

Letters about Vipassāna

Preface

This book consists of a compilation of letters on the Dhamma to Sarah Abbott, Alan Weller, Robert Kirkpatrick and other friends. These letters were written in the period between 1980 until 1992. The material I have used are tapes of Khun Sujin's lectures and conversations with her on the development of right understanding. She encourages people to develop understanding of the present moment, since that is the way to the ultimate goal, namely, the eradication of the clinging to the concept of self and of all other defilements. What the Buddha taught is not mere theory, but it is to be applied right now, at this moment. The Buddha taught that all mental phenomena and physical phenomena which naturally appear in our daily life can be objects of mindfulness and right understanding.

I greatly appreciate Khun Sujin's constant reminders to develop right understanding naturally, and not to force oneself to particular practices. Before one realizes it one is lured by clinging to the idea of self. The scriptures are subtle, profound in meaning, and when one is reading them one may be deluded by wrong understanding. Khun Sujin's clear explanations of the Dhamma are of immense value and can have a great impact on one's life. I hope that the reader will find these letters on vipassanā beneficial.

Introduction

I shall explain some terms and notions of the Dhamma I am using in order to facilitate the reading of this book.

It is essential to know the difference between what is real in conventional sense and what is real in the absolute or ultimate sense. If we only know conventional truth and do not know ultimate truth, the clinging to the concept of self and all other defilements cannot be eradicated. Notions such as person, world or tree are conventional truth, they are concepts we can think of, but they are not real in the ultimate sense. Mental phenomena or *nāma* and physical phenomena or *rūpa* are ultimate realities or paramattha dhammas. They have each their own inalterable characteristic, they are real for everybody; the names of realities can be changed but their characteristics are inalterable. *Nāma* is the reality which experiences something, whereas *rūpa* does not experience anything. Seeing, for example, is *nāma*, it experiences visible object which is *rūpa*. We may change the names “seeing” or “visible object”, but their characteristics cannot be changed. Seeing is real for everybody, anger is real for everybody, no matter how we name it. A person is not real in the ultimate sense, but what we take for a person consists of ever changing *nāmas* and *rūpas*.

Citta, or a moment of consciousness, is *nāma*, it experiences an object. Seeing is a citta which experiences visible object, hearing is a citta which experiences sound. Cittas experience their appropriate objects through six doors, the doors of the senses and the mind-door.

Cittas are variegated: some cittas are wholesome, kusala, some are unwholesome, akusala, and some are neither kusala nor akusala. One citta arises at a time and then falls away, to be succeeded by the next citta. Our life is an unbroken series of citta. Each citta is accompanied by several mental factors, cetasikas, which each perform their own function while they assist the citta in knowing the object. Some cetasikas accompany each citta, whereas other types of cetasikas accompany only particular types of citta. Attachment, lobha, aversion, dosa and ignorance, moha, are akusala cetasikas which accompany only akusala cittas. Non-attachment, alobha, non-aversion or kindness, adosa,

and wisdom, amoha or paññā, are sobhana cetasikas, beautiful cetasikas, which can accompany only sobhana cittas.

Citta and cetasika which are both nāma, arise because of their appropriate conditions. Wholesome qualities and unwholesome qualities which arose in the past can condition the arising of such qualities at present. Since each citta is succeeded by the next one wholesome qualities and unwholesome qualities can be accumulated from one moment to the next moment, and thus there are conditions for their arising at the present time.

Some cittas are results of akusala kamma and kusala kamma, they are vipākacittas. Kamma is intention or volition. An unwholesome volition can motivate an unwholesome deed which can bring an unpleasant result later on, and a wholesome volition can motivate a wholesome deed which can bring a pleasant result later on. Akusala kamma and kusala kamma are accumulated from one moment to the next moment of citta, and thus they can produce result later on. Kamma produces result in the form of rebirth-consciousness, or, in the course of life, in the form of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and the experience of tangible object through the bodysense. These vipākacittas experience pleasant objects or unpleasant objects, depending on the kamma which produces them.

Cittas which experience objects through the six doors arise in a process of cittas. When, for example, hearing arises, it occurs within a series or process of cittas, all of which experience sound. Only hearing-consciousness hears, but the other cittas within that process, which is called the ear-door process, perform each their own function. Hearing-consciousness is vipākacitta, it merely hears the sound, it neither likes it nor dislikes it. After hearing-consciousness has fallen away there are, within that process, akusala cittas or kusala cittas which experience the sound with unwholesomeness or with wholesomeness. There can be akusala cittas with attachment or with aversion towards the sound, or there can be kusala cittas. There are processes of cittas experiencing an object through the eye-door, the ear-door, the nose-door, the tongue-door, the body-door and the mind-door. After the cittas of a sense-door process have fallen away, the object is experienced by cittas arising in a mind-door process, and after that process has been completed there can be other mind-door processes of cittas which think of concepts. Cittas arise and fall away in succession so rapidly that it

seems that cittas such as seeing and thinking of what is seen occur at the same time, but in reality there are different types of citta arising in different processes. We believe, for example, that we see a table, but in reality there is a process of cittas experiencing visible object through the eyesense, and then there is a process of cittas experiencing visible object through the mind-door, and later on there are other mind-door processes of cittas which think of the concept of table. For the development of right understanding it is important to know that there are different cittas which experience different objects through the six doorways.

Rūpa does not know or experience anything. What we call the body consists of different kinds of rūpa which arise and then fall away. Rūpas arise and fall away in groups or units of rūpas. Each group consists of several kinds of rūpas which always include four kinds of rūpas which are called the four Great Elements: the Element of Earth or solidity, appearing as hardness or softness, the Element of Water or cohesion, the Element of Fire or temperature, appearing as heat or cold, and the Element of Wind, appearing as motion or pressure. Solidity, temperature and motion or pressure are objects which can be experienced through the bodysense, whereas cohesion can only be experienced through the mind-door.

Right understanding of nāma and rūpa can be developed by sati, awareness or mindfulness of the nāma and rūpa appearing at the present moment. There are many levels of sati; sati is heedful, non-forgetful, of what is wholesome. There is sati with generosity, dāna, with the observance of moral conduct, sīla, with the development of tranquil meditation, samatha, and with the development of insight or right understanding, vipassanā. In the development of insight sati is mindful of whatever reality presents itself through one of the six doors. Ultimate realities, nāma and rūpa, not concepts, are the objects of mindfulness and right understanding.

Paññā develops progressively in different stages of insight knowledge. When the first stage of insight knowledge arises there is no doubt about the difference between the characteristic of nāma and the characteristic of rūpa. At a higher stage of insight the arising and falling away of nāma and rūpa, their impermanence, can be penetrated. In the course of the development of insight a clearer understanding is gained of the three characteristics of conditioned

realities, namely the characteristics of impermanence, dukkha and non-self. Dukkha is translated as suffering or unsatisfactoriness. It is the unsatisfactoriness due to the impermanence of conditioned realities. What arises and falls away cannot be a true refuge, it is dukkha.

We come across the terms “development of the eightfold Path”, “development of insight”, vipassanā, and “development of satipaṭṭhāna” or the four Applications of Mindfulness. All these terms pertain to the development of right understanding of mental phenomena, nāma, and physical phenomena, rūpa. By the teaching of the four Applications of Mindfulness the Buddha showed that all nāmas and rūpas which naturally appear in our daily life can be the objects of mindfulness and right understanding.

Letter about Vipassanā I

Dear Dhamma friends,

Sarah and Jonothan traveled from Hong Kong to Bangkok in order to visit Khun Sujin and talk about problems which arise concerning the development of satipaṭṭhāna. I received the cassette tapes of these discussions and I would like to share with you what I learnt from these tapes.

The discussions dealt with the goal of satipaṭṭhāna and the way of its development. Right understanding of realities which appear through the six doors is the goal. Khun Sujin explained that it is useless to have many moments of sati without understanding anything, without understanding the reality which appears through one of the six doors. We should remember what the object of sati of satipaṭṭhāna is: paramattha dhammas, absolute realities, that is, nāma, mental phenomena, and rūpa, physical phenomena, appearing one at a time. Before we studied the Dhamma we knew only conventional truth, such as people, houses and trees. Through the Dhamma we learn about paramattha dhammas, nāma and rūpa. Citta, consciousness, is nāma, it experiences something. Rūpa is the reality which does not experience anything. Seeing is a citta, it experiences an object, visible object. Visible object is rūpa, it does not experience anything. It is useful to combine the study of the suttas with the study of the Abhidhamma, Khun Sujin remarked, because this helps us to understand our life as being different realities, as nāma and rūpa.

We should reflect more on the nature of citta, the reality which experiences an object. When we know more about the conditions for its arising we shall have more understanding of its characteristic of anattā, not self. Khun Sujin reminded Sarah and Jonothan that different objects appear because cittas arise in processes which experience objects through the doors of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense or mind. When we are fast asleep there are no objects appearing

through the different doorways. Bhavanga-cittas (life-continuum) are arising and falling away in succession, which have as their function to preserve the continuity of life as this particular person. If there would not be citta we would not be alive. When we are fast asleep we do not know any object of this world, we do not know who our parents are, what our possessions are, we are not involved with anything of this world. When we wake up we experience again the objects of this world. Visible object impinges on the eye-door and is experienced by seeing and by the other cittas of the eye-door process ¹. There is sound impinging on the ear-door and there are the other sense objects impinging on their corresponding doorways. On account of the objects which are experienced there are mostly akusala cittas with like or dislike. We keep on thinking of the objects which are experienced through the senses and we create long stories about people and things. We take it for granted that different objects appear all day long, but, we should remember that they appear just because there are cittas arising in processes, vīthi-cittas. In the case of seeing, several conditions are needed for seeing to experience visible object. Seeing is vipākacitta, the result of kamma, a deed performed in the past. Eyesense is also a condition for seeing; eyesense is produced by kamma. Visible object is another condition for seeing; if it would not impinge on the eyesense there could not be seeing. Seeing sees visible object, and then there is paying attention to shape and form which is not seeing. It is important to reflect on the difference between seeing and thinking of concepts such as people and things. In that way it will be clearer that realities such as seeing and visible object can be the objects of mindfulness and right understanding, and that conventional truth, concepts or ideas, are objects of thinking but not objects of awareness. However, the reality which thinks about concepts is a type of nāma and thus it can be object of awareness. Khun Sujin said that when there is more intellectual understanding based on study and reflection, sati can arise, and direct understanding of the characteristics of realities can be developed.

I shall quote from a letter of Alan Weller in England, who describes his own experience concerning the study of Dhamma, in order to encourage my husband Lodewijk:

¹ See Intro.

“I remember getting stuck with Khun Sujin's tapes, listening to the same ones over and over again. Books like the Visuddhimagga used to send me to sleep. I could not cope with the endless classifications. However, very gradually I just keep on walking. I have no problems now with the Visuddhimagga and I delight in its precision. The teachings are so wide, books, tapes, discussions with people. I like to study what I am interested in and if I find something tiring or difficult I turn to what I find interesting. The Jātaka stories are very easy to read and so useful for daily life. The wide reading is a condition to have great respect for Khun Sujin's words on the tape, for without those tapes I could not understand the depth of the Dhamma or have the confidence that I have now. This is my advice to Lodewijk: just keep on walking.”

Alan refers to what Khun Sujin once said in India: “Keep on walking, even if it is just one step at a time.” We should have more confidence in the value of listening to the Dhamma, studying the scriptures and reflecting on the Dhamma again and again. This is a condition for right understanding of *nāma* and *rūpa*, and this understanding is being accumulated. We can be sure that in this way conditions are being built up for the arising of direct awareness and direct understanding which is different from thinking about realities.

The gradual development of understanding is in the scriptures (Gradual Sayings, Book of the Sevens, Ch VII, par. 7) compared to the wearing out of a knife handle which one holds each day. However, it wears out so slowly that one cannot see its wearing away. Jonothan remarked that if one's practice is right one should see some progress. He found that there was no *sati* while working in his office. The world of work seems to be different from the world of Dhamma. He thought that being under stress was not a good condition for *sati*. One should be in the right mood and have some leisure time.

Khun Sujin answered that this is only thinking. One should know the difference between a moment of experiencing a reality and thinking. Only through *satipaṭṭhāna* one can know the difference. This is a good reminder. We are so involved in our thoughts about having *sati*, finding ways to have more, but what is there right at that moment? Only a *nāma* which thinks. When we realize this, the infatuation is gone, no more worry about *sati*. Khun Sujin said:

“Do not think of the past or the future, just be aware. Realities appear, why do you have to move away from them. That is not the way to understand this moment. There is seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking, no matter whether one is working or not. If sati does not arise often it is because there are not enough conditions for it. Does one just want to have it? Develop it!”

If one has no understanding of cittas which experience objects through the six doors one does not know how to apply Khun Sujin's words, "develop sati now". Time and again objects such as visible object, sound or tangible object are appearing. They can only appear because there is citta which experiences them. Did we consider this enough? There may be sound but if hearing-consciousness does not arise sound is not an object which is experienced, sound does not appear. We believe that we see the world of people and different things, but there is only citta which thinks about what has appeared to seeing. Seeing does not occur at the same time as thinking. Seeing experiences visible object which has impinged on the eyesense, it does not pay attention to shape and form. However, seeing conditions thinking of shape and form, of defining them as people and different things. Khun Sujin writes in her book "A Survey of Paramattha Dhammas":

“Since cittas succeed one another very rapidly, it seems that there is the world which does not disintegrate, the world which is lasting and which is full of beings and many different things. In reality the world lasts just for one moment and then it falls away.”

If we have a bowl of fruits on the table we can look at them and they do not seem to fall away. It is helpful to know the reason. Realities, paramattha dhammas, such as visible object which is a kind of rūpa, fall away. However, we keep on thinking about the stories we create. The concepts such as fruit we can think of are not paramattha dhammas, they are not realities, thus they do not

arise and fall away. They are merely made up by our thinking.

Khun Sujin said to Jonothan:

“When one is busy with one's work, just keep on remembering that sati can be aware of any moment. When there is not forgetfulness but awareness, one can begin to have some understanding, even though it be very little, of what is real. Citta is real, it experiences an object. A dead body, even if there are still eyes and ears, cannot experience anything. Citta experiences. The experience is a reality. We should not be attached to the idea of, ‘how can I have more sati’. It can grow in a few lifetimes. Let us talk about seeing and visible object so that there can be conditions to be aware of them. If there is no understanding of this moment how can understanding grow? Considering visible object in the office is not different from considering visible object at this moment. There is no need to change the situation or to do anything else in order to develop right understanding. When sati is not hindered by wrong ideas we may have about it, it can arise freely and show its characteristic of anattā , not self or mine. Also when one talks about conventional things in the office there can be awareness of nāma and rūpa.”

Jonothan said that he would continue to consider visible object, since it is there all the time. Khun Sujin remarked that a few moments of awareness now are better than thinking of having many moments of it in the future, when one has free time. Are we inclined to put off kusala to a later time?

We read in the "Gradual Sayings" (Book of the Fours, First Fifty, Ch I, par. 6) about four kinds of people: a person of small learning who doesn't profit thereby, a person of small learning who profits thereby, a person of wide learning who doesn't profit thereby and a person of wide learning who profits thereby. We read:

In this case, monks, a certain person has small learning in Sutta, Geyya, Veyyākaraṇa, Gāthā, Udāna, Itivuttaka, Jātaka, Abbhutadhammā and Vedalla ²;

² A classification of the Dhamma as suttas without and with verses, expository matter including Abhidhamma, Birth stories, marvels, etc.

yet, as of that small learning he knows not the letter, knows not the meaning, he does not live in accordance with Dhamma. That, monks, is how a person with small learning profits not thereby.

And in what way, monks, is a person of small learning profited thereby?

In this case, monks, a certain person has small learning in Sutta... ; but, as of that small learning he knows both the letter and the meaning, he lives in accordance with Dhamma. That, monks, is how a person of small learning profits thereby.

We then read about the person with wide learning who does not profit thereby and the person of wide learning who profits thereby. Of these two kinds of persons the same is said as in the case of the person with small learning who does not profit thereby and the person with small learning who profits thereby.

According to the commentary, the "Manorathapūraṇī", the person with small learning who lives in accordance with the Dhamma, who profits thereby, has eradicated the āsavas ³. The same is true for the person with wide learning who profits thereby. Thus, when one studies the Dhamma and develops satipaṭṭhāna one can become enlightened and finally attain arahatship.

Alan Weller wrote:

“The last few weeks I have been very busy and have had little time for reading or writing. The sutta about profiting even from small learning is very useful. I often find myself wanting to read or study and I am forgetful of the reality which is there at that moment. We all need lots of details because defilements are so crafty to move us away from the present moment.”

People may have misunderstandings about satipaṭṭhāna, they doubt whether it can be developed also during the time they are working. These misunderstandings arise because they confuse sati with concentration. They believe that they should concentrate on realities in order to be aware of them. We should know that there can be wrong concentration, arising with akusala citta.

³ The “Intoxicants”, a group of defilements.

Concentration is a cetasika, a mental factor ⁴, which arises with each citta. Its function is to focus on one object at a time. Concentration does not last, it falls away immediately together with the citta it accompanies. If one thinks that one has to concentrate on nāma and rūpa there is thinking with attachment. One tries to control sati but that is impossible. When there are conditions for the arising of right mindfulness and right understanding, there is also right concentration without the need to think of concentration.

Citta and cetasika are conditioned nāmas. There is one citta at a time and each citta is accompanied by several cetasikas which each perform their own function while they assist the citta in knowing an object. If we do not know that understanding, mindfulness and right concentration are cetasikas which accompany kusala citta, we shall cling to them and have wrong view about them. We need to know many details because defilements are deeply rooted.

