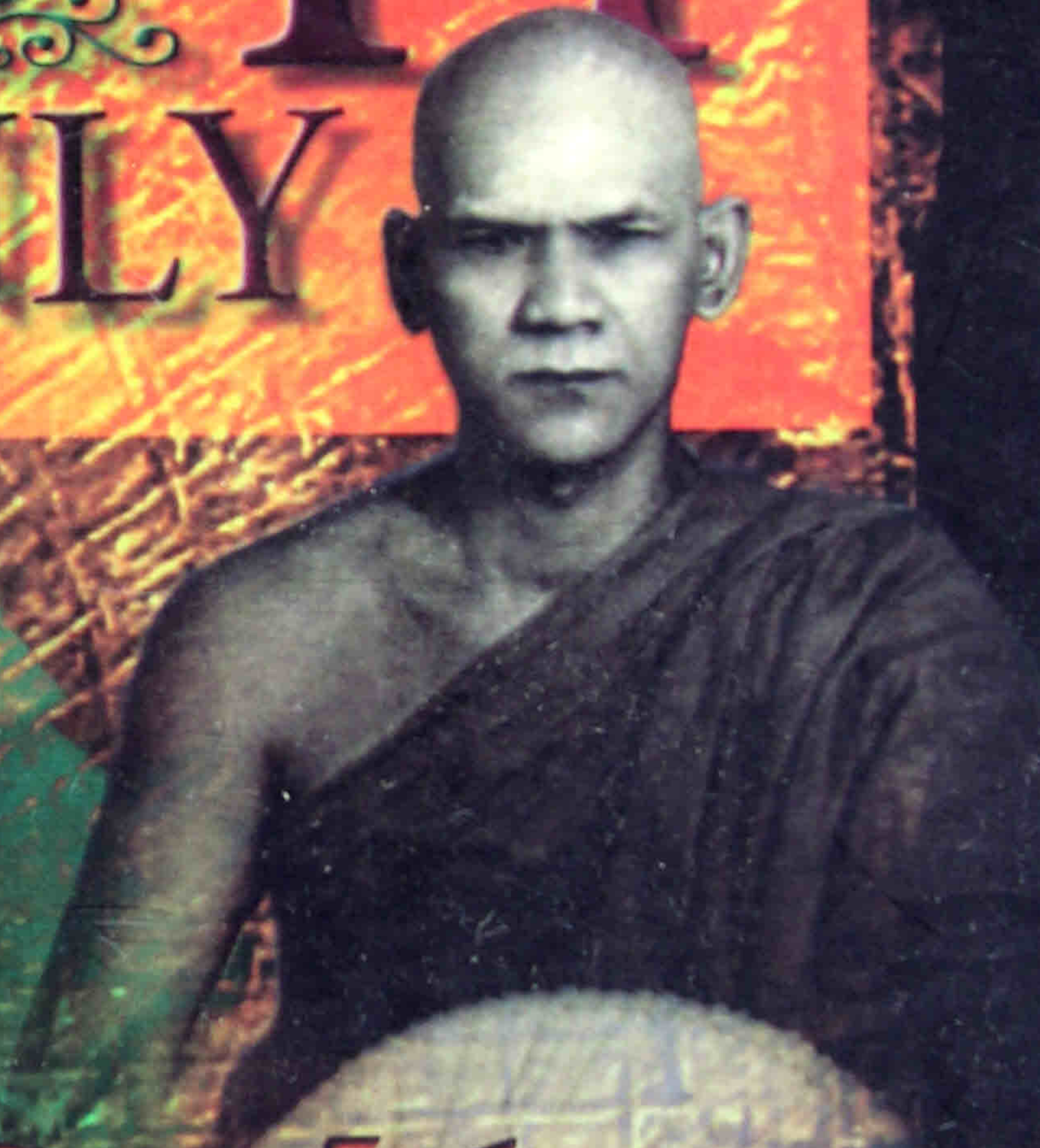




ONE
TRUTH
ONLY



Mahāsi Sayādaw

**A COMPILATION OF PASSAGES
FROM HIS DISCOURSES**

1998 INWARD PATH
AN INWARD PUBLISHER
JOURNEY BOOK Penang, Malaysia

ONE
TRUTH
ONLY

Mahāsi Sayādaw

A DHAMMA DĀNA
From U Sīlānandābhivamsa
Rector
ITBMU

**A COMPILATION OF PASSAGES
FROM HIS DISCOURSES**



AN INWARD JOURNEY BOOK

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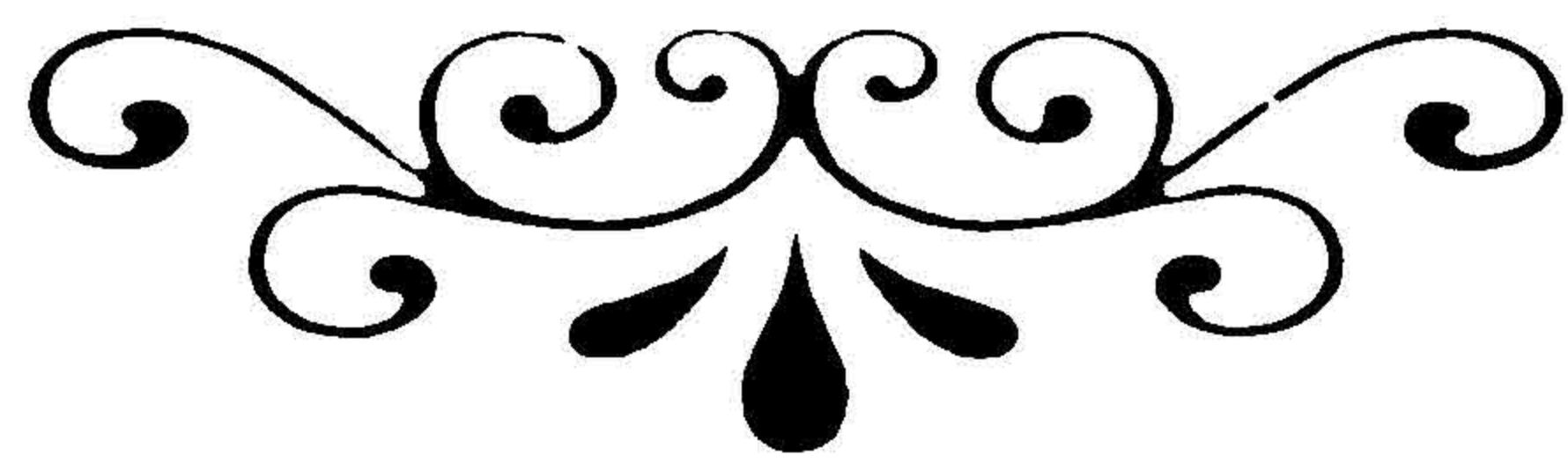
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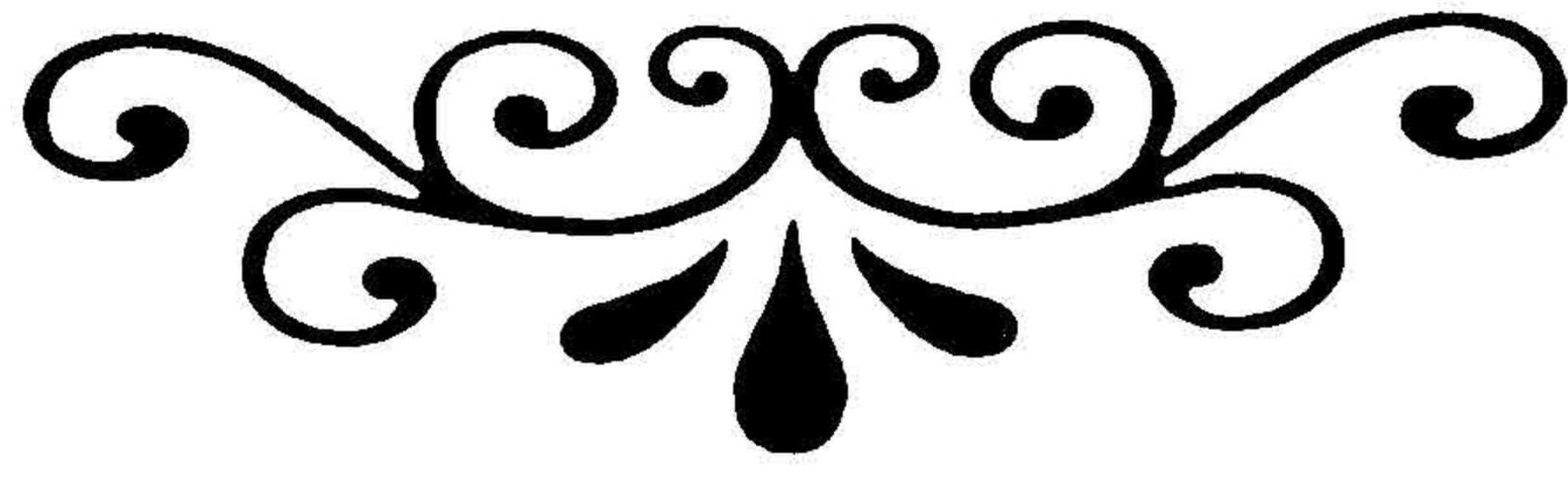
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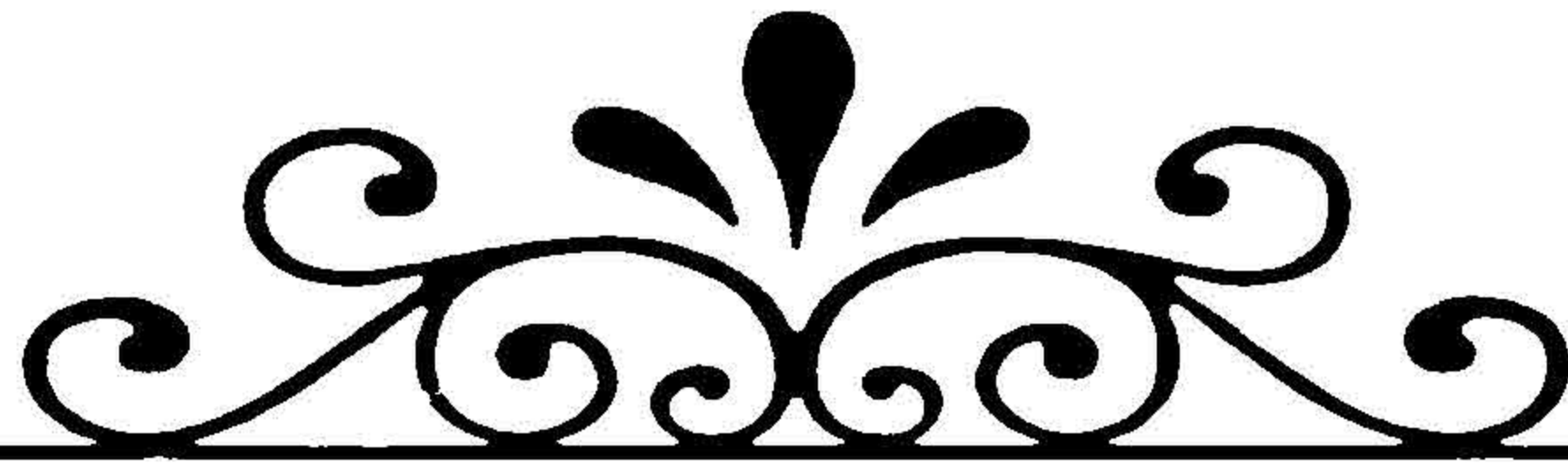


May this Dhamma book be help
to many for deeping
their understanding of the Dhamma
and practice of meditation.

*It is hard to be born human;
the life of mortals is hard.
Teaching of Truth is hardly ever heard;
Buddhas hardly ever appear.*
~ BUDDHA, Dhammapada 182 ~

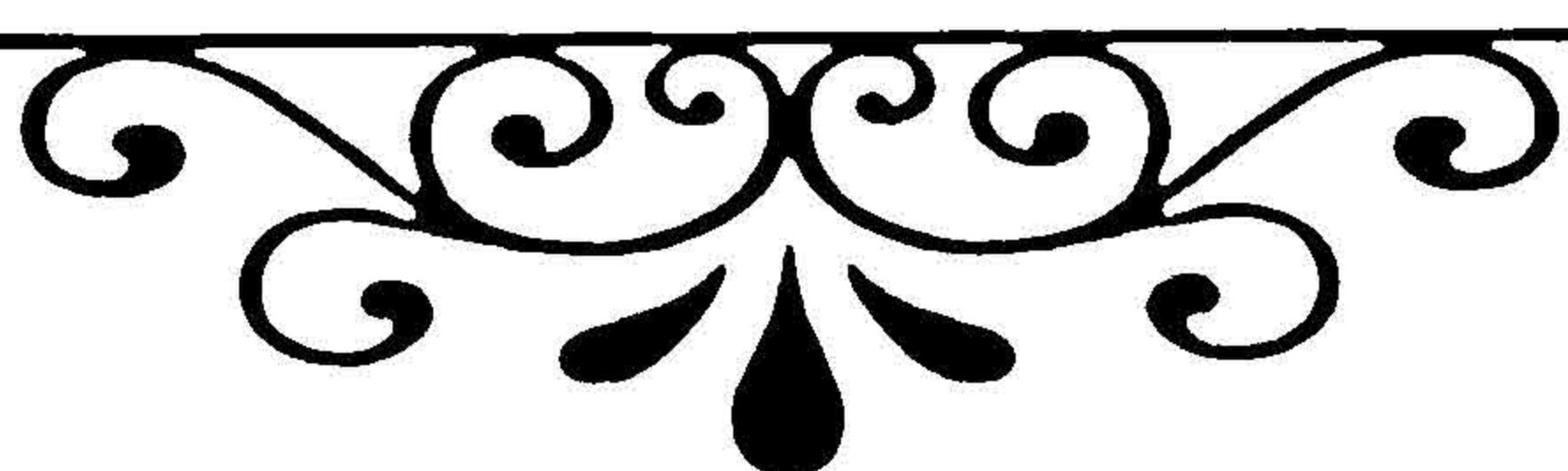
May the merits accruing from this work
long be to the weal and happiness
of all Sangha and Dhamma friends
without whom this book
would not have been possible.

The sponsors
of this Dhamma book share
the merit of this dana with all beings,
with those who are walking on the path to liberation
and those not yet on it.
May all attain to the happiness of peace, Nibbana.



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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION



WHILE THE PRESENT BOOK was in preparation, its author, the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw of Myanmar, passed away at the age of 78. Thus, unexpectedly – as death so often comes – this publication has turned out to be a memorial issue in honour of one of the outstanding contemporary teachers of Theravāda Buddhism, especially in the field of insight meditation. It was not long before he passed away that the Sayādaw had conveyed his consent to a compilation of his thoughts and observations, chiefly on insight meditation.

The selections here presented have been taken from sermons by Mahāsi Sayādaw dealing with various discourses of the Buddha. The sermons had been delivered in the Burmese language and were translated into English by various hands. These English translations are published by the BUDDHA SĀSANA NUGGAHA ORGANISATION OF YANGON^(a), which gave its kind permission for extracts from these books to be reproduced in the present anthology. These selections have been slightly edited, and references to their sources are given after each extract. A short biography of the author is also included here.

In issuing this anthology, it is hoped that the sayings will be found instructive and inspiring, and that they will stimulate the reader to take up earnestly the threefold cultivation of morality, meditation and wisdom, reaching culmination in liberating insight wisdom.

It was a direct approach to that liberating insight which Mahāsi Sayādaw taught for many decades to a very large number of meditators from the East and West. Based on the Buddha's *Foundation of Mindfulness*^(b), he devised an effective method of meditative practice, partly derived from tradition and his own teachers, and partly evolved by himself. This method certainly demanded, or led to a high degree of mental concentration, but did not require

(a) That is, Organization for Promoting the Buddhist Religion. For address turn to Appendix B.

(b) In Pali: *Satipatthana Sutta*, appears in two places in the Pali Canon:

the twenty-second sutta of the "Collection of Long Discourses: *Digha Nikaya*" and the tenth sutta of the "Collection of Middle Length Discourses: *Majjhima Nikaya*".

the prior attainment of full meditative absorption, the *jhānas*. Yet, as some of the extracts in this book will show, the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw was fully aware of the great significance of full concentration of mind in the *jhānas*, and he neither discouraged their cultivation nor belittled their value. But as a wise and compassionate teacher, he wanted to help those who, for psychological or environmental reasons, would have been faced with a long and frustrating struggle in their attempts to gain *jhānic* concentration.

For such a person, the method of direct insight practice could open an access to the core of the teaching by direct meditative experience. In the course of the diligent practice of that method, there would follow a natural growth of mindfulness and concentration, of inner firmness and calm, which would place the meditator in a better position to attain to the *jhānas*.

In conclusion, the undersigned wishes to express his humble respect to the late Mahāsi Sayādaw, and his deep felt gratitude for the guidance and inspiration he received from him.

Nyanaponika


Forest Hermitage

Kandy, Sri Lanka

September 1982

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION



 DURING THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS since the passing away of Mahāsi Sayādaw the number of people plunging into the adventure of insight meditation has steadily increased. Among the various styles of insight meditation taught in Myanmar, the Mahāsi school has by far remained the most popular. This undiminished attraction is certainly due to its excellent approach which combines an elucidating and penetrative theoretical exposition of the Dhamma with a refined guidance of the meditator by the teacher through the various stages of insight.

Myanmar has, in spite of its political problems, remained the powerhouse of the Theravādin meditation tradition. The late Mahāsi Sayādaw's foremost disciples have carried on conducting intensive meditation courses according to his instructions. Among these senior teachers three have been most popular among Burmese and foreign yogis:

- Sayādaw U Pandita : Successor to Mahāsi Sayādaw and now abbot of Panditarama Meditation Centre, Yangon.
- Sayādaw U Kundalā : Abbot of Saddhammaransi Meditation Centre, Yangon.
- Sayādaw U Janaka : Abbot of Chanmyay Meditation Centre, Yangon.^(c)

Their great success in Myanmar and many countries around the world is an indication of the steady growth of serious practice of BuddhaDhamma in these modern times.

Unlike the Mahāsi meditation centres in Myanmar, many of those established in Thailand and Sri Lanka seem to have passed their peak times of attraction and quality. Schools of meditation in the tradition of Mahāsi Sayādaw established in the sixties and seventies in Thailand have often been left without able successors. In some places teachers lacking theoretical and

^(c) For addresses turn to Appendix C

practical understanding have even altered the profound original instructions by Mahāsi Sayādaw and teach wrong methods but still running their courses under his name. Although the meditation centres in Sri Lanka which follow the school of Mahāsi Sayādaw have fared better than most in Thailand, they have never been able to replace the loss of their foremost teachers, Ven. Sumatiphala and Ven. Nanarama.

The most interesting and promising growth in the practice of intensive insight meditation is occurring in non-Buddhist countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Nepal, Australia, the USA, Canada and Europe. The largest centre in the West, the INSIGHT MEDITATION SOCIETY (IMS) in Barre, Massachusetts, USA, has conducted intensive vipassana courses for more than twenty years^(d). The one hundred available places on their annual three-month course is booked out within a few days after the release of the new programme. Teachers like Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, Steve Smith, Michelle McDonald-Smith, Carol Wilson, Steven Armstrong and others have found ways to gently and wisely adjust the instructions of the great Asian meditation teachers to the particular needs of Western meditators, without losing the essence of the noble path.

Considering the development and spread of practical Dhamma we feel fortunate to live in a time when it is much easier to access qualified teachers of insight meditation than even twenty or thirty years ago. We recommend the beginners of insight meditation to start at home and look first for a teacher from their own culture. The practice of insight meditation is a serious undertaking and it is of great advantage if one can take one's beginning steps in mindfulness and concentration with a teacher who speaks the same language and understands the peculiarities of one's own cultural conditioning. Yet once the basics are well absorbed and should there arise the urge for longer re-

(d) Founded in 1975 by Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, Jack Kornfield and Jacqueline Schwantz.

treats in an intensive setting, then an extended stay in one of the city or country meditation centres in Myanmar could help to deepen the practise.

During the past decade a flood of meditation manuals has reached the bookstores. The best of these books have tremendously contributed to our grasp of the theoretical and practical aspects of BuddhaDhamma. Compared with some of these high quality manuals the discourses by Mahāsi Sayādaw may seem somewhat clumsy and dry. I believe this is mainly due to the often unwieldy and even faulty translations and the lack of editorial refinement. Leading meditation teachers consider the discourses by Mahāsi Sayādaw as a classic exposition of Theravādin meditation and a treasure house of profound explanations and precise practical instructions. It is the task of the new generation to re-edit his talks and reprint them in a better quality.^(e)

A large number of his talks are now available in English translation although his main work, which surpasses in depth all other of his writings, the *Manual of Vipassanā Meditation*, remains to be translated.^(f)

This revised edition of an anthology of Mahāsi Sayādaw's discourses serves as an appetiser to his writings and as an entrance to the realm of Buddhist mental cultivation. The selection of passages has been rearranged and slightly expanded. All texts have been edited to improve on the English expression, to clarify somewhat obscure passages and to simplify the reading for the beginner by replacing all uncommon Pali terms with English equivalents.

