna*.

Here meditating on a skeleton means reflecting on all bones of the body excluding the teeth. A meditator can reflect on one bone or all bones or skeleton. One who contemplates the repulsiveness of the skeleton must learn the name of thirty-two parts of the body by heart and must reflect on them several times first. This is because the bones are constituent parts of the thirty-two parts of the body.

3:4:1. The Procedure of Meditating on the Loathsomeness of a Skeleton

A meditator who wants to meditate on a skeleton must first reflect thoroughly on the bones. Secondly he must note the characteristics of the bones, their colour, shape, etc. Thirdly he must reflect on the loathsomeness of the colour, etc.⁵¹ The method of meditation on the skeleton is as follows: A meditator should meditate thus:

(a) Nothing is desirable and pleasant inside my body.

(b) There exist only repulsive bones. This is the brief method. In detailed practice he should reflect repeatedly thus:

"Nothing is desirable and pleasant inside my body. Indeed the bone of the big toe, the bone of the second toe, the bone of the middle toe, the bone of the fourth toe, the bone of the little toe, the bone of right leg, the bone of left leg, those which are formed together inside the instep, the bones of the right and the left hand, the soft bones inside the body, the bone of the right and the left ribs, the bones of the spine, the bones on the right and left the chest, the skull, the neck-bones, the right and left ankle bones, the right and the left knee bones, the right and the left knee joints, the right and the left thigh-bones, the right and the left arms-bone, the right and the left collar-bones, the bones of the upper and the lower jaws, the ear-bones, the eye-bones, the forehead-bone, the bone of the crown, etc., exist inside my body".⁵²

3:4:2. Contemplating the Characteristics of the Skeleton

A meditator proceed his contemplation of the skeleton thus: "All of the bones are white in colour and different in shape; the bones of front-toe-joints are bigger in the end and smaller in the middle part; the neck bone of the middle joint resembles the seed of the jack-fruit, the bone of third joint resembles a small drum, the bone of the fourth joint resembles a land-lily bud with its top cut off, the bone of the fifth joint resembles a land-lily bud with its base and top cut off, the bones of the sixth and seventh joint resemble a land-lily bud which is cut off at its stalk.

The heel-bone resembles a shell of a toddy palm fruit with a slight curve; the ankle-bone resembles two small marbles put together; the shins rest on the knee-joint which is of concave shape resembling the peeled sprout of the march-date palm; the minor shin bone resembles the shank of a small bow, the major shin-bone resembles the withered back of a snake, the knee-bones are convex on top and concave below resembling multi-perforated piece of foam.

The thigh-bone resembles a slightly twisted-handle of axe; where the thigh-bone meets the hip-bone, the shape of the bone resembles a disc shaped nut with which children play; where the thigh-

⁵¹ . Vism. I. 183

⁵² . M. III. 135, M. I. 75

bone and the hip bone meet the shape of the bone resembles a big truncated *punnāga* fruit, each of the hip-bones resembles the strap of a blacksmith's hammer, etc. The meditator keeps on contemplating the other bones in the same manner mentioned above.

The shape of a skeleton resembles a scarecrow figure knitted and wound around by rattan twine, stuffed with straw and smeared with wet cow-dung (*Saññhāna*). The bones are present in both the upper and the lower region. They are placed over the whole body. The bones of the head are joined to those of the neck, the bones of the neck to the back-bones, the back-bones to the hip-bones, the hip-bones to the thigh-bones, the thigh-bones to the knee-bones, the knee-bones to the shin-bones, the shin-bones to the ankle-bones, the ankle-bones to the bones of the upper part of the foot. The remaining bones are also joined to their respective bones and flesh (*Okāsa*).

Although the head bones are connected with the brain, flesh, blood, marrow, oil of the joint, they do not mingle with them. The head bones remain separately.

A meditator must contemplate repeatedly on the bones thus: "Although the bones are placed on together like the other constituents parts of the body such as hair, they constitute separate parts of the body (*Pariccheda*).⁵³

3:5. Visualized Image (*Uggaha-nimitta*)

As mentioned above, one meditates repeatedly on the original object of meditation by reciting verbally or mentally. When he has bone, the color, the direction, the position (*Okāsa*), and the limitation (*Pariccheda*) of the bones gradually appear in the mind, as they really exist in nature as if they were seen with the naked eyes. This is called the visualized image (*Uggahanimitta*). Here, the *Uggaha-nimitta* is an exact mental replica of the original object. It means the object, which arises clearly and distinctly in the mind of a meditator as a visualized object.

3:6. Meditating on the Object to gain Repulsive Perception

Then, a meditator continues his meditation as follows, so that the repulsive perception appears. The bones in my body resemble the skin of a person who suffers from leucoderma. It is the same as a skeleton without flesh and sinews that lies in a cemetery. Thus they have a very repulsive colour (*vaṇṇa*).