Khun Sujin said that people who develop satipaṭṭhāna naturally, in daily life, have more detachment than those who do not develop it naturally. If one develops satipaṭṭhāna naturally one does not try to exert control over sati or the objects of sati. A moment of awareness may arise and after that moments of forgetfulness. One can learn to notice the difference between such moments. Does at this moment a paramattha dhamma appear, or is there thinking of a concept? There can be awareness of a moment of ignorance which just occurred so that it can be realized as a conditioned reality.

Jonathan remarked that visible object is different from what we think it is. We tend to speculate about it, we are wondering how far the visible object we see at this moment extends. We make it into something abstract, but in reality it is just that which is seen. All that appears through the eyesense is visible object. If one were blind it could not appear. Khun Sujin asked whether visible object can move. When we notice a change of position of what we perceive it is only thinking. Because of remembrance of past experiences one believes that one sees people move. If there can be a moment of awareness of one reality there will be less clinging to a concept of a "whole", to an image of a person walking.

When we hear a dog barking different moments of experience arise. Hearing hears that particular sound and then we remember that it is the sound of a dog.

⁴ See Intro.

We can remind ourselves that it is not "I" who remembers but saññā, remembrance or perception, a cetasika which remembers an object or "marks" it so that it can be recognized later on. Saññā accompanies each citta, be it seeing or hearing or the citta which thinks of concepts. We recognize people and things because of saññā. Previous experiences have been accumulated and they are remembered. Also in the past the sound of a dog was heard, we learnt what a dog is and the way it barks. Because of saññā we can imitate its barking, or, when other people imitate its barking we can know that it is not the barking of a dog. "Sound does not know that you are thinking about it", Khun Sujin said, reminding us that there is no being, no dog in the sound. It is only rūpa which impinges on the earsense; when there are the right conditions a particular sound, pleasant or unpleasant, can be heard. The sound only appears when it is the right time for vīthi-cittas ⁵ arising in the ear-door process. When we are fast asleep there may be sound, but it is not heard.

Seeing, hearing and the other sense-cognitions are followed by thinking which thinks about what was experienced. We are absorbed in the concepts we are thinking of. Khun Sujin said that it takes time to realize that one lives with one's own thoughts, in one's own world of thinking. It is useful to know about the function of the cetasika vitakka, which can be translated as thinking. It accompanies many cittas, though not every citta. It "touches" the object which is experienced, or it leads citta to the object, so that citta can experience it. We read in the suttas about vitakka which is akusala: thinking with desire, with hate and with cruelty. We also read about vitakka which is sobhana (beautiful): thinking with detachment (nekkhamma), with non-aversion or kindness, and with non-violence. There is right thinking, sammā-sankappa, of the eightfold Path. It "touches" the object of awareness, a nāma or a rūpa, so that paññā can know it as it is.

If we do not know that thinking is due to the activity of vitakka we are bound to take it for self. We think most of the time with akusala citta, we can become confused by the stories we create ourselves.

Someone wrote to me that he was infatuated with his own fantasies which went on for a long time. He found himself a mean person because of that. If one thinks

⁵ Cittas arising in a process, see Intro.

of oneself as a mean person one takes one's akusala for "self". One can learn from such experiences that thinking is beyond control, anattā. Defilements arise because there are conditions for their arising. The writer of the letter thought that his fantasies were the consequence of the education he had had. However, this is merely a "story" one may think of but which does not explain the deepest cause. It can happen to all of us that we suddenly, for no apparent reason, have very ugly thoughts, thoughts of jealousy or even thoughts of hatred, and we may wonder where these come from. There were countless lives before this life, and during these lives we accumulated many defilements. We do not know what our past lives were like, but during the cycle there must have been births as an animal. The defilements of all past lives have been accumulated from moment to moment and they can arise at any time with akusala citta, they can even motivate bad deeds. We experience sense objects usually with akusala cittas since we accumulated such an extent of akusala. When we notice our defilements it is of no use to keep on thinking about them with aversion, then we will only accumulate more akusala. We can learn to develop right understanding also of akusala which arises, in order to see it as not self, only a conditioned reality. Khun Sujin explained:

“We should be brave and encounter the reality at that very moment with right understanding, then there is right effort. It is difficult to follow the Middle Way, that is, to follow all realities naturally. Through right understanding one will see more clearly one's own akusala, also the more subtle attachment to sense objects.”

The study of the Abhidhamma can remind us that the different cittas which are accompanied by cetasikas arise because of their own conditions and fall away immediately. When one, for example, has the intention to abstain from akusala but one cannot do so in a particular situation, one should remember that it is not self who can abstain but that there are cetasikas, "virati ⁶ cetasikas", which have the function of abstaining. They are: abstention from wrong speech, from wrong action and from wrong livelihood. When virati cetasika does not arise we cannot

⁶ virati means abstinence.

possibly abstain from akusala. Only through the development of satipaṭṭhāna can there be more conditions for abstention from akusala.

We read in the "Stories of the Mansions" (Khuddaka Nikāya, Vimānavatthu, V, Great Chariot, 53, the Mansion of Chatta) that the brahman youth Chatta was on his way to pay his teacher. Thieves were waiting for him in order to kill and rob him. The Buddha sat under a tree on the road Chatta was taking and he taught him out of compassion the three refuges and the five precepts. Chatta continued on his way, reflecting on the Buddha's teaching, and then he was killed by the robbers. He was reborn a deva and showed himself with his luminous mansion. the Buddha asked him of which deed his rebirth was the result so that many people would know the deed of merit Chatta had done. Chatta explained that he first did not want to take the three refuges and that he afterwards did so. Evenso he did not want to take the five precepts but afterwards he did so. We read that he said:

I approached the glorious Conquerer for refuge, and Dhamma too, likewise the Order of monks. First I said "No", revered sir; afterwards I did your bidding faithfully.

Live not in any way impurely, hurting any breathing thing, for wise men do not praise lack of restraint towards breathing things. First I said "No", revered sir; afterwards I did your bidding faithfully...

We read that he after the teaching of each of the five preecepts first said "No", and then afterwards, took the precept. We read further on:

Even a little done in the Tathāgata's Dhamma is of great fruition, a wide-spread fruit. Behold how Chatta, through merit done, illumines the earth even as does the sun....

It can happen to all of us that we first say "No", when we think that we cannot abstain from akusala. However, when kusala citta arises it can be done. Even a

brief moment of kusala is very beneficial. When we learn that satipaṭṭhāna should be developed naturally, in daily life, also in our work situation, we may at first say, "No, I cannot do it." But when there are conditions for kusala citta with right understanding we see that it can be done. Or we may think, "No, I cannot be aware of akusala, I must make it disappear first." When there is more understanding of citta and cetasika which arise because of their own conditions we can learn that it is not self but sati which can be aware of the characteristic of akusala.

Sarah was wondering why it is necessary to learn so many details about citta, cetasika and rūpa. Is it not enough to read just one page of the scriptures one's whole life? Khun Sujin answered that the Buddha did not have to teach for a long time to those who had conditions to attain enlightenment soon. However, for us it is different. We may read, "Seeing is impermanent", but this is not enough for us. We need to listen much, read and study much and consider the Dhamma often. We have to learn to be aware again and again, with right understanding of the characteristics of the realities which appear now. Kusala citta and akusala citta can arise shortly one after the other and there has to be awareness and keen understanding so that their different characteristics can be known. Kusala citta with pleasant feeling may arise and after that akusala citta with pleasant feeling and attachment to the idea of "my kusala" may arise. Do we know the difference between such moments?

Sarah said that she likes to earn money with her work since that gives her an opportunity to travel to Bangkok or to England. But she finds that the Dhamma makes one feel ashamed of liking to earn money. Khun Sujin said: "You don't understand yourself completely, you are not honest with yourself. If one does not understand one's own accumulations, one has ambitions to be the Dhamma way." Those who have attained enlightenment are "people who walk straight", "ujupatipanno". They know their accumulations, they are honest to themselves. Sometimes I feel ashamed about liking to read magazines and novels. However, satipaṭṭhāna should be developed naturally, so that one realizes one's accumulated inclinations as not self. Next to my bed I have suttas as well as magazines and novels. At times I take up a sutta, at times a magazine or novel. I cannot tell beforehand what I will do, it is dependent on conditions. Also while

reading a magazine there can be a few moments of considering visible object and then one is absorbed again in the story, which is a different moment.

When we look at other people satipaṭṭhāna can be developed naturally. When we see colours of hair, lips, eyebrows or skin, we think of them as belonging to the different parts of the body, but we should remember that all these colours are just visible object, they appear through the eyesense. They could not appear if we close our eyes. Colour which appears is not the same colour all over, it is not all grey or black. Many different colours appear but they are just visible object, they are experienced by seeing. While we are eating many different flavours appear, such as flavour which is sweet, sour or salty. Tasting-consciousness experiences all the different flavours which impinge on the tastingsense. There is such a great variety of colours, sounds, odours, flavours and tangible objects which appear and are experienced by the appropriate sense-cognitions through the corresponding sense-doors. If we remember this we shall not imagine the objects of seeing, hearing and the other sense-cognitions to be other than they really are. Then satipaṭṭhāna can develop more naturally. After the sense-door process has been completed, the object is experienced through the mind-door, and then there are other mind-door processes of cittas which define the object and think about it.

We should not worry about it when satipaṭṭhāna does not often arise. When Khun Sujin was in England, she said that one should not cling to the stages of insight, vipassanā ñāṇas:

“We do not mind about vipassanā ñāṇa, there should just be understanding of the reality appearing at this moment. It is so anattā, there should not be any expectation. So long as there are expectations vipassanā ñāṇa cannot arise.”

Khun Sujin reminds us time and again that we should always be humble, a "nobody", instead of somebody. A wise person who understands realities which arise because of their own conditions will be less attracted by honour, praise or gain. Do we think of "my development", is there an idea of "I did it"? Then we want to be somebody, and that is not the right way.

Sarah said to Khun Sujin that it is very hard to see the danger of the arising of nāma and rūpa, to see the benefit of not having them anymore. Khun Sujin answered:

“That is why there are many stages of vipassanā. Even when the arising and falling away of realities is experienced it is not enough. Attachment and the other defilements are so deeply rooted. It needs higher and higher understanding to see the danger of the arising and falling away of nāma and rūpa. They appear and then disappear immediately, but the succeeding ones arise and thus there will be attachment again. Attachment is so attached to any object which arises. We can talk a great deal about the impermanence of realities, but this does not mean anything if the reality of this moment is not directly experienced as impermanent.”

Sarah asked:

“Is it of any use at all to think of the impermanence of realities if it is not directly experienced?”

Khun Sujin answered:

“It is right thinking which is wholesome, but it cannot eradicate akusala. That is why the Buddha told us to develop more understanding. He spoke about the objects awareness should be aware of, so that right understanding can grow. The knowledge of all details can condition paññā to see the characteristic of anattā of all realities. One may read the scriptures but if there is no awareness of the present moment we shall not understand what has been taught in the scriptures.”

Letter about Vipassanā²

When Khun Sujin was in England Alan Weller recorded the discussions he had with her. These recordings contain many precious reminders about satipaṭṭhāna in daily life and therefore I would like to share these with all of you. The discussions were about citta (consciousness), cetasika (mental factors arising with the citta) and rūpa (physical phenomena). They were about cittas which experience objects through the six doors of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body sense and mind.

There are many different types of citta arising in daily life. There is seeing of visible object and there is the interpretation of what was seen and this is not seeing but thinking. When there are conditions for awareness it can arise and be aware of any object which appears, be it visible object, seeing, feeling or thinking. When there is awareness we do not have to name or label any reality, there is the direct experience of the characteristics of realities. Seeing is just the experience of what is visible, it has its own characteristic, we do not have to name it. Thinking is just thinking, it has its own characteristic, we do not have to name it.

Seeing sees visible object but it lasts only for an extremely short moment and then it is gone. Visible object does not last either, it falls away. Seeing can only see, it cannot think of visible object. If one wants to concentrate on seeing or visible object, if one has any idea of fixing one's attention on them with the purpose of knowing them, it prevents right understanding of realities. We cannot stare at visible object, since it is seen just for a moment, and then it falls away. We may think about it, but that is not direct awareness of its characteristic.

I would like to transcribe a dialogue between Khun Sujin and Alan about this subject:

Khun Sujin: "The more one understands that thinking thinks, the more visible object will appear as visible object. It does not matter at all if there is thinking because there are conditions for thinking almost all the time. There is the experience of objects through the sense-doors and then thinking."

Alan: “We have to know, not through thinking, but through direct experience.”

Kh. S. : “That is why there should be awareness of thinking and the understanding of it as just a reality.”

A. : “That is it, visible object should be separated from thinking.”

Kh. S. : “That is why it is necessary to be aware of thinking, so that realities can be understood. Many people do not want to think, they try to stop thinking. They believe that in that way they can understand realities.”

A. : “The thinking is very fast. Seeing sees visible object and then there is thinking.”

Kh.S. : “The development of awareness is necessary in order to understand thinking. Visible object appears very shortly and then there is thinking. One thinks about a particular thing.”

A. : “We are picking out one thing from the visible object by our thinking. Just one idea.”

Kh.S. : “Then some ‘thing’ is there, even if we do not name it. When we point at something there is thinking, not seeing. For the experience of visible object you don't have to point.”

A. : “I was looking at curtains but I did not notice the pattern of pine-apples, because I was not thinking of it. Only when someone said that there were pine-apples I recognized the pine-apples.”

Kh.S. : “Because then you were thinking about it. What is seen now is just a reality and then the thinking thinks a lot. This happens all the time, no matter whether you read a book, watch T.V., look at paintings or look while you walk in the street. There can be understanding of the true nature of realities at such moments.”

A. : “There are just different types of thinking when one selects things from the visible object.”

Kh.S. : “One begins to understand that there is nobody, thinking thinks only.”

A. : “Thinking is just a reality which thinks. There is no one, just realities. That is the meaning of being alone.”

Kh.S. : “This is the way to become detached from realities we used to take for ‘I’. There is all the time the idea of ‘I think’, ‘I see’; ‘I,I,I’, all the time. At the moments there is no attention to shape and form, awareness of realities can develop. There is not only visible object, there is also sound. Awareness can be aware of any reality, without thinking. There is sound which appears, then visible object, then sound again, all such moments are extremely short. Awareness can follow all kinds of realities.”

A. : “When we pay attention to shape and form is there usually lobha (attachment)?”

Kh.S. : “When the feeling is not unpleasant, thus, pleasant or indifferent, there is usually lobha. Lobha arises when we read a newspaper or look at a picture, but sati can be aware of realities in daily life. Sati should be very ‘daily’.”

A. : “I think that there is no difference between this or that particular situation.”

Kh.S. : “There is no difference at all. The six doorways are the same, everywhere. One has to become detached. This cannot be achieved by a self, only by understanding. Through satipaṭṭhāna one will see more clearly one's accumulated inclinations. Satipaṭṭhāna should be naturally developed. No matter whether one moves around or looks at something, awareness can be aware and right understanding can understand. Every reality arises and then falls away very rapidly, but awareness can follow different realities which appear. Instead of thinking too much about other people, awareness can be aware of realities. We may think about others and wonder why they behave like that, but what about our own citta? Awareness leads one back to ‘one's own reality’.”

It is true, we may have aversion about someone else's behaviour, but aversion falls away and instead of thinking for a long time about it there can be awareness of whatever reality appears.

Some people, when they hear about citta, cetasika and rūpa, say that they do not like the Abhidhamma, that they prefer the suttas. They think that the Abhidhamma is too theoretical. It depends on one's personal inclination to what extent one will study the Abhidhamma, but if there is no knowledge at all about nāma, the reality which experiences something, and rūpa, the reality which does

not experience anything, one cannot develop the eightfold path. One does not know what the object of awareness is. One does not know that a concept such as the whole body or a person cannot be object of awareness, but only an object of thinking. One *nāma* or *rūpa* at a time as it appears through one of the six doors can be object of awareness. If one begins to be aware of the characteristic of seeing which appears, or the characteristic of visible object, or the characteristic of any other reality which appears, one will understand that the Abhidhamma explains the realities of our daily life. Also the suttas are full of Abhidhamma, one cannot really understand them without any knowledge of paramattha dhammas. Time and again we read in the suttas about the objects which are experienced through the six doors, we read about seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, the experience of tangible object and the experience of objects through the mind-door. If we do not know that the experiences of the objects through the six doorways are different cittas, we take all experiences for self.

We learn through the Abhidhamma and also through the suttas that cittas are accompanied by different cetasikas, mental factors. Not everybody is inclined to study cetasikas in detail, but if one does not know anything about them one does not see that akusala citta is so different from kusala citta because they are accompanied by different types of cetasikas. Defilements as well as wholesome qualities are cetasikas which accompany citta. The factors of the eightfold Path, such as right understanding and right mindfulness, are cetasikas. When these factors which accompany kusala citta arise, the eightfold Path is being developed, just for a moment, and then citta and the accompanying cetasikas fall away. Sati and *paññā* can be accumulated and then there are conditions for another moment of developing the eightfold Path, later on. Understanding develops from moment to moment. If we understand that life exists only in one moment, we shall be less inclined to believe that there is a self who could develop the eightfold Path continuously. This would not be according to the truth, because the next moment is likely to be akusala. If we know that right effort is a cetasika which arises just for a moment we shall cling less to an idea of self who exerts effort in the development of the eightfold Path.

We think that we should develop understanding, but actually it is understanding, *paññā*, which develops. There is nobody who develops understanding. Khun

Sujin remarked:

“In the beginning it seems that ‘I’ am developing, but later on one realizes that it is right understanding, paññā, which grows. One comes to the conclusion that nobody can do anything.”

Alan said:

“Because each moment is conditioned, one can't do anything or control anything, not even the development of right understanding. It is conditioned by what one has learnt or considered.”