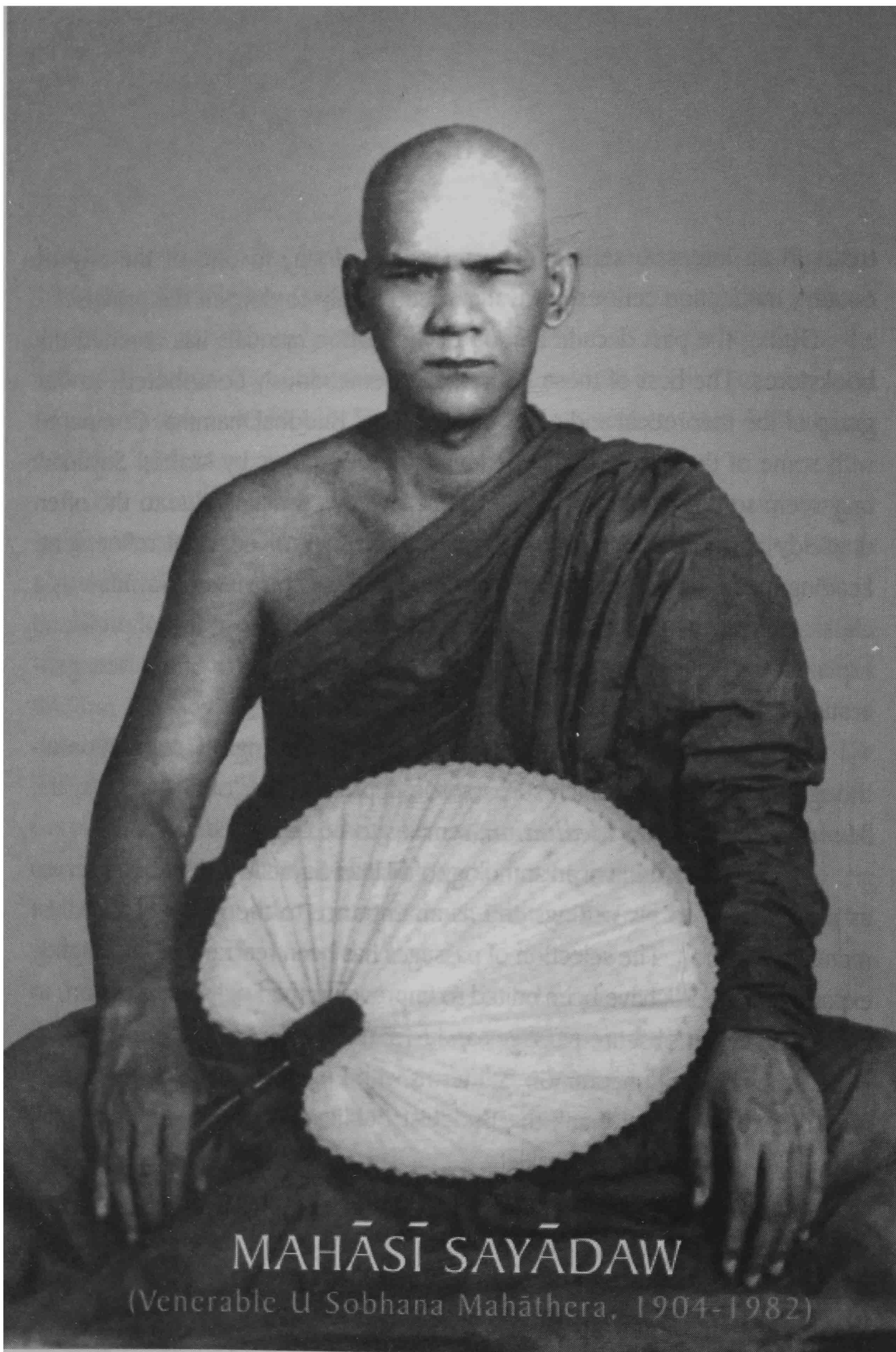
We would like to thank the Buddhist Publication Society for their kind permission to reprint this booklet.

Bodhisara

Penang, September 1997

(e) Praiseworthy new editions have been produced by Pesala Bhikkhu for the *Buddhist Publication Society*, Kandy, Sri Lanka and Bruce Evans of the *BuddhaDhamma Foundation*, Bangkok, Thailand.

(f) A comprehensive list of the discourses can be found in Appendix A.



MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

(Venerable U Sobhana Mahāthera, 1904-1982)

THE VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW



THE VENERABLE U SOBHANA MAHĀTHERA, better known as Mahāsi Sayādaw^(g), was born on 29th July 1904 to the peasant proprietors, U Kan Htaw and Daw Shwe Ok at Seikkhun village, which is about seven miles to the west of the town of Shwebo in Upper Burma, once the capital of the founder of the last Burmese dynasty.

At the age of six he began his studies at a monastic school in his village, and at the age of twelve he was ordained a novice, receiving the name of Sobhana. On reaching the age of twenty he was ordained as a monk (*bhikkhu*) on 26th November 1923. He passed all three levels of the government Pali examinations (lower, middle and highest) in the following three successive years.

In the fourth year of his bhikkhu ordination, he proceeded to Mandalay, noted for its preeminence in Buddhist studies, where he continued his further education under various monks of high scholastic fame. In the fifth year he went to Moulmein where he took up the work of teaching the Buddhist scriptures at a monastery known as TAUNGWAINGGALAY TAIK KYAUNG.

In the eighth year after his bhikkhu ordination he and another monk left Moulmein equipped with the bare necessities of a monk (i.e. almsbowl, a set of three robes, etc.) and went in search of a clear and effective method in the practice of meditation. At Thaton he met the well-known meditation teacher Venerable U Nārada, who is also known as Mingun Jetawun Sayādaw. He then placed himself under the guidance of the Sayādaw and at once proceeded with an intensive course of meditation.

He had progressed so well in his practice that he was able to teach the method effectively to his first three disciples in Seikkhun while he was on a visit there in 1938. These three lay disciples, too, made remarkable progress. Inspired by the example of these three gradually as many as fifty villagers joined

(g) The Burmese word Sayadaw, meaning "Venerable Teacher", is an honorific term and way of address given to senior or eminent monks.

the courses of intensive practice.

The Venerable Mahāsi could not stay with the Venerable Mingun Sayādaw as long as he wanted, as he was urgently asked to return to the Moulmein monastery. Its aged head monk was gravely ill and passed away not long after the Venerable Mahāsi's return. The Venerable Mahāsi was then asked to take charge of the monastery and to resume teaching the resident monks. During this time he sat for the Pali lecturership examination on its first introduction by the government of Burma. Passing this examination on the first attempt, in 1941, he was awarded the title of *Sasanadhaja Sri Pavara Dhammacariya*.

On the event of the Japanese invasion, the authorities gave an evacuation order to those living near Moulmein at the Taungwainggalay monastery and its neighbourhood. These places were close to an airfield and hence exposed to air attacks. For the Sayādaw this was a welcome opportunity to return to his native Seikkhun and to devote himself wholeheartedly to his own practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā*) and to the teaching of it to others.

He took residence at a monastery known as MAHĀ-SI KYAUNG, which was thus called because a drum (in Burmese: *si*) of an unusually large (*mahā*) size was housed there. From that monastery the Sayādaw's popular name Mahāsi Sayādaw is derived.

It was during this period, in 1945, that the Sayādaw wrote his great work, *Manual of Vipassanā Meditation*, a comprehensive and authoritative treatise expounding both the doctrinal and the practical aspects of the *satipaṭṭhāna* method of meditation. This work of two volumes comprising 858 pages in print was written by him in just seven months, while the neighbouring town of Shwebo was at times subjected to almost daily air attacks. So far, only one chapter of this work, the fifth, has been translated into English and is published under the title *Practical Insight Meditation: Basic and Progressive Stages*.

It did not take long before the reputation of Mahāsi Sayādaw as an able teacher of insight meditation had spread throughout the Shwebo-Sagaing region and attracted the attention of a prominent and very devout Buddhist layman, Sir U Thwin, who was regarded as Burma's 'elder statesman'. It was his wish to promote the inner strength of Buddhism in Burma by setting up a meditation centre to be guided by a meditation teacher of proven virtue and ability. After meeting Mahāsi Sayādaw and listening to a discourse given by him and to the meditation instructions given to nuns in Sagaing, Sir U Thwin was in no doubt that he had found the ideal person he was looking for.

In 1947 the *Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organisation* was founded in Rangoon with Sir U Thwin as its first president and with its object the furthering of the study and practice of Buddhism. In 1948 Sir U Thwin donated five acres of land at Kokkine, Rangoon (now known as Yangon), to the organisation for the erection of a meditation centre. It is on this site that the present *Thathana Yeiktha*, i.e. 'Buddhist Retreat', is situated, which now however, covers an area of twenty acres, with a large number of buildings.

In 1949 the then prime minister of Burma, U Nu, and Sir U Thwin requested that Mahāsi Sayādaw come to Rangoon and give training in methodical practice of insight meditation. Within a few years of the Sayādaw's arrival in Rangoon, similar meditation centres sprung up all over Burma, until they numbered over one hundred. In neighbouring Theravāda countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka such centres were also established in which the same method was taught and practised. According to a 1972 census, the total number of meditators trained at all these centres (both in Burma and abroad) had passed the figure of seven hundred thousand. In the East and in several Western countries as well, insight meditation courses continue to be conducted.

At the historic Buddhist Council held at Rangoon for two years, culminating in the 2500 Buddhist era (1956) Mahāsi Sayādaw had an important role. He

was one of the final editors of the canonical texts, which were recited and thereby approved, in the sessions of the council. Further, he was the questioner, that is, he had to ask the questions concerning the respective canonical texts that were to be recited. They were then answered by an erudite monk with a phenomenal power of memory, by the name of Venerable Vicittasārā. To appreciate fully the importance of these roles, it may be mentioned that at the first council held one hundred days after the passing away of the Buddha, it was the Venerable Mahā Kassapa who put forth those introductory questions which were then answered by the Venerable Upāli and the Venerable Ānanda.

After the recital of the canonical scriptures, the Tipiṭaka, had been completed at the sixth council, it was decided to continue with a rehearsal of the ancient commentaries and subcommentaries, preceded by critical editing and scrutiny. In that large task, too, the Sayādaw took a prominent part.

In the midst of all of these tasks, he was also a prolific and scholarly writer. He authored more than 70 writings and translations, mostly in Burmese, with a few in the Pali language. One of these deserves to be singled out: his Burmese translation of the commentary to the *Visuddhi Magga*, which presents many difficulties, linguistically and in its contents. In 1957 Mahāsi Sayādaw was awarded the title of *Aggamahāpandita*.

Yet even all of this did not exhaust the Sayādaw's remarkable capacity for work in the cause of the BuddhaDhamma. He undertook several travels abroad. The first two of his tours were in preparation for the sixth council, but were likewise used for preaching and teaching.

- Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam in 1952.
- India and Sri Lanka in 1953 and 1959.
- Japan in 1957.
- Indonesia in 1959.
- America, Hawaii, England, Continental Europe in 1979.

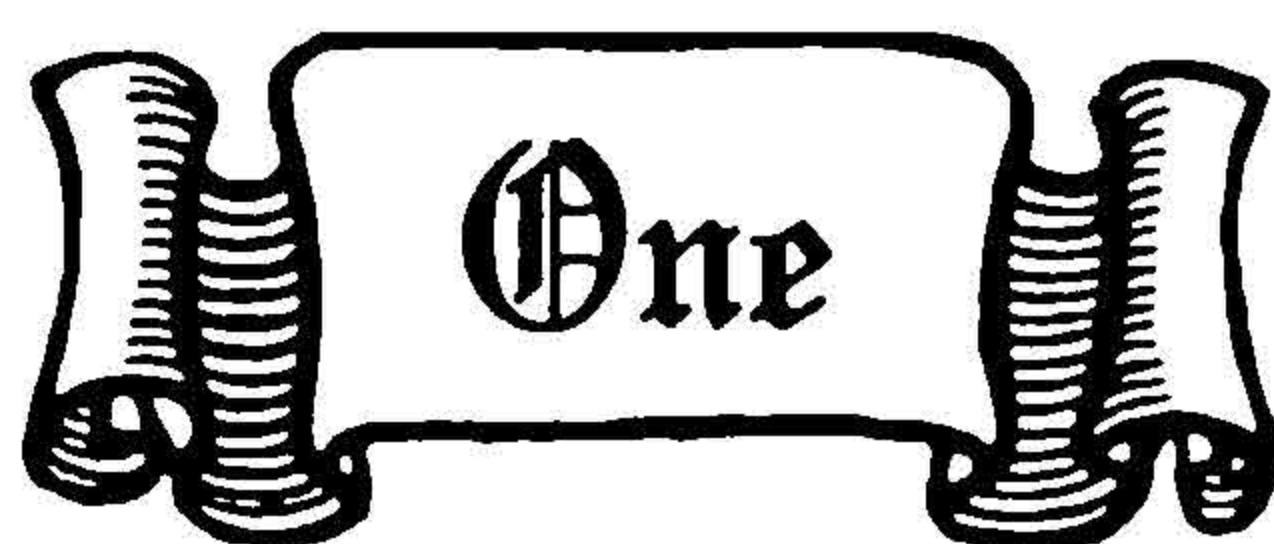
- England, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand in 1980.
- Nepal and India in 1981.

In the midst of all these manifold and strenuous activities, he never neglected his own meditative life which had enabled him to give wise guidance to those instructed by him. His outstanding vigour of body and mind and his deep dedication to the Dhamma sustained him through a life of 78 years.

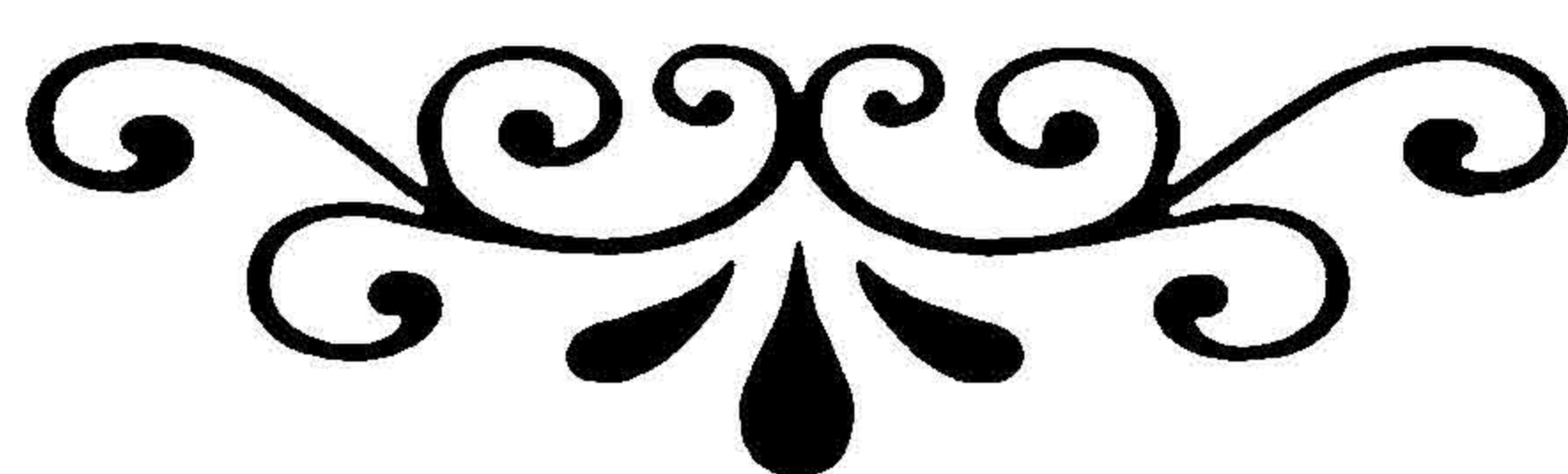
On 14th August 1982 Mahāsi Sayādaw succumbed to a sudden and severe heart attack which he had suffered the night before. Yet on the evening of the 13th, he had still given an introductory explanation to a group of new meditators.

Mahāsi Sayādaw was one of the very rare personalities in whom there was a balanced and high development of both profound erudition linked with a keen intellect, and deep and advanced meditative experience. He was also able to teach effectively both Buddhist thought and Buddhist practice.

His long career of teaching through the spoken and printed word had a beneficial impact on many hundreds of thousands in the East and the West. His personal stature and his life's work rank him among the great figures of contemporary Buddhism.



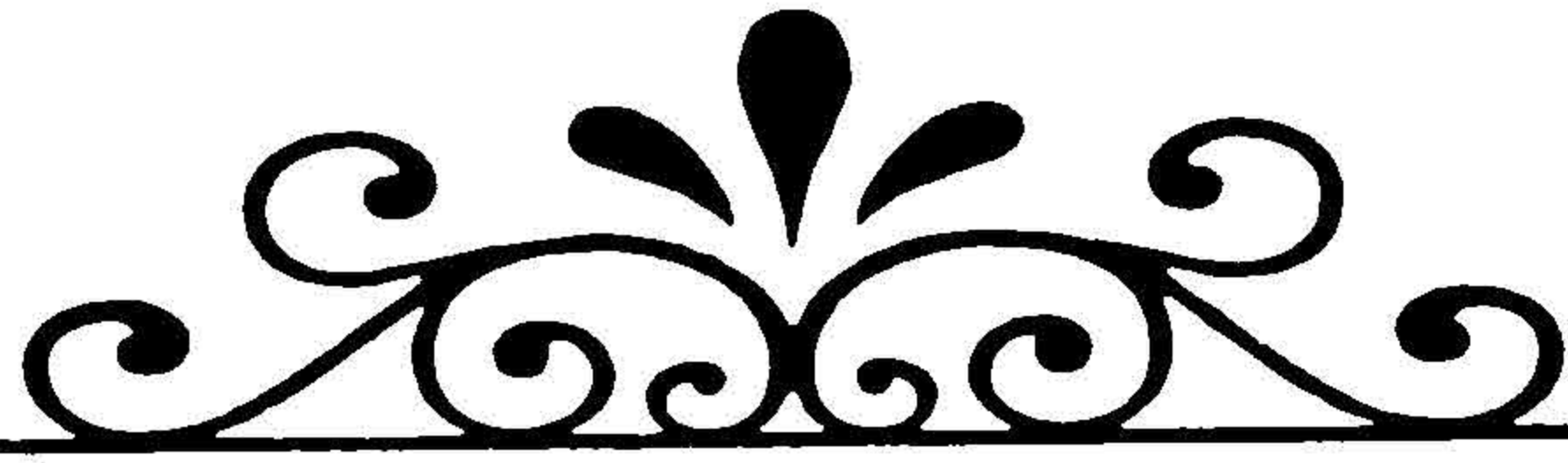
THE DHAMMA



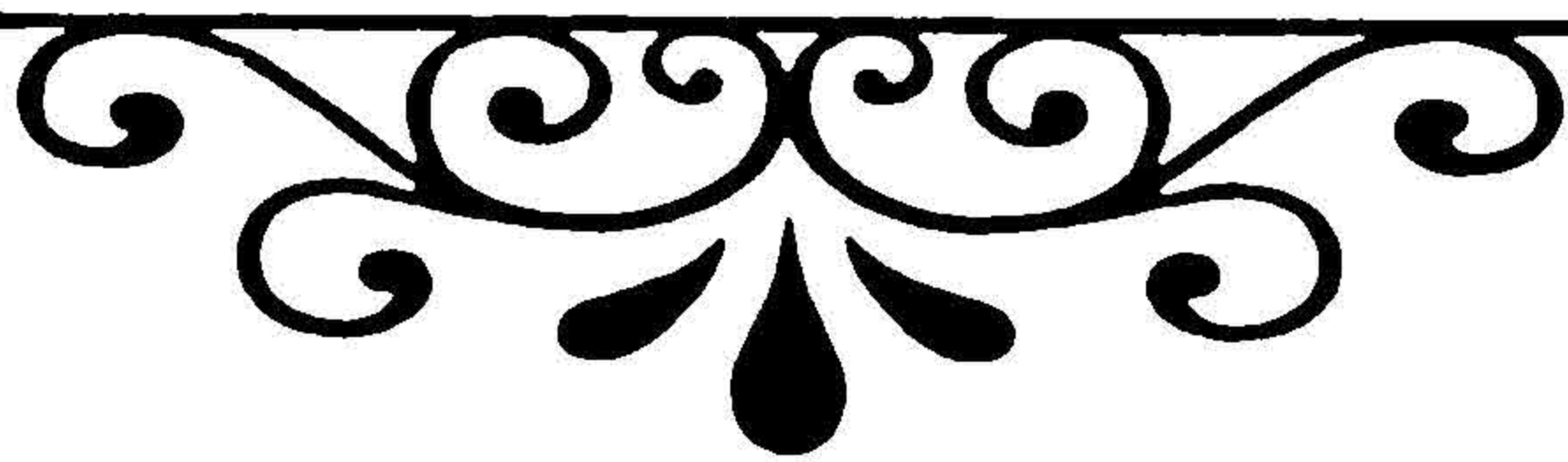
“He who sees me sees the Dhamma;
and he who sees the Dhamma sees me.”

THE BUDDHA

The Teaching, or Dhamma,
signifies the three aspects of
study, practice and realization.
(*pariyatti, patipatti & pativedha*)



- | | |
|----|------------------------------|
| 3 | The Heavy Burden |
| 5 | Carrying the Heavy Burden |
| 7 | The Body's Deterioration |
| 8 | The Empire of Defilements |
| 9 | The Working of Ignorance |
| 10 | Slaves of Greed |
| 11 | The Deities' Dissatisfaction |
| 12 | The True Faith |
| 13 | Working for Liberation |
| 14 | One Truth Only |
| 15 | The Need for Practice |



The greatest burden for living beings is to fend for their livelihood. Some have to work for a living starting at the age of twelve or thirteen. People have to be educated. Some can get only an elementary schooling and so they can get employment only as labourers. Those who can get a good education are employed in higher positions, but then they have to work day in and day out without a break.

Those who are born with past good kamma into this world do not feel the burden so much. People born with the best of kamma are fed and clothed well since childhood by their parents who give them the best education when they grow up. Even when reaching adulthood the parents continue to give them every possible support to raise them up into people of position who can fulfill their desires and wants. Such fortunate people may not know how heavy the burden of life really is.

Those whose past kamma is not good never meet with affluence. As children they know only hunger, not being able to eat what they would like to eat or dress in a way that they would like to dress. Once they have grown up, they are just trying to keep their body and mind together. Some do not even have their daily minimal amount of rice ready for the table. Some have to get up early to pound rice for cooking. Some do not even have that rice, and so they have to borrow some from their neighbours. If you want to know more about the life of poor people, go to their quarters and make inquiries yourself.

CARRYING THE HEAVY BURDEN



THIS BODY, which is one of the five aggregates, is a heavy burden. Serving it means carrying the heavy burden. When we feed and clothe it, we are carrying the burden. That means we are servants to the aggregate of matter. Having fed and clothed the body, we must also keep it sound and happy both in the physical and psychological sense. This is serving the aggregate of feeling. Again, we must see that this body experiences good sights and sounds. This is concerned with consciousness. Therefore we are serving the aggregate of consciousness.

These three burdens are quite obvious. The aggregate of matter says: "Feed me well. Give me what I like to eat, if not I shall make myself ill or weak. Or worse still, I shall kill myself!" Then we have to try to please it.

The aggregate of feeling says: "Give me pleasurable sensations, if not I shall make myself painful or regretful, or worse, I shall kill myself!" Then we have to hanker after pleasurable sensations to serve its needs.

Then the aggregate of consciousness says: "Give me good sights. Give me good sounds. I want pleasant sense objects. Find them for me, if not, I shall make myself unhappy and frightful. Eventually I shall kill myself!" Then we have to do its biddings.

It is as if all these three aggregates are perpetually threatening us. So we cannot help but comply with their demands, and this compliance is a great burden on us.

