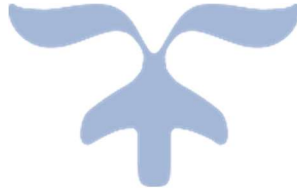


UPASAMĀNUSSATĪ

The Recollection Meditation of Peace (Nibbāna)



BHANTE VIMALAVANSA, SRI LANKA

Upasamānussatī

The Recollection Meditation of Peace (Nibbāna)

The Buddha says in Aggapasāda Sutta (AN 4.34 and Iti 90), “a meditator who is willing to develop the recollection of peace (Nibbāna), should go to a calm place with seclusion, and recollect the special qualities of the Nibbāna for stilling of all the suffering. Monks, in comparison with the phenomena (dhamma), whether they are conditioned or unconditioned, dispassion (virāga) is claimed to be foremost among them. That is to say, cutting off of vanity (madanimmadano); elimination of thirst for sensual pleasure (pipāsavinayo); detachment from pleasures of the five senses (ālayasamugghāto); termination of the round of rebirth (vaṭṭupacchedo); destruction of craving (taṇhakkhayo); dispassion (virāga); cessation (nirodha), and peaceful element (Nibbāna).”

Excluding the phenomena that are concepts (e.g., counterpart sign), which do not have natural features, the phenomena that have natural and general features (sabhāvā dhamma) are taken. Indeed, they bear their essence, so they are called the dhamma. They are called dhamma due to the unique features, i.e., impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Any phenomena, whether met by conditions or getting together by conditions, are known as conditioned (saṅkhata), and those not so met are known as unconditioned (asaṅkhata). Among those conditioned or unconditioned phenomena, dispassion (virāga) is the best and the highest. Herein, dispassion (virāga) is not just the mere absence of craving, but it is the cutting off of vanity (madanimmadano); elimination of thirst for sensual pleasure (pipāsavinayo); detachment from pleasures of the five senses (ālayasamugghāto); termination of the round of rebirth (vaṭṭupacchedo); destruction of craving (taṇhakkhayo); dispassion (virāga); cessation (nirodha), and peaceful element (Nibbāna). The cutting off of vanity and so on should be realized as dispassion

(virāga). If this unconditioned phenomenon has reached dispassionateness, all kinds of vanity, like vanity of conceit, vanity of manhood, etc., are eliminated, undone, and done away with; therefore, it is known as the elimination of vanity (madanimmadano). And, having reached the dispassionateness, all kinds of thirst related to the sensual pleasure get quenched; therefore, known as the elimination of thirst for sensual pleasure (pipāsavinayo). Again, having reached the dispassionateness by reaching the Arahant path knowledge, the sensual pleasure of the five senses is abolished, also known as the abolition of sensual pleasure (ālayasamugghāto). And, again, having reached the dispassionateness, the three planes of existence are terminated, and therefore known as the termination of the round of rebirth (vaṭṭupacchedo). It is called destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, because reaching dispassionateness, craving gets eliminated entirely (taṇhakkhayo). This dispassionateness is called Nibbāna, as it is the extinction of craving; it has gone away from the craving; it has escaped from the craving; dissociated from craving. Craving (taṇhā) is taken as common usage as vāna, as craving serves as joining together (vinanato); binding together (ābandhanato); tying together (saṃsibbanato), by keeping beings in successive becoming in four kinds of generation (catasso yoniyo); five destinies (pañca gatiyo); seven stations of the mind (satta viññāṇaṭṭhitiyo); nine abodes of the beings (nava ca sattāvāsā). This is the way, peace, in other words, nibbāna, should be recollected according to the special qualities beginning with the destruction of vanity and so on.

In the Kāyagatāsatisuttaṃ, SN 4.9, Buddha said, “Monks, I will teach unconditioned dhamma and the way leading to the unconditioned dhamma. Listen carefully! What, monks, is the unconditioned dhamma? Monks, the destruction of lust (rāgakkhayo); the destruction of ill-will (dosakkhayo); the destruction of delusion (mohakkhayo), is called unconditioned dhamma. And Bhikkhus, what is the way leading to the unconditioned dhamma? Mindfulness directed to the body (kāyagatāsati) is the way leading to unconditioned dhamma.” Mindfulness directed to the body (kāyagatāsati) has fourteen meditation subjects, which include – mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati); four posture meditation (iriyāpatha); crystal clear understanding of the phenomena (sampajāna); repulsiveness of the 32 parts of the body (paṭikulamanasikāra); four elements meditation

(dhātumansikāra); and nine charnel ground meditation (asubha). Buddha says further in this sutta, “Monks, whatever should be done by the compassionate teacher out of compassion for his disciple, desiring their welfare, that I have done for you. Then, monks, there are the foot of trees, empty places, practice tranquility (samatha) and insight (vipassanā) meditation, do not be negligent, do not regret later. This is our instruction to you.”