Khun Sujin remarked:

“Even if one considers oneself a Buddhist, it depends on conditions whether one can read wisely or consider wisely. Or does one just want to be ‘somebody’ instead of developing right understanding?

It is quite difficult to develop understanding of visible object at this moment, to realize that there is not anybody in the visible object which is seen. It takes time to listen again and again, to be aware again and again. Without awareness and understanding of this moment there is no way to eliminate desire. There is desire if one wants to have a special experience instead of developing understanding. I do not tell anybody to do this or that first in order to be aware, there is no technique which should be applied. One thinks too much and tries too much. When can there be satipaṭṭhāna? When there is enough understanding to condition it.”

One may be very keen to reach the different stages of insight, but if there is such a wish, is there not an idea of self? We should not force ourselves to reach something for which we are not ready yet. Khun Sujin said:

“This moment of gaining understanding is enough for this moment, and thus the development can continue naturally. There should be contentedness with one's own ability.

We should be grateful to the Buddha for the understanding we have gained already, even if it is not a great deal yet. If there is not much understanding now, it is because it was not developed much in the past. It takes aeons to develop it. We should remember that right understanding is a conditioned reality, we cannot hasten its development. If we try to do so, we are clinging to the idea of self. However, understanding is developed in order to get rid of the idea of self.”

A friend wrote to me about a meditation technique he applies in order to experience the impermanence of rūpas of the body. Through concentration on rūpas of the body he thinks that he can experience the change of rūpas such as heat of the body. He finds it such an intellectual struggle to grasp the truth of anattā (non-self) and through the experience of impermanence he believes that he can realize the truth of anattā more easily. He thinks that by this method all the stages of insight, vipassanā ñāṇas, can be reached.

When the rūpa which is heat appears, there must also be nāma which experiences heat. In order to know the truth there should not only be awareness of rūpa but also of nāma, the element which experiences something. If there is no awareness and right understanding which realizes nāma as nāma and rūpa as rūpa, there is an idea of self who feels hot or "my body" which is hot. There is "somebody" or "something" there, thus, one clings to a "self". There is the deeply rooted idea of self, even when we do not think, "I feel", or "This is my body".

It is not easy to understand the meaning of anattā, as the writer of the letter remarks. We should consider what the Buddha taught about anattā . He clearly showed the conditions for each reality which arises. Since there are conditions for the nāmas and rūpas which arise we cannot exert control over their arising. "Beyond control" is one way to describe the nature of anattā. When the right conditions are present, a rūpa such as heat may impinge on the bodysense. Bodysense is a kind of rūpa which is produced by kamma. Nobody can create his

own bodysense. The bodysense is all over the body, it can be outside or inside. When heat impinges on the bodysense there are conditions for the arising of body-consciousness which experiences the heat just for a short moment and then it falls away. It merely experiences the heat and it does not know anything else. Feeling accompanies the body-consciousness, it is a cetasika which feels on account of the tangible object which is experienced. When tangible object is pleasant, pleasant bodily feeling accompanies body-consciousness, and when it is unpleasant, painful bodily feeling accompanies body-consciousness. Shortly afterwards there are likely to be akusala cittas which may be akusala cittas rooted in attachment, accompanied by pleasant or by indifferent feeling, or akusala cittas rooted in aversion, accompanied by unpleasant feeling, or akusala cittas rooted in ignorance, accompanied by indifferent feeling. Sometimes there can be kusala cittas accompanied by pleasant feeling or by indifferent feeling. We can learn through awareness that when the feeling is not unpleasant there is usually attachment to objects.

At first it may seem easy to be aware only of rūpas of the body. When we learn more about different types of nāma and rūpa we can see that it is not easy to have precise knowledge of any of them.

When there is awareness of either nāma or rūpa right understanding of their characteristics can develop. When heat appears its characteristic can be known as only a rūpa. We do not have to think whether it is external heat or internal heat, we do not have to think of the spot of the body where it appears. It is only a rūpa which appears just for a moment, it does not belong to "my body", it is beyond control. Understanding of the different types of nāma and rūpa which appear through the appropriate doorways develops very gradually. It is only later on that paññā can realize the three general characteristics of nāma and rūpa, which are impermanence, dukkha and anattā.

One may believe that one can select the object of awareness, but it depends on the sati of which object it is aware. Sati is a cetasika, and understanding, paññā, is another cetasika. When there are the right conditions kusala citta accompanied by sati and paññā can arise. One cannot select any object of awareness, all realities which appear are beyond control. The Buddha spoke about the six doors in order to remind people that all realities of daily life should be known as they

are.

It is not easy at all to know precisely, through direct understanding, what *nāma* is and what *rūpa*. When *paññā* is still weak we are not sure whether a characteristic of *rūpa* or of *nāma* appears. Understanding has to be developed again and again. When there is direct experience of hardness or heat we may have doubts whether that was mindfulness or not. The fact that hardness or heat can be directly experienced without having to think about them does not mean that there is mindfulness of them. They are directly experienced by body-consciousness which is *vipākacitta*, and this *citta* is not accompanied by *sati*. After that there may be *akusala citta*s with subtle clinging to hardness or heat, but one may take that for mindfulness. When one tries to concentrate on realities in order to know them there is *akusala citta* with clinging; there is desire to know, not mindfulness.

It does not matter if mindfulness does not arise yet. It is conditioned by listening to the Dhamma, reading and considering, thus, by right understanding. Our goal should not be: having *sati* for its own sake. *Sati* without the development of understanding of the *nāma* and *rūpa* which appear will not lead to the eradication of the idea of "self". The following sutta can remind us that there should be the development of understanding of *rūpa* as *rūpa* and of *nāma* as *nāma*, as elements devoid of self. We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (II, *Nidāna-vagga*, Ch XIV, Kindred Sayings on Elements, § 1) that the Buddha, while he was at *Sāvatthī*, said to the monks:

What, monks, is the diversity in elements? The elements of eye, of visible object, of seeing-consciousness; the elements of ear, of sound, of hearing-consciousness; the elements of nose, of odour, of smelling-consciousness; the elements of tongue, of taste, of tasting-consciousness; the elements of body-sense, of tangibles, of body-consciousness; the elements of mind, of mental objects, of the experience of mental objects. This, monks, is called diversity in elements.

We should reflect more on this sutta. Seeing can only arise when there are visible object and eyesense, thus, it can only arise when there are the appropriate

conditions. The nāma-elements and rūpa-elements of our life arise because of conditions, they are not self, they are beyond control. When heat appears, understanding of its characteristic can be developed for that short moment, so that it can be known as a rūpa element. It is rūpa, not part of "my body", not self. It does not know anything, it is different from nāma. When feeling appears, understanding can be developed of its characteristic as a nāma element. It is nāma, an element which experiences something, different from rūpa. There is no self who experiences.

When understanding is developed at the moment of mindfulness, there will be less doubt about the fact whether there was sati or not. Sati can arise naturally in daily life, while seeing, hearing or experiencing objects through the other doorways. Doubt about mindfulness is bound to arise, but then we can be mindful of doubt as a kind of nāma which is conditioned. Khun Sujin reminds us: "Begin again, be aware again." Sati can follow all kinds of realities appearing through the six doors. We should not try to hold on to any reality, then we are forgetful of what appears at the present moment. We should not try to select any object in order to be mindful of it. Since sati and paññā are anattā there cannot be any rule that there should first be mindfulness of rūpas of the body, then of feelings, then of cittas and then of other dhammas.

The first stage of insight which clearly distinguishes nāma from rūpa may seem to be far away, but it is useful to know that this is the first stage. When one experiences changes of the body temperature or notices the appearance and disappearance of sound, one may believe that one experiences the impermanence of rūpas. However, the arising and falling away of nāma and rūpa is the fourth stage of insight or the first stage of "principal insight", mahā-vipassanā, and this cannot be realized if the first stage of "tender insight" has not been reached ¹.

We are inclined to name or label the objects which appear and to think about them for a long time instead of being mindful of them in order to know them as nāma or as rūpa. Khun Sujin reminded Alan:

¹ The first three stages of insight are beginning stages or "tender insight", taruṇa vipassanā. They precede the first stage of principal insight, which is followed by other stages, until enlightenment is attained. This will be further explained in Letter 6.

“Life is just the flux of realities. Without studying the details about realities it is very difficult to become detached from the object which is experienced. Detachment is most helpful. Forgetting about labelling the objects is another stepping-stone which has to be taken and this is difficult.”

Life exists only in a moment. When we consider this more we shall be less inclined to cling to the concept of a person. When we cling to someone or dislike someone it is only thinking. We always think of people, but when there is awareness we know whether we think with kusala citta or with akusala citta, with loving kindness or with aversion. Khun Sujin said:

“When we have aversion we should find out whether it is a name or a reality which is the object of aversion. A name represents a person. When you think of a name you think of someone. Right understanding can find out that it is thinking again. One lives with one's own thoughts. Develop loving kindness instead of having aversion towards what is only a name.”

When we understand that a person, in the ultimate sense, exists only in our thoughts, we can appreciate the following reminder:

“What we consider as a friend in conventional terms is only an idea. When you have a friend what does it mean? About what do you talk? ‘What shall we do tomorrow, where are we going, what shall we eat?’ Thus it means that you associate with someone's opinion which you consider as a friend. These are moments of thinking. We may associate with wrong opinions or with right opinions and that influences our way of life.”

Khun Sujin also spoke to Alan about married life:

“We are attached to many things in life but we know that it is for a very short time. You can change your mind. One will be married or single according to one's accumulations. But don't forget the development of understanding. You should not think that your attachment to a person will last as long as you live. Every moment arises because of conditions. There can be a change in the relationship because of your own accumulations or because of the other person's accumulations. Attachment brings sorrow, no matter it lasts long or short. If one really studies one's citta one can understand that there are many degrees of attachment. Sometimes one wants something so much for oneself, even if one likes the other person. You are attached to that person but you want something for yourself. If we study our life closely we just love ourselves. Everything is just for the sake of our own feeling, our own pleasure. Nothing is permanent. This helps us to see the true nature of reality. We can gain something from each moment, even when there is a loss. Even a loss does not bring me much pain, I get something from it. It is good if one is prepared, ready to face any unpleasant situation. The understanding of the Dhamma can help one in many situations about which one would otherwise feel unhappy.”

Alan asked Khun Sujin:

“Should one in daily life not be very careful so that one is not caught up with pleasant things, non-Dhamma things?”

Khun Sujin answered:

“I think one cannot live without pleasure, and one cannot live without Dhamma. One cannot live with ignorance, having just pleasure. The wise person cannot live just for pleasure. He will live with pleasure and with understanding.”

This is the Middle Way. If we are honest we know that we have accumulations for enjoyment, why deny it? But understanding can develop naturally, of all

realities which appear, also of pleasure. We do not have to wait or change conditions. The Middle Way is the right way, but it is difficult. Progress is bound to be slow and because of desire one may try to flee from daily life, try to exert effort and concentrate on realities. Khun Sujin spoke again and again about natural awareness. She said:

“When one enjoys something very much one cannot prevent it, but by being aware there can be right understanding. That is the eightfold Path. One should understand all conditioned realities which occur in one's life. Seeing is conditioned, pleasant feeling and unpleasant feeling are conditioned. They have their own conditions already. We should not ‘prepare’ conditions for anything to arise. When one develops more the eightfold Path one can see how intricate and subtle its development is. Sati and paññā can follow the realities appearing through all doorways until there is no doubt about conditioned realities. Nobody can condition any reality at all. When there is sati with a very low level of understanding, begin again, begin again. When one has precise understanding of the Middle Way, one will not turn away. One can easily turn away because of lobha.”

When one hears about natural awareness in the midst of enjoyment, one may wonder where the right effort of the eightfold Path comes in. It comes in exactly when we begin again, begin again. When we are not disheartened about our low level of understanding and there is courage for sati and paññā now, there is right effort accompanying right understanding, even though we are only in a beginning stage of developing the eightfold Path. We do not have to think of making an effort, then there would be an idea of self who exerts effort. We should not forget that sati without the development of understanding is not very helpful. Understanding of the flux of realities which is our life is the goal.

Letter about Vipassanā³

Through the study of the Dhamma we learn that we are misled by the outer appearance of things. As soon as we open our eyes it seems that we see continuously. Even when there is thinking or hearing it seems that there can still be seeing at the same time. More than one experience at a time seems to occur, but in reality only one citta at a time arises, experiences an object through the appropriate doorway, and then falls away. We may believe that our body can feel pleasant and unpleasant things, but in reality the body consists of rūpas, physical phenomena, which cannot experience anything. The more we study the Dhamma the more we realize that we have accumulated wrong ideas about the phenomena in ourselves and around ourselves. Should we not find out more about the realities of our life?

We understand in theory that there is no self, but understanding has not been developed to the stage that the truth of anattā, not self, can be directly realized. At this moment we are full of the idea of self and our clinging to the self is bound to hinder the development of right understanding. We cling to "our kusala" and we have aversion towards "our akusala", we do not see these realities as they are, as not self. Are we not annoyed when there is disturbance of mind, forgetfulness and distraction in a day? Then we have aversion towards "our akusala". We wish to improve the situation and become calm, undisturbed and mindful, in order to accumulate a great deal of kusala, "our kusala". Instead of right understanding of realities which arise because of their own conditions our goal becomes the accumulation of kusala. Then we are moving away from our real goal: detachment from the self through right understanding.

Alan Driver, a Dhamma friend who passed away, clearly understood that we can easily be moved away from our real goal. I shall quote from his words ² :

“So very often our aim is not really to understand whatever appears right now. We want to get rid of distraction, to be calmer, to be steadier, to be more organised, to be somehow other than we are. What is that if it is not attachment?

² Taken from "Be here now", Adelaïd.

Why can't we just be aware of distraction? But, oh no, we don't like distraction and there we are, thoroughly distracted from awareness, because of our attachment to a self who does not want to be distracted. In fact, this is attachment to peace, not the development of understanding.

Ask yourself, do you really want to be aware or do you want calm? We just go on perpetuating the illusion of a self who has got a job to do and who wants to do it and does not like distraction which gets in the way of doing the job. That is not right understanding at all. It is a cause for more frustration when distraction arises. When there is satipaṭṭhāna you are not thrown off balance by distraction. You are just aware and then there can be awareness of what appears next. There can be awareness and right understanding of what has already appeared by conditions, which is not self. Only for one moment though. And then there may be a whole lot of distraction. We can't do anything about it, it is anattā. If there is awareness at that moment something has been done already. It is anattā.

Developing awareness. I don't think it is what we really want to do at all. We don't have the inclination, deep down we are not really interested very often. Only at a moment of right understanding is there any interest, right interest in the object that appears, in order to see it as it really is. We are always looking for some other object, trying to change it or make it last. That is attachment, not detachment."

If we are honest with ourselves we shall notice when we are diverted from the right Path in choosing another goal, such as the gaining of kusala for ourselves. I am grateful for being reminded of the true goal. There should be detachment from the very beginning. When there is a moment of awareness of realities such as hardness or sound, are we pleased? Do we cling to "my awareness"? We should not be concerned about having awareness, our foremost goal is developing understanding. When heat appears it can be known as rūpa, a reality which does not experience anything. It is not part of "my body", it is not "mine". We never know what reality will appear next, a reality which is pleasant, unpleasant, kusala or akusala. If we try to direct sati to this object first and then to that, for example to rūpas appearing in the body or to feelings, there is again an idea of self and we shall never understand that sati is anattā.

Someone wrote that a teacher in a meditation center told people to get rid of akusala as soon as possible. When it arises one should concentrate more deeply on particular realities such as feelings. He also said that one burns up old kamma by the accumulation of kusala citta while one is practising vipassanā.

Akusala kamma is past already and we cannot prevent it from producing its result. The ariyan who has attained enlightenment has no more conditions for an unhappy rebirth, but he still receives unpleasant results through the senses in the course of his life. We cannot know which kamma produces which result at a particular moment, only a Buddha can know this. There were countless lives in the past with countless akusala kammās. Who can claim that he can accumulate a great deal of kusala and can burn up old kamma? When we are having such thoughts we are clinging to the accumulation of kusala, we are again off the right Path.

When akusala citta arises and paññā can realize it as a conditioned nāma there is at that moment kusala citta instead of akusala citta. However, this will not be achieved by striving to have strong concentration on particular objects one selects. There will be more detachment from the self if one does not sit down in order to concentrate on particular nāmas and rūpas and if one does not “plan” to have mindfulness. It depends on conditions whether there will be sati and paññā or not. It depends on conditions what will be the object of paññā, it may be akusala citta or any other object. If we believe that by means of satipaṭṭhāna a great deal of kusala has been accumulated already, so much so that akusala can be burnt up, we do not know ourselves. Do we realize the countless moments of subtle clinging or of ignorance, arising time and again after there has been seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or the experience of tangible object? Do we know whether there is at this moment kusala citta or akusala citta after seeing?

People who have practised in a center find it difficult to develop satipaṭṭhāna in daily life, they find daily life distracting. One should check what one's goal is, understanding realities or being calm and free from disturbances? Daily life can be the measure of our understanding. When paññā is truly paññā it can understand as it is seeing occurring now, hearing occurring now, it can understand them naturally, in daily life. Paññā does not develop rapidly or suddenly. We cannot determine that from now on paññā should clearly

understand realities. Paññā develops when it discerns the dhamma which appears naturally, in whatever situation or place one may be. We may believe that it is difficult to be aware of realities while we are working, but the situation of our work is daily life and any reality which appears can be the object of mindfulness. Alan Weller wrote:

“I do not separate Dhamma from work. I think that one sentence concerning the Dhamma, spoken by Alan Driver, can be applied and be of value in the work situation: ‘We know from our own lives that we do not always give help when help is needed.’ This can encourage us not to be neglectful of kusala in our work situation. Another phrase to be remembered: ‘This moment should not be lost’. This can be a reminder not to be absorbed in work with akusala citta. When we understand that this moment should not be lost we don't have to think first or reflect first in order to be aware. Thus, understanding can be applied in whatever situation, at different levels too: at the levels of sīla, of calm and of insight.