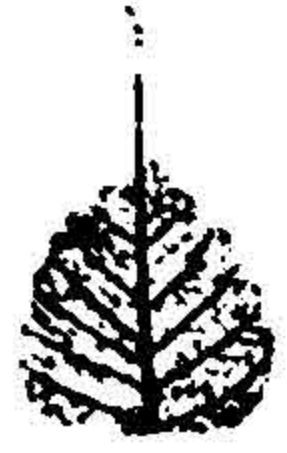
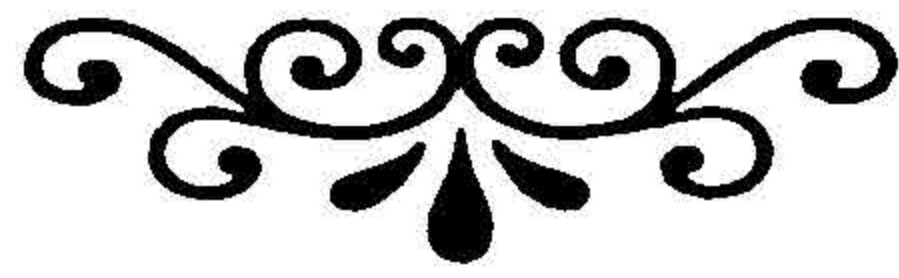
The aggregate of volitional activities is another burden. Life demands that we satisfy our daily needs and desires, and for this satisfaction we have to be active. We must be working all the time. This round of human activities gets encouragement from our volitions prompted by craving. These activities make threatening demands on us daily, indicating that, if they are not met, trouble and

even death would ensue. When human desires remain unfulfilled, they resort to crime. How heavy the burden of the volitional activities rests upon us! It is because we cannot carry this load well on our shoulders that we get demoralized into committing offences that bring shame upon us. Criminal deeds are committed mostly because we cannot carry the burden of volitional activities well.

The aggregate of perception is also a great burden, because it is with perception that you train your faculties like memory, to retain knowledge, and wisdom which can discern good from bad and reject from your mind unwholesome things produced by unpleasant sense objects. If the demands of the mind for pleasant sense objects are not met, it will take up only evil which does nobody any good. Regrets and anxieties arise because we cannot shoulder the burden of the aggregate of perception well.

For all these reasons the Buddha declared the five aggregates of clinging a heavy burden.

THE BODY'S DETERIORATION

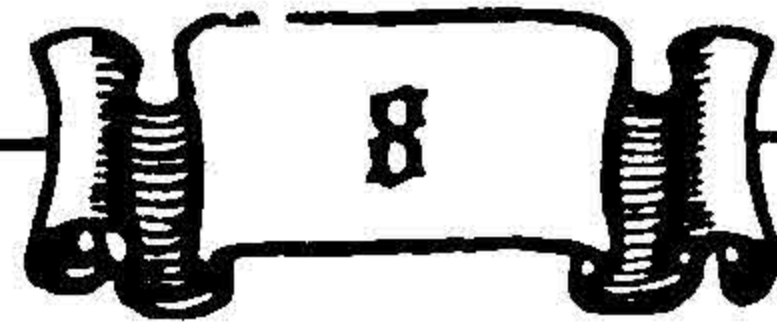


HUMAN BEINGS usually are living their lives without being actually aware of the slow and gradual deterioration of their bodies. Only when old age comes or a terminal disease sets in and death is close, do people reflect on this sad fact.

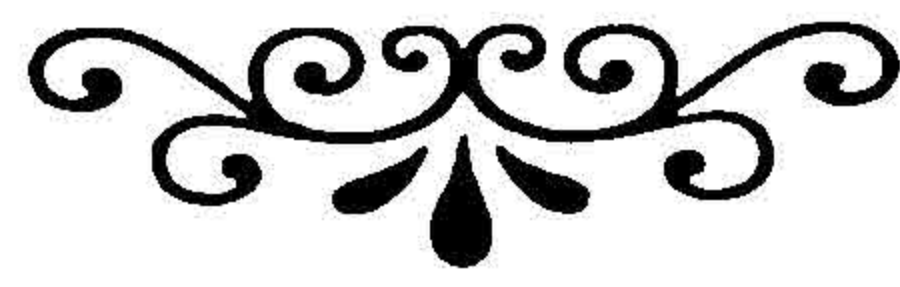
The same process of decay repeats itself in each successive existence: the gradual deterioration of the body, the onset of old age and disease and the eventual death. The Buddha came to realize this pattern. When he surveyed millions of lifetimes of beings ailing and dying, and the sorrow of those who are near and dear to them, a great compassion arose in him. 'Millions upon millions' it is said, but in reality the number of lifetimes is countless. If the history of a being's existences were to be illustrated by pictures they would fill the entire surface of the earth and even more space would be needed.

The Buddha's great compassion arose when he saw these countless pictures of the beings' birth, old age, illness and death.

from
DISCOURSE ON
HEWAVATA SUTTA



THE EMPIRE OF DEFILEMENTS

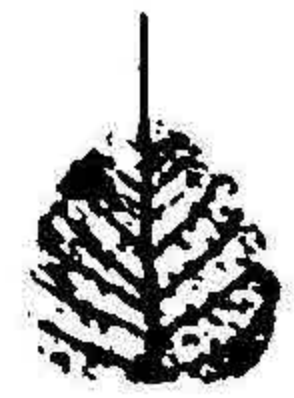
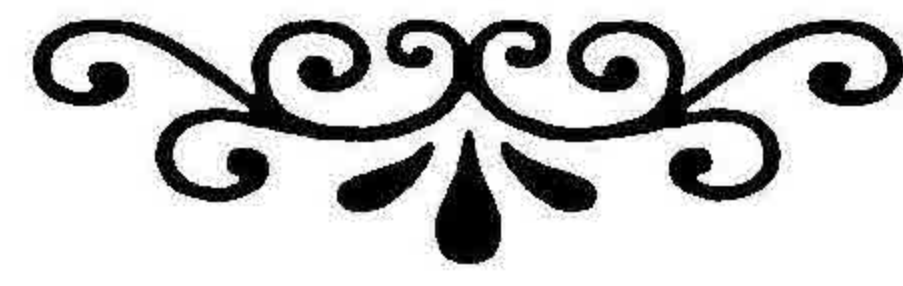


FAILURE TO SEE things with understanding gained from insight meditation, which recognizes the real nature of things, is ignorance. When people declare that they see or hear something, they do so with the wrong notion that it is their ego that sees or hears. But in fact, there is no ego. This wrong notion deludes one into believing that things are permanent or pleasing or satisfactory. It therefore gives rise to craving, which, as it intensifies, develops into clinging. This is how defilements build up their own empire.

from
ON THE NATURE
OF NIBBANA



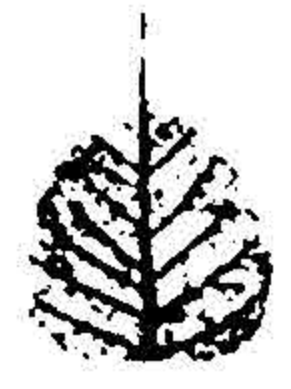

THE WORKING OF IGNORANCE



PEOPLE SEEK pleasant sense objects, good sights, good sounds, good food, etc. Their effort to secure what they believe to be the good things of life is due to their illusion about their existence. Ignorance works here like green eyeglasses that make a horse eat the dry grass, while mistaking it for green grass. Living beings are mired in sensual pleasure because they see everything through rose coloured glasses. They harbour illusions about the nature of sense objects and mind and matter.

from
DISCOURSE ON
PATICCA SAMUPADA

SLAVES OF GREED

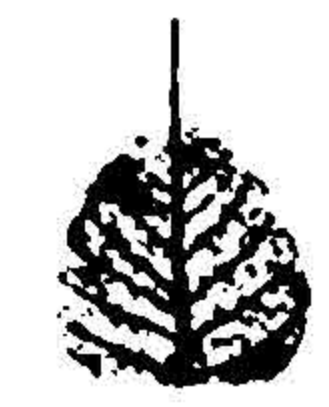


THE BUDDHA saw that all beings were slaves of lust and greed, and that moved him to great compassion. Living beings serve their lust and greed even at the risk of their lives. They have to work daily during all their lives to satisfy their craving, and after death and in the next existence, too, they remain slaves of the same master, craving. There is no period of rest for them.

In the human world a slave may remain a slave for one lifetime, but a slave of greed has an unending term of servitude, spanning uncountable lifetimes, unless he or she becomes an Arahant and thus ends his or her wandering through the cycles of birth and death.


from
DISCOURSE ON
HEWAVATA SUTTA

THE DEITIES' DISSATISFACTION




DO NOT HAVE the impression by becoming a celestial being based on your good deeds, you get to a place where every wish is fulfilled and you don't need to have any more wishes, that is, you would be satisfied to the full. No being is ever satisfied with what has been given, and will always ask for more. To get more, further efforts have to be made, and suffering ensues from these efforts.

from
DISCOURSE ON
HEWAVATA SUTTA




THE TRUE FAITH



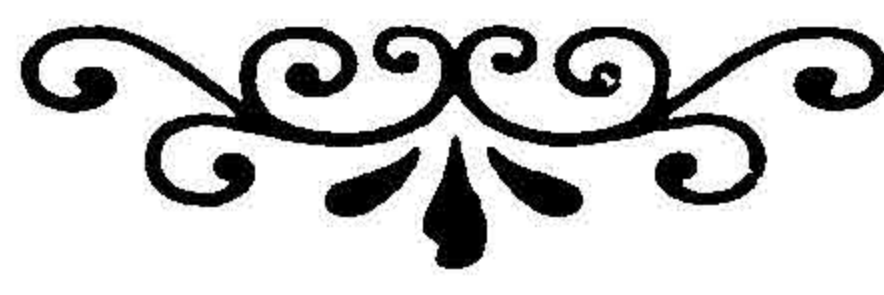
 THE THEORY that phenomena arise randomly, without causes, is gradually gaining in favourable attention because people's greed is increasing and their hankering after sensual pleasures is having a corresponding growth. Nowadays some people are of the opinion that one cannot achieve one's goals if one abstains from all unwholesome actions. This attitude leads people to false faiths. The spreading ignorance of the law of kamma and its effect is the result of overwhelming greed superimposed by delusion.

The Buddha discovered this law of cause and effect and so he urged people to make effort to reduce their volume of greed and delusion. Faithful disciples will follow the Buddha's directions and try to reach realization through meditation and thus free themselves from false faiths. They know that the kamma of the previous existences had made them what they are in the present existence, and the kamma of the present existence will determine the state of the next existence, as long as they are not free from craving. Thus they confirm their belief in the true faith.

from
DISCOURSE ON
HEWAVATA SUTTA



WORKING FOR LIBERATION




GOOD BUDDHISTS have the habit of wishing for attainment of Nibbana whenever they accomplish a meritorious deed. This goal will of course not be fulfilled immediately by their mere wishing. It will be attained in one of the higher planes which they will reach by virtue of their good deeds, and then only if they actually develop the eightfold path. So why wait till future existences? Why not start now and work for liberation in this very life?


from
THE WHEEL
OF DHAMMA

ONE
TRUTH
ONLY

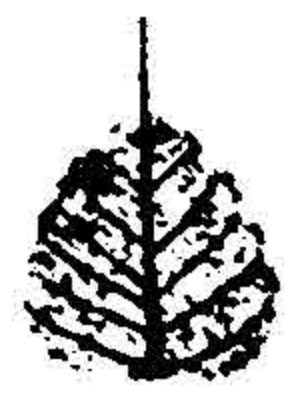
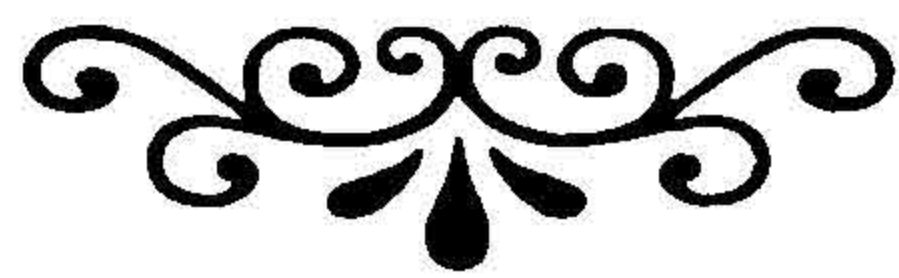


 INDEED, TRUTH MUST BE ONE and indivisible. Keep this in mind. Nowadays when BuddhaDhamma is disseminated it should be only based on the practice of the noble eightfold path which is called the *middle way*; the practice of morality, concentration and wisdom, the practice that leads to the realization of the four noble truths. If somebody were to preach that the realization of the Truth can be accomplished without the practice of the eightfold path, without practicing to develop morality, concentration and wisdom, without practicing with a view to realize the four noble truths, then it is necessary to have understood such teaching as one that is in variance with the teaching of the Buddha.

from
TO NIBBANA VIA
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH



THE NEED FOR PRACTICE



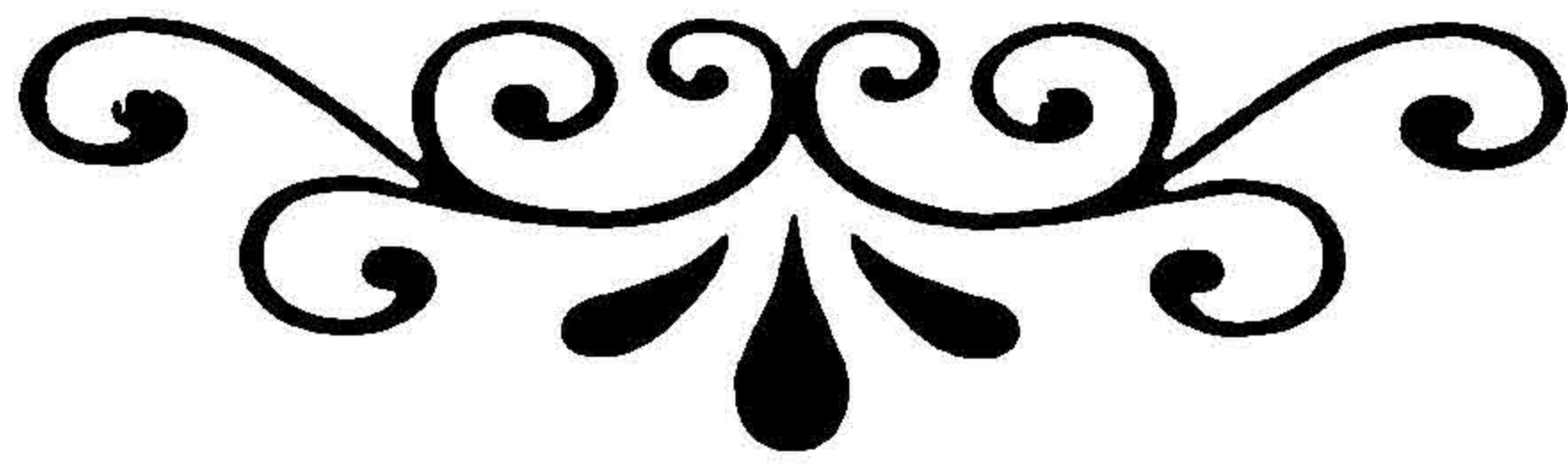
IN THESE DAYS misrepresentations of the Buddha's teachings have cropped up. Knowledge, it is said, is accomplishment, and there is no need for anyone to practise Dhamma once knowledge has been attained. Such a statement amounts to the rejections of the practice of the Dhamma and to the exclusion of the noble eightfold path.

But in point of fact, the Buddha taught that the noble eightfold path is to be constantly practised, for it is a set of discipline which, by its cultivation, can generate insight into the nature of the supramundane path. Without effort nothing can be achieved. And yet there is a school of thought which wrongly suggests that making an effort itself is suffering or unsatisfactoriness and that therefore it should not be undertaken. Will those who believe in these teachings prepared to take the trouble of meditating according to the eightfold path and develop its factors? If there is no development of the eight factors of the path, will the factors exist in their minds? And in the absence of any insight into the nature of the supramundane path how can one eliminate defilements and attain nibbanic peace?

from
TO NIBBANA VIA
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH



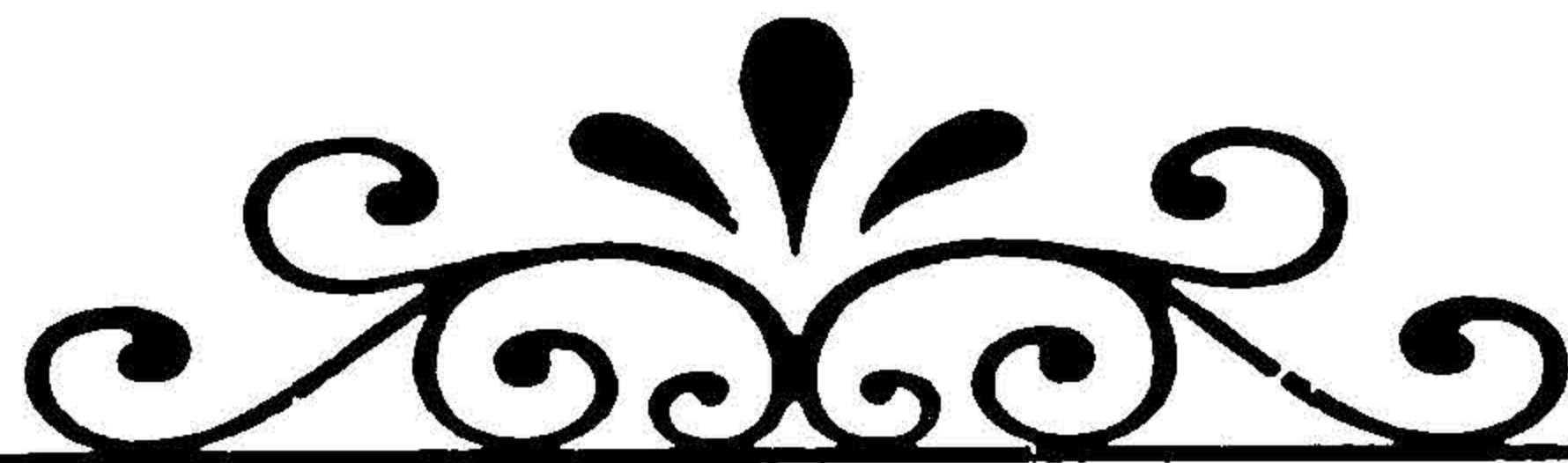
ETHICS



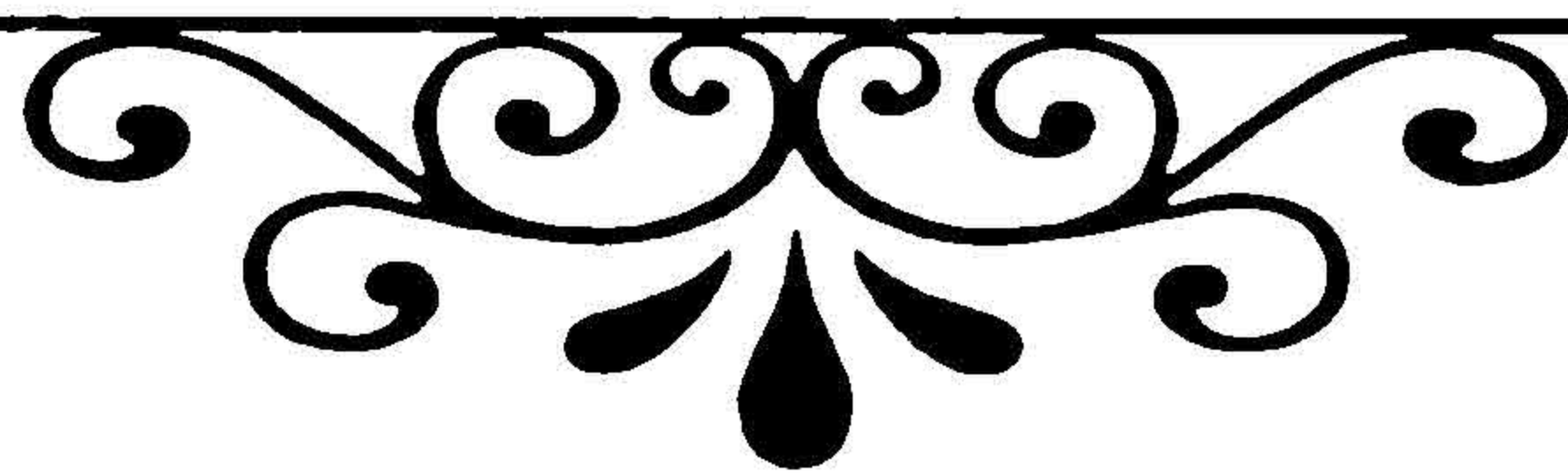
“By oneself, indeed, is evil done;
by oneself is one defiled.
By oneself is evil undone;
by oneself, indeed, is one purified.
Purity and impurity depend on oneself.
No one purifies another.”

THE BUDDHA

A decorative flourish consisting of a single, smooth, wavy line that curves upwards at both ends, resembling a stylized wave or a flourish.



19	The Light of Dhamma
20	Keeping the Precepts
21	The Influence of Ill-will
22	Killing in Self-Defence
23	Acts of Charity
24	Radiating Love
25	Aspiring for Nibbana



THE LIGHT OF DHAMMA



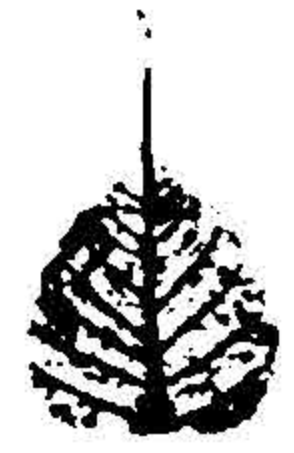

VIRTUE, CONCENTRATION AND WISDOM lead to Nibbana. Yet some assert that it is not necessary to observe the rules of morality if one is intellectually convinced of the teachings. Such protagonists often say they have some self-invented simplified or easy methods for their followers. How strange! It cannot be denied that in Buddha's time there were instances of intelligent and mature individuals who at once saw the light of Dhamma the moment they heard the Buddha's sermons. No doubt there exist geniuses who can after a brief exposition grasp at once the meaning of the four noble truths², or those who can realize the truth after a wider exposition³. In Buddha's times such individuals gained the light of knowledge without appreciable endeavour while listening to the Buddha's teachings.

But when it comes to an ordinary individual who has to be guided for the gradual realization of truth, even the Buddha may not be able to make her or him see the light of Dhamma without practicing.

² In Pali: *ugghatitannu*

³ In Pali: *vipancittannu*

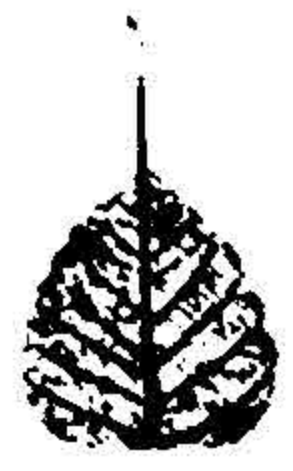
KEEPING THE PRECEPTS



THE NOBLE ONES who have attained the first stage of sainthood adore the five precepts. They do not want to break them, they are always anxious not to break the precepts. They observe them not because they are afraid to be censured by others, but because they want to keep their minds in purity, and purity of mind can be achieved only by observance of the five precepts. They do not want to fail in keeping the precepts during this life only but in all future existences. In such a future existence they may not know that they have become stream-enterers in their previous life, but they do know that they must observe the five precepts fully and without fault.

