

VISUDDHI-ÑĀA-KATTHĀ

VISUDDHI AND VIPASSANĀ-ÑĀṬṬA

This is a summary of the discourse on Visuddhi (purity) and Vipassanā-Ñāṭṭa (insight). The full discourse is usually given by Bhaddanta Sobhana Mahā Thera, AGGAMAḤĒPAṬḌITA, (Mahāsaṅgī Sayādaw), for the benefit of those disciples who have taken the full course of practical training in moral and mental culture (the Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā) in order to gain insight.

The discourse gives a general view of the facts in respect of Visuddhi and Vipassanā-Ñāṭṭa in order to enable each disciple to compare with his own experiences gained during the training and to decide for himself what stage he has reached in regard to maturity of insight. A disciple will have to develop through seven stages of Visuddhi and seventeen stages of Vipassanā-Ñāṭṭa.

The following gives a brief description of each of (1) Sotāpanna-Aṅga, (2) Nibbāna, (3) four Noble Truths and the manner of perceiving them, (4) stages of Visuddhi and Vipassanā-Ñāṭṭa, and (5) five Samyojanas from which a Sotāpanna is freed.

(1) SOTĀPANNA-AṅGA.

In Dhammaḍḍesa Sutta, Buddha mentions the four characteristic qualities of a Stream-winner (Sotāpanna). They are called mirrors or looking-glasses. Anybody who, by virtue of matured insight, possesses these qualities can rest assured that he has attained the first stage of Sotāpanna on the way. The following are the qualities:-

1. He possesses unshakeable faith in the Buddha, because he now understands the most exalted qualities of the Buddha.
2. He possesses unshakeable faith in the Dhamma, because, by working earnestly, he in his own person realises the supreme truth and wisely penetrating, beholds it face to face.
3. He possesses unshakeable faith in the Sangha, because he now knows their excellent qualities.
4. He naturally observes the Pañca Sīla (five precepts) which is the most cherished moral code of the Noble Ones.

(2) NIBBĀNA

Lakkhaṇa (original feature), Rasa (quality), and Paccupaṭṭhāna (manifestation) are the three modes of realising or attaining Nibbāna. They are as follows:-

Lakkhaṇa : It is the ceasing of the ever-flowing stream of Nāma-Rūpa processes on having been cut off. (Santi Lakkhaṇam Nibbānam).

Rasa : It is freed from the natural course of changing, deterioration and decay (Accutirasam).

Paccupaṭṭhāna : Neither form nor sign is present. (Animitta paccupaṭṭhānam).

It is in this wise that the intuitive apprehension of Nibbāna is won.

(3) FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND THE MANNER OF PERCEIVING THEM

The following are the four Noble Truths:-

- Dukkha (first Truth) : All sa³khāras which arise and pass away are Dukkha (suffering).
- Samudaya (second Truth) : The craving of sa³khāras on thinking them to be good is Samudaya (the cause of suffering).
- Nirodha (third Truth) : The ceasing of the ever-flowing stream of the processes of Nāma-Rūpa is Nirodha (Nibbāna).
- Magga (fourth Truth) : The way of eight a³gās leading to the personal intuitive apprehension of Nibbāna is Magga (way to Nibbāna).

The following questions and answers explain the manner of perceiving the four Noble Truths.

Question : How are those four Noble Truths perceived at the same time?

Answer : On winning the personal intuitive apprehension of Nibbāna (third Truth), the purpose of discerning suffering (first Truth), of expelling Craving (second Truth), and of developing the Way (fourth Truth) is accomplished.

(Pāḷi quotation : Nirodhe Arammanappañivedho Tisu Kiccato pañivedho).

(4) STAGES OF VISUDDHI AND VIPASSANĀ-ÑĀṀA

The seven stages of Visuddhi and seventeen stages of Vipassanā-Ñāṅga are listed as A and B respectively. They are:

- A 1. **Sōla Visuddhi** (purity of moral): This is gained by the strict observance of the rules of discipline laid down for lay-disciples and Bhikkhus respectively.
- A 2. **Citta Visuddhi** (purity of mind): This is gained when one's attention is fixed, without wavering, on the objects which are being contemplated.
- B 1. **Nāma-Rūpa Paricchedha Ñāṅga** (insight into two-fold divisions of mind and corporeality): While practicing contemplation the two different processes of mind and corporeality are clearly noticed. This is the first degree of insight.
- A 3. **Diṅhi Visuddhi** (purity of views): On having noticed the two processes of mind and corporeality during the contemplation, it is clearly understood that there are only two things of mind and corporeality but there is no other entity or living being. This is the third stage of purity.
- B 2. **Paccaya Pariggaha Ñāṅga** (insight into conditioned nature): While practicing contemplation, the preceding causes and the effects that follow them are noticed. This is the second degree of insight.