There is no self who can cause the arising of any reality. We have to be so very patient to let understanding arise by conditions and forget the trying and the wishing for results.”

This moment should not be lost. We acquire from the scriptures many valuable reminders to develop understanding of nāma and rūpa. It is right understanding which should be emphasized, not concentration or effort. When understanding develops naturally, in daily life, there are also concentration and effort or energy accompanying paññā, they are cetasikas which perform their own functions. If we think of concentration and effort there can easily be attachment, or, when we worry about lack of concentration, there is aversion.

Someone asked Khun Sujin whether he would have to stop reading in order to be aware of different realities. He was wondering how paññā could know different realities while he was reading. Khun Sujin asked him whether during the time he was paying respect to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and reciting the Pāli texts, he could, in between, also think of other things. There can be many moments of ignorance in between, thus, ignorance can arise extremely rapidly.

Evenso when paññā has been developed it is extremely fast. We underestimate the power of paññā. Paññā is different from what we think it is. We are full of the idea of self and thus we imagine that paññā can only know something if we first focus on it and exert effort. We may think that it is not possible for paññā to know the difference between sense-door process and mind-door process ³, since the different processes of citta run extremely fast. However, it can be known by paññā. It is known by paññā at the first stage of "tenderinsight" which is the beginning stage. Or we may mistakenly think that there cannot be sati and paññā in a sense-door process. Also in sense-door processes there are conditions for akusala cittas or kusala cittas. When there are kusala cittas they can be accompanied by paññā or unaccompanied by paññā, depending on conditions. Nobody can tell paññā to arise or not to arise, nobody can predict the object of paññā. When it arises it performs its function of understanding.

The paññā which is vipassanā of the first stage of "tender insight" clearly knows rūpa as rūpa and nāma as nāma, and it knows this through the mind-door. It is useful to know more about this stage of insight, because then we shall realize what should be known and what we do not know yet.

The rūpas which are the different sense objects are experienced through their corresponding sense-doors and then through the mind-door. We may have doubts about this. We may believe that through the mind-door there can only be thinking about concepts and not the experience of rūpas. We read in the "Atthasālinī " (I, part II, Analysis of Terms, 72-74) that sense objects are experienced through the senses and then through the mind-door. We read about the javana cittas ⁴ arising in a sense-door process and then in the mind-door process:

.... Thus the javana cittas experiencing visible object arise at the eye-door and also at the mind-door. The same is the case with the javana cittas experiencing sound and the other sense objects....

³ See Intro.

⁴ Kusala cittas or akusala cittas arising in the sense-door process and in the mind-door process. The javana cittas of the arahat are kiriyacittas, "inoperative" cittas.

The "Atthasālinī" states in the section on rūpa (II, Book II, Rūpa, the four Great Essentials, 304) that the cognition through the mind-door "falls into the stream of the fivefold cognition and goes along with it." The mind-door process which succeeds the sense-door process falls into its stream since cittas succeed one another very rapidly. The rūpa is experienced through the sense-door and then through the mind-door. When it is experienced through the mind-door it has only just fallen away. During other mind-door processes cittas can have as object a concept, such as the shape and form of something.

The eye-door process, the ear-door process and the other sense-door processes are each followed by a mind-door process, but there are bhavanga-cittas ⁵ in between the processes. Now, at this moment, the different sense-doors are mixed up, they do not seem to be demarcated by a mind-door process. It seems that seeing does not fall away and that there can be hearing or the experience of tangible object at the same time. This shows us that processes of citta succeed one another very rapidly. The mind-door is hidden at this moment, it is hidden by the sense-doors. In order to remind us of what we do not know yet Khun Sujin said: "One door is bright, the other doors are dark." Only when there is seeing the world is bright. But now it seems that the world keeps on being bright. There seems to be seeing continuously.

At this moment we know in theory that nāma is the element which experiences and that rūpa is the element which does not experience anything. However, when there is, for example, the experience of heat through the bodysense it is difficult to distinguish nāma from rūpa. There can be awareness of only one object at a time, either a nāma or a rūpa, and at that moment there is not "my body". When we think of "bodily sensations" we think of a "whole" and we are thoroughly mixing up nāma and rūpa. Then we shall continue to cling to a "self".

In the beginning the understanding of nāma and rūpa is bound to be vague and there may be awareness of only a few nāmas and rūpas. It depends on the accumulations of the individual through which doors there is awareness. Even when the first stage of vipassanā ñāṇa, insight knowledge, has been reached there may not be clear understanding of many kinds of realities. However, when

⁵ Lifecontinuum. Cittas which arise in between processes and which keep the continuity in life. They are different from the cittas arising in processes which experience objects impinging on the six doors.

that stage arises there is no more doubt about the characteristic of *nāma* and about the characteristic of *rūpa*, both of which at those moments appear, one at a time, through the mind-door. Then there is direct understanding of *nāma* and *rūpa*. After this stage has been reached one must continue to be mindful and develop understanding of all kinds of realities which appear through the six doors. Khun Sujin said:

“The characteristic of *nāma* can only clearly appear when the mind-door appears. At the moment of the first *vipassanā ñāṇa paññā* knows the characteristic of *nāma* and the characteristic of *rūpa*. *Rūpa* is not different from *rūpa* which usually appears through the sense-door. Visible object appears through the mind-door just as naturally as when we see now, but at that moment it is not experienced through the eye-door but through the mind-door.”

During a trip in the North of Thailand Alan Driver asked Khun Sujin some questions about the first stage of insight, *vipassanā ñāṇa*, and I shall quote the conversation:

Alan: “Does visible object appear to be the same through the mind-door as through the eye-door, or does it appear differently at the moment of the first *vipassanā ñāṇa*?”

Khun Sujin: “It is the same, exactly the same”.

Alan: “In that case how can one know the difference between seeing and the experience of visible object through the mind-door?”

Khun Sujin: “Now there are sense-door processes, and mind-door processes do not appear. When the mind-door appears in the case of *vipassanā ñāṇa* it is different from just now. “

Khun Sujin explained that at this moment sound is experienced through the ear-door and after that through the mind-door, but that we do not realize that

sound is also experienced through the mind-door. The ear-door process “covers up” the function of the mind-door process of citta in which process the sound is also “heard”. Citta arise and fall away, succeeding one another extremely rapidly. Also in the case of the other sense objects an object is experienced through the relevant sense-door and then through the mind-door. We are confused with regard to the different doorways, it seems that we can see and hear at the same time; we do not notice that there are different sense-door processes and that each sense-door process is followed by a mind-door process.

Khun Sujin remarked that at the moments of vipassanā ñāṇa the sense objects appear and are understood only through the mind-door. When at those moments the mind-door appears it is as if none of the sense-doors is appearing. Thus, the situation is different from this moment when the mind-door is “covered up” by the sense-doors. At the moments of vipassanā ñāṇa sense objects are known one at a time and these appear only through the mind-door. But this does not mean that there are no sense-door processes, otherwise rūpas such as sound could not appear. Sound is experienced through the ear-door and extremely rapidly after that through the mind-door. In the case of vipassanā ñāṇa, it is experienced by paññā in a mind-door process and realized as it is, as rūpa.

Khun Sujin said: “One rūpa at a time and one nāma at a time appears and is understood through the mind-door. The world does not appear, there is no self, there is nothing else but nāma and rūpa which appear one at a time. At the moments of vipassanā ñāṇa there is no more doubt about the mind-door.”

When we hear a sound at this moment we have a vague knowledge of the characteristic of sound, but nāma and rūpa and all the doorways are mixed up. Whereas when there is the first vipassanā ñāṇa the difference between nāma and rūpa is directly understood. Paññā clearly knows this, it does not have to think or consider.

Is there doubt about the mind-door? Does nāma clearly appear as an element which experiences something? When we realize what we do not know yet we shall not erroneously believe that we can have direct understanding of the arising and falling away of nāma and rūpa. This can only be realized at a later stage.

First paññā must be developed to the stage that it can clearly distinguish between the different characteristics of nāma and of rūpa.

We should be grateful to the Buddha for teaching us about all realities which naturally appear in daily life. Thus we are able to test the truth of what he taught. He taught that each reality arises because of its own conditions. For example, if there were no eyesense and visible object, seeing-consciousness could not arise. Eyesense and visible object are necessary conditions for seeing. The eyesense is the rūpa which is the physical base or place of origin for seeing-consciousness. Seeing arises at that base. Hearing-consciousness arises at the ear-base and each of the other sense-cognitions have their corresponding base. The rūpas which are bases (vatthus) arise and fall away, they do not last. The base for body-consciousness can be at any point of the body, inside or on the outside. When we think of "body sensitivity" we still have an idea that the body itself can experience something. The bodysense is the base for body-consciousness and also for the accompanying bodily feeling which can be painful or pleasant. We dislike pain and we attach great importance to bodily wellbeing. When we know what exactly the bodysense is it will help us to have less confusion about nāma and rūpa.

The word body sensitivity can mislead us, the bodysense cannot experience anything. It can be a condition for the experience of tangible object, of softness, hardness, heat, cold, motion or pressure. There can be impingement only by one of these rūpas on one extremely small point of the body at a time, and then body-consciousness experiences that object just for a moment. That point of the body is then the body-base and the body-door, but it falls away immediately. When a characteristic of rūpa is experienced, such as heat, impinging on the rūpa which is then body-base, nothing else can at that moment appear at other parts of the body. These parts are as it were completely numb, they cannot be the base for body-consciousness and bodily feeling. Neither can seeing or hearing arise at the same time, since only one citta arises at a time experiencing one object.

My husband pushed one hand on his shoulder and one hand on his waist, and he thought that hardness could be experienced on two points at the same time. When we only think of the body as a whole and there is no awareness of one

object at a time, we shall not know the truth. We are misled by saññā, the cetasika which is remembrance. When saññā remembers wrongly, not according to the truth, it seems that there is "my whole body". All the rūpas of the body arise and then fall away immediately, never to come back again. Since we hold on to memories of what has been experienced and has fallen away already we do not know the truth. There may be "attā saññā", wrong remembrance of self, and "niccā saññā", wrong remembrance of things as permanent. Do we still think that the whole hand can "feel" something? Then there is wrong saññā. Because of association of different experiences in the past, also in the recent past, we form up the idea of a hand which feels something.

In the Commentary to the "Book of Analysis" (the "Vibhaṅga", the Second Book of the Abhidhamma), in the "Dispeller of Delusion" (Sammohavinodanī, Classification of the Khandhas) it is explained that saññā is like a mirage which deceives us:

Perception, saññā, also is like a mirage in the sense of being unsubstantial, and likewise in the sense of being ungraspable. For one cannot grasp it and drink it or wash in it or bathe in it or fill a pot with it. Furthermore, just as a mirage quivers and seems like the movement of waves, so indeed perception also, divided up as perception of blue, etc. for the purpose of experiencing blue, etc., shakes and quivers. And just as a mirage deceives many and makes them say: "This is blue, beautiful, pleasant, permanent." So too in the case of yellow and so on. Thus it is like a mirage by deception also.

We may not have considered to what extent wrong saññā influences our whole life. We are misled by the outer appearance of things. When children play with dolls and toy animals they live in their own dream world which they take very seriously. When a toy is broken or is lost they cry. Is it not pitiful that we do not really grow up, but keep on playing in our dream world? Because of saññā which remembers wrongly we hold on to all objects which are experienced. We have a short happy time with the five khandhas which arise, are present for an extremely short time and then fall away. We cry about our losses.

We can begin to be mindful of different characteristics of nāma and rūpa, this moment should not be lost. The study of the Abhidhamma helps a great deal to eliminate misunderstandings about different nāmas and rūpas. When for example hardness appears that characteristic can be known as rūpa, not self. We should not try to catch the place which is the body-base at a particular moment. Then there is thinking instead of awareness of the reality which appears. The rūpa which is body-base cannot be experienced through touch, it can only be experienced through the mind-door. This rūpa falls away immediately.

We read in the scriptures that realities are not self, anattā, but anattāmay only be a word to us. Does the reality which is not self appear already through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door? If we still confuse the different doorways it seems that people, houses and trees appear, and they seem to be real. Seeing is one experience and it experiences only colour, it has nothing to do with hearing or the experience of tangible object. It is only when paññā has been developed to the degree of the first vipassanā ñāṇa that no world, no person, no self appears, only nāma and rūpa.

When the different objects experienced through the six doors are not clearly separated we tend to think for a long time about what is not real. The object is then a concept. We are obsessed by our thoughts and we cling to them, and thus there are still conditions for rebirth. The arahat also thinks of concepts, but he has no defilements, for him there are no conditions for rebirth. We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (II, Nidāna vagga, Kindred Sayings on Cause, Ch IV, § 40, Will), that the Buddha, while he was at Sāvatthī, said to the monks:

That which we will, monks, and that which we intend to do, and that with which we are occupied: - this becomes an object for the persistence of consciousness. The object, being there, becomes a basis for consciousness. Consciousness being based and having grown, there comes a bending; there being a bending, there is a going to a coming; there being a going to a coming, there is decease and rebirth; there being decease and rebirth, birth, old age and death happen in the future, and grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow and despair. Even such is the entire mass of dukkha.

This happens also if we do not will, or intend to do, but are occupied about something.

But if we do not will, nor intend to do, nor are occupied about something, these things do not happen. Even such is the ceasing of this entire mass of dukkha.

This sutta is about daily life. Time and again we are absorbed in our thinking and planning and there is forgetfulness of realities. We plan what we are going to do today or tomorrow. However, if there were no citta which thinks we could not plan anything. If we remember this there can be conditions for awareness of the citta which thinks and it can be known as a conditioned nāma. At that moment we are not obsessed by our thinking. There will be thinking again and again because there are conditions for it, but through awareness and right understanding it can be known as anattā.

Letter about Vipassanā 4

We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (I, *Sagāthā vagga*, Ch IV, *Māra*, 2, par. 7, The Sphere of Sense) that the Buddha taught the monks about the six spheres of contact. *Māra* wanted to confuse the monks and therefore he made a terrible noise so that they thought that the earth was splitting open. The Buddha told the monks that it was only *Māra*. He addressed *Māra* in a verse:

Sights, sounds, and tastes and smells and tangibles,
 All sense impressions and mental objects,
 These are the direful bait that draws the world;
 Herein the world infatuated lies.
 All this if he get past and leave behind,
 The Buddha's follower, with heedful mind,
 Passing beyond the range of *Māra*'s might,
 Like the high sun fills the world with light.

We then read that *Māra* was sad and disappeared.

We are engrossed in the sense objects, but through the development of right understanding we can pass beyond the range of *Māra*. According to the commentary to this sutta, the "*Saratthappakāsinī*" (Thai edition p. 329), the range of *Māra* are the three classes of planes where one can be reborn: the sensuous planes, the *rūpa-brahma* planes and the *arūpa-brahma* planes. When there is no more rebirth one escapes the snare of *Māra*.

We are born in the human plane which is a sensuous plane. Our birth in the human plane is conditioned by kusala kamma performed by citta of the sense sphere, *kāmāvacara citta*. In the human plane there are opportunities time and again to experience sense objects. We are engrossed in all the sense objects and we keep on thinking about them. All these objects can only appear because there

are cittas arising in processes which experience objects through the six doors. We may have learnt this through the study of the Abhidhamma but since we are so absorbed in the objects themselves we forget to consider citta, the reality which experiences them. The Abhidhamma teaches us about daily life and thus the study of it can motivate us to find out more about all realities which occur in our daily life. The Abhidhamma can be a supporting condition for the arising of sati, mindfulness, which is directly aware of realities which appear.

When visible object impinges on the eyesense there are conditions for seeing, but visible object appears only for an extremely short moment. It is the same with sound and the other sense objects, they are all insignificant dhammas, they appear just for a short moment and then they fall away. Also the cittas which arise in the different sense-door processes and experience the objects fall away very rapidly. Cittas arise and fall away but each citta is succeeded by the next citta and thus it seems that citta can stay. After the experience of visible object, sound and the other sense objects, we form up concepts on account of these objects. Our world seems to be full of people and things and we keep on thinking about them. We are quite occupied with thinking and we take our thoughts very seriously. However, thinking only occurs because citta arises, thinks about something and then falls away.

Each citta experiences an object, and the object can be an absolute or ultimate reality, a *nāma* or *rūpa*, or a concept. We cannot predict which object will impinge the next moment on which doorway. Visible object, sound or the other sense objects can be pleasant or unpleasant. The experience of pleasant sense objects or unpleasant sense objects is *vipākacitta* which is conditioned by *kusala kamma* or *akusala kamma* performed in the past. There isn't anybody who can control *vipāka*. *Vipākacittas* just experience the pleasant sense object or the unpleasant sense object, they do not like or dislike it. When there is like or dislike there are already *akusala cittas* arising. After the moments of *vipākacittas* there are, in the case of non-arahats, seven *akusala cittas* or *kusala cittas* which experience the object. When *akusala cittas* arise there is unwise attention to the object and when *kusala cittas* arise there is wise attention to the object.

We can notice that we all have different inclinations and these are conditioned by what has been accumulated in the past. *Kusala citta* and *akusala citta* arise

and then fall away, but the succeeding citta carries on the inclination to kusala or to akusala and thus there are conditions for the arising of kusala citta or akusala citta later on. Kusala citta and akusala citta of the past condition the arising of kusala citta and akusala citta at the present, and the arising of kusala citta and akusala citta at the present are in their turn conditions for the cittas arising in the future.