Sometimes one comes across a person who has never since his or her infancy done any unwholesome action such as killing or stealing. He or she has not been given any particular instructions by his or her parents, but he or she knows by him- or herself what an evil deed is and refrains from it. He or she has kept his virtue pure since his childhood. Maybe he or she had achieved a special insight of the Dhamma in a previous existence. There are also instances of persons who though born of non-Buddhist parents have come to the East to practise meditation. Maybe such people have had some practice of observance of the Buddha's Dhamma in their previous existences. These are interesting instances, and their cases must be evaluated in accord with the extent and depth of their study and practice of the Dhamma.

THE INFLUENCE OF ILL-WILL


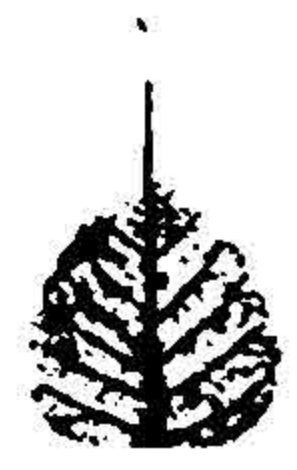


ILL-WILL IS ONE of the five hindrances on the holy path. It is like a disease that creates a distaste for good food and makes the sick person listless and apathetic. Ill-will makes us irritable, bad tempered and suspicious. We then do not trust our friend who stays in good terms with the person we dislike. A person who has ill-will should regard himself or herself as suffering from a disease. Unless a disease is treated promptly, it may gain ground and lead to death. Likewise, the effect of unrestrained ill-will may be disastrous as is evident in the newspaper reports of violent crimes.

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from
DISCOURSE ON
ARIYAVASA SUTTA

KILLING IN SELF-DEFENCE

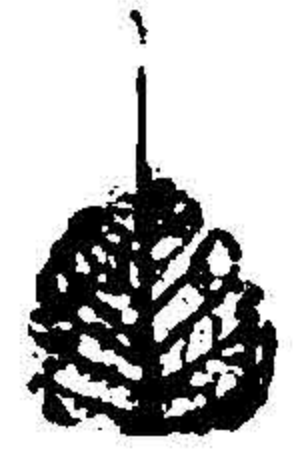



ONCE A WRITER said in an article of a journal that a stream-enterer will not kill others, but if anyone comes to kill him, he would kill his attacker. The writer declared that he made that statement after a research into the nature of the human mind.

I just wonder whose mind he had made a research of, and how he did it. He must have made a research of his own mind. He might have thought he was a stream-enterer. He might have asked himself if he would allow the attacker to kill him when he had an effective weapon of defense, and it might have been his own answer that he would rather strike the attacker first. He probably obtained the conclusions which he expressed in his article from his personal attitude. According to the tenets of Buddhism, this is a ridiculous statement.

The very fact that one thinks one can and should retaliate if attacked proves that one is not a stream-enterer, for according to Buddhist tenets, the person entertaining such a notion is a mere ordinary worldling, definitely not a noble one. A real stream-enterer would not kill even a flea or a bug, not to say a human being. This fact must be remembered once and for all.

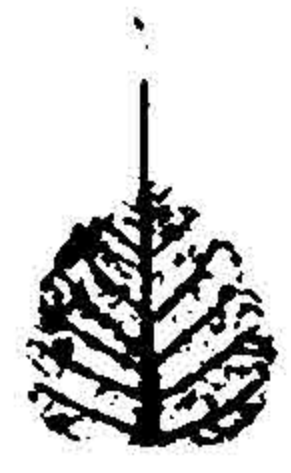
ACTS OF CHARITY



ACTS OF CHARITY inspired by loving-kindness live long in human memory, generating love and respect among people and thus laying a foundation for the unity of the whole world.

from
TO NIBBANA VIA
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

RADIATING LOVE

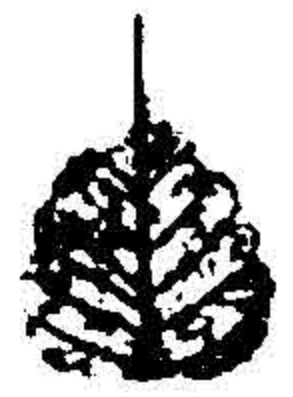


WHETHER ONE is residing in one's own quarters or whether one is moving about or working, if a person or any living being is seen or heard, loving-kindness should be developed with a sincere and sympathetic feeling as: "May she or he find happiness! May she or he find happiness!"

In the same manner one should put the spirit of loving-kindness in the bottom of one's heart mentally saying, "May all beings be happy", whenever a large gathering of people is seen or heard. This is quite an easy and excellent way of radiating metta, since every being wishes to be happy.

from
BRAHMAVIHARA
DHAMMA

ASPIRING FOR NIBBANA

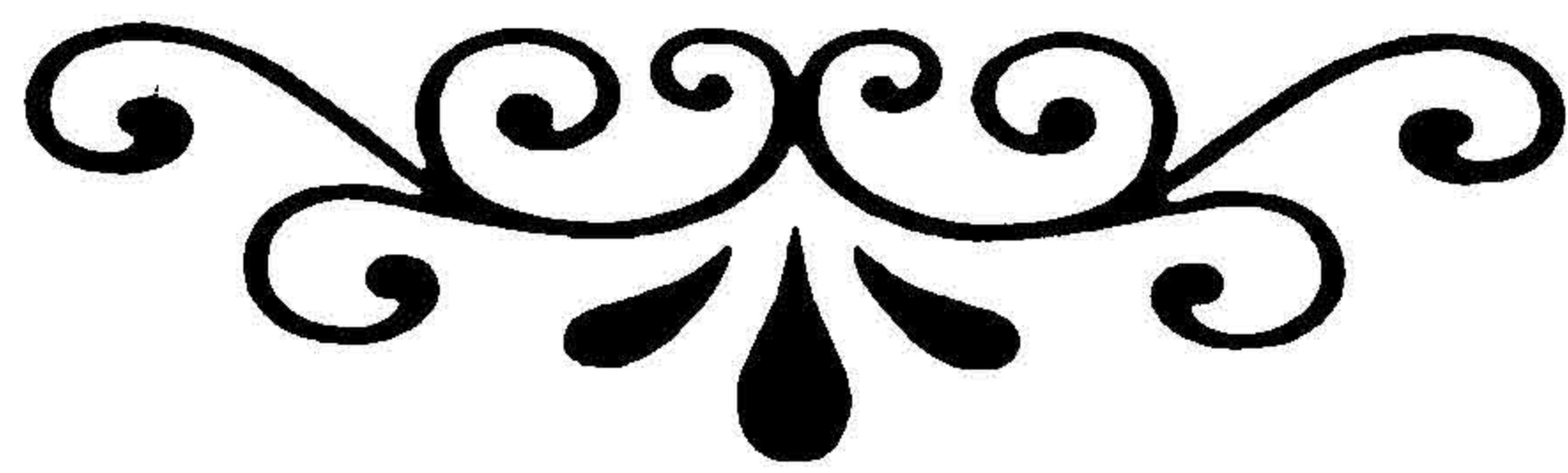


WHEN YOU DO a good deed you should do it with zeal and with Nibbana as your objective. If you set your heart on Nibbana, the good deed will lead you to it and the zeal with which you do it will ensure rebirth with good predispositions. It is not necessary to pray for such noble rebirth because you are assured of it if you do good deeds intelligently and zealously. But if you lack zeal and understanding in doing good, yours will be a rebirth with only non-greed and non-hatred faculties, lacking wisdom faculty.

from
DISCOURSE ON
PATICCA SAMUPADA



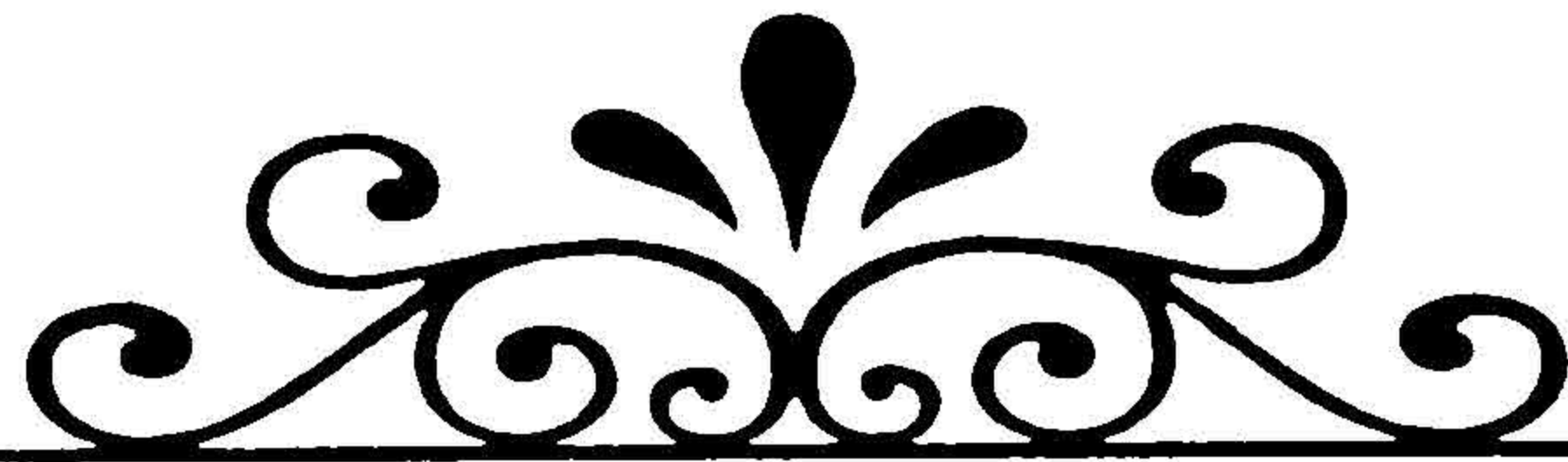
CONCENTRATION



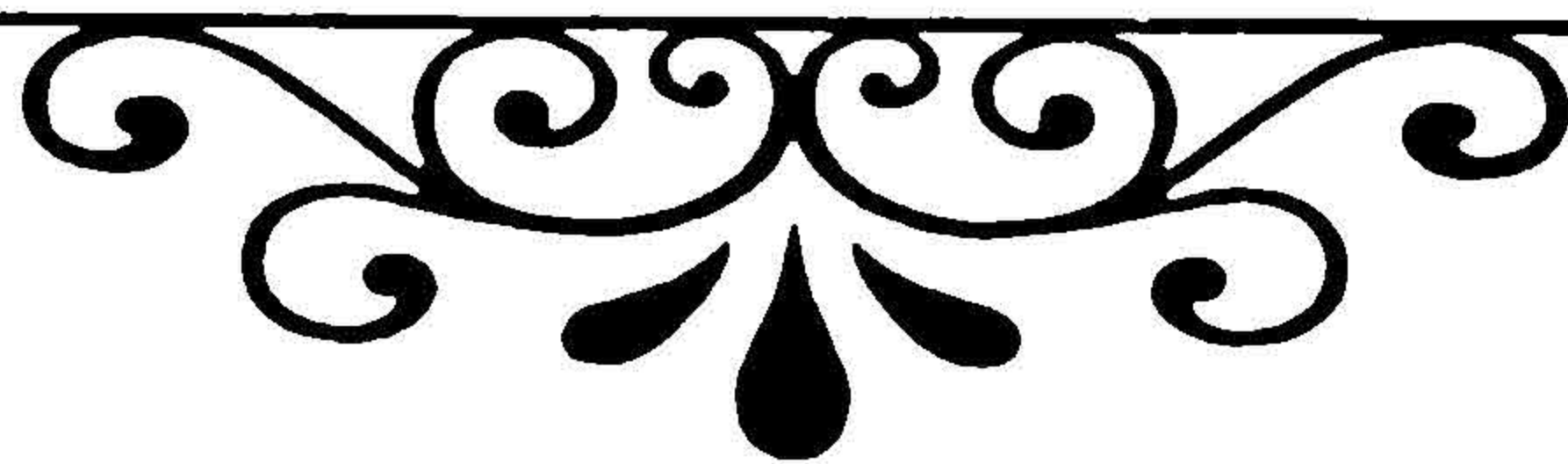
“Bhikkhus, develop concentration.
A Bhikkhu with a concentrated mind
knows things as they really are.
And what does he know as it really is?
The origin of the body and the passing thereof,
the arising of feeling, perception, mental activities and consciousness
and the passing thereof.”

THE BUDDHA





- 29 Wrong Concentration
- 30 Right Concentration
- 31 Attentive Listening
- 32 The Necessity of Samadhi
- 33 Three Types of Right Concentration
- 34 Practising Tranquillity Meditation
- 35 Gaining the Proper Concentration
- 36 The Concentration of
Insight Meditation



WRONG CONCENTRATION




WRONG CONCENTRATION is concentration of the mind on an unwholesome action committed by body or speech. It needs concentration to accomplish unwholesome things. If, for example, you intend to tell a lie, your intention will materialize only if you fix your mind on the words to be falsely uttered. If your mind wanders off, the chances are that you unwittingly speak the truth. At the law courts the truth about a case sometimes comes to light when witnesses, who intend to give false evidence, are sidetracked by the lawyer with a cross examination that creates confusion. Such witnesses lack concentration to stick to the false evidence.

So concentration is vital for doing unwholesome actions. The power of wrong concentration is indeed great when people plan a massacre, stage a big robbery or produce lethal weapons.

from
DISCOURSE ON
SALLEKHA SUTTA

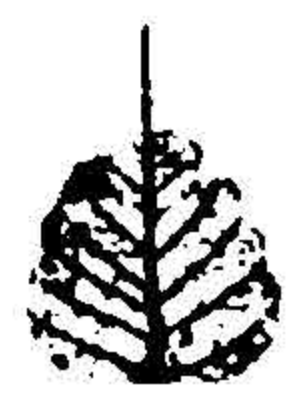
RIGHT CONCENTRATION



 RIGHT CONCENTRATION is concentration on wholesome actions like almsgiving or observance of moral precepts. Almsgiving requires concentration strong enough to effect it. So does paying respect to monks or doing services to others. Concentration is of great importance to mental exercises such as preaching and hearing sermons. It is even more important in the practice of observing the inbreaths and outbreaths where one has to fix the mind wholly on a single object. Concentration related to such wholesome consciousness is *right concentration*.

from
DISCOURSE ON
SALLEKHA SUTTA

ATTENTIVE LISTENING



TO ACHIEVE REALIZATION of the Dhamma while listening to a sermon, one must have a settled mind, for it is only through focused attention with a calm mind that one can achieve concentration and only concentration can still the mind for insight to arise. If the mind wanders over domestic, economic or other secular affairs during the sermon, concentration will not be attained. If anxiety crops up, the essence of the Dhamma will slip and as concentration is lacking there will be no insight. If one cannot attain insight into impermanence, suffering and non-self how can one attain realization of the Dhamma?

The listener must listen carefully, with full mental involvement, and the words of the Dhamma must be adhered to in practice. If one attends to a sermon in this way, one's mind will be calm and absorbed in the Dhamma talk. One will be free from interference and thus attain *purity of mind*.

from
DISCOURSE ON
HEWAVATA SUTTA

THE NECESSITY OF SAMADHI



SOME ARE SAYING that concentration of mind, samadhi, is not necessary and that if one just ponders upon the two wisdom factors *right understanding* and *right thought* of the eightfold path, there is no need to note phenomena arising and vanishing. This is the skipping of the development step of concentration. Concentration of jhanic depth is indeed the best to have as a basis for insight meditation, but failing that one should acquire momentary concentration which is in strength equivalent to access concentration. Without such a concentration one cannot attain real insight wisdom. The Buddha said:

“Bhikkhus, develop concentration. A Bhikkhu with a concentrated mind knows things as they really are. And what does he know as it really is? The origin of the body and the passing thereof, the arising of feeling, perception, mental activities and consciousness and the passing thereof.”

So it is clear that without concentration one cannot acquire insight knowledge and attain the knowledge of the supramundane paths and fruitions. One can therefore say that knowledge outside of concentration is not insight knowledge, and that without insight knowledge one cannot attain Nibbana.

THREE TYPES OF RIGHT CONCENTRATION



RIGHT CONCENTRATION is of three kinds, momentary concentration, access concentration and absorption concentration.⁴

Concentration that arises with ordinary forms of wholesome consciousness is called momentary concentration, as it lasts only temporarily. It arises for example with almsgiving or the keeping of precepts. This ordinary concentration is usually unnoticable and so the scriptures do not mention it. Momentary concentration is discussed only in connection with the foundation of concentration and insight meditation. It is concentration that occurs at the preparatory stage of mental development, at the beginning of the meditation exercise.

Concentration which is powerful enough to exclude the hindrances is called access or neighbourhood concentration.

Concentration that the meditator has on the attainment of jhana is called absorption concentration.

⁴ In Pali: *khanika samadhi*, *upacara samadhi* and *appana samadhi*.

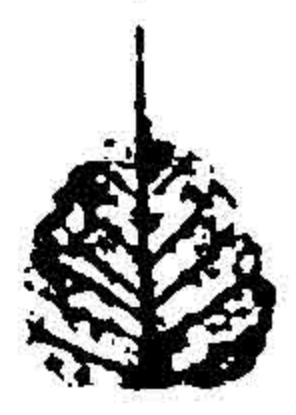
PRACTISING TRANQUILLITY MEDITATION



FIXED CONCENTRATION on a contemplated object such as kasina (e.g. a circle of light) as a practice to develop absorption concentration is *tranquillity meditation*. By being mindful with fixed concentration the mind is riveted on one single object. If the mind flits occasionally it should be recalled and put back on the object of contemplation. Then, while tranquillity meditation is carried on, pleasurable attachment to sensations on sights, sounds, etc., which may arise by imagination or thinking, will cease to occur. This is the manner in which the upsurge of craving is wiped off by the practice of tranquillity, i.e. by developing concentration. Yet tranquillity can dispel craving only for the moment while contemplation is on the swing. Hence if one desires to totally uproot craving, wisdom has to be developed through insight meditation.

from
DISCOURSE ON
PURABHEDA SUTTA

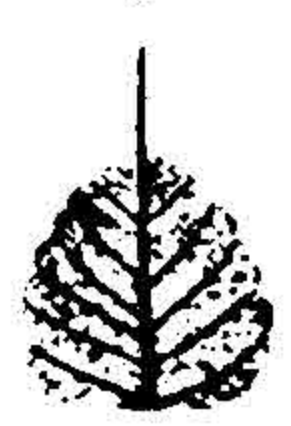
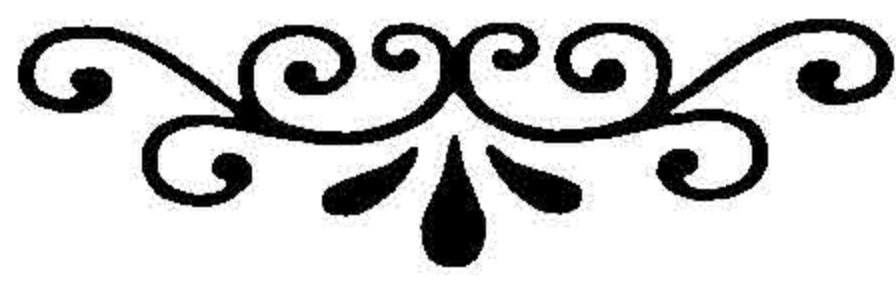
GAINING THE PROPER CONCENTRATION



AFTER ENSURING THE PURITY of one's moral conduct the monk should strive for attainment of the first, second, third or fourth jhana. If unable to do so, he should work for gaining at least the access concentration in the neighbourhood of jhana. If he cannot work separately for the jhanic concentrations, he must try to achieve the momentary concentration of insight meditation by contemplating on the four elements, mindstates, feelings, etc. This concentration has the same characteristic of suppressing the hindrances like the access concentration.

So one does not establish concentration as such on a single object but the concentration of insight meditation arises automatically by keeping close awareness of the true nature of mind and matter. When the attention during insight meditation is dispersed over too many objects or when it is fixed on those objects which are not easily discernable, then concentration takes a long time to arise. Confining the attention to a limited number of objects which can be distinctly noticed will facilitate and hasten the development of concentration.