In Anāsavādisuttaṃ SN 4.9, Buddha said, “Monks, I will teach you the taintless (anāsava) and the path leading to the taintless. What, monks, is the taintless? Monks, the destruction of lust; the destruction of ill-will; and the destruction of delusion, is called the taintless. I will teach you the truth (saccaṃ) and the path leading to the truth.... I will teach you the other shore (pāra) and the path leading to the other shore.... I will teach you the high wisdom (nippaṇṇa) and the path leading to the high wisdom.... I will teach you the one very difficult to reach (sududdasa) and the path leading to the one very difficult to reach I will teach you the unageing (ajajjaraṇa) and the path leading to the unageing.... I will teach you the permanent (dhuvaṇa) and the path leading to the permanent I will teach you the everlasting (dhuvaṇa) and the path leading to the everlasting... I will teach you the non-disintegrated (apalokitaṇa) and the path leading to the non-disintegrated... I will teach you the non-dissolved (apalokitaṃ) and the path leading to the non-dissolved.... I will teach you the sign-less (anidassanaṇa) and the path leading to the sign-less.... I will teach you the non-manifesting (anidassanaṃ) and the path leading to the non-manifesting.... I will teach you the no-impediments (nippapaṇaṇa) and the path leading to the no-impediments I will teach you not to form any obstacles (nippapaṇaṃ) and the path leading to not forming any obstacles.... I will teach you the calm (santaṇa) and the path leading to the calm.... I will teach you the deathless (amataṇa) and the path leading to the deathless.... I will teach you the ambrosia (amataṃ) and the path leading to the ambrosia.... I will teach you the excellent (paṇṇitaṇa) and the path leading to the excellent.... I will teach you the sublime (paṇṇitaṃ) and the path leading to the sublime.... I will teach you the shelter (sivaṇa) and the path leading to the shelter.... I will teach you the blessed (sivaṃ) and the path leading to the blessed.... I will teach you the safety (khemaṇa) and the path leading to the safety.... I will

teach you the security (khemaṃ) and the path leading to the security.... I will teach you the extinction of craving (taṇhākkhayaṇca) and the path leading to the extinction of craving.... I will teach you the wearing away of craving (taṇhākkhayaṃ) and the path leading to the wearing away of craving.... I will teach you the marvelous (acchariyaṇca) and the path leading to the marvelous.... I will teach you the marvel (acchariyaṃ) and the path leading to the marvel.... I will teach you the astonishing (abbhutaṇca) and the path leading to the astonishing.... I will teach you the unbelievable (abbhutaṃ) and the path leading to the unbelievable.... I will teach you the free from calamity (anītikaṇca) and the path leading to the free from calamity.... I will teach you the unproblematic (anītikaṃ) and the path leading to the unproblematic.... I will teach you the untroubled state (anītikadhammaṇca) and the path leading to the untroubled state.... I will teach you the unproblematic state (anītikadhammaṃ) and the path leading to the unproblematic state.... I will teach you the complete cooling (nibbānaṇca) and the path leading to the complete cooling.... I will teach you the ultimate bliss (nibbānaṃ) and the path leading to the ultimate bliss.... I will teach you the free from mental pain (abyāpajjhaṇca) and the path leading to the free from mental pain.... I will teach you the free from mental suffering (abyāpajjhaṃ) and the path leading to the free from mental suffering.... I will teach you the dispassion (virāgaṇca) and the path leading to the dispassion.... I will teach you the fading of desire (virāgo) and the path leading to the fading of desire.... I will teach you the purification (suddhiṇca) and the path leading to the purification.... I will teach you the liberation (muttiṇca) and the path leading to the liberation.... I will teach you emancipation (mutti) and the path leading to emancipation.... I will teach you the free from attachment (anālayaṇca) and the path leading to the free from attachment.... I will teach you the free from clinging (anālayo) and the path leading to the free from clinging.... I will teach you the security (dīpaṇca) and the path leading to security.... I will teach you the island (dīpaṃ) and the path leading to the island.... I will teach you the cave (leṇaṇca) and the path leading to the cave.... I will teach you the place of security (leṇaṃ) and the path leading to the place of security.... I will teach you the shelter (tāṇaṃ) and the path leading to the shelter.... I will teach

you the refuge (saraṇaṇca) and the path leading to the refuge.... I will teach you the protection (saraṇaṃ) and the path leading to the protection.

In Parāyanasuttaṃ SN 4.9.33, the Buddha said, “monks, I will teach you the destination (parāyanaṇca) and the path leading to the destination. Listen carefully! What, monks, is the destination and the path leading to the destination? Monks, mindfulness directed to the body (kāyagatāsati) is called the destination, and the path leading to the destination. Buddha further says in this sutta, “Monks, whatever should be done by the compassionate teacher out of compassion for his disciple, desiring their welfare, that I have done for you. Then, monks, there are the foot of trees, empty places, practice tranquility (samatha) and insight (vipassanā) meditation, do not be negligent, do not regret later. This is our instruction to you.”