If our reactions today are conditioned by past accumulations it may seem that a fate reigns our life. Someone was wondering whether there is no possibility to control one's inclinations, to exert effort for the development of kusala. The inclinations which have been accumulated in the past condition cittas which arise today but this does not mean that inclinations cannot be changed. If we listen to the Dhamma as it is explained by the right friend in the Dhamma, and if we study the Dhamma and consider it carefully, conditions are being built up for the arising of sati. Sati can be directly aware of realities as they appear in our daily life and then right understanding can be developed. Right understanding must be developed from life to life but there is no self who develops it. The development of understanding depends on conditions. If there were no conditions how could it arise and develop? We are used to an idea of self who can exert effort but there is no one. We read in the "Visuddhimagga" (XVI,90) :

Mere suffering exists, no sufferer is found;

The deeds are, but no doer of the deeds is there;

Nibbāna is, but not the man who attains it;

Although there is a path, there is no goer.

There is a path and it can be developed but there is no self who can develop it. If there is no development of right understanding we are tied down to all the sense objects, we are tied down to the cycle of birth and death. We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (III, Khandha vagga, Middle Fifty, Ch V, par. 99, The Leash) that the Buddha said at Sāvattihī:

Just as, monks, a dog tied up by a leash to a strong stake or pillar, keeps running round and revolving round and round that stake or pillar, evenso, monks, the untaught manyfolk... regard body as self, regard feeling, perception, activities, consciousness as self... they runand revolve round and round from body to body, fromfeeling to feeling, from perception to perception, from activities to activities, from consciousness toconsciousness... they are not released therefrom, they arenot released from rebirth, from old age and decay, fromsorrow and grief, from woe, lamentation and despair...they are not released from dukkha, I declare...

We then read that the ariyan disciple who does not take any reality for self is released from dukkha. In the following sutta, "The Leash" II, we read again about the simile of the dog which is tied:

Just like a dog, monks, tied up by a leash to a strongstake or pillar- if he goes, he goes up to that stake or pillar; if he stands still, he stands close to that stake or pillar; if he squats down, he squats close to thatstake or pillar; if he lies down, he lies close to that stake or pillar.

Those who take the five khandhas for self are like that dog which is tied down. They are always close to the five khandhas, they are tied down to it. A dog tied to a pole, which runs around it and always has to stay close to it, is a pitiful sight. So long as we take the khandhas for self we are not free. Through the development of satipaṭṭhāna the idea of self can be eradicated.

The Buddha taught the four "Applications of Mindfulness": mindfulness of body, of feelings, of cittas and of dhammas. Some people think that they should select one of these subjects, such as body or feelings, and only develop these. However, there should be awareness of any object which appears. If we try to select an object there is an idea of self who can control the appearance of particular objects. It depends on conditions whether visible object, sound, akusala citta or any other object appears. Sati can be aware of any object just as it naturally appears in our daily life. We do not have to make an effort to classify the object

of awareness as one of the four Applications of Mindfulness. At one moment there may be awareness of rūpa, the next moment there may be awareness of citta or feeling, nobody can predict of which object there will be awareness. We should learn that all realities are anattā, they cannot be directed by a self.

The Buddha taught the four Applications of Mindfulness in order to remind us to be aware of different kinds of nāma and rūpa as they naturally appear in our daily life. We read in the "Kindred Sayings"(V, Mahā-vagga, Book III, Kindred Sayings on the Applications of Mindfulness, Ch V, par. 9, Feelings) that the Buddha said, while he was at Sāvattthī:

Monks, there are these three feelings. What three? Feeling that is pleasant, feeling that is painful, feeling that is neither pleasant nor painful. These are the three feelings.

For the full understanding of these three feelings the four applications of mindfulness ought to be cultivated...

The four applications of mindfulness are cultivated by awareness of all kinds of nāma and rūpa which appear; there should not be mindfulness of only feeling.

We read in the "Kindred Sayings"(V, Kindred Sayings on the Way, Ch VII, par. 9, Feelings) that the Buddha said, while he was at Sāvattthī:

Monks, there are these three feelings. What three? Feeling that is pleasant, feeling that is painful, feeling that is neither pleasant nor painful. These are the three. It is for the full comprehension of these three feelings that the ariyan eightfold Path must be cultivated.

Feeling is nāma, it feels, thus it is different from rūpa which does not know anything. The difference between nāma and rūpa has to be clearly discerned before paññā can realize realities as impermanent, dukkha and anattā. In order

to fully understand feeling there must be awareness of the characteristics of all the different kinds of *nāma* and *rūpa* which appear in daily life. Then right understanding of realities can grow. That is the development of the "Four Applications of Mindfulness" or *satipaṭṭhāna*, and that is the development of the eightfold Path. We do not have to think of classifications while we develop the Path in being aware of any object which appears.

Do we know feelings as they are? Feelings change all the time since they arise and fall away together with the *citta* they accompany. We may be aware of pleasant feeling or unpleasant feeling, but we should also know the characteristic of indifferent feeling. When there is seeing the accompanying feeling is indifferent feeling, there cannot be pleasant feeling or unpleasant feeling. When we feel pain we are inclined to think that pain lasts. We think in this way because we do not realize the different characteristics of realities which appear. When there is impact of tangible object such as hardness on the bodysense there can be conditions for painful feeling. Painful feeling accompanying body-consciousness which is *vipākacitta* only arises for one moment and then it falls away together with the *citta*. Tangible object which impinges on the bodysense falls away and so does the *rūpa* which is the bodysense on which the tangible object impinges. We tend to forget that the bodysense on which tangible object impinges is only an extremely small part of the body, a *rūpa* which arises and then falls away. We keep on thinking of "my sensitive body". Right understanding reduces the importance of "my body" or "I". We should "belittle ourselves from head to toe". When we remember this we can read with more understanding what is written in the suttas about endurance. We read, for example, in the "Discourse on all the Cankers" (Middle Length Sayings I, no. 2) that the Buddhaspoke about ways to eliminate defilements. We read about endurance:

And what, monks, are the cankers to be got rid of by endurance? In this teaching, monks, a monk, wisely reflective, is one who bears cold, heat, hunger, thirst, the touch of gadfly, mosquito, wind and sun, creeping things, ways of speech that are irksome, unwelcome; he is of a character to bear bodily feelings which, arising, are painful, acute, sharp, shooting, disagreeable, miserable,

deadly...

When one is wisely reflective one realizes unpleasant experiences as *nāmas* which arise because of their own conditions. *Paramattha dhammas*, *nāma* and *rūpa*, fall away immediately, they are insignificant *dhammas*, they are very trivial. We immediately form up concepts on account of *paramattha dhammas* which are experienced and we keep on thinking about concepts for a long time.

When we pay attention to the shape and form of things we think of concepts, but we could not think of shape and form if there were no seeing. Seeing sees colour or visible object but there is usually ignorance of these realities. They arise and then fall away but they are not known. When one considers realities more often there will be more conditions for awareness of them. Someone said that the word colour may be misleading, because when one recognizes red or blue there is already thinking. However, red or blue are seen without having to label them red or blue. These colours are not the same and they appear through the eye-door. If there were no eyesense the different colours could not appear. The "*Dhammasaṅgaṇi*" (Book II, Ch II, 617) gives many details about colour. Colour can be blue, yellow, red, white, black, crimson, bronze, green, of the hue of the mango-bud, shady, glowing, light, dim, dull, frosty, smoky or dusty. It can be the colour of the moon, sun, stars, a mirror, a gem, a shell, a pearl, a cat's eye, gold or silver. The aim of giving so many details is to remind us to be aware of colour, no matter it is the colour of the moon, of a gem or any other colour. *Satipaṭṭhāna* can be developed in a natural way. Also when we look at the moon or at gems there is colour and it can be known as the reality which can be seen. We do not have to make an effort to look for a special colour in order to be aware of it.

The "*Dhammasaṅgaṇi*" gives in the same section (621) examples of different kinds of sounds:

That sound which is derived from the four great Elements, is invisible and reacting, such as the sound of drums, of tabors, of chank-shells, of tom-toms, of singing, of music; clashing sounds, manual sounds, the noise of people, the sound of the concussion of substances, of wind, of water, sounds human and

other than human, or whatever sound there is...

This passage reminds us to be aware of sound, no matter which kind of sound it is. Sounds are not the same, they are high or low, loud or soft, they have different qualities. We are so used to the familiar sound of the shuffling of feet, of the turning of pages or of pen or pencil when we are writing. We let such moments pass without awareness. We are usually absorbed in the meaning of sounds, thus, in concepts, but we can begin to be aware of the characteristic of sound. This is the way to know it as a reality which can be heard. Right understanding reduces the importance of the meaning of something, of concepts.

Patience and perseverance are needed for the development of right understanding. Life passes so rapidly, we are advancing in years and we do not know what our next life will be like. We do not know whether we shall have the opportunity to develop paññā again, and therefore, should we not speed up our practice? We all may be inclined to think in this way, but are we aware of such a moment of thinking? If we are not mindful of it as a conditioned reality we are neglecting the Dhamma, not profiting from the treasures of the teachings in full. We are so absorbed in the stories we are thinking of and are forgetful of the reality of citta which thinks. Thinking is a reality arising because of conditions, it is non-self.

Lokuttara citta ⁶ cannot arise all of a sudden, insight has to be developed in stages, on and on. It has to be developed just now, not at some other time. Defilements are anattā, it is not possible to get rid of them quickly, they arise because they have been accumulated for aeons, they are conditioned. They can be realized as nāma when they appear. If we get to know them as they are there is already a beginning of a cure, paññā does its work. Paññā is the most important factor because it is paññā which can eradicate ignorance and wrong view. There is no need to think so much of effort, volition and concentration. Don't we usually think of effort, volition and concentration with an idea of self who wants to exert control? We should carefully examine ourselves as to this point because such an idea hinders the development of right understanding. We may not attain enlightenment in this life, but what has been learnt is never lost.

⁶ The citta which attains enlightenment and experiences nibbāna.

It has been accumulated and it can appear in another life. A moment of right understanding now, of our natural life, is a precious moment. It is more valuable than thinking of the future.

We read in the sutta "The Sphere of Sense" (Kindred Sayings I) which was quoted above, that the Buddha "was instructing, enlightening, inciting and inspiring the monks by a sermon on the six spheres of contact". This wording is also used in the previous sutta "The Bowl", and there the commentary (the *Saratthapakāsinī*, Thai edition, p. 328) gives an explanation. The Buddha was inciting the monks so that they would apply the Dhamma. In this connection the Pali word "samādāna" is used, which means undertaking what one considers worth while. The Buddha preached to the monks so that they would consider the Dhamma and have right understanding. He instructed them so that they would have energy (*ussaha*) and perseverance for the application of the Dhamma. The Buddha taught about all the realities of daily life and these can be verified. The commentary explains that the monks were inspired, gladdened and purified because of the benefit they acquired from the Dhamma.

Khun Sujin writes in her book "A Survey of Paramattha Dhammas" (Citta, Ch 16) about this passage in the commentary:

"... Someone may be unhappy and he may worry about it that he is growing older and that sati arises very seldom. When one worries the citta is akusala. We should not because of the Dhamma have akusala cittas, we should not be worried. The Buddha taught the Dhamma in order that people would be encouraged to apply it, develop it with perseverance and be inspired by it. Akusala arises when there are conditions, there is no self who can prevent its arising. When akusala citta has already arisen, we should not be downhearted, but we can take courage if there can be awareness of the characteristic of akusala which appears. We should not waste any opportunity to be aware. Then we shall know that also akusala dhamma which appears at such a moment is not a being, not a person or self. It can be clearly seen that at the moment of awareness there is no akusala, no downheartedness. One will not be troubled about akusala if one does not take it for self..."

The monks were inspired and gladdened because of the benefit they acquired from the teachings. The Commentary adds: "We all can attain this benefit." We can really benefit from the teachings when satipaṭṭhāna is developed. The development of satipaṭṭhāna should not make us discouraged. The realities which appear can be penetrated and realized as they are. They arise and fall away, they are not self, not a being or person. When we consider the great value of the truth and know that we can realize it one day, although not today, we shall not be disheartened. One should not worry about it that one cannot know realities as they are today. Sati can arise and begin to be aware today, and then the characteristics of realities will surely one day be wholly penetrated and clearly known as they are.

When we see that the truth of Dhamma is for our benefit and that it can be attained, we shall not become discouraged. We shall continue to listen and to study the realities the Buddha taught in detail, and then we shall not be forgetful of realities, there will be conditions for the arising of sati.

Letter about Vipassanā⁵

We are disturbed by aversion, dosa, which often arises in a day and we would like to get rid of it. We would like to have more patience in difficult circumstances and more loving kindness towards others, but kusala citta does not arise very often.

If we want to cultivate patience and loving kindness, we should see the disadvantage not only of dosa but also of all other kinds of akusala. We find it unpleasant to have dosa, but dosa is conditioned by attachment, lobha. Our attachment to pleasant objects conditions dosa when we do not get what we want. There are many moments of akusala we overlook. We may notice that there is akusala citta when we act or speak in an unpleasant way, but there are countless moments of thinking which are akusala and these pass unnoticed. In which way do we think of others, with kusala citta or with akusala citta? For example, when we notice someone who is dressed in a peculiar way we may find him funny looking, and there may be conceit. We compare him with ourselves, he does not conform to the way we think someone should dress. When there is conceit there is no loving kindness. When we are annoyed about something which is very unpleasant we know that there is dosa, but we may not notice dosa when it is of a lesser degree, for example, when something is not quite as it should be. Do we have kusala cittas or akusala cittas when we taste fruit which is overripe, when we see that there is a button missing, when we feel a little too cold or too hot? We find it very important how the "self" is feeling. We only want pleasant objects and we forget that seeing, hearing and the other sense-cognitions are produced by kamma. We cannot see kamma, it has been committed in the past, but nobody can change the result produced by kamma. If we do not accumulate kusala there will be evermore akusala accumulated from life to life.

When we notice that there are so few moments of loving kindness, mettā, in a day and so many akusala cittas, we may become discouraged. However, there is no self who can prevent the arising of akusala and cause mettā to arise immediately. Akusala citta as well as kusala citta are nāmas which arise because of their own conditions, they are beyond control. It depends on one's accumulated inclinations what type of citta arises at a particular moment. Through the study of the Dhamma there will be more understanding of the different characteristics of kusala and akusala. The Dhamma is the condition for less ignorance in one's life. If we want to develop mettā we must have a precise knowledge of its characteristic when it arises. At the moment of mettā one is not selfish, one only thinks of the wellbeing of someone else. There is kindness without expecting anything in return.

Lovingkindness is one of the four "Divine Abidings", Brahmavihāras. The other Brahmavihāras are: compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. These are subjects of samatha or tranquil meditation. Through the development of samatha there can be temporary freedom from akusala. However, samatha cannot be developed without right understanding. Paññā must know the characteristic of true calm which is kusala. When we hear the word samatha we may think that we have to go into seclusion in order to have concentration and that we should recite for example the "mettāsutta". However, the development of mettā is not a matter of trying to concentrate or reciting. Mettā must be developed in daily life when we are with others; then we can come to know its true characteristic. Foremost is right understanding which knows the characteristic of mettā when it appears.

We read in the scriptures about people who developed samatha to the degree of jhāna, absorption, but we should know that not everybody is able to attain jhāna. People who had accumulated great skill for jhāna could attain different stages of jhāna, but, as the "Visuddhimagga" (Ch XII,7) states, jhāna is extremely difficult and only very few people can attain it. One has to live in seclusion and many conditions have to be fulfilled in order to attain it. At the moments of jhāna there are no sense impressions and the "hindrances" are temporarily subdued. The "hindrances" are: sensuous desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. However, through samatha defilements cannot be eradicated.

Through right understanding developed in vipassanā defilements can be eradicated. We think of ourselves and others as persons, we cling to a concept of "self", but through vipassanā we learn to see what we really are: only citta, cetasika and rūpa which arise and then fall away immediately. When someone goes away or dies, we can think of a name, but also a name is forgotten soon. We read in the "Sutta Nipāta" (on Decay, vs. 807-809):

As a man awakened from sleep no longer sees what happened in his dream, similarly one does not see a loved one who is dead. Those people who were seen and heard and called by their names as such and such, only their names remain when they have passed away.

When we are reborn there is another life and we are no longer "this person", but also right now there isn't "this person" who exists. We should often consider where our body now comes from. We have eyes and ears, but we cannot notice what causes eyesense and earsense. It is kamma performed in the past. The rūpas which form up our body are conditioned by kamma, citta, temperature and food. We are seeing and hearing time and again. Seeing and hearing are cittas produced by kamma. They arise and then fall away immediately. When we think of other people we usually think of names. We should consider the difference between names and paramattha dhammas, absolute realities, nāma and rūpa which can be directly experienced without having to name them. We live mostly in the world of our thoughts, we keep on thinking of stories about people, about their names, about concepts. However, in order to know the truth we should learn to be aware of realities as they appear one at a time through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense or mind-door. Then we shall eventually be able to see realities as they are: impermanent, dukkha and anattā. When we look at a chair it does not seem to fall away. A chair is a concept we can think of, but it is not a reality. Only paramattha dhammas have the characteristics of impermanence, dukkha and anattā which can be realized by paññā when it has been developed.

Vipassanā should be developed in daily life, it is right understanding of all realities which are in us and around us. The object of vipassanā are paramattha

dhammas as they appear one at a time through one of the six doors. The object of samatha is one of the meditation subjects and the aim is to have true calm, temporary freedom from akusala. Mettā, loving kindness, is an object of samatha, but it can and should be developed in daily life. Mettā is directed towards a person, thus, its object is not a paramattha dhamma but a concept. There are many moments that we think of people and instead of thinking with attachment, aversion or conceit, we can learn to think with kindness. Mettā is a reality and thus it can be object of mindfulness, it can be known as a kind of nāma which is not self. We can develop both vipassanā and mettā in daily life. Mettā is one of the "perfections" (paramīs) which should be developed together with satipaṭṭhāna from life to life. Through the development of mettā we learn to be less selfish and thus also mettā is, together with all the other sobhana cetasikas which are accumulated, a supporting condition for paññā which can eventually eradicate the wrong view of self. Satipaṭṭhāna conditions mettā to arise more often. When there is awareness of the different cittas we learn to know their characteristics more clearly, we learn to know when the citta is kusala and when akusala. When mettā arises and there is awareness of it we shall be less inclined to take it for self.