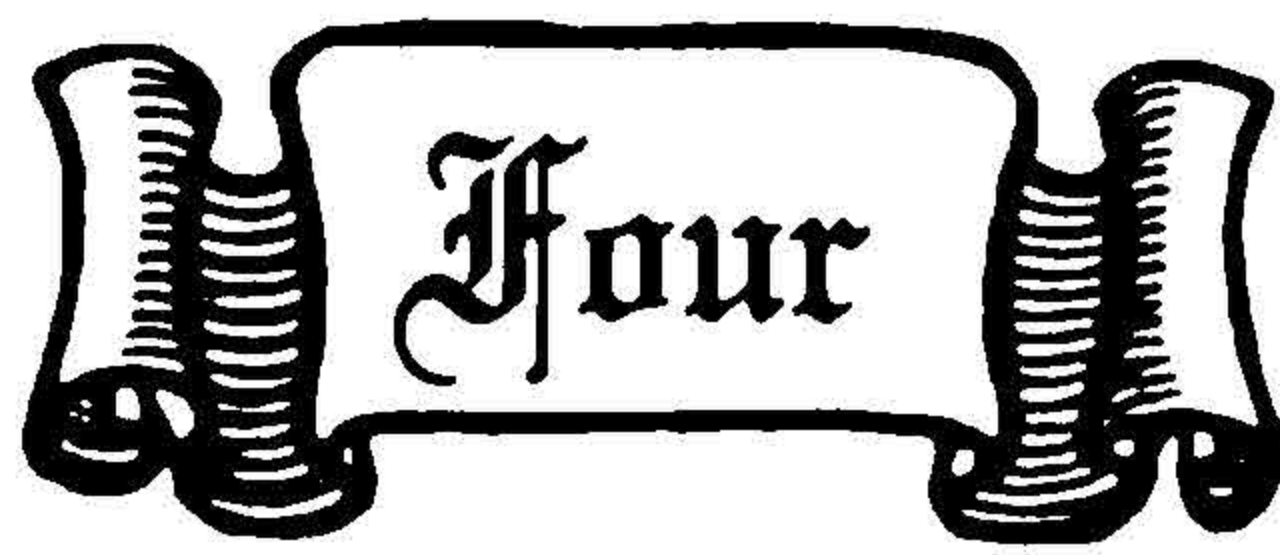
THE CONCENTRATION OF INSIGHT MEDITATION



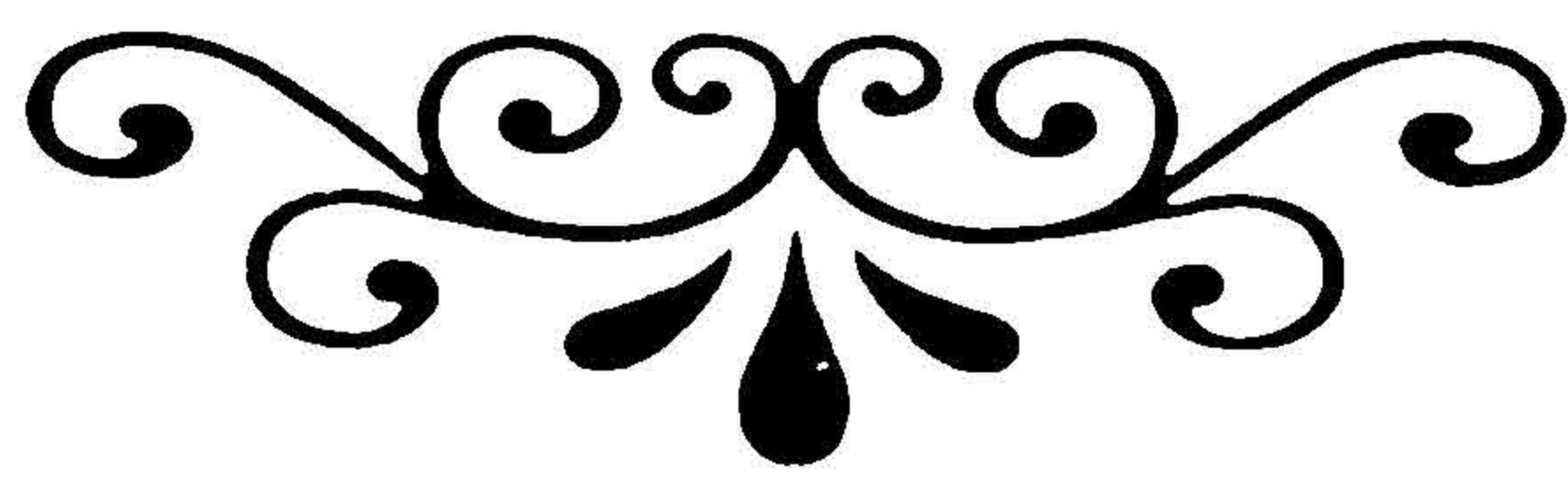
IN INSIGHT MEDITATION there is momentary concentration when the meditator concentrates on the four elements, the five aggregates, mind and matter, etc. But at the beginning concentration is not apparent as it is not well developed. Once it is developed the mind is entirely fixed on the object of contemplation. During this time the meditator's mind is free from hindrances such as sensual desires, etc. The mind becomes a ceaseless stream of mind moments characterized by mindfulness. This is the momentary concentration of insight meditation. It can also be called access concentration because it resembles the latter in respect of its ability to free the yogi from hindrances.

For the insight meditator, from the time concentration is developed enough to exclude the hindrances, the concentration that arises at every moment of mindfulness is momentary concentration of insight meditation that is like access concentration. The meditator possesses purity of mind because the mindful insight consciousness is pure. When the insight knowledge is perfect the meditator attains the result of the noble path which brings him or her into contact with Nibbana. The concentration at the moment of attaining the result of the noble path is supramundane absorption concentration.

from
DISCOURSE ON
SALLEKHA SUTTA



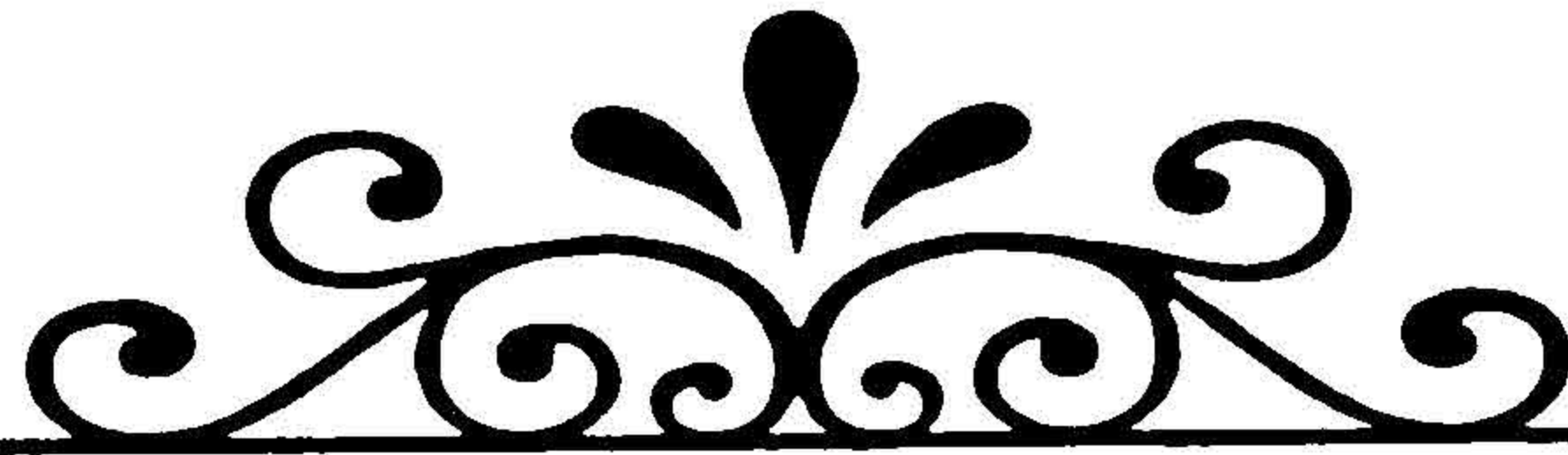
BEGINNING
INSIGHT MEDITATION



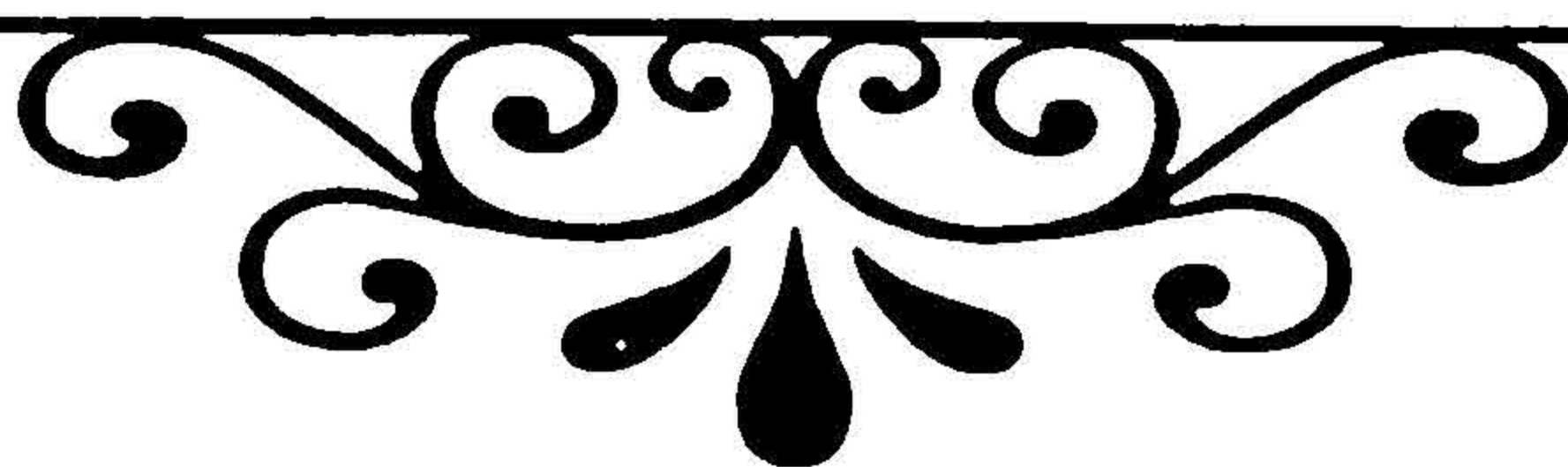
“In the seen there should be only the seen,
in the heard only the heard,
in the sensed only the sensed,
in the cognised only the cognised.”

THE BUDDHA

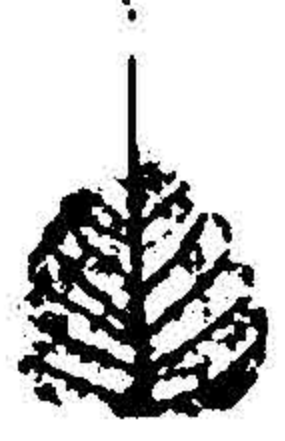
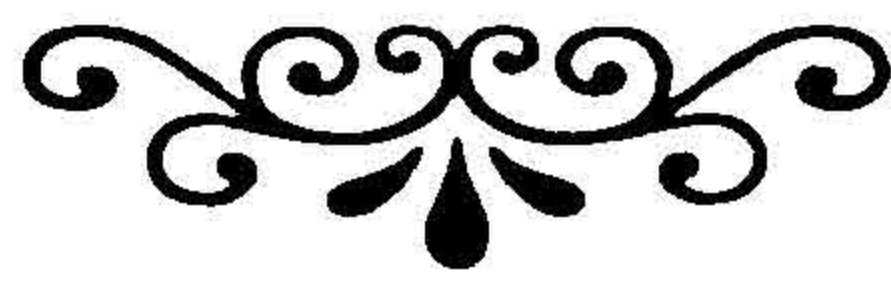
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|----|-------------------------------|
| 39 | Basic Meditation Instruction |
| 40 | A Flash of Lightning |
| 41 | Mindful Perception |
| 42 | The Unseen and the Seen |
| 43 | Encountering Initial Doubt |
| 44 | Avoiding Two Extremes |
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BASIC MEDITATION INSTRUCTION

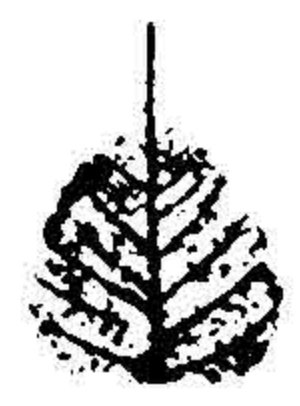


TO DEVELOP MINDFULNESS and gain insight knowledge keep the following points in mind:

1. Be aware of and understand all bodily sensations correctly as they occur.
2. Be aware of and understand all mind states as they occur.
3. Be aware of and understand all feelings, the pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent ones, as they occur.
4. Know distinctly every phenomenon that is evident.


from
TO NIBBANA VIA
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

A
FLASH OF
LIGHTNING

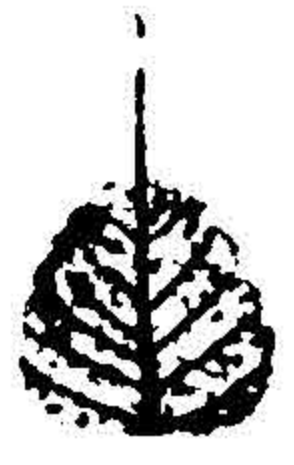


WATCH A FLASH of lightning. If you watch it at the moment when lightning strikes, you will see it in reality. If you are merely imagining how lightning occurs before or after the actual event, then you do not perceive the real flash of lightning. Try to know things in your meditation by actual observation of phenomena as they happen, not through imagination.

from
TO NIBBANA VIA
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH



MINDFUL PERCEPTION



THE BUDDHA'S meditation instruction to Bahiya was:


"In the seen there should be only the seen,
in the heard only the heard,
in the sensed only the sensed,
in the cognised only the cognised."

One must note what is seen as seen and no more. That is the general idea. In Meditation one should note in the beginning any object, which is evident and easy to note. If one concentrates on each phenomenon distinctly and separately, one does not feel any desire or attachment and thus craving is abandoned.

from
DISCOURSE ON
HEWAVATA SUTTA



THE UNSEEN AND THE SEEN




WHEN THE BUDDHA was about to give instructions to Malunkyaputta Bhikkhu he asked him:


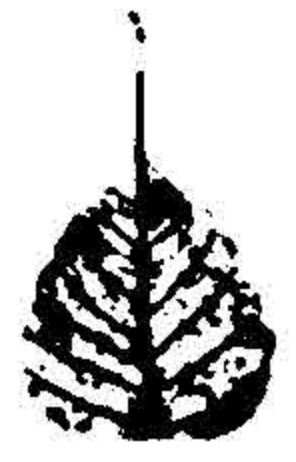
“Malunkyaputta, do you have any desire for the appearances that you have never seen, or those that you are not in the act of seeing, or those that you never expect to see?”

The Bhikkhu replied: “No Sir, that is impossible.”

If I were now to ask you the same question as the Buddha put to Malunkyaputta Bhikkhu you would give the same answer as he did. You cannot have any feeling of love or hatred for a person whom you never expect to see, can you? Now there are many people in so many villages, towns and countries, and you would never have any feeling of love or hatred for them. Defilements do not arise from the unperceived.

For the things which are seen, however, defilements can arise while seeing. Defilements can also arise for things after having them seen because a mental picture is retained in the memory. Therefore, it is necessary to note and abandon so that latencies of defilements cannot happen.

ENCOUNTERING INITIAL DOUBT

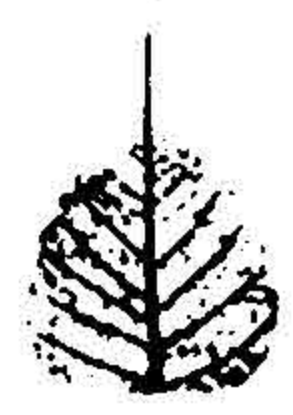
SOME PEOPLE who have never meditated may have some doubt about it. No wonder! For only seeing is believing and their scepticism is due to their lack of experience. I myself was a sceptic at one time. I then did not like the *satipatthana* method⁵, as it makes no mention of mentality and materiality, impermanence, non-self and so forth. But the Sayadaw who taught the method was a learned monk and so I decided to give it a try. At first I made little progress because I still had a lingering doubt about the method which, in my view, had nothing to do with ultimate reality.

It was only after I followed the method seriously that its significance dawned upon me. I realised then that it is the best method of meditation since it calls for attentiveness to everything that is to be known, leaving no room for absent-mindedness. That's why the Buddha describes the *satipatthana* method as the 'only way'; in Pali *ekayano maggo*.

5 The *satipatthana* method is the meditation on the four foundations of mindfulness* as described by the Buddha in the Satipatthana Sutta.

* contemplation of the body in the body, contemplation of feelings, contemplation of consciousness and contemplation of the dhammas.

AVOIDING TWO EXTREMES



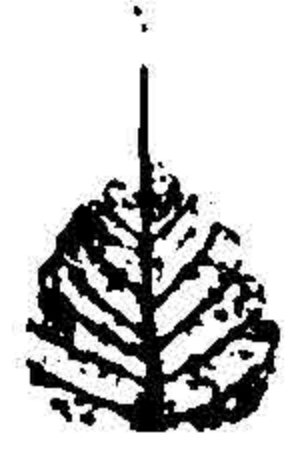
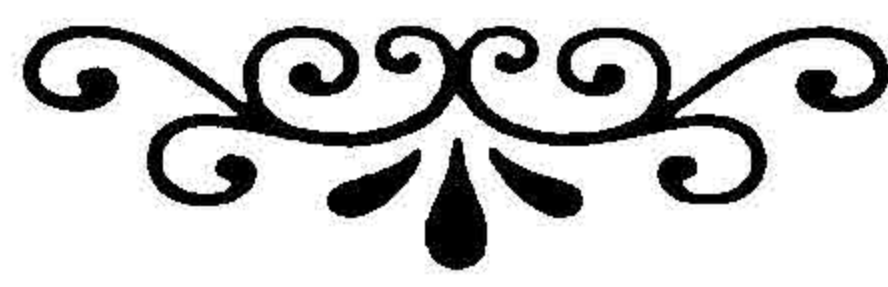
YOU MAY MAKE use of those five sense objects sight, sound, smell, taste and touch, which do not violate the observance of precepts or those which are helpful for the practice of Dhamma. For example eating food which is normally eaten and wearing clothes which are normally worn contribute to easeful practice of Dhamma, thus avoiding the extreme of self-mortification.

Necessary material goods such as food, clothing, medicine and shelter should be used accompanied either by reflective contemplation or the practice of tranquillity or insight meditation. Every time contact is made with the five sense objects they should be noted as objects of insight meditation. By adopting a reflective attitude or by noting these sense objects as phenomena of insight meditation, the partaking of necessary food, using clothes, etc., does not develop into enjoying them with delight or pleasure, and thus one avoids the other extreme of indulgence in sensual pleasures.

Therefore the Buddha said:

“Having avoided these two extremes (extreme practices) I have come to understand the middle path.”

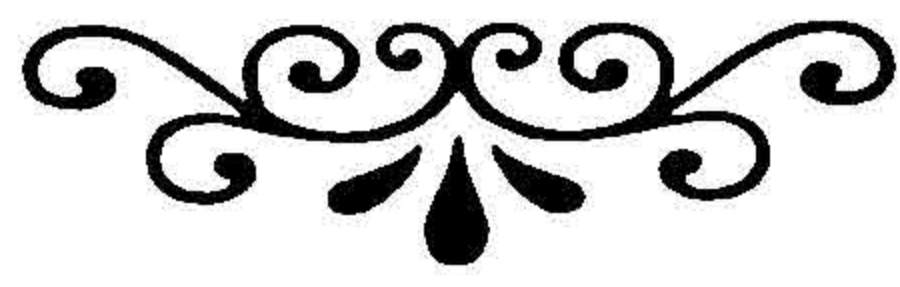
STRENUOUS EFFORT AND PATIENCE



STRENUOUS, RELENTLESS effort in meditation for the achievement of concentration and insight should not be misconceived as a form of self-torture. Leaving aside meditation practices, even the keeping of the moral precepts that may entail some physical discomfort and abstention, should never be regarded as a practice of self-mortification.

In the practice of tranquillity and insight meditation, patience as self-control play an important role; it is a crucial factor for any attainments. Therefore, physical discomfort should be endured with patience. The self-control which is practiced thereby is not self-mortification, because its goal is not the afflicting and enduring of pain but one's progress in virtue, concentration and wisdom as taught by the Buddha.

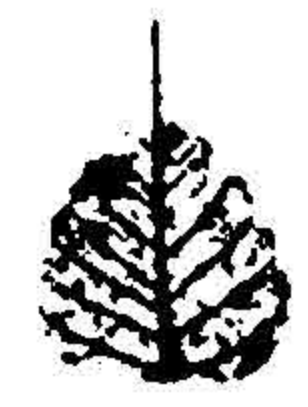
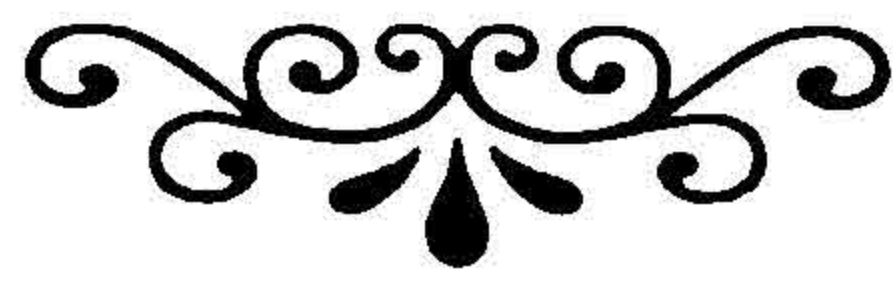
HINDRANCES ON THE PATH



THERE ARE FIVE causes of deterrents, called hindrances, to the attainment of concentration and wisdom. These are sensual desire, ill-will, laziness, restlessness and doubt. Here laziness means reluctance to hear or practice the Dhamma and getting bored or dejected during meditation. Restlessness is worry or anxiety over one's mistakes in the past, and doubt refers to doubt about the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, or about the way to the attainment of the supramundane path, fruition and Nibbana.

from
DISCOURSE ON
DHAMMADAYADA SUTTA

KNOWING AND NOTING GREED



THE MIND needs to be duly bridled. When you keep watch on its activities you will come to know when it develops craving for pleasurable things, and when you note that craving as craving then the undesirable propensity to snatch, grab and possess things will disappear.

I am saying this on the authority of the *Abhidhamma*⁶. But when we put the theory of meditation to actual practice, we cannot be occupying ourselves all the time with analysing the mind into its properties. We simply take note of greed as it arises and as soon as we recognize it, it subsides, leaving only the wholesome actions of knowing and noting it. Such actions are dispassion, which in turn has to be noted by the meditator. This method of observation can be applied to the arising of anger, doubt and other similar emotions. But it is not easy to watch the mind, in this case consciousness, and gain insight. Observing matter is easier because it is capable of making strong impressions on the meditator's mind.

⁶ The *Abhidhamma*, the Buddhist psychology, is a detailed analysis of mind and matter and their interaction.