Truth signifies reality, not falsehood. Nibbāna, in the figurative sense, is indeed unable to change, irreversibly true because of being peaceful, and free from unrest. Therefore, Nibbāna is very true (saccaṃ). Nibbāna is extremely hard to see by unskilled knowledge due to its profundity, it is extremely subtle and deep. In Nibbāna, there is no decaying; hence, when Nibbāna is realized, no decay to the meditator. Nibbāna is constant, permanent through firmness, as it does not have impermanence. Nibbāna is free from craving or any impediments. Nibbāna is the deathless state. Nibbāna is a safe place as there are no defilements that act as an unsafe. It is a shelter because of the non-trouble from the four kinds of bonds - sensual bond (kāmayoga), bond of attachment to existence (bhavayoga), bond of wrong view (diṭṭhayoga), and bond of ignorance (avijjāyoga). Nibbāna is marvelous, not experienced by the meditator before, as an absence of the formations (saṅkhāra). Nibbāna is intact due to the lack of harm and misfortune. Nibbāna is free from mental suffering and very pure. It is an island due to non-submergence by four great floods – the flood of sensual pleasure (kāmoghā), the flood of becoming (bhavoghā), the flood of wrong view (diṭṭhogha), the flood of ignorance (avijjogho). It provides an asylum from all kinds of rounds of rebirth and gives shelter.

Nine benefits of cultivating meditation of peace (Upasamānussatī)

In case of another six-recollection meditation, that is the recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, virtue (sīla), generosity (cāga), and special qualities of deities (devatānussati), those recollections come to full success in the noble disciples only. But, Buddha says, though it is so, it should be brought to the mind by the ordinary person who values peace. So, the mind is pleased and at peace just by hearing. The meditator who is devoted to this meditation recollection of peace, sleeps in bliss (sukhaṃ supati), wakes up in bliss (sukhaṃ paṭibujjhati), his faculties are very peaceful (santindriyo hoti), his mind is very peaceful (santamānaso), he is endowed with conscience and shame (hirottappasamannāgato), he is amiable (pāsādiko), he inclines to the superior states of nibbāna (paṇītādhimuttiko), he is respected and honored by the peers in his life of purity (sabrahmaṇasamānāyakaṃ garu ca bhāvanīyo ca). If the meditator could not attain arahantship in this life, then he is at least headed for a happy destiny (uttari apāṭivijjhanto pana sugatiparāyano hoti). These are the nine benefits of this meditation of peace.

Therefore, a man of wit would indeed cultivate mindfulness in the noble peace, with endeavor, which gives rewards in so many ways.

How to practice Upasamānussatī?

A meditator must know the meaning of the qualities of Nibbāna as described above, “in comparison with the phenomena (dhamma), whether they are conditioned or unconditioned; dispassion (virāga) is claimed to be foremost among them. That is to say, cutting off of vanity (maṇimaddaṇa); elimination of thirst for sensual pleasure (pipāsavinayo); detachment from pleasures of the five senses (ālayasamugghāto); termination of the round of rebirth (vaṭṭupacchedo); destruction of craving; dispassion (virāga); cessation (nirodha), and peaceful element (Nibbāna).” A meditator must continually contemplate these qualities until the mind becomes very calm and mindfulness is steadfast towards all the qualities which are the objects of this meditation. Once mindfulness is established on all qualities, take one quality at a time and keep practicing the same way. While practicing this way, the mind gladdens, the body feels happy, and light-weight. At this stage, the meditator will see some light before him. Now, if the meditator can see the mindfulness towards the object only, take one quality, e.g., cutting off of vanity (maṇimaddaṇa), and contemplate “in comparison with dhamma, whether conditioned or unconditioned, dispassion (virāga) is foremost”. This dispassionateness is the cutting off of vanity, therefore, this dispassionateness is peaceful. This has to be recollected again and again for a long time. When the meditator recollects these qualities, his mind is not obsessed by greed, hatred, or delusion; at that time, his mind is very straightforward to the object of peace (Nibbāna). So, when the meditator has suppressed the five hindrances, the five jhāna factors (jhānaṅgāni) arise in a single mind moment, and the meditator reaches access concentration (upacāra samādhi), which is the highest concentration achieved by this meditation. Absorption concentration (jhāna) cannot be reached by upasamānussati, given the profundity of the Nibbāna object. Therefore, it is known as recollection of the peace because it arises from the special qualities of the peace (Nibbāna).

Abbreviations

AN - Anguttara Nikāya

Iti – Itivuttaka

SN – Saṃyutta Nikāya