Some people think that they should first have calm as a condition for more moments of satipaṭṭhāna later on, but that is desire, not mahā-kusala citta accompanied by paññā.

Someone wrote to me that the development of jhāna would be beneficial for the development of vipassanā. He wrote:

"Jhāna can provide a very strong basis of concentration serving the development of insight. Though jhāna is not strictly necessary to develop vipassanā, it can prove very effective in suppressing the hindrances and thereby allows the development of insight to proceed with special strength and consistency. Jhāna fulfills the factor of Right Concentration in the noble eightfold Path."

The factors of the eightfold Path must be accompanied by right understanding of the eightfold Path, and the object must be a nāma or a rūpa.

The factors of the eightfold Path are cetasikas which each have their own function in the development of right understanding of paramattha dhammas, of the realities appearing right now. When right understanding arises of the reality which appears there is also right thinking, vitakka, which assists right understanding; it "hits" the object which appears so that paññā can penetrate its characteristic and know it as it is. At that moment also right effort arises, which is effort or energy to develop understanding of the object which appears; it strengthens and supports paññā. The path-factor right mindfulness is aware of the nāma or rūpa which appears so that right understanding can develop. Right concentration (sammā-samādhi) is concentration on the paramattha dhamma which appears, just for that moment. As to the factors which are sīla (morality), namely, right action, right speech and right livelihood, they arise one at a time, when there is an opportunity for them. When there is a moment of right awareness and right understanding the eightfold Path is being developed. One can also say, satipaṭṭhāna is being developed, or vipassanā is being developed. It is the same.

The development of the eightfold Path is not a matter of developing concentration separated from the other factors of the eightfold Path. When right understanding arises of a paramattha dhamma which appears there is already right concentration which arises naturally, because of conditions. At that moment right understanding is assisted by the other path-factors and there is no need to think of path-factors or name them.

If one encourages people to develop jhāna as a foundation for vipassanā many misunderstandings are bound to arise. People may not know what true calm is, they may not know what jhāna is. They do not realize that the objects of vipassanā and samatha are different. We read in the Visuddhimagga that jhāna can be a base for the development of vipassanā. However, we should stress again and again that this can only be so when someone has the five masteries (vasīs, Vis. XXIII, 227): mastery of adverting and of entering jhāna at any time, at any place, resolving on its duration, emerging at any time, at any place and reviewing the jhāna-factors, at any time, at any place. Only then the jhānacitta can arise so naturally, that it is a reality of one's life and can thus be object of awareness. It can be a proximate cause or a base for insight. But even those who

have such skill cannot omit being aware of paramattha dhammas, nāmas and rūpas appearing one at a time. The three characteristics of impermanence, dukkha and anattā of nāmas and rūpas have to be realized, no matter one develops jhāna or not.

We often read in the scriptures about people who developed jhāna and insight and then attained arahatship. Also before the Buddha's enlightenment people developed jhāna. The attainment of jhāna is not specifically Buddhist, but the Buddha taught that one should not take jhānacitta for self. Therefore for those who could attain jhāna the jhānacitta should be object of satipaṭṭhāna. The Buddha spoke about jhāna because he included everything in his teaching, for completeness, for the beautifying of the teaching. He took account of all kinds of temperament.

I have noticed that people are inclined to stress concentration in the practice of vipassanā, also when they do not intend to develop jhāna first. They think that there must be a purified concentration by suppressing the hindrances first and that this would lead to uninterrupted mindfulness. However, defilements should be known as they are, as not self, that is the only way leading to their eradication. Seeing should be known as only a nāma, and also akusala citta which is likely to follow seeing immediately should be known as a kind of nāma. Is there not time and again like or dislike of the different objects appearing through the six doors? Should these not be known as they are? We should not stay ignorant of the akusala arising on account of the objects appearing through the six doors. We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (V, Mahāvagga, Kindred Sayings on the Way, Ch VIII, par. 7, Hindrances):

Monks, there are these five hindrances. What five? The hindrance of sensual desire, the hindrance of malevolence, the hindrance of sloth and torpor, the hindrance of restlessness and worry and the hindrance of doubt and wavering. These are the five hindrances. It is for the full comprehension, realization, wearing down and abandoning of these five hindrances that the ariyan eightfold Path must be cultivated.

In the beginning we cannot yet have clear understanding of *nāma* as *nāma* and of *rūpa* as *rūpa*. Beginning is beginning. Generally people cannot accept that, they want to stress exertion, volitional control, doing this or that special technique first, before developing awareness of *nāma* and *rūpa*. Any reality appearing in daily life can be the object of *satipaṭṭhāna*. From the beginning one should understand that realities are *anattā*. Seeing is *anattā*; it arises because *kamma* produces it, nobody can produce his own seeing. In its train there are immediately *javana cittas* which are either *kusala* or *akusala*, but mostly *akusala*. They have already arisen before one realizes it. They are beyond control, *anattā*. We have to begin now being aware of *nāma* and *rūpa*, they are not abstractions. We know that seeing sees, hearing hears, but what about this moment? We learn about processes of *cittas*, but do these not occur now? Different things appear, but they could not appear if there were no *cittas* arising in processes. When we are fast asleep we do not know who we are or where we are, there is no house, no book, nothing appears. All these things appear as soon as we wake up. Realities appear already, we should not try to do anything about them. Some people say, "I had to break off my meditation because of sickness, stress of circumstances or work." No, when *vipassanā* is being naturally developed in daily life one will not break off its development. I believe we should have more understanding of this moment, and then of a next moment, and that we should consider the intricacy of *citta* which is so variegated in the life of each one of us. There is no use of thinking, "when shall I attain this or that stage of insight or enlightenment", it depends on *paññā* and the other *sobhana cetasikas* which have been accumulated; they can condition the arising of insight knowledge, *vipassanā ñāṇa*, when it is the right time.

The writer of the letter thought that one should not say that realities are "beyond control" and that one should not say that it depends on one's accumulations whether *kusala citta* or *akusala citta* arises. He is inclined to stress volitional control. He said that, although one cannot have absolute control, there must be effort and a certain amount of control, otherwise one would be a victim of fate, one could not do anything.

Alan Weller wrote about this subject:

"I think that time and again we need to be reminded of the uncontrollability of realities in order to develop awareness of whatever reality appears naturally. Otherwise there will be the idea of self having effort, energy, etc. When we hear the word uncontrollable it does not mean we are the victims of fate, but we have to carefully consider how to develop the Path. The understanding of the Dhamma is the condition for wholesomeness at different levels, not control. Each moment of being awake we accumulate either kusala or akusala. Considering the Dhamma more is the condition for accumulating more kusala, but that also depends on previous accumulation. It is better not to mind or care what reality is there, but to just understand it. This is for me the subtlety of the teachings. It is so necessary to consider a lot in order not to be misled by desire or the idea of self. The understanding of uncontrollability can help us to develop understanding and not to accumulate more ignorance. It can help us to be natural in our development of kusala. No matter how busy we are, kusala at whatever level can arise any time by its own conditions. This understanding can help us to be detached from our practice. We do not try. We can become patient with lack of results, with our akusala. The practice can become a very natural part of our daily life. We do not limit it by thinking of a certain place or situation, or by making effort now and then. Confidence in the Dhamma, a sense of urgency, concentration, these are different realities which work by themselves. They grow as the understanding of the Dhamma develops. There is no one besides these realities. This moment is either kusala or akusala, a keener understanding will realize this more and more deeply and this will lead to turning away from akusala. If we do not understand this moment as akusala, we shall accumulate more akusala. Seeing or hearing without understanding is dangerous. We should find out whether this moment is akusala or kusala. I learn to be more considerate in speech and actions, also as regards seemingly unimportant things, which are often overlooked in daily life, for example, not leaving dirty washing or cups around, since this is unpleasant for others. There are many examples like this so close at hand. Dhamma is in front of us all the time."

When I use the expression "beyond control" I do not mean a fate, I only want to

explain that realities are anattā. People want to do so many things, instead of understanding realities just as they naturally appear. If one really scrutinizes oneself is there not an idea of "I do it, I want to make progress"? There must be, so long as we are not sotāpannas, and thus we need reminders all the time. There can be awareness even of such moments.

When I say that it depends on one's accumulations of kusala and akusala what type of citta arises I do not mean that we are in a hopeless situation. Accumulations are not something static; at each moment new experiences are accumulated. This is hopeful, if there were no accumulation, how could we learn to have more mettā, or how could satipaṭṭhāna be developed? It is not true that nothing can be done. We should consider the Dhamma and study more, and verify what we read in our own life. Hearing the Dhamma conditions more understanding of one's life. However, some people may hear the Dhamma but it does not mean anything to them. Why? They have no accumulations for it.

If someone thinks that he is a hopeless victim of his accumulations and cannot develop understanding, it is a moment of thinking which is akusala. When he thinks, "I cannot", he thinks so because of his lack of understanding of conditions. When right understanding is developed it can understand this moment only. Dhamma is subtle and intricate, one really needs to consider it carefully. All moments of consideration of realities are accumulated, they are never lost. Thus understanding can grow and grow, until the time has come for direct awareness without thinking about realities. Then another step has been taken. Nobody can plan or control the arising of the stages of insight and enlightenment. Can we accept this or is there a secret resistance against this fact? We want to control all the time. The wish to control leads one away from developing understanding naturally in daily life. Some people want to sit and concentrate first on breathing, or on rūpas of the body they believe they can feel moving. One may be inclined to do something else first, anything else except knowing the present moment. Thus it is understandable that some people like to stress volitional control more than paññā.

Volition, cetanā cetasika, arising with each citta, is like a supervisor of the accompanying cetasikas, but it supervises them only at that one moment that it arises together with them. It cannot call paññā to come forward when there is no

paññā at that moment. There is kusala volition and akusala volition, there is volition arising with vipākacitta and with kiriya-citta (inoperative citta) and these volitions are different all the time. They are conditioned by the accompanying dhammas and in their turn they also condition the accompanying dhammas. Volition is not a factor of the eightfold Path. Viriya (energy) is, but it is energy or courage for being aware and developing understanding of the reality which is appearing. It must arise together with right understanding of the eightfold Path in order to perform its function, and it prevents one from becoming disheartened about the development.

When we read about striving we should not think of merely striving with the exclusion of the other path-factors. One may still cling to an idea of self who strives, who exerts control over one's citta, although one understands in theory that realities are anattā. Some people try to separate their "meditation life" and their daily life. They believe that, for the development of the eightfold Path, it is necessary to go into seclusion first in order to suppress akusala and to induce calm. One may be used to the idea of exerting control over one's citta, but it should be remembered that realities arise because of their own conditions. When awareness arises of the reality appearing now, even if it is unpleasant or akusala, it is accompanied already by right effort which performs its function without an idea of self who strives. Right effort is nothing else but effort for awareness right now and it arises because of its own conditions. What would be the use of the study of the Dhamma if it would not lead to the aim which is right understanding of whatever reality appears. We are the frequent victims of our own accumulations so long as we are not arahats yet. But realizing this is already a beginning of a cure, because we see that akusala is not self, that it is a conditioned nāma. Right understanding will finally lead to the elimination of akusala.

I think we should not become impatient or disheartened by lack of sati, lack of kusala. Gradually conditions can be built up for the growth of paññā. Not by volitional control. Not by trying to make particular realities arise, special objects of awareness, or doing special exercises, instead of being aware naturally of realities which arise because of their own conditions. It does not matter if the reality which arises is a hindrance, it can be known as it is and then there is

kusala citta, no hindrance.

When we have more understanding of paramattha dhammas we can read the suttas with more understanding. We read about striving and self-control, but we shall understand the deep meaning of what is said: that these are sobhana cetasikas arising because of conditions. The teachings can be most helpful in reminding us to cling less to an idea of self who can develop insight. We do not develop understanding, it develops.

Letter about Vipassanā⁶

Vienna,

November 1, '89

The development of satipaṭṭhāna is the only way to know the truth of impermanence, dukkha and anattā . However, we all notice that mindfulness does not often arise and that nāma and rūpa are not known as they are. We confuse all the different doorways and we do not realize nāma as nāma and rūpa as rūpa; we cannot distinguish them from each other. We know that the eightfold Path has to be developed, but it is difficult to develop it. Khun Sujin said that we are too sick to be able to walk. She reminded us that the wholesome qualities which are the "pāramīs", the perfections ⁷, must be developed together with satipaṭṭhāna; they are like vitamins which will give us the strength to walk the Path. The Buddha, when he was still a Bodhisatta, developed the pāramīs for aeons. We all need the perfection of resolution (adiṭṭhāna), which is the resolution to continue being mindful of the nāma or rūpa appearing right now. We know that the Path is difficult and that it will take many lives to develop it and therefore, we need the firm resolution to continue on. When we come to know more our akusala we shall understand that defilements are deeply rooted. Akusala is like weed which is deeply rooted and not easily pulled out. We need the perfection of wisdom; it is right understanding which can pull out the roots of lobha, attachment, dosa, aversion, and moha, ignorance. We need the perfection of energy or courage, viriya, so that we shall not become downhearted when progress is slow. We should encourage ourselves to continue on with mindfulness of nāma and rūpa. The perfection of patience is important; we should listen to the Dhamma with patience and consider it carefully, so that we can develop understanding of realities in the situation of our daily life. We need the perfection of loving kindness, mettā, as a means to have kusala citta when we are with other people or when we think of them. When mettā arises we consider other people as our close friends, even when we do not know them,

⁷ The wholesome qualities which the Bodhisatta developed during countless lives and which were conditions to attain Buddhahood. They are: generosity (dāna), morality (sīla), detachment (nekkhamma), energy (viriya), wisdom (paññā), patience (khanti), truthfulness (sacca), resolution (adiṭṭhāna), loving kindness (mettā) and equanimity (upekkhā).

when they are strangers to us. We shall think of ways and means to help them and to make them happy. It is natural that there are people we do not find sympathetic, but when aversion or anger arises we should consider that characteristic. Then we shall see more clearly that aversion is useless and we can be reminded to develop mettā rightnow. For the development of mettā it is necessary to have right understanding of the different cittas which arise. When someone else speaks unpleasant words to us we are likely to have resentment, but when we see the value of kusala we can gradually learn to refrain from retorting such words and to forgive him. Forgiving is a kind of generosity, it is like handing a gift to someone.

Sarah said to Khun Sujin that it is more difficult to develop mettā when we are tired because then we are more easily irritated and annoyed. Although we see the value of mettā we do not have enough confidence in kusala; we have no conditions for kusala at the moment we want to have it. Khun Sujin answered that the idea of self is in the way all the time. We attach too much importance to the way we feel. Tiredness is no reason for being angry, we should develop mettā in order to think less of ourselves.

We need also the perfections of generosity, of sila and of detachment or renunciation (nekkhamma) so that we shall be less selfish and more considerate for other people's wellbeing. All the perfections should be developed, they are a necessary support for the arising of sati and paññā in our daily life. Sati may not often arise, but when there is patience we do not mind it if understanding develops only little by little. There is conceit when we believe that we should be "somebody with great wisdom". We should follow Sāriputta's example who compared himself with a dustrag, a useless rag without any value. If we do not consider ourselves "somebody", but rather a "nobody", it will prevent us from pretending, even to ourselves, that we are more advanced than we in reality are. We also need the perfection of truthfulness (sacca) to keep us on the right track. We have to be sincere, truthful to reality. Do we want to avoid being aware of akusala? We have to be aware of it in order to know our true accumulations. If we are not aware of akusala we shall take what is akusala for kusala. We need to develop the perfection of equanimity, upekkhā, in order to learn to accept with kusala citta the vicissitudes of life. Praise and blame are only realities which arise

because of their own conditions; in reality people are not the cause of praise or blame. When people do wrong to us we can develop mettā if we see the value of mettā. Instead of having aversion about people's bad points we shall try to remember their good qualities. If they have none there can be compassion or there can be equanimity. Equanimity can arise when we remember that the real cause of unpleasant experiences through the senses is not a person but our own kamma.

We should carefully consider the different perfections and then we shall be reminded to develop them in our daily life, they are necessary in each situation. Khun Sujin said that while she prepares lectures for the radio she needs many perfections, such as mettā, patience, energy and equanimity. When there is equanimity she does not feel hurt when people do not want to listen to her or when they criticize her.

The perfection of wisdom must be developed from life to life. We know that we should realize the difference between paramattha dhammas, namely, nāma and rūpa, and concepts. We know that the object of satipaṭṭhāna is nāma and rūpa, not concepts. It is necessary to consider the difference between paramattha dhammas and concepts in detail, under different aspects, in our daily life. All such moments of considering are accumulated, they condition the growth of paññā, so that one day, we do not know when, direct understanding of nāma and rūpa can arise.

When we see, we think that we are in this world, a world full of people, houses and streets. When we hear, we think that we are in this world, we hear people, animals, cars. We think all the time of the whole wide world with everything in it. In reality there is only one moment of seeing and one moment of hearing. Seeing sees just that which appears through eyes, visible object, and then both seeing and visible object fall away. After that we think of a person or of the whole world, because saññā⁸ remembers. There is only one moment of hearing and then both hearing and sound fall away, but we keep on thinking about what was heard, because saññā remembers.