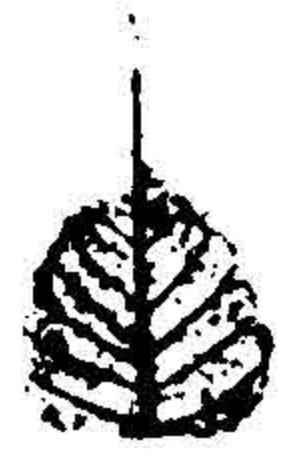

ELIMINATING THE UNWANTED



EVERY MOMENT of mindfulness is a gradual destruction of latent defilements. It is somewhat like cutting away wood with a small axe, every stroke helping to get rid of small pieces of the unwanted wood.


from
DISCOURSE ON
ARIYAVASA SUTTA

NOTING THOUGHTS

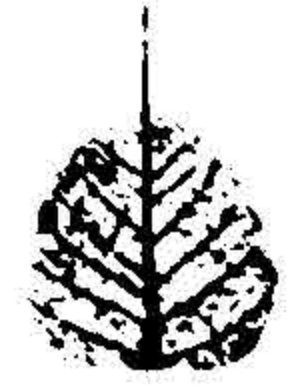
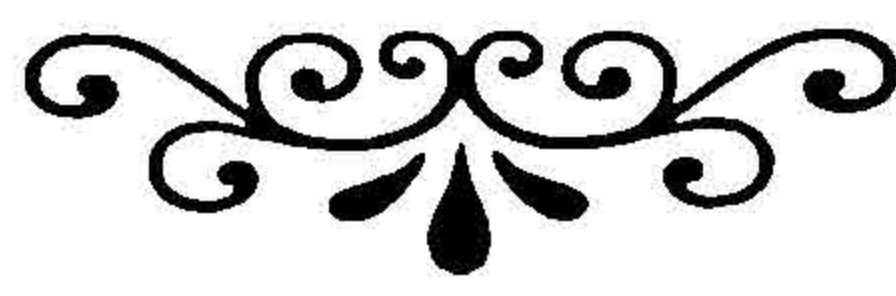


AT THE BEGINNING of insight meditation your power of concentration may be weak. So your mind goes off randomly. When your mind wanders, note its wandering. At times you may imagine things. Note this at once and eventually you will get familiar with the process of thinking. As you repeatedly note the phenomena, your power of concentration will get stronger and stronger, and your mind, unable to get away from the object that you are noting, will become one with it.

from
DISCOURSE ON
NATURE OF NIBBANA



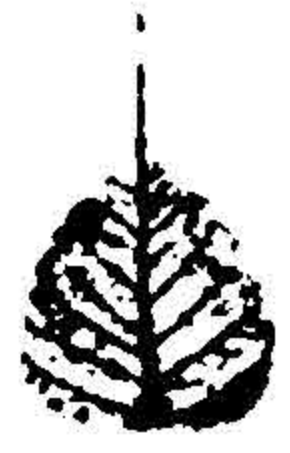
DESPAIR



SOME MEDITATORS are disheartened because of their weak concentration when starting to meditate. But some are stirred up by this lack and redouble their effort, to attain unusual insights. So the meditator can benefit by his or her despair. According to the commentaries one should welcome the despair that results from the non-fulfilment of one's goals in renunciation, meditation, insight and absorption. One should welcome such sorrow for it may spur effort and lead to progress on the path. It is, however, not to be sought deliberately. It is best to have wholesome joy in the search for enlightenment.

from
DISCOURSE ON
SAKKAPANHA SUTTA

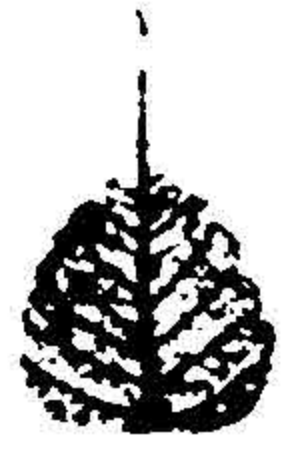
DIFFICULT MINDSTATES



WE SHOULD KEEP in mind the law of kamma, which is the Buddha's teaching that everything happens according to one's actions, and bear our misfortunes calmly. The best remedy in a crisis is the practice of either tranquillity or insight meditation. If sorrow, grief or depression afflict us during meditation hours, such unwholesome states of consciousness must be noted carefully. The Buddha describes the *satipatthana* method⁷ as the only way to overcome grief and end all suffering. As long as we keep ourselves mindful according to this teaching, depression may not arise at all or even if depression arises, it passes away after we focus our attention on it.

⁷ See footnote number 5 page 43.

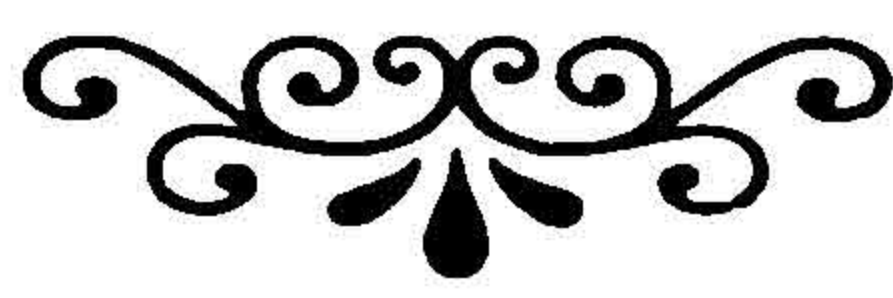
OBSERVING PAINFUL SENSATIONS



IF ANY DISAGREEABLE sensation such as tiredness in the limbs or feeling of hotness or pain arise in the body, attention should be fixed on the spot where they arise and contemplation be carried on as 'tired, tired' or 'hot, hot' or 'painful, painful', as the case may be. When the disagreeable sensation cease one should return to contemplate continuously on the rising and falling movements of the abdomen.

Only when painful sensations are so acute that they become unbearable, then the posture of the body and the position of hands and legs can be changed to get relief.

A VERY EFFECTIVE REMEDY

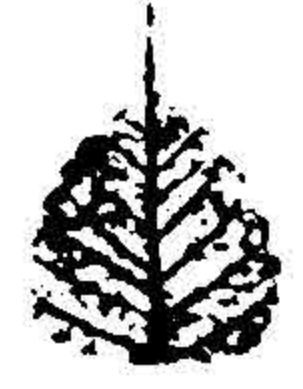


IF YOU SUFFER from ill health or disease, and if you have no medicine to alleviate the pain and suffering, then the meditation on the suffering of illness can give at least some relief if it cannot effect a complete cure. If the pain and suffering remain in your body the meditation can give relief to your mind. If you are angry at or irritated by the physical suffering, your mind will suffer, too.

The Buddha compared this dual suffering to a being pierced by two thorns at the same time. If a person has a thorn in his or her flesh and tries to extract it without success by piercing another thorn into it, then he or she suffers the pain of two thorns at the same time. Similarly the person who cannot note the physical pain with mindfulness suffers both physical and mental pain. But if he or she can reflect well upon the physical pain he or she will suffer only that pain and be free from mental unhappiness. Such a person will be like the Buddha and arahants who suffer physical pain only. They do suffer from the pain of heat and cold, insect bites and other kinds of discomforts. Yet their minds remain stable, free from unhappiness. Meditation is a very effective remedy for physical pain and suffering.⁸

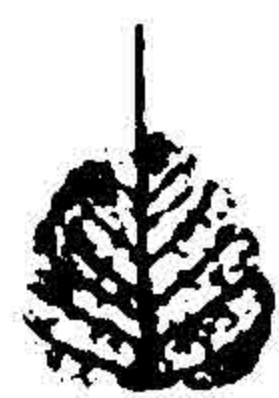
8 Case studies of cures from sickness through insight meditation are discussed in *Dhamma Therapy* compiled by Mahasi Sayadaw and translated into English by Bhikkhu Aggacitta.

UNBEARABLE SENSATIONS



WHEN CONCENTRATION in insight meditation is practised in an intensive manner, the meditator may experience almost unbearable sensations, such as itching, aches, heat, numbness and stiffness. If mindful noticing is stopped, such sensations will disappear. When noticing is resumed, they will reappear. Such sensations arise in consequence of the body's natural sensitivity and are not the symptoms of a disease. If they are noticed with energetic concentration they fade away gradually.

TRANQUILLITY AND INSIGHT



WHAT DO WE meditate on? How do we develop insight? These are very important questions to ask.

There are two kinds of meditation: meditation to develop *tranquillity* and meditation to develop *insight*. Meditating on the ten devices (like colours, earth, water, etc.) gives rise to tranquillity, not insight. Meditating on the ten repulsive things (a swollen corpse for example), too, gives rise only to tranquillity. The ten recollections, like contemplating the qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma, etc., again develop tranquillity and not insight. Meditating on the thirty-two parts of the body, like hair, nails, teeth, skin, is not insight meditation either. Anapanasati, or mindfulness of breathing, also develop tranquillity. But one can develop insight from it too. In the *Path of Purification*⁹ however it is included in the tranquillity meditations and so we will call it as such here.

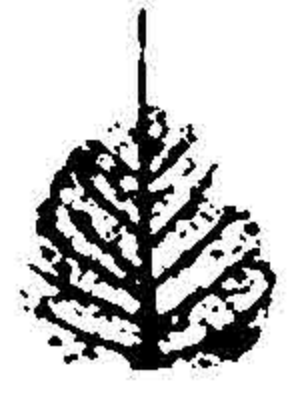
Then there are the four divine states of meditation, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, and the four formless meditations leading to formless meditative absorptions. Furthermore there is the meditation on the loathsome aspect of food. All these are objects for tranquillity meditation.

The meditation on the four elements is called the analysis of the four elements. Although this is a tranquillity meditation, it can be an object to develop insight as well.

All these forty objects of contemplation are objects for developing tranquillity. Only anapanasati and the analysis of elements can be used for insight meditation. The others cannot give rise to insight.


⁹ In Pali: *Visuddhi Magga*, by Acariya Buddhaghosa. This is a key manual for Theravada Buddhist meditation.

ATTAINING PURITY OF MIND

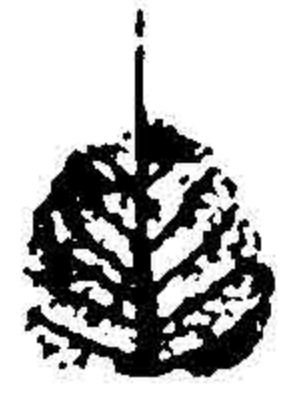
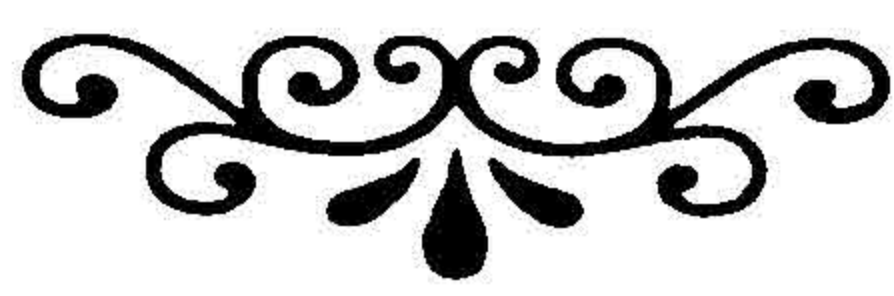


YOU HAVE PURITY of mind when you are mindful. It is a mistake to think that one can attain it only when one enters meditative absorption. Purity of mind based on absorption is due to the continuous stream of jhanic consciousness. Purity of mind in pure insight meditation is called Vipassana momentary concentration which means that at every moment of arising of insight the mind is pure. Both kinds of purity are alike in that mind is pure through freedom from mental hindrances.

from
DISCOURSE ON
ARIYAVASA SUTTA



THE PATH FACTORS IN VIPASSANA



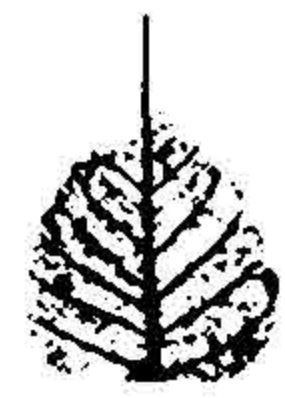
MEDITATORS HAVE to note and observe every object that appears to them via the six sense doors. This they do with an effort, and that is *right effort*. There is also awareness of whatever object appears; that is *right mindfulness*. As they are mindful, their mind will be fixed or concentrated on the object and there is unification of mind on the object. This is *right concentration*. These three constituents of the path, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration are grouped under the heading of concentration, they are the *path of concentration*.

Then there is the process of right directing of mind to the object, which is *right thinking* or *right thought*. As a result of this correct understanding the object, one gets *right view*. These two are grouped under the heading of wisdom, they are the *path of wisdom*. All these five in the concentration and wisdom sections are together classified as the activators, which combine their efforts in the process of simultaneously noting and knowing.

Right speech, right action and *right livelihood* constitute the section on virtue, they are the *path of virtue*, which has to be fulfilled before the meditator takes up insight meditation. During the period of meditation these three path factors of virtue remain unpolluted. In fact they get more and more purified as time goes on. With the three in this group added to the five in the previous groups we have eight path factors as they appear in insight meditation and hence one meditates on the *path of insight*.

from
TO NIBBANA VIA
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

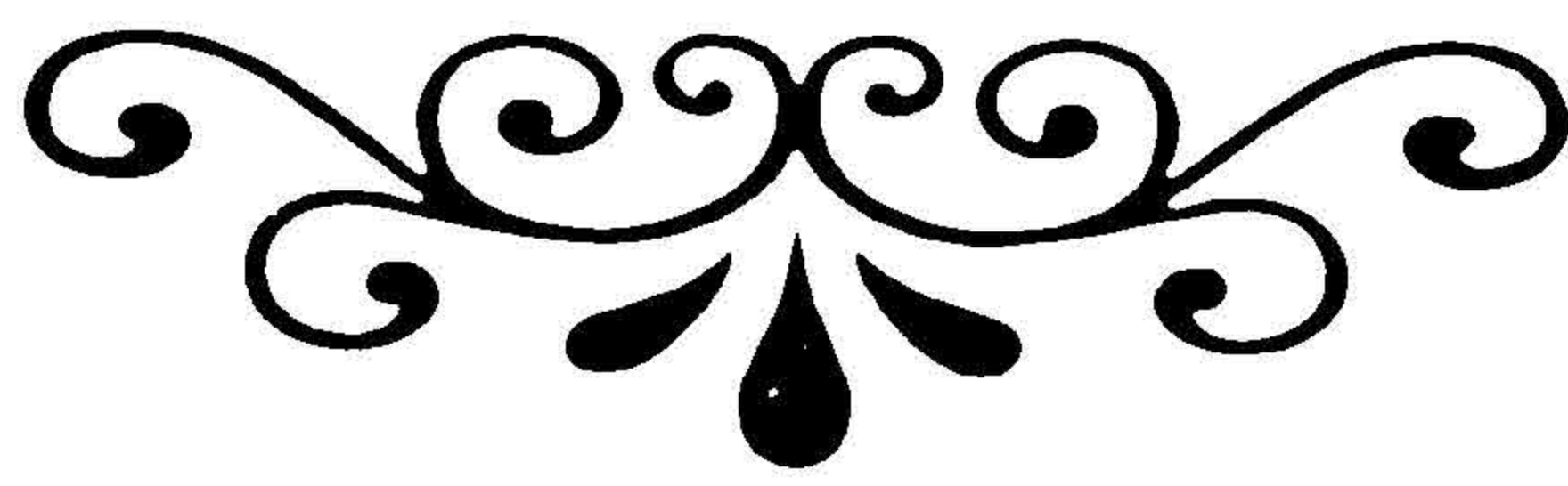
KNOWLEDGE
DEEPENS
NATURALLY



IF THE NOBLE path is practised to gain direct personal experience then knowledge deepens naturally as time goes on.



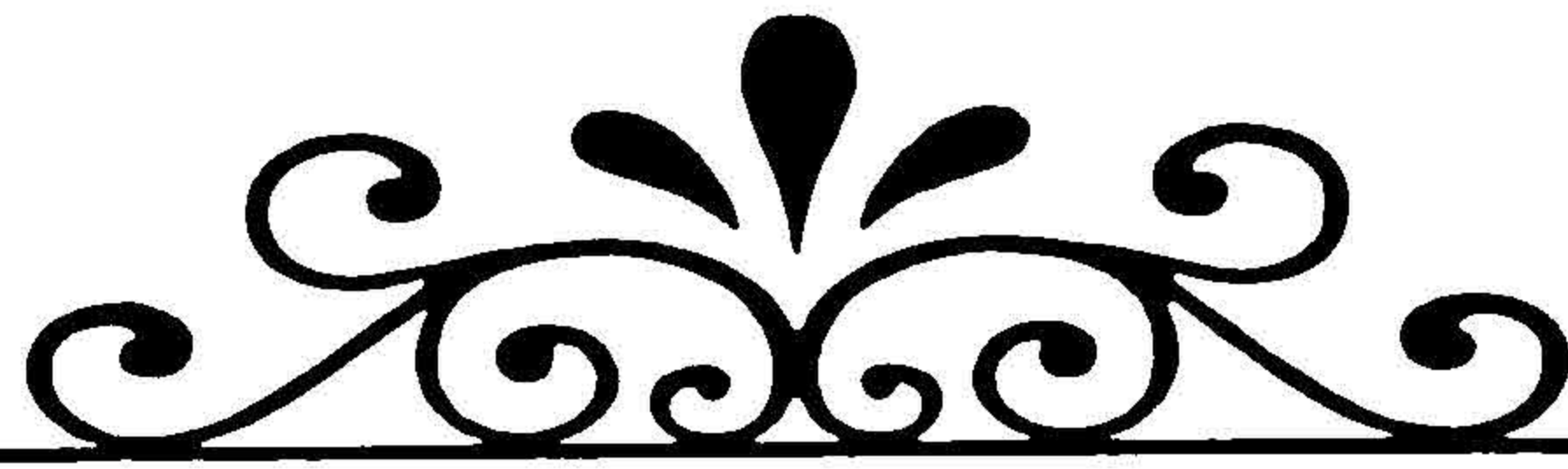
DEEPENING INSIGHT MEDITATION



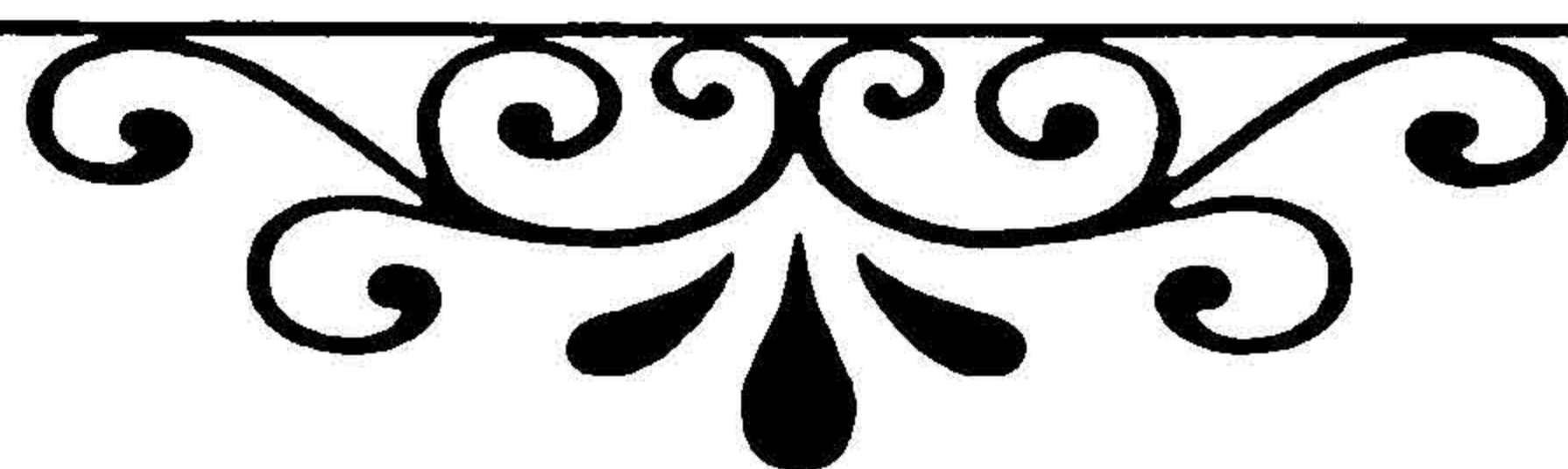
“Monks, even the right view (of insight meditation)
which is purified and bright,
if you cling to it, cherish it, and treat it as a possession,
then you do not understand that
the teaching is similar to a raft,
which is for crossing over
and not for the purpose of grasping.

THE BUDDHA

A decorative flourish consisting of a simple, curved line.



- 61 Attaining Insight Knowledge
- 62 The Knower and the Known
- 63 Having Conviction in Impermanence
- 64 Arising and Dissolution
- 65 Experiencing Wholesome Joy
- 66 Striving for Higher Goals
- 67 Gaining Empirical Knowledge
- 68 Doing Away with Ego Belief
- 69 Body is Non-Self
- 70 Feelings are Non-Self
- 71 Consciousness is Non-Self
- 72 A Sense of Disgust
- 73 Weariness of the Body
- 74 Equanimous Towards All



ATTAINING INSIGHT KNOWLEDGE



INSIGHT KNOWLEDGE is attained by observing the activities of mind and body in the state of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self. It is not attained simply by casual observation but only by a deep analysis of the activities as they are happening, without leaving any one of them unobserved. Thus the observation should be on all activities such as seeing, hearing, smelling, eating, etc., as they are happening and without failing to observe a single one.

from
DISCOURSE ON
HEWAVATA SUTTA

THE KNOWER AND THE KNOWN



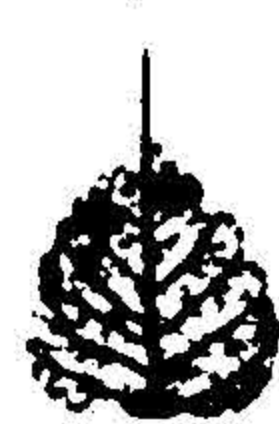
WHEN THE INSIGHT MEDITATORS' concentration gets stronger, *right thoughts* direct their minds, so that they correctly know the object on which their minds are concentrated. Following that directing, the factor of *right view* knows the realities of the sense objects correctly. How do they know? At the beginning of the stage where concentration becomes strong enough for the mental hindrances to disappear, when *purity of mind* begins to arise, one will be able to distinguish the matter that is noted and the mind that notes.

For instance, when one is noting on the rising and falling movement of the abdominal wall, one knows clearly that what rises and falls are one thing and what notes is another. In another word, one may be able to distinguish the phenomena of rising and falling from the mind that knows them. In much the same way, in the process of walking, one may notice that the act of raising the foot, moving it forward and putting it down is different from the mind motivating the movement. In this way mind, the knower, can be distinguished from matter, the known. And that knowing is not by imagining, but a distinct and clear understanding through just observing without imagining.

As the power of concentration in the meditators gains strength and their wisdom gets thereby sharpened, they will come to realize the fact that their knees bend because they wish them to be bent. They walk because they want to. They see because they have eyes to see and the object to be seen is there. They hear because they have ears to hear and the object to be heard is there. They enjoy life because their past kamma is favourable. In this way, they come to know and become convinced of the cause and its effects distinctly.

from
TO NIBBANA VIA
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

HAVING CONVICTION IN IMPERMANENCE



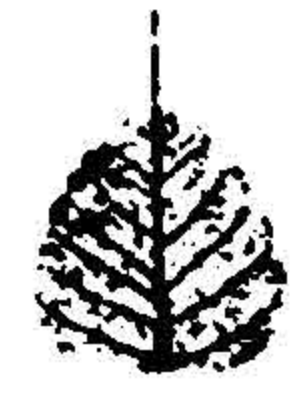
Only when one sees the actual arising and actual dissolution does one know directly through experiential knowledge that mind and matter are impermanent because they do not exist after having come into being, as commentaries say:

“Having become, things cease to exist, and that is impermanence.”