The bones of my body have remained in my mother's womb amidst stench of the flesh and blood, urine and excrement for nine or ten months. They have never been washed since that time till now. Thus they have a foul smell (*gandha*).

The bones of my body resemble the bones of a corpse which have been bitten and gnawed by crows, vultures and dogs and consequently they have no flesh and sinew but are smeared with rotten blood, urine and excrement. Thus, they have a very repulsive appearance (*saññhāna*).

The impure parts of the body such as the flesh, the blood, and the bone arise out of the internal and external nutriment. They resemble the vines, which grow out of the excrement-pit. So they are very repulsive with respect to the cause of their arising. (*Āsaya*)

The bones of my body are in contact with the thirty-two constituent parts of the body. They resemble the spears and the sticks, which are planted in the excrement-pit near the gate of the beggars' village. Thus, they are very repulsive with respect to their location (*Okāsa*).

Thus, the bones are repulsive with respect to their colour, smell, appearance, cause, and location. Therefore one meditates on bones repeatedly thus: these bones are not a person or being. There is no difference between the bones of a living being and the bones of a dead body. Indeed, in the ultimate sense, there is nothing, which can be designated as bones. They represent one part of the thirty-two constituent parts of the body. They are neither a being nor a soul.⁵⁴

3:7. Conceptualized Image (*Paññhāga-nimitta*)

⁵³ . Vism. I. 182

⁵⁴ . Vism. I. 183

When one meditates on bones repeatedly in the above-mentioned way, one will visualize one's skeleton as repulsive as the skeleton of a corpse. It is called conceptualized image (*Pañbhāga-nimitta*). Here, *Pañbhāga-nimitta* means just a similar image of the original object. In fact, *Pañbhāganimitta* is exactly the same in the shape and size as *Uggahanimitta*. However, the meditator visualizes it as if the skeleton were inserted into his body, as if the head bone of the corpse were inserted into his head bone. Then, as he reflects on it from the head bone to the leg bones again and again, from the leg bones to the head bone whenever he looks at all persons, he visualizes them as the skeleton only. If he visualizes like this, the *Pañbhāganimitta* becomes more and more vivid. The conceptualized image is as distinct as a white heron flying out of dark clouds.

When a meditator contemplates the conceptualized image again and again, he will attain the first *jhāna*.⁵⁵

If a meditator attains *Uggahanimitta*, *Pañbhāganimitta*, he must proceed his contemplation with perseverance until he attains the first *jhāna*. By doing so, he will surely attain the first *jhāna*.

CONCLUSION

People continually look for ways to increase their happiness, inner peace and harmony. According to public opinion, happiness is got through wealth, power, and social status. They look for solutions to their problems through their family, jobs, partners, friends, etc. They try to change external conditions in their physical, social and political environment this and that way, because they believe that when the world finally becomes perfect, they become happy and peaceful. Nevertheless they forget that conditions change all the time and unceasingly. Just before the fulfillment of their dreams, things change and the promise of happiness fades away like the morning mist at daybreak. The harder worker tries to reach out for happiness, the more it seems so elusive like a fluttering butterfly which is enticingly near, but impossible to catch.

The catch is that most people adopt the wrong ways to find peace and harmony. They seek them outside themselves into the external world, instead of looking within themselves. Many people are beginning to discover the real sources of their happiness and troubles in their mind. And, to turn their attention to the 'inner mind', the mind, meditation is the way. The task of meditation is to understand the nature of the mind and to use it effectively in daily life. The mind is the key to be happiness and also the key to be misery. To understand the mind and use it well is a task that transcends racial, cultural and religious barriers. Meditation can indeed be practiced by anyone regardless of his or her religious label.

Samatha is a method of training the mind for those who like to develop their concentration. Samatha meditation is concerned with producing a one-pointed. A one-pointed mind is the opposite of a distracted or scattered mind. Ordinarily our mental states are scattered in all directions but if the concentration is fixed on one object, then we begin to know the true nature of that object. The process of concentration gradually modifies the mental states until the whole mental energy converges towards one point.

The purpose of developing a one-pointed mind to bring calmness and tranquility to the mind and be able to gather our attention to one point, so as to stop the mind from absent and wasting its useful energy. A tranquil mind is not an end in itself. Calmness of mind is only a necessary condition to develop Insight. In other words, a calm mind is necessary if we want to have a deep look into ourselves and to have a deep understanding of the world and ourselves.

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⁵⁵ . Vism. I. 181

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Kundalacara

**Ph.D Research Scholar, Center for Mahayana Buddhist Studies,
Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.**