When we think of a person or of the world, the object of citta is a concept. As

⁸ Saññā cetasika, remembrance or perception, arises with each citta. It remembers or recognizes the object or marks it so that it can be recognized later on.

soon as we notice the shape and form of a person or a thing there is a concept of a whole. Even when we do not think of names we can still have a concept as object. When we perceive a pen we experience already a concept before we think about the name "pen". Children who cannot talk yet and who do not know the meaning of conventional terms which are used in language can experience concepts of a "whole". When they grow up they learn conventional terms so that they can name different things. They can then understand which person or thing is referred to. The English word "concept" (in Pāli: paññatti) stands for the idea which is the object of thinking as well as the name or term used to denote such an idea.

We should not try to avoid thinking of concepts; even the arahat thinks of concepts because there are conditions for thinking. The arahat does not cling to concepts but we are still clinging. We have not eradicated "attā-saññā", the wrong remembrance of things as "self". We cling to the general appearance of things and to the details. When we cling to the image of a man or woman we do not know the reality which appears through the eyes, visible object, and thus we know only a concept, not a reality. We do not only like the general appearance of things, we also like the details. We are attached to the trademark of clothing, of cars.

Someone wrote to me that conventional truth is still truth: citta, cetasika and rūpa constitute the whole of a person, a living being which really exists. He finds that at the moment we adopt the discipline of vipassanā, paramattha dhammas appear and at the moments we deal with our ordinary life in the world, conventional truth appears.

I believe that we should not think in terms of the "discipline of vipassanā" as being separated from our daily life. There are conditions to think of concepts, of "wholes", we need conventional terms in order to communicate with other people. We should lead our daily life naturally, but we can develop understanding of citta, cetasika and rūpa in our daily life. One may believe that these are constituents of a whole, but where is that whole? It only exists in our thinking, it cannot be directly experienced. We think that we see people lifting their hands or walking, but in reality there are countless nāmas and rūpas arising and falling away. So long as we do not realize the arising and falling away of

nāma and rūpa, we cling to the idea that what appears are people, women or men, or this or that thing. We cling to the concept of somebody or something.

Khun Sujin writes in "A Survey of Paramattha Dhammas", in the section on "Concepts":

“In order to know that concepts are not paramattha dhammas one should learn to discern the characteristics of the different paramattha dhammas which arise together. One should be aware of one characteristic at a time as it appears through one doorway at a time. The arising and falling away should be realized of rūpa which appears through one doorway at a time, so that the truth can be known. Each rūpa lasts only as long as seventeen moments of citta and then it falls away. Therefore rūpa which arises has no time to stand, walk or do anything. During the time one lifts one's hand already more than seventeen moments of citta⁹ have passed. One sees people walking or lifting their hands but in reality the rūpas which arise fall away immediately and are succeeded by other rūpas. The rūpa which is visible object appears to cittas of the eye-door process and then, after there have been bhavanga-cittas in between, there are many mind-door processes of cittas. That is why one can see people walking or lifting their hands. Seventeen moments of citta pass away extremely rapidly. Thus one should consider what happens in reality. One should know that the rūpa which appears at this moment through the eyes only lasts seventeen moments of citta and that it must fall away before sound can be experienced through ears. It seems that there can be hearing and seeing at the same time, but in between the moment of hearing and the moment of seeing there is an interval of more than seventeen moments of citta. The visible object which appears through the eyes and lasts seventeen moments of citta must have fallen away before the citta which hears arises.

It seems that there can be hearing and seeing at the same time, but these are different moments of citta experiencing different objects. Rūpas arise and fall away and succeed one another. Visible object appears through the eye-door and after there have been bhavanga-cittas in between it appears through the mind-

⁹ Rūpa does not fall away as rapidly as citta, but it still falls away very rapidly. Comparing the duration of rūpa with the duration of citta it has been explained that rūpa lasts as long as seventeen moments of citta.

door. Then there are many mind-door processes of cittas which think of concepts. That is why people who walk, lift their hands or move can appear.“

We may have often heard that paramattha dhammas are not concepts and we may have repeated this for ourselves, but that is not enough. When right understanding of realities is being developed we can learn when the object of citta is a paramattha dhamma and when there is thinking of a concept. It depends entirely on conditions whether a paramattha dhamma appears and there can be awareness of its characteristic, or whether one thinks of a concept.

We are inclined to cling to a self who develops satipaṭṭhāna and we want to hasten the arising of the stages of insight. If we have such desire it hinders the understanding of realities as anattā. The stages of insight can only arise when there are the right conditions for their arising, not because we try to direct their arising.

Khun Sujin writes about mindfulness in "A Survey of Paramattha Dhammas", in the section on the "Stages of Insight":

“Mindfulness is not easy and in the beginning it cannot often arise. The reason is that ignorance, clinging and all the other akusala dhammas have been accumulated for an endlessly long time in the cycle of birth and death. And also in this life, from the time we were born, defilements are being accumulated each day. When we correctly understand cause and effect of realities we know that we need great patience and perseverance so that we can listen to the Dhamma, study it carefully and consider it. Only thus can one have understanding of the realities which appear through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door. When the right conditions have been accumulated for the arising of satipaṭṭhāna, the characteristics of the realities which are appearing can be investigated by being directly aware of them. Thus, eventually, realities will be known as they are. Through the practice one shall directly understand the truth in accordance with what one has learnt and understood intellectually, namely, that all dhammas, and thus also satipaṭṭhāna and the eightfold Path, are anattā. Satipaṭṭhāna can arise when there are the right conditions, that is, when mahā-

kusala citta accompanied by paññā has arisen time and again so that paññā can be accumulated. Then we shall not deviate anymore from the right Path. We shall not follow a practice which is other than being aware of, noticing and considering the nāma-dhammas and rūpa-dhammas which are appearing through the six doors.“

We may pay attention to different realities and we may remember that seeing is nāma, that it is different from visible object which is rūpa. The direct experience of nāma as nāma and of rūpa as rūpa, without any idea of self is another step which has to be taken. Nobody else can show us exactly how the truth can be directly experienced, because paññā develops according to its own conditions. Seeing arises and we have learnt that seeing is nāma, but so long as paññā has not eradicated the idea of self, we still have an idea of self who sees.

When paññā has been developed to the degree that the first stage of insight, vipassanā ñāṇa, arises, characteristics of nāma and rūpa appear clearly, one at a time, through the mind-door. Their different characteristics are clearly distinguished from each other. At that moment there is no idea of self who experiences and there is no idea of a "whole" or of the world. There is "anattā-saññā", the perception of non-self, instead of "attā-saññā", the perception of self. Only nāma and rūpa are appearing one at a time. If we really understand that there must be anattā-saññā at the moment of vipassanā ñāṇa, we shall not try to create conditions for the arising of vipassanā ñāṇa, because then there is an idea of self. This would be counteractive to the development of vipassanā.

When the moments of vipassanā ñāṇa have fallen away, the world appears as before, as it used to appear, as a "whole" or a conglomeration of things, Khun Sujin explained. We may be surprised that realities appear as anattā only at the moment of vipassanā ñāṇa, and that after that the world appears as usual, as a "whole". Has nothing changed? We may think that it is already an achievement to have reached the first stage of vipassanā ñāṇa but it is not enough. The accumulated clinging to a self is very persistent, it cannot be eradicated by the first vipassanā ñāṇa. One has to apply the knowledge one has gained at the moments of vipassanā ñāṇa and go on developing understanding of all nāmas and rūpas which appear.

It is only at the fourth stage of insight, which is the first stage of "principal insight" ¹⁰, that the arising and falling away of *nāma* and *rūpa* can be realized. Now, at this moment, hardness appears and it falls away immediately. However, it is succeeded so rapidly by the next *rūpa* which is hardness that it seems that hardness stays. Each reality is succeeded by a next one which is similar but not the same. Each reality appears only once in the cycle of birth and death and then it disappears, it never comes back. When we meet people who are dear to us we should not forget that seeing only sees visible object and that seeing and visible object only last for a moment and are then gone for ever. "Everything goes, goes, goes", Khun Sujin reminded us. It comes and then goes for ever. It is useful to reflect about impermanence, but it is not the same as the direct experience of the arising and falling away of *nāma* and of *rūpa*. When the first stage of "principal insight" has arisen, *vipassanā* has become a "power" (*bala*) ¹¹.

When there is mindfulness of hardness now, knowledge of this characteristic is still coarse; realities have not been precisely understood yet. There is no realization of the characteristic of each *nāma* and *rūpa* which appears one at a time, no realization of their arising and falling away. When insight has become a "power" it is unshakable. However, at the first stage of principal insight *paññā* is not keen enough yet so that there can be detachment from realities. At the second stage of "principal insight", "Knowledge of Dissolution" (*bhanga ñāṇa*), *paññā* turns more towards the falling away of realities and sees that they cannot be any refuge. Even when insight has become already a "power" its development should continue on so that there can be more and more "turning away" from *nāma* and *rūpa*.

We read in the "Path of Discrimination" (*Paṭisambhidāmagga*, Treatise on Knowledge, Ch XXXIV, par. 455):

Insight power: in what sense is insight a power?

¹⁰ The first three stages of *vipassanā ñāṇa* are beginning stages, they are called "tender insight", *taruṇa vipassanā*. The fourth stage is the first stage of *mahā-vipassanā ñāṇa*. *Mahā* means great. The objects of insight are the *nāma* and *rūpa* which appear, and as insight develops their characteristics are penetrated more.

¹¹ Specific *cetasikas* have been classified as "spiritual powers" which should be developed, namely: confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (insight). When these have been developed so that they are unshakable by their opposites, they have become powers.

Through contemplation of impermanence it is unshakable by perception of permanence, thus insight is a power. Through contemplation of dukkha it is unshakable by perception of pleasure... Through contemplation of anattā it is unshakable by perception of self... Through contemplation of dispassion it is unshakable by delight... Through contemplation of fading away it is unshakable by greed... Through contemplation of cessation it is unshakable by arising... Through contemplation of relinquishment it is unshakable by grasping, thus insight is a power.

It is unshakable, immovable and cannot be shifted by ignorance and by the defilements and khandhas that accompany ignorance, thus insight is a power.

This is insight as a power.

Right understanding has to be developed of all realities which appear through the six doors so that insight can become a power. When we see what we do not know yet we can have a sense of urgency to continue on with satipaṭṭhāna. Gabi wrote to me that she had read Khun Sujin's "Stages of Insight" with great pleasure. She wrote:

“This shows with great clarity how intricate the development of satipaṭṭhāna is and how complicated it is. This does not discourage me at all, on the contrary, I enjoy it to take up time and again the scriptures and then I am reminded of the truth in my daily life. I am reminded that only paramatthas are real and everything else is only imagination.”

In the commentary to the Therīgāthā , Canto XXXIV, Sikkā , we read that Sikkā had in many former lives listened to Buddhas, renounced worldly life, studied the Dhamma and explained it to others. In spite of her great knowledge of the Dhamma she did not attain enlightenment. In this Buddha era she listened to the Buddha and when she heard Dhammadinnā preach she developed insight and reached arahatship. Once when she preached the Dhamma, a deva who lived in a tree was inspired by her words and incited people to come and listen to

her. Sukkā, at the end of her life, declared her attainment in a verse. She called out her own name Sukkā , which means: bright, lustrous. We read:

O Child of light! by light of truth set free
 From cravings dire, firm, self-possessed, serene,
 Bear to this end your last incarnate frame,
 For you have conquered Māra and his host.

This story shows us that it takes aeons to develop paññā. Even Sukkā who listened to several Buddhas needed aeons to develop the perfections together with satipaṭṭhāna. However, instead of wondering how arahatship could ever be achieved we can take note of the benefits of satipaṭṭhāna even now. Before we studied the Dhamma we did not know anything about citta, cetasika and rūpa. We did not know that on account of the pleasant or unpleasant objects experienced through the senses defilements such as attachment or aversion arise. Through the study of the Dhamma and through satipaṭṭhāna there will gradually be less ignorance of the realities of our daily life. The development of right understanding takes aeons but even a moment of right understanding now of a nāma or a rūpa is beneficial because it can be accumulated from moment to moment. We should not lure ourselves into thinking that through satipaṭṭhāna we shall have less aversion, dosa. First the wrong view of self has to be eradicated and only at the third stage of enlightenment, the stage of the non-returner, anāgāmī, dosa is eradicated. Because of the study of the Buddha's teachings we may notice that there is aversion, for example, when we are talking and we have unpleasant feeling. Then we are thinking about "our dosa", we take it for self. Through satipaṭṭhāna we can learn to see defilements as conditioned realities which are non-self. Also when we see the disadvantage of akusala and we abstain from unwholesome speech, we should remember that it is not self who abstains, but a type of nāma arising because of its own conditions.

We read in the scriptures about Sāriputta's generosity, humility and gentleness. He had no anger and could forgive anything. This can inspire us with confidence

in the benefit of satipṭṭhāna which eventually leads to the fulfillment of all the perfections. However, we should not forget that Sāriputta had developed right understanding during countless lives until he had eradicated all defilements. He had reached arahatship.

We read in the "Commentary to the Dhammapada" (XXVI,7,commentary to vs. 389, 390) about Sāriputta's virtues. A brahman wanted to test his patience and therefore tried to provoke his anger. When Sāriputta walked for alms he went behind him and struck him violently with his fist in the back. Sāriputta said "What was that?", and then, without turning around to look, continued on his way. When the brahman became remorseful and asked forgiveness, Sāriputta forgave him and accepted his invitation to receive food in his house. We read in the Commentary that the monks were discussing this incident and were offended about it that the brahman had struck Sāriputta. The Buddha said to them:

“Monks, no Brahman ever strikes another Brahman; it must have been a householder-Brahman who struck a monk-Brahman ¹²; for when a man attains the fruit of the third Path (anāgāmī or non-returner), all anger is utterly destroyed in him.”

We then read that the Buddha explained the Dhamma and spoke the following stanzas, which are the verses 389 and 390 of the “Dhammapada”:

vs. 389. One should not strike a brahman; a brahman should not vent (his wrath) on him. Shame on him who strikes a brahman! More shame on him who gives vent (to his wrath).

vs. 390. Unto a brahman that (non-retaliation) is of no small advantage. When the mind is weaned from things dear, whenever the intent to harm ceases, then and then only sorrow subsides.

¹² In the scriptures the word brahman is used in the sense of the person who develops the eightfold Path leading to arahatship. The arahat has eradicated all defilements.

When all defilements have been eradicated there is an end to dukkha. There is no attachment and when someone else behaves in an unpleasant way one has no feelings of resentment, no aversion. There is perfect calm.

Letter about Vipassanā⁷

the Hague,

May 20, 1991

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for the tapes which you made in Bangkok when you and Jonothan were visiting Khun Sujin. The discussions were in various surroundings: in the Safari Park, in the car, in a restaurant with loud background music, in a Park with a Japanese garden and in Khun Sujin's house. The scenery changes all the time but there are only *nāma* and *rūpa*: visible object and seeing, sound and hearing and all the other realities. They appear but we need reminders so that we are not forgetful of what appears all the time. In your letter you wrote that you had carefully planned Dhamma discussions in the afternoon during the three days you were in Bangkok, but that things turned out quite differently from what you expected. Khun Sujin was ill one of these days and thus she could not speak much. However, you had a good discussion with her sister and with Khun Duangduen. We make beautiful plans but we never know what will happen, because whatever happens is conditioned. Your letter was a good reminder of this truth. I liked Khun Sujin's reminder: "Everyday life is a test for the development of understanding." We are in different circumstances, some pleasant, some unpleasant, but we should not forget that there are realities appearing through the six doors, wherever we are.

You spoke about the stress of everyday life, when you are in the situation of your work. You find it difficult to remember that there are only *nāma* and *rūpa*, and this is a problem we all have. When we are rushing around to finish our tasks such as cleaning the house or cooking, we believe that we need more leisure time, more time for reading suttas. But, as Jonothan remarked, do we really use our free time for Dhamma, or do we take up other activities, such as playing with the computer, solving problems with it? Different *cittas* motivate our activities, some are *kusala* but many more are *akusala*. They arise because of conditions, and instead of trying to exert control over them we should develop understanding of them. I liked Khun Sujin's answer that we should not worry,

that worry is akusala and that we should develop understanding at ease. I shall quote her words:

"... Develop at ease, don't rush. You should not want a result soon. One should understand one's own understanding. When there is a moment of not understanding it cannot be changed into a moment of understanding. When there is no understanding of visible object yet one can begin to develop understanding of it."

Khun Sujin spoke about her daily life. She goes out shopping, she plays scrabble or receives visitors. She does not always read the scriptures, but she listens every day to Dhamma on the radio. She follows the Middle Way. We cannot exert control over the arising of sati or direct it to specific objects. It is unpredictable what the next moment will be like. When there is attachment we can see it as just a reality. Khun Sujin pointed out that we need many "ingredients" for the growth of right understanding. These ingredients are the sobhana cetasikas (beautiful mental factors) which have been accumulated and which support one another and cooperate so that right understanding develops to the degree that it can achieve detachment from the self. A cook needs many ingredients in order to compose a meal. In the same way many ingredients are needed for a moment of precise understanding of the reality which appears. It is necessary to accumulate many moments of reading, listening, studying and considering. When we study the Dhamma in detail, we collect ingredients which lead to direct understanding later on. Khun Sujin said:

"We read in order to understand this moment.

We listen in order to understand this moment.

We consider in order to understand this moment."