Therefore only when the reality of this nature of arising and dissolution of all compounded things are seen, will one be thoroughly convinced about the impermanence of existence.

from
TO NIBBANA VIA
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH


ARISING AND DISSOLUTION



A BUBBLE BURSTS soon after it has been formed. A mirage conjures up an image of reality which disappears on close examination. There is absolutely no lasting substance in either of them. This is common knowledge. As we know their true nature, so also must we know the true nature of the phenomena observed during meditation. When a meditator acquires knowledge through the observation of the dissolution of the aggregates¹⁰ she or he will discover that the known objects and the knowing mind are all in a state of flux, now appearing, now vanishing. They are transitory. There is no essence or substance worth to be called 'mine' in them. They signify only the processes of becoming and dissolution.

¹⁰ See footnote number 5 page 43.

EXPERIENCING WHOLESOME JOY



SOME PEOPLE are joyful when they think of their renunciation of worldly affairs, their ordination as monks, their practice of morality, concentration and wisdom. This joy is wholesome since it is bound up with renunciation or disassociation from secular life. So are the feelings of joy that we have when we hear a Dhamma talk or when we go to a meditation centre for the practice of insight meditation.

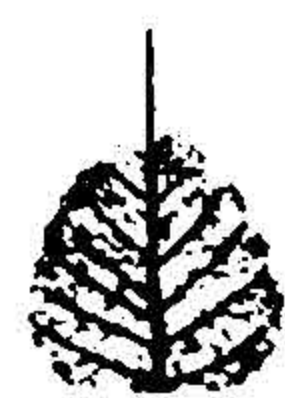
The joy dependent on insight meditation is the joy that arises while being mindful. Having realized the impermanence and dissolution of materiality one knows that all the matter that one has seen before and that one is seeing now is subject to change and unsatisfactoriness. This insight knowledge causes joy and such joy may be described as a pleasant feeling rooted in liberation from sensual desire.

from
DISCOURSE ON
SAKKA-PANHA SUTTA





STRIVING FOR HIGHER GOALS



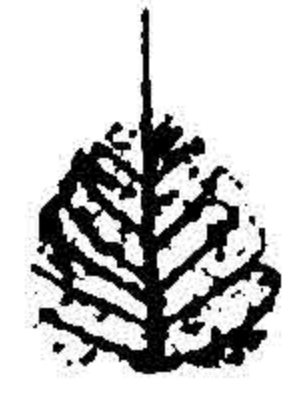
WHEN THE MEDITATORS understand deeply the aggregates as composite and thus as unsubstantial works, they become fully convinced of the truth of the Dhamma relating to the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self. On the contemplation of these characteristics they can gain in depth of understanding about the arising and passing away of mentality and materiality. This stage is called the *knowledge of rising and passing away*.

At this stage meditators might see a radiance in their minds. They will find joy arising excessively. Their awareness will be extraordinary. There will be nothing of which they fail to note. Their minds will be sharpened and their memory clear. Strong faith will be established. They will be joyous both physically and spiritually. This stage surpasses description.

But if at this stage they become attached to such pleasurable mental states, then those will become precursors to defilements of the mind and be obstacles to further mental development. But, in another way, this joy could be viewed as supports for the meditators in their effort to reinforce and encourage them to strive for higher goals, namely mature insight knowledges. We advise them to just note the mental state of joy as it occurs, to gain more insight.

from
TO NIBBANA VIA
THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

GAINING EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE




REAL KNOWLEDGE has nothing to do with preconceived notions but is based on personal experience. The empirical knowledge acquired by the meditator is distinct and clear. In the course of this practice one comes to see nothing except the vanishing of everything. This is called *knowledge of dissolution*. One understands it deeply not through scriptures nor teachers but from experience. Direct experience may be followed by explanations on the part of the teacher but not the other way around.

from
DISCOURSE ON
ARIYAVASA SUTTA


DOING AWAY WITH EGO BELIEF



 AS MEDITATORS practise mindfulness their power of concentration will become strengthened and their mind purified. Then they will be able to distinguish the mind that knows from the body that is known. They will also realize the absence of a thing called 'self', or 'I'. Repeated noting will lead them on to the knowledge of causal relationship of mind and matter. In the end the idea of self will be utterly destroyed. Before starting the practice of mindfulness meditation a person might be wondering if a self existed in the past, is still existing in the present moment and will exist in the future. After insight meditation all such doubts will be resolved, as the true nature of phenomena is understood.

As meditators continue noting, they will find that the sense objects, together with the consciousness directed at them, vanish. They are all impermanent. They just arise and pass away on their own accord. What is not permanent is not satisfactory. Nothing is substantial. What is there to cling to as I or mine? All phenomena are in a state of flux, now arising, now passing away. Contemplating on these matters one can, by the conviction of one's own experience, do away with the idea of self or soul.

BODY
IS
NON-SELF



DURING SITTING meditation changes of posture become necessary due to discomforting pains and aches. With repeated adjustments of the posture the oppressive nature of the body becomes apparent. Despite one's inclination to remain still, one cannot remain so. Then one realizes that matter, which is constantly oppressing, afflicting oneself, is non-self, mere physical phenomena occurring in accordance with their own conditions. This realization is the contemplation of non-self. The body never obliges one with what one wishes for and is unmanageable. Being uncontrollable it is non self.

from
DISCOURSE ON
ANATTALAKKHANA SUTTA


FEELINGS
ARE
NON-SELF



MEDITATORS WILL FIND through personal experience that feelings afflict them now and then, that they cannot have their wish fulfilled to always enjoy good sights, good sounds, good smells, good food, soft touch, etc. They will have discovered that unpleasant feelings outweigh pleasant ones. It is because feelings are non-self that one cannot have them according to one's wishes.

from
DISCOURSE ON
ANATTALAKKHANA SUTTA

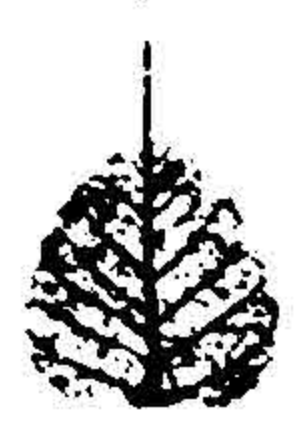

CONSCIOUSNESS IS NON-SELF



THE MEDITATOR who is ever mindful of the mental and physical phenomena perceives that every activity that arises, like the desire to think, desire to see, hear, bend, stretch, change position, walk, talk, etc. vanishes instantly after it has been noted. Therefore all these activities arising and vanishing incessantly are impermanent. Consequently they are not delightful, not dependable, mere suffering. Therefore one realizes through personal insight that there is nothing to cling to as 'this is mine,' or to take pride in 'this I am' or 'this is my self.'


from
DISCOURSE ON
ANATTALAKKHANA SUTTA

A SENSE OF DISGUST



WHEN THE MEDITATORS become aware of the dissolution of things as they observe their rise and fall, a sense of disgust assails them and they begin to develop the desire to abandon all objects. Mind and matter that arise and pass away flow on continuously like a stream without end. As the meditators concentrate on this flow they become just perceptive to it automatically.

from
ON THE NATURE
OF NIBBANA



WEARINESS OF THE BODY



WITH THE INSIGHT into dissolution of all phenomena the meditators are fairly assured of further progress. Continued practice helps them to develop other insights. Seeing only dissolution, they become scared. They see defects, so they become sick of existence. Ordinary people enjoy life because they are blind to its evils. If they were aware of its ceaseless dissolution, they would become disgusted and weary. This insight is important.

In his discourses the Buddha, after pointing out the three characteristics of life, impermanence, suffering and non-self, usually says,

“So the noble disciple becomes weary of his or her body”

and then goes on to say,

“Being weary, he or she is free from attachment and attains the path knowledge.”

from
DISCOURSE ON
SALLEKHA SUTTA

EQUANIMOUS TOWARDS ALL



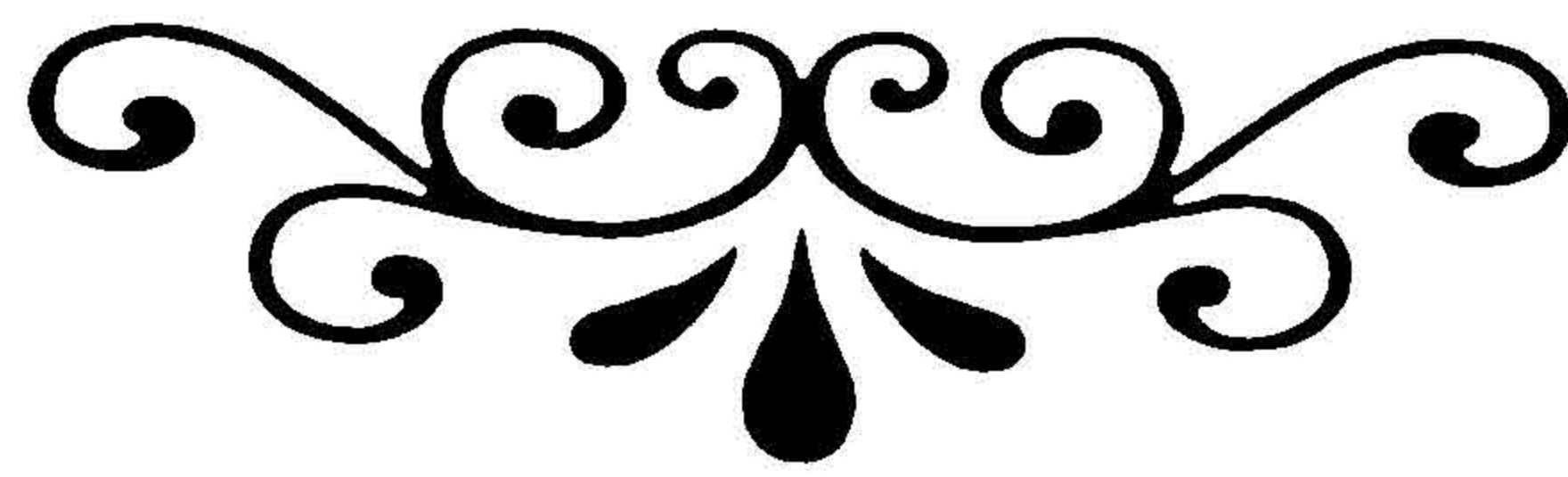
IT IS ONLY when a meditator gains insight into the real nature of mind and matter that she or he feels repugnant to them and considers all attachment as useless and empty. Eventually she or he develops indifference to the rise and fall of aggregates to arrive at the *knowledge of equanimity towards all formations*, when all conditioned things can be looked upon with equanimity of mind.

In the beginning one has to make special effort to come to this stage of knowledge, but with continued practice equanimity arises naturally as soon as one contemplates on the rise and fall of conditioned things. When one has acquired this knowledge, one feels that one at once becomes cognizant of the phenomena, but one is not affected by them, whether they are agreeable or pleasing or not. No attachment arises in one's mind when it dwells on pleasurable objects. Neither will one be disconcerted by disagreeable things. One has now developed stoicism like fully enlightened beings.

from
ON THE NATURE
OF NIBBANA



NIBBANA



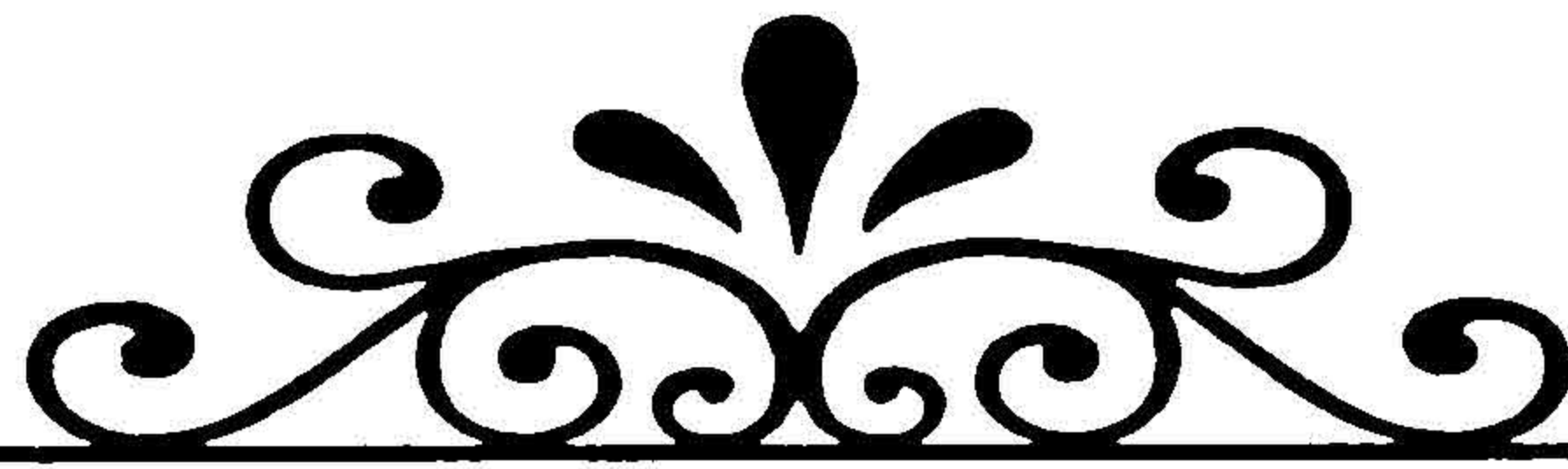
Arguments about the nature of Nibbana
have been going on since the Buddha's time.

It seems there was a abbot of a monastery
who was discussing Nibbanic bliss before an audience of monks.

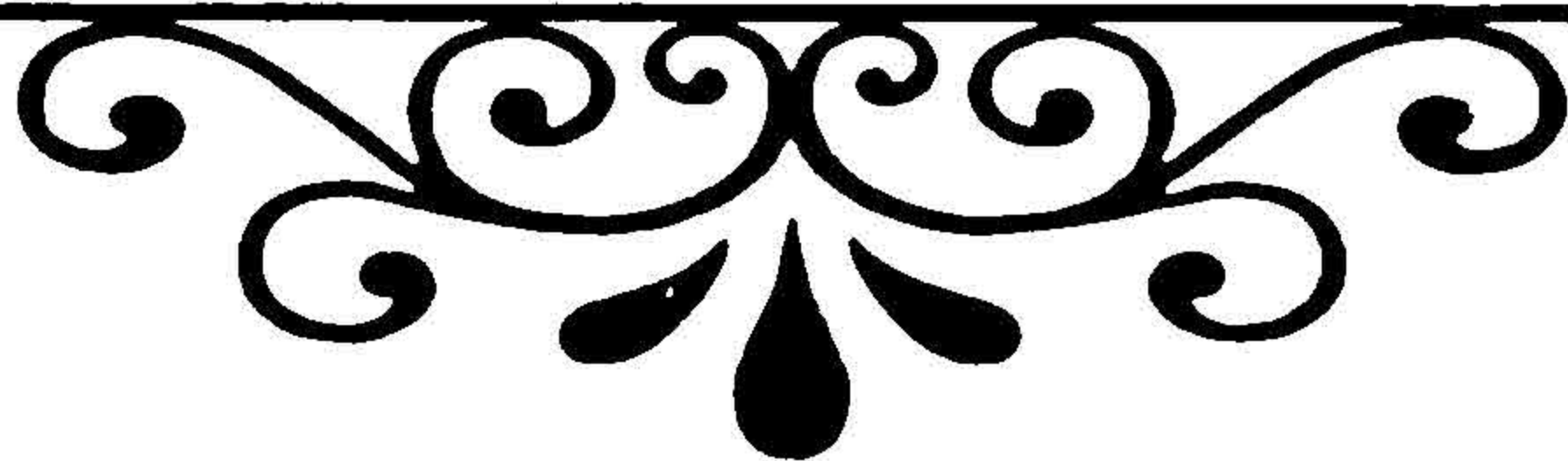
One of the monk stood up and said,

"If there is no sensation in Nibbana, how can there be bliss?"
The elder answered, "My friend, it is precisely because there is
no sensation in Nibbana that it is so blissful."

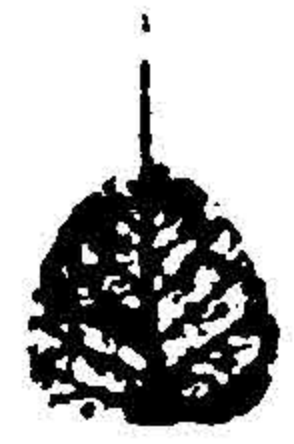




- 77 What is Nibbana?
- 78 Analysis of Nibbana
- 79 The Cessation of Feelings
- 80 No Elements Exist in Nibbana
- 81 Nibbana is Formless
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- 83 The Absence of Mind and Matter
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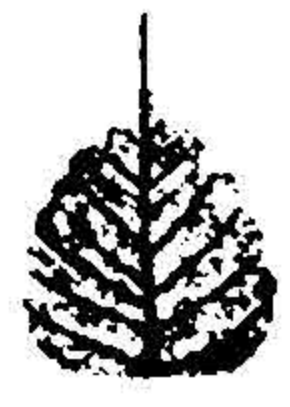

WHAT IS NIBBANA?



NIBBANA means extinction or annihilation. What is extinguished or annihilated? The round of suffering in the realm of defilements, of actions and of results of actions is extinguished or annihilated. The realm of defilements encompasses ignorance, craving and clinging or attachment. The realm of action includes both wholesome and unwholesome deeds that contribute to the emergence of the endless round of rebirths. The realm of the results of actions, usually called kamma-result, relates to the consequences of actions, good or bad. Every action produces a resultant of mind, matter, six sense bases, feeling, etc. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking are all manifestations of the results of actions, in Pali *vipaka*.


from
ON THE NATURE
OF NIBBANA

ANALYSIS OF NIBBANA

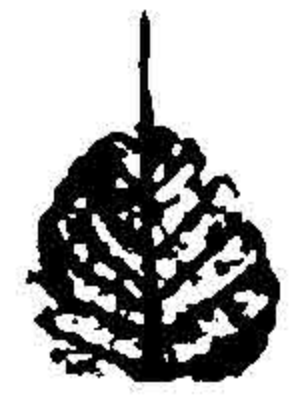


COMMENTARIES DESCRIBE NIBBANA by its characteristic, function and manifestation. The characteristic of Nibbana is peace, its function deathlessness and its manifestation signlessness. Insight into the signless can be achieved only through the *knowledge of the path and fruition* and by the *reviewing knowledge*. As noble ones reflect on the path and its fruition the absence of form, conventional concept and sign becomes apparent.

from
ON THE NATURE
OF NIBBANA



THE CESSATION OF FEELINGS

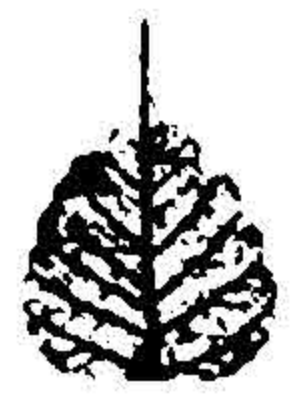


THE TEACHING of all the Buddhas says that Nibbana is paramount. Nibbana is the cessation of all feelings¹¹. In the absence of feelings, peace and coolness reign supreme. All suffering related to old age, disease, death and dissolution cease. As it is deathless, its bliss is indestructable. It is therefore the highest bliss.

Nibbana is where the round of suffering ceases. Nibbana is also the instrument by which this cessation is brought about. It is the state of distraction of the round of suffering.

11 In Pali: *vedana*

NO
ELEMENTS EXIST
IN NIBBANA




IN NIBBANA there is no earth element, or solidity, no water element, or fluidity, no fire element, or temperature and no air element, or motion, that can usually be met with in the world of senses or form. The world of senses is for example where human beings and devas live, the world of form is the world of fine material Brahmas, etc. Possessing solidity human beings, devas and Brahmas assume shape and form. Cessation means the end of any such shapes and forms possessing mass. In the absence of mass, there are no elements of fluidity, temperature or motion either.

from
ON THE NATURE
OF NIBBANA

NIBBANA IS FORMLESS



 IN THE BOOK *Milinda's Questions*¹², Arahant Nagasena told King Milinda that there is nothing that can be equated with Nibbana. It has no shape or form, no size, and no dimension. It cannot be perceived by reasoning, or by disputation, or by metaphorical presentation. It is beyond comparison. It is neither white nor black, nor bright nor dark, nor big nor small.

Nibbana is not a mansion or a place. It is no city. It is not light. There is no luminescence in Nibbana. It has no element of lucidity and coolness. Mansions, palaces, cities, light, luminescence, lucidity and coolness are not unconditioned realities.

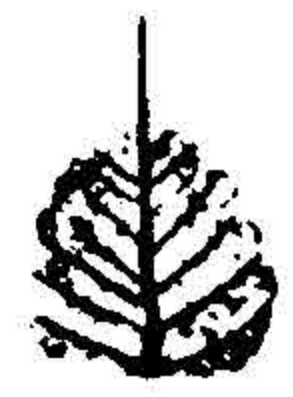

12 *Milinda's Questions* is an important old commentary on the Buddha's teachings.

NIBBANA HAS NO FOOTHOLD



I HAVE REPEATEDLY stressed the point that Nibbana has no foothold anywhere, because it is impossible to locate where the cessation of the occurring of mind and matter takes place. In one sutta it has expressly been stated that Nibbana knows no abode.


THE ABSENCE OF MIND AND MATTER



IN NIBBANA there are no such things as consciousness or mental factors which can be met with in the realms of sense or form sphere. It naturally follows that any mind and matter that belongs to the three planes of existence are completely absent in Nibbana. But some people like to advance the unusual proposition that the Buddha and arahants acquire a special kind of mind and matter in Nibbana after their demise. Such an extraordinary way of thinking may appeal to those who cannot let go of the idea of a soul or ego.

In regards to this proposition a learned monk reasoned that if there is a special kind of mind and matter in Nibbana, there must be also a special kind of rebirth which gives rise to a special kind of old age, disease and death which in turn bring about a special kind of sorrow, lamentation, suffering, distress and despair. When the Buddha's teachings explicitly say *cessation* then it is inappropriate to go beyond it and formulate the idea of a special kind of existence. Extinction points to nothing but nothingness. Nibbana, which is not involved in mind and matter, cannot be made to get involved in this world or in other worlds either.

from
ON THE NATURE
OF NIBBANA



NIBBANA IS BEYOND ALL REALMS



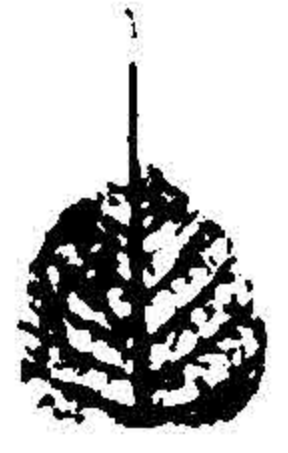
THE SCRIPTURES SAY: *nayam loka na paro loko*. In English: 'Neither in this realm nor in other realms.' In the absence of matter there can be no concept of darkness, and in the absence of the concept of darkness, there can be no concept of light. Hence in Nibbana there is no sun nor moon. Where no new bodies of the aggregates arise there can be no darkness or light.