- A 4. **Ka³khāvitarana Visuddhi** (purity of transcending doubt): On having noticed the preceding causes and the effects that follow them during the contemplation, it is fully understood that, in the same way, the two factors alone existed in the past and they alone will exist similarly in the future. This is the fourth stage of purity.
- B 3. **Sammāsaṇa Ñāṁa** (insight into anicca, dukkha, anatta): While practicing contemplation, it is noticed that the objects successively arise and pass away. Thus the real sense of impermanency, misery and egolessness or no-soul is well understood. This is the third degree of insight.
- B 4. **Udayabbaya Ñāṁa** (insight into arising and passing away)_(i)
Initial state: In the course of proceeding with the mere act of contemplating the present objects without any consideration, the arising and passing away of each object are easily noticeable. Besides, there generally appear a vision of Obhāsa (supernatural light) and feelings of Pīti (rapture) Passaddhi (composure), Adhimokkha (strong faith). Paggaha (great energy), Sukha (happiness), Ñāṁa (insight), Upatthāna (intensity of mindfulness), Upekkhā (equanimity) and Nikānti (a mild desire for the preceding states). This is the initial stage of the fourth degree of insight.
- A 5. **Maggā-magga-ñāṁa-dassana Visuddhi** (purity of insight on discerning what is way and what is not): There arises a wise discrimination thus: "To be satisfied with the mere experience of seeing a vision of Obhāsa and of high mental states and to be pondering over them is not the way but it may operate against further progress. To proceed with the practice of contemplation is the way which will lead to the final achievement." This is the fifth stage of purity.
- B 4. **Udayabbaya Ñāṁa** (insight into arising and passing away)_(ii)
Final stage: On proceeding with the practice of contemplation without pondering over the experiences of seeing a vision of Obhāsa and of other high mental states, the arising and passing away of each object are distinctly noticed, and each object is separate and cut off from one another. This is the final stage of the fourth degree of insight.
- A 6. **Patipadā-ñāṁa-dassana Visuddhi** (purity of intellectual culture): All these insights from the final stage of Udayabbaya Ñāṁa (fourth degree of insight) to Anuloma Ñāṁa (thirteenth degree of insight) are collectively termed as the sixth stage of purity.
- B 5. **Bha³ga Ñāṁa** (insight into passing away): On each time of contemplating or noting, it is noticed that the object as well as the mind knowing the object pass away. This is the fifth degree of insight.

- B 6. **Bhaya Ñāṁa** (insight into fearful condition): On each time of contemplating or noting, there arises a fearful feeling on realizing the nature of passing away. This is the sixth degree of insight.
- B 7. **Ādinava Ñāṁa** (insight into evil condition): On each time of contemplating or noting, there arises an insight into evil condition on realizing the nature of passing away. This is the seventh degree of insight.
- B 8. **Nibbidā Ñāṁa** (insight into wearisome condition): On each time of contemplating or noting, there arises a feeling of weariness on realizing the nature of passing away. This is the eighth degree of insight.
- B 9. **Muncitukamyatā Ñāṁa** (insight longing to be set free): On each time of contemplating or noting, there arises a longing to be set free on realizing the nature of passing away and of suffering. This is the ninth degree of insight.
- B 10. **Paṭisa³khā Ñāṁa** (insight of re-contemplation): A special effort is made to carry on with re-contemplation in order to be set free. This is the tenth degree of insight.
- B 11. **Sa³kharupekkhā Ñāṁa** (insight of equanimity): There arises a state of equanimity, and the act contemplating the sa³khāras as they occur proceeds automatically. This is the eleventh degree of insight.

Sa³khārupekkhā Ñāṁa consists of six qualities which are as follows:-

1. There is an absence of fear and pleasure.
2. There is an indifference to either happiness or suffering.
3. There is an automatic and balanced state of contemplation.

These are the three qualities of equanimity.

4. The automatic and balanced state of contemplation lasts for a long time.
5. The longer it lasts the finer it becomes.
6. The contemplation is fixed and steady, and the mind does not wander to other objects.

There are the three qualities of special nature.

- B 12. **Vutthāna Gāmini Vipassanā Ñāṁa** (insight leading to uprising): From the steady and balanced state, the act of contemplation quickens its pace in a distinctive manner preparatory to rising out. This is the twelfth degree of insight.
- B 13. **Anuloma Ñāṁa** (insight of adaptation): Of these special mental elements, the 'last mental element of knowing' is Anuloma Ñāṁa. This is the thirteenth degree of insight.
- B 14. **Gotrabhū Ñāṁa** (insight of adoption): It is the entering into the state of cessation of the mental element of contemplation and of all sa³khāras on being cut off. This is the fourteenth degree of insight. (It is the insight which cuts off the heritage of Puthujjana).
- B 15. **Magga-Phala Ñāṁa** (insight of the way and its fruition): It is the realization of the state of cessation of all sa³khāras. This is the fifteenth degree of the twofold insight.
- A 7. **Ñāṁa-dassana Visuddhi** (purity of insight): The mental element of intelligence which has developed into Magga Ñāṁa (insight of way) is called Ñāṁa-dassana Visuddhi. This is the seventh stage of purity. (This is the clear understanding of the four Noble Truths, the manner of perceiving which is described under head (3)):
- B 16. **Paccavekkhāṇā Ñāṁa** (insight of retrospect): It is the recollection of the inner experience just passed with regard to the manner of entering the state of cessation of sa³khāras and of the state of cessation. This is the sixteenth degree of insight.
- B 17. **Phala-samāpatti Ñāṁa** (insight of fruition of way): On proceeding with the contemplation and when it is will developed, the state of cessation of sa³khāras is attained again. In this manner the process may be repeated. This is the seventeenth degree of insight.

(5) Five Samyojanas (fetters) from which a Sotāpanna is freed.

They are as follows:-

1. He is freed from the wrong views of holding the aggregates of the physical and mental processes as 'ego'. (Absence of Diṃhi).
2. He no longer feels any doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. (Absence of Vicikicchā).
3. He believes that no methods other than that of cultivating the qualities of eight-fold Ariya-Magga and developing insight into the four Noble Truths would bring eternal peace.
4. He is free from envy. (Absence of issā).
5. He is free from selfishness. (Absence of macchariya).

A noble Sotāpanna is thus free from wrong views (SAKKĒYA-miccā diṃhi), sceptical doubts (vicikicchā) belief in the efficacy of rites and ritual (silabbata-parāmaṣa), envy (issā), and selfishness (macchariya).