The question arises whether it is possible for sentient beings to come to Nibbana in the way that beings from the lower realms of existence come to the human realm, or beings from the human realm come to the realm of heavenly beings. But in Nibbana there are no such comings. The usual term used to describe the realization of Nibbana is that Buddhas and arahants *enter* Nibbana, or specifically, Nibbana without the groups of existence remaining¹³. This does not mean the arrival of new aggregates but the cutting off of the flow of mind and matter that causes existence. It is the complete extinction of aggregates, and this extinction is recognized as Nibbana without the groups of existence left. It is not a place where beings make their landing from other realms of existence.

No one goes out or gets transported from Nibbana to other realms of existence either. Beings who have performed wholesome actions depart the human realm for the realm of heavenly beings, and those from heaven might also come down to earth as human beings. Those with unwholesome kammass may have to go down into the lower realms. In Nibbana there are no such goings.

13 In Pali: *anupadisesa nibbana*

NIBBANA IS REAL



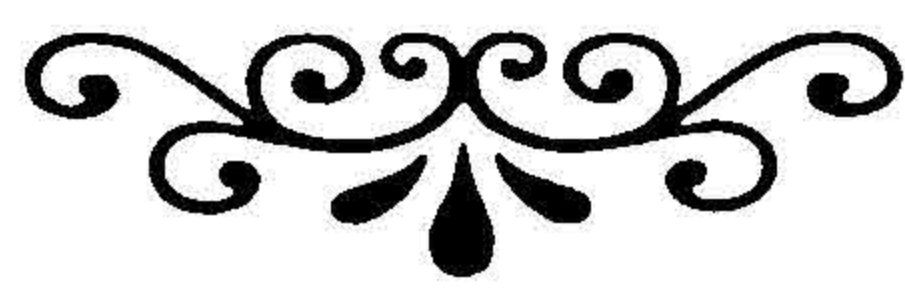
SINCE NIBBANA means the cessation of consciousness, mental factors and matter, suggestions have often been put forward that it signifies *nothing* and is therefore useless.

Nibbana is an absolute reality, the reality of the nullification of the activities of consciousness, mental factors and matter to which the *knowledge of path and fruition* and the *reviewing knowledge* are inclined to. It is the object to which this knowledge of the mind is directed to. Buddhas, arahants and noble ones vouch for the truth of its reality.

Let us say for the sake of argument that there is no Nibbana where all the rounds of defilements, actions and results of actions cease. Then no one in this universe could find peace. In the absence of Nibbana defilements will play havoc with our lives to produce actions, which will bring about results of actions, which will create conditions for the rise of a new body of aggregates attended by suffering. It is only the supramundane path and its fruition that can exterminate defilements, and only this extermination will put the round of suffering to an end. This cessation of suffering is real. Buddhas and arahants do actually reach this stage of reality, and after their parinibbana all suffering come to an end.

from
ON THE NATURE
OF NIBBANA

HOW NIBBANA IS REALIZED



THE UPS AND DOWNS of insight knowledge occurring in the aforesaid manner are comparable to a bird let loose from a sea-going ship.

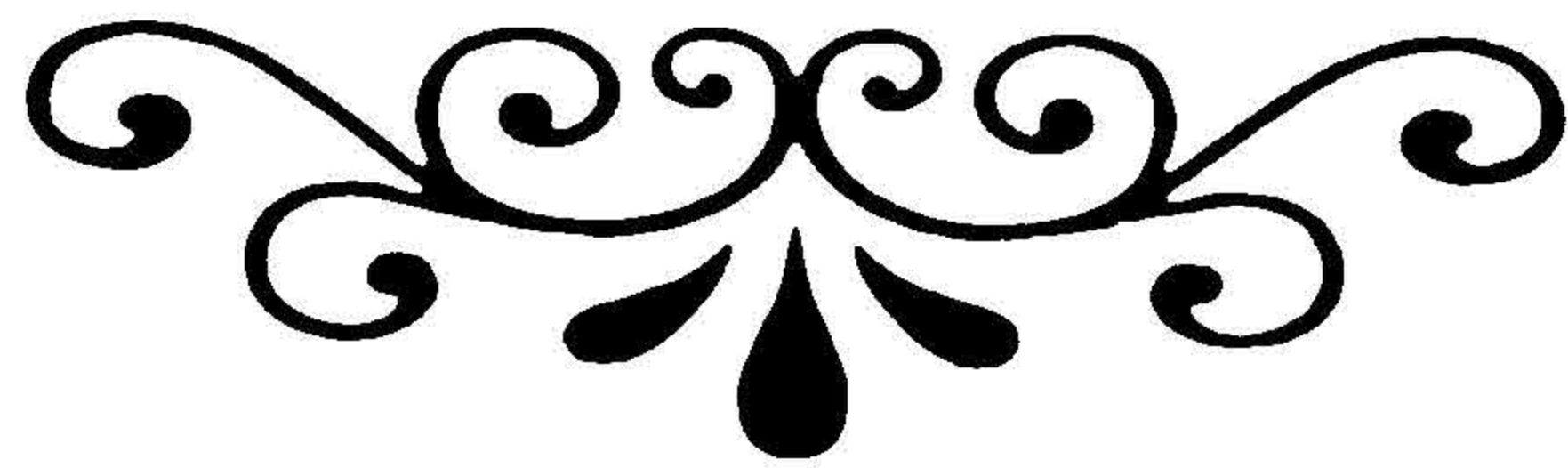
In ancient times the captain of a sea-going ship, finding it difficult to know whether the ship was approaching land, released a bird that he had taken with him. The bird flies in all four directions to look for a shore. Whenever it cannot find any land, it comes back to the ship. As long as insight knowledge is not mature enough to grow into *path and fruition knowledge* and thereby attain to the realization of Nibbana, it becomes lax and retarded, just as the bird returns to the ship.

When the bird sees land, it flies on in that direction without returning to the ship. Similarly, when insight knowledge is mature, on having become keen, strong and lucid, it will understand one of the formations, at one of the six sense doors, as being *impermanent or painful or without self*. That act of noticing any one characteristic out of the three which has a higher degree of lucidity and strength in its perfect understanding, becomes faster and manifests itself three or four times in rapid succession.

Immediately after the last consciousness in this series of accelerated noticing has ceased, *magga and phala (path and fruition)* arises, realizing Nibbana, the cessation of all formations.

The acts of noticing are now more lucid than the previous ones immediately before the realization. After the last act of noticing, the cessation of the formation and realization of Nibbana become manifest.

APPENDICES



“Well spoken is the Dhamma by the the Buddha,
indeed well proclaimed is the Dhamma by the Buddha.”

The Buddha taught the Dhamma in the most effective way,
and your present teachers have reliably transmitted it.

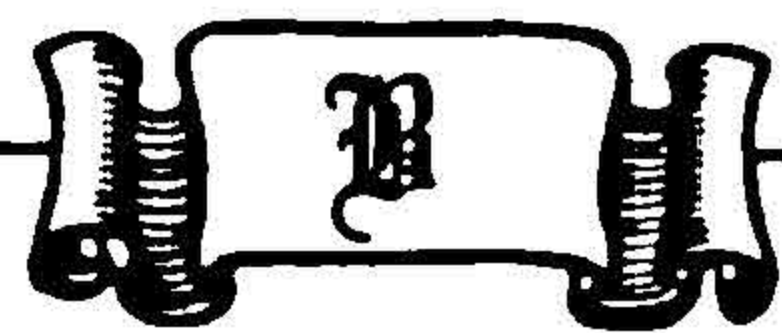




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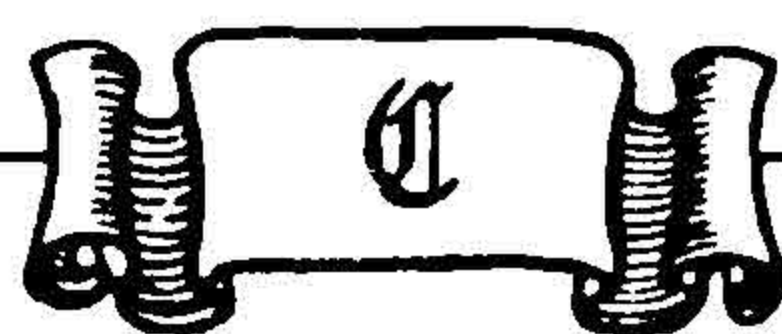


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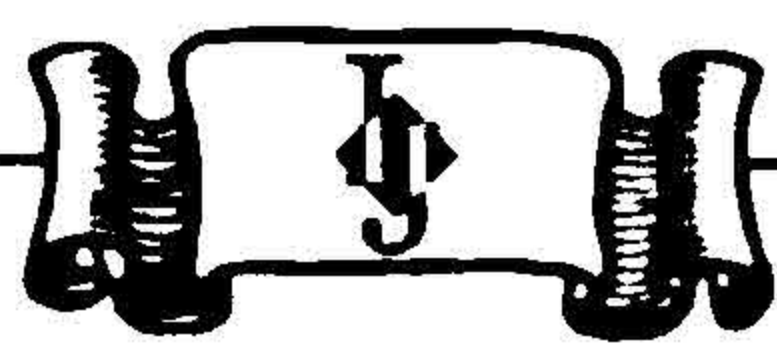
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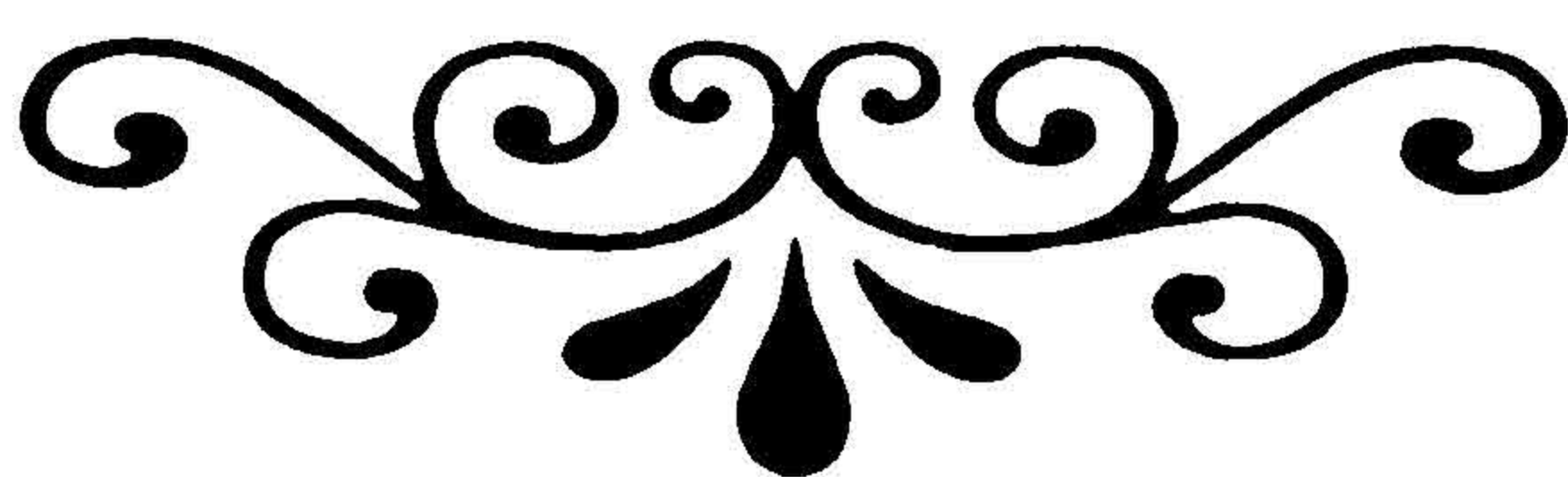
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-Nanadassi

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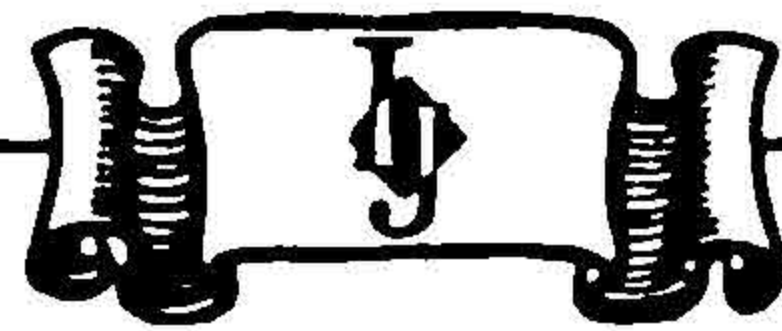
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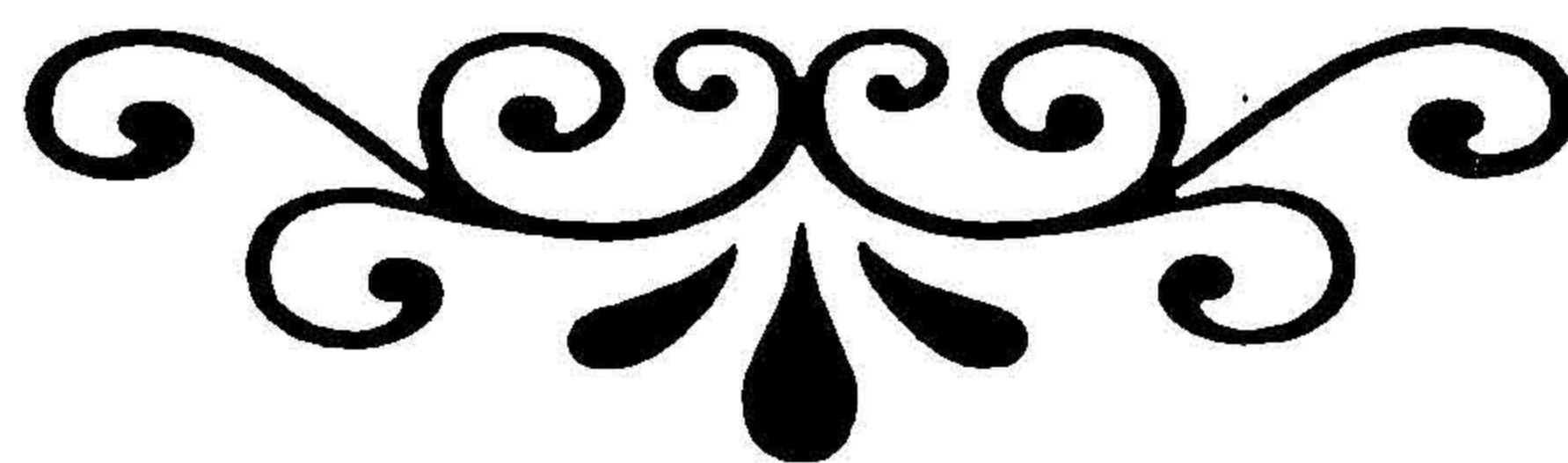
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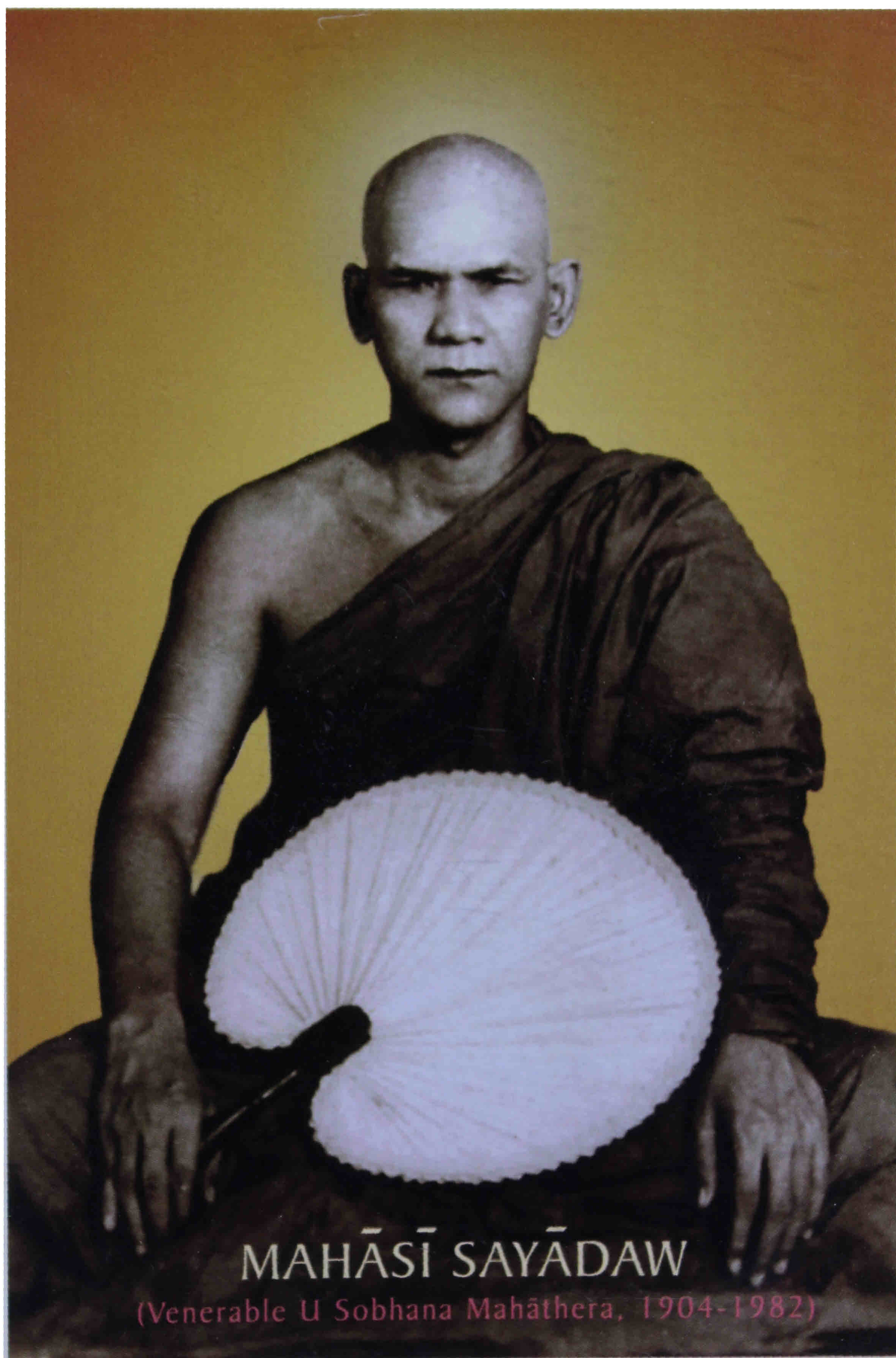
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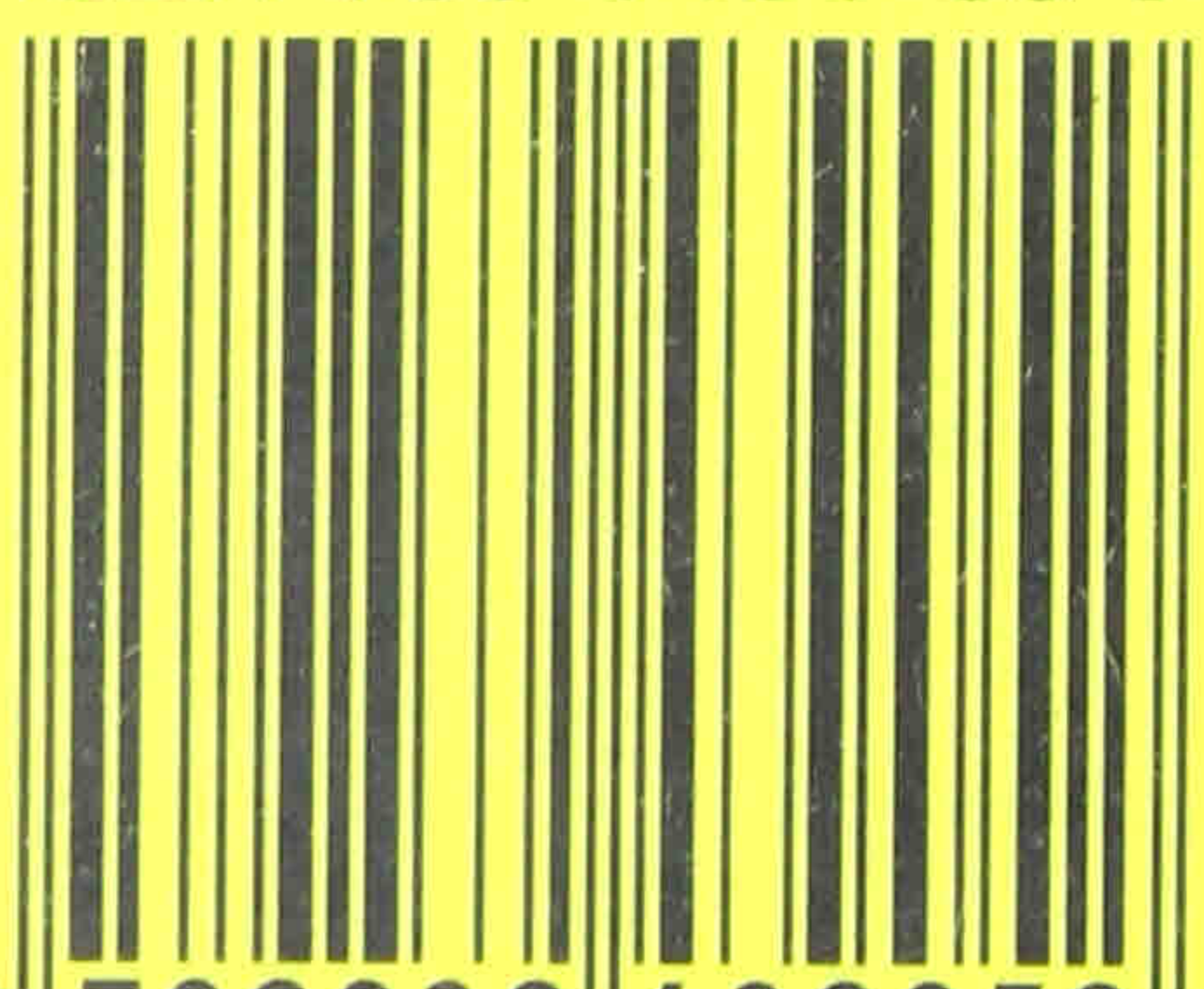
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