When one is aware and there is no progress, one can know why: there is not enough understanding of the details of the Dhamma. You were wondering why

one should know about details such as the four Great Elements of Earth, Water, Fire and Wind, which names designate the rūpas of solidity, cohesion, temperature and motion arising with each group of rūpas ¹³. I liked the discussion you had with Khun Sujin, because usually people are wondering why it is necessary to know such details. You asked why it was not enough just to be aware of hardness when it appears. Khun Sujin answered that when one is just aware of hardness it is not enough. There are many realities which appear and they are conditioned by different factors. Visible object is the rūpa which appears through eyesense, but visible object does not arise alone, it arises in a group of other rūpas in which also the four Great Elements take part. Visible objects are various because they are conditioned by different compositions of the four Great Elements which arise together with them. Detailed knowledge helps us to see that what we experience is nothing but conditioned reality. The more we understand conditions the more shall we understand that there is no self. The study of the Dhamma is never lost, because the understanding acquired from it is accumulated, even from life to life. If we in a next life can listen to the Dhamma again there are conditions to understand the Dhamma more deeply. It is beneficial to know about the different cittas which arise in processes because this is our daily life. As Khun Sujin said, we study in order to know this moment. We should not forget the goal of our study: detachment from the idea of self by right understanding. This understanding eventually leads to the eradication of all defilements. There is impingement of visible object, sound and the other sense objects on the relevant sense-doors and these objects are experienced by cittas which arise and fall away, succeeding one another in processes. In a process of cittas there are moments of citta which are either kusala or akusala, but most of the time we are ignorant of this. On account of the objects which are experienced through the different doorways we form up long stories, we are quite absorbed in our thinking. The cittas which think arise in mind-door processes and they may be kusala, but most of the time they are akusala. We cling to the people around us or we are annoyed about them, and we forget that there are no people, only nāma and rūpa. Khun Sujin stressed during the discussion that when we go to sleep all the stories we made up during the day are forgotten. It is

¹³ Rūpas arise and fall away in groups, consisting of at least eight rūpas, namely, the four great Elements and in addition colour, odour, flavour and nutritive essence. As regards the rūpas of the body, some groups consist of eight kinds of rūpa, and some consist of more than eight.

true that when I am asleep I do not know who I am, whom I am married to or where I live. We have forgotten our joys, fears and worries. When we are asleep and not dreaming there are no processes of cittas which experience objects impinging on the six doors. There are bhavanga cittas (life-continuum), cittas which have the function of keeping the continuity in life, and these cittas experience the same object as the rebirth-consciousness, which is the object experienced shortly before the dying-consciousness of the previous life. It is beneficial to know about such details, it helps us to understand that all the stories we are absorbed in now are nothing at all. They exist only so long as we are thinking about them, but they are forgotten as soon as we are asleep. Khun Sujin said that we should not wait until we go to sleep to forget about the stories we make up. One can come to realize that the processes of cittas which experience sense objects pass like a flash and that on account of them there is thinking. We live in our own world of thinking from birth to death. We have different feelings because of our thinking, but everything passes like a flash, it is very temporary. After seeing there is thinking, after hearing there is thinking. What we are used to taking for a permanent thing appears for a very short moment and then it is completely gone. We have heard this before but it is so good to be reminded of the truth. Khun Sujin remarked:

"In your idea it is as if things are permanent, but it all is so short, it is nothing at all. When one says, "Life is so short", one should remember that each moment is shorter. It never comes back. We listen to the song of a bird but it is completely gone in split seconds."

You remarked that you are just thinking about temporariness, and that this is a way of samatha or calm with impermanence as object. This is a good point you brought up. We know that we understand about impermanence in theory, that we can think about it, but that we do not directly experience the truth. I quote your conversation with Khun Sujin:

Khun Sujin: "There can also be a moment of insight, of understanding realities

which arise and fall away, but it depends on the development of understanding whether that degree has been reached or not yet. It is not a matter of wanting or trying, but of developing."

Sarah: "When we talk about stages of insight we start to worry. Why should we not just be aware of the characteristic which appears?"

Khun Sujin: "Even if one talks about stages of insight one does not have to worry about it. There may be ignorance and attachment. People worry because they want to experience the stages of insight. One has to develop understanding. Then one does not worry about the different stages. One knows that one will reach them one day if the Path is right. One moment of understanding will lead to more understanding. There are only six doorways. Seeing continues from life to life. If one dies now and one is reborn for example in a deva plane, seeing follows instantly and it is like this from aeon to aeon. One sees a great deal and there is no understanding of seeing until one listens to the Dhamma and begins to develop understanding. There can be understanding of seeing as it is.

If someone thinks that the development of understanding is too difficult and that he should do other things in order to have more awareness he does not see the value of a moment of being aware of a reality, of understanding it. "

The following sutta reminds us that understanding does not develop by mere wishing, that it only grows by developing it right now. We read in the "Gradual Sayings" (Book of the Threes, Ch X,§ 91, Urgent):

Monks, there are these three urgent duties of a yeoman farmer. What three?

Herein, monks, the yeoman farmer gets his field well ploughed and harrowed very quickly. Having done so he puts in his seed very quickly. Having done that he lets the water in and turns it off very quickly. These are his three urgent duties.

Now, monks, that yeoman farmer has no such magic power or authority as to say: "Let my crops spring up today. Tomorrow let them ear. On the following day let them ripen." No! It is just the due season which makes them do this.

In the same way there are these three urgent duties of a monk. What three? The undertaking of training in higher sīla, in higher citta and in higher insight. These are his three urgent duties.

Now the monk has no such magic power or authority as to say: "Today let my mind be released from the āsavas without grasping, or tomorrow, or the following day." No! It is just the due season which releases his mind, as he undergoes the training in these three.

Wherefore, monks, thus must you train yourselves: Keen shall be our desire to undertake the training in these three branches of training. That is how you must train yourselves.

There is higher sīla, higher citta (higher concentration) and higher insight when the eightfold Path is being developed. We may keep on thinking that the realization of the truth is too difficult. We delay awareness of the present moment and we still expect that there can once be realization of the truth. We should not wait for a miracle to happen. If there is no development of understanding now defilements cannot be eradicated. We cannot hasten the development of understanding, but when we see that the development of the eightfold Path is the only way to eliminate ignorance there will be conditions for awareness. At the same time it is necessary to remember that there should not be an idea of self who tries to be aware. There should not be clinging to awareness, then it cannot arise. It arises because of its own conditions which are study of the Dhamma, listening and considering. We should not blame the situation we are in for our lack of awareness. Khun Sujin said:

"When we want to control the situation we create new stories, new concepts. Someone who sees the value of awareness is aware instantly and has no wish to go to other places. He knows that it takes a long time to develop understanding."

You had a discussion about knowing the difference between kusala and akusala. We know in theory that they are different but we find it difficult to know directly

when the citta is kusala and when it is akusala. When we help someone there are kusala cittas, but there are also akusala cittas with attachment to the person we help or with attachment to "our kusala". Cittas are very intricate and they change very quickly. Khun Sujin said that it is important to know the difference between kusala and akusala, otherwise we cannot develop kusala. She explained that we can only know the present moment:

"If we do not talk about this moment how can we know whether the citta is kusala or akusala? It is helpful to know this in daily life. When you think of the other person's benefit without attachment there can be kusala at the level of dāna. People have kusala cittas in a day but they don't know it. Right understanding can understand that there are different nāmas."

Khun Duangduen had offered coffee to Jonothan and while she was thinking of his benefit without attachment the citta was kusala. Generally we worry too much about the development of kusala. Khun Sujin remarked that some people think and think and think how they can have more kusala whereas others just perform it whenever there is time and opportunity. We keep on worrying about kusala and also about our akusala. I noticed that Khun Sujin stressed several times that one should not worry and that one should develop right understanding at ease. She repeated what she had said in India about her anger. She said that it is no problem to her when she gets angry since it has conditions for its arising. She does not think, "O, I studied a lot and therefore I should not have anger." Gabi had listened to the tapes which were recorded in India and she wrote to me about her reactions concerning this subject:

"I was so surprised when I heard Khun Sujin say, 'I am not bothered by my dosa, I don't want to control it'. I was struck by these words and they made me have a totally new approach to dosa and anattā, not self. Khun Sujin had often said, 'It is not your dosa', but this had not convinced me. Should one not work on oneself, should one not pull oneself together, and if one has the will to do this can one not succeed? Seminars are organised to help people with problems in

relationship and to make them change their behaviour, and these seminars are successful. And now I hear from Khun Sujin, 'I am not bothered by my dosa and I don't want to control it'. Why am I bothered by my dosa? Because the accompanying feeling is unpleasant and my fellowmen do not like me for it, or they do not admire me.

We cannot prevent thinking, but it is important not to forget that dhammas are anattā , beyond control. I think that one could say that Khun Sujin does not want to control 'her' dosa and that she is therefore not disturbed by it."

That is the answer. When we realize that whatever appears is "only a reality", that it is conditioned, not self, we shall be less disturbed by it. This does not mean that we should not develop wholesome qualities. We notice that we often fail but instead of having aversion there can be a moment of understanding of what appears and then the citta is kusala. Dosa will arise again but then there can be a moment of understanding of its characteristic. When we really consider realities and we are aware of them there will be a keener understanding of their characteristics. "One does not worry, one keeps on developing understanding", as Khun Sujin said.

You were having tea and squeezing a lemon, and then Khun Sujin reminded you of the present moment. She said: "When you squeeze a lemon there can be, instead of thinking of awareness, understanding of the characteristic which appears". We think and worry about awareness but we forget to attend to characteristics of softness or hardness which appear time and again through the bodysense.

Jonothan remarked that the characteristic of anattā does not appear. Khun Sujin answered:

"Now there is visible object. There can be understanding of it as only visible object. One learns to begin to separate the eye-door from the mind-door. Visible object is just a reality. By understanding this one can take away the idea of something in it. When one begins to develop understanding there is no distinction between nāma and rūpa, they are all mixed up. Then there cannot be

elimination of the idea of self from any reality. By developing understanding of realities one at a time one can learn that the reality which experiences now is just an element, that it is a reality different from visible object which is seen. If one understands this one will learn that there is nobody who experiences, and nobody, no thing in the visible object. It takes time to have clear understanding of visible object, seeing, sound, hearing, of all realities appearing through the six doorways.

When we notice people we can remember that this is the same as looking into a mirror, since only visible object is experienced and there are no people. We only make up our stories about people. We begin to see that it is visible object, not a thing or a person. Is this not a beginning of understanding of the nature of anattā of visible object?"

Khun Sujin pointed out several times during the discussions that when one sees the value of right understanding it can condition instant awareness. We may say that we see the value of right understanding but do we really mean it? The following sutta can remind us of what is most valuable in life. We read in the "Dialogues of the "Buddha" (Dīgha Nikāya III, The Recital, VI, 18):

Six unsurpassable experiences, namely: certain sights, certain things heard, certain gains, certain trainings, certain ministries, certain recollections.

This passage is short but deep in meaning and it will be explained further on. Unsurpassable experiences are experiences which are superior, most valuable. The Pāli term used here is "anuttariya ". Khun Sujin explained the meaning of the six "anuttariyas" in the Bovornives Temple and quoted the "Manorathapūranī", the commentary to the Anguttara Nikāya (commentary to the Book of the Ones, Ch XIII). This commentary deals with the six anuttariyas.

The first unsurpassable experience is the unsurpassable experience of sight (dassana). Ānanda had this experience because he saw the Buddha the whole day and he had developed right understanding and attained enlightenment. If

someone sees the Buddha but he does not develop right understanding he does not have the unsurpassable experience of sight. He does not really value the Buddha and his teaching. The commentary states that the other enlightened disciples and also the "noble persons" (*kaliyāna puggala*), namely those who developed the eightfold Path, had the unsurpassable experience of sight. We cannot see the Buddha now but we can apply what he said to Vakkali who was attached to the sight of him (*Theragāthā*205). The Buddha said: "Who sees the Dhamma sees me".

As to the unsurpassable hearing (*savana*), Ānanda heard the Buddha preach and developed right understanding so that he could attain enlightenment. The same is said with regard to the other enlightened disciples and all those who developed the eightfold Path. They listened and developed *satipaṭṭhāna* so that they could attain enlightenment. When we listen to the Dhamma now and we begin to develop *satipaṭṭhāna* we can have the unsurpassable hearing. We can come to realize that the explanation of the Dhamma is the most precious thing that can be heard.

What is the most precious gain (*lābha*)? Everybody wants excellent things, but if there is no wisdom one does not know whether one's possessions are really superior. Those who had strong confidence in the Buddha, like Ānanda, had the best of gains. The same is said about the other enlightened disciples and the noble persons who developed the eightfold Path. We find the things which give us pleasant feeling most valuable in our life. However, the teachings remind us that pleasant feeling is very temporary, that clinging to pleasant objects leads to sorrow. When we have enough confidence in the teachings we shall continue to develop right understanding of all realities which appear. We shall see that it is most valuable to know our defilements, to have less ignorance about realities. Then we shall have the best of gains. As to the trainings (*sikkhā*) which are superior, these are the higher *sīla*, the higher *samādhi* and higher wisdom of the eightfold Path. Ānanda and the other disciples of the Buddha valued these three trainings as unsurpassable, since they lead to the eradication of defilements. If we consider them as unsurpassable we shall not be neglectful, we shall be aware of any reality which appears, pleasant or unpleasant, *kusala* or *akusala*.

The unsurpassable ministry (*pāricariya*) is the ministry to the Buddha, as Ānanda

and the other disciples performed. Through satipaṭṭhāna they had acquired the greatest confidence and respect for the high qualities of the Buddha who taught the truth of impermanence, dukkha and anattā. Without right understanding the ministry to the Buddha is not an unsurpassable experience. The Buddha has passed away but we can still serve the Dhamma. One ministers to the Dhamma when one studies it and explains it to others so that they too can develop right understanding.

The unsurpassable recollection (anussata) is the recollection of the Buddha's qualities, those which are "worldly" (lokiya) as well as those which are supramundane (lokuttara), the commentary states. Without wisdom one cannot recollect the qualities of the Buddha. When we are mindful of nāma and rūpa we value the Buddha's wisdom at that moment. Without his teaching we could not develop satipaṭṭhāna. Thus at that moment there is the sixth unsurpassable experience.

Khun Sujin said that enlightenment cannot be attained without these six most excellent experiences. If we do not consider the Dhamma as that which is most valuable in our life, enlightenment cannot be attained. We value the Dhamma not merely by words, but by applying it, by developing right understanding. When we listen to the Dhamma, consider what we heard and begin to be aware of realities we can verify the truth of what the Buddha taught. Then we can gain more confidence to develop all the "perfections", the good qualities the Buddha had developed together with right understanding during aeons. Ānanda and the other disciples had developed the perfections during aeons and when they met the Buddha and listened to him it was the right time for them to attain enlightenment.

Khun Sujin's words at the end of your tape were a good reminder:

"In order to come to the moment of enlightenment all kinds of realities must be thoroughly understood. Then there can be the moment of awareness which conditions enlightenment. If there is not enough development, have more development!"

With mettā,

Nina

Letter about Vipassanā8

the Hague,

June 29, 1991

Dear Robert,

You have understood that the eightfold Path the Buddha taught is the Middle Way. The Buddha said in Isipatana to the five disciples that two extremes should not be followed: devotion to sense pleasures and devotion to self-mortification (Kindred Sayings V, Mahā-vagga, Book XII, Ch II). We may understand in theory that we have to follow the Middle Way, but when it comes to the practice doubts may arise. Should we do particular things in order to have more awareness and should we avoid things which seem unfavorable for the development of satipaṭṭhāna? We may do wholesome deeds such as performing generosity or helping others, but still, attachment, lobha, aversion, dosa, and ignorance, moha, arise time and again, and sati seldom arises. We may become discouraged about our lack of progress. You have understood that satipaṭṭhāna should be developed naturally, in daily life, but, as you wrote, you have doubts whether you should avoid certain situations.

You mentioned that you had doubts whether you should accept an invitation from your friends to go to the movies or whether you should stay home in order to study Dhamma. You feel that accepting is indulgence in pleasure. Nevertheless you find that, even while watching the movie, you would have the opportunity to face the present reality. I will quote from your letter:

"Although I have at home the opportunity to study the Dhamma, perhaps there will be a feeling of "my practice", "my sīla", so that the benefits may not be high. Whereas if I would accept I would lose the study time but there is less chance of developing attachment to "my practice" and really just as much time to observe the present moment. Of course, as paññā develops one may naturally not have

any desire to see a movie and then one would decline anyway. I do, however, believe that there are more conditions for developing kusala cittas if one stays home. I guess that the answer to this is that the practice is not so much to accumulate many kusala cittas but rather to develop understanding which recognizes the different characteristics of all rūpas and nāmas and sees them as anattā, including sati and paññā."

The answer to this dilemma is that one never knows beforehand which type of citta arises at which moment, kusala citta or akusala citta. Only the anāgāmi, the person who has realised the third stage of enlightenment, will never indulge in sense pleasures. He will have no inclination to go to movies. For us it is different. Sometimes we shall accept an invitation to go to the movies, sometimes we shall decline and the cittas arising in both cases can be kusala or akusala, nobody can predict that. We can also accept an invitation because of kindness, out of consideration for someone else who may not be able to go alone. How could one prescribe citta what to decide? Each citta arises because of its own conditions, it is anattā, beyond control.

Sometimes while watching a movie mindfulness of realities can arise, but this depends on the accumulated understanding. There can be study with awareness of visible object, that which appears through the eyes. When we are absorbed in the story we are thinking of concepts. The thinking is conditioned by seeing. When we stay home in order to study the Dhamma there may not be any awareness at all, how could it be planned? Perhaps we fall asleep or there may be distractions. As you say, there can always be attachment to "my practice", but this is a conditioned nāma and it can be realized as such.

You have understood that our goal should not be merely the accumulation of kusala but rather the understanding of all realities, sati and paññā included, as anattā. When we try to induce sati by doing particular things we shall never see that it is anattā. Someone wrote that a teacher said to his pupils that there should be continuous mindfulness. However, this is not realistic. We cannot help seeing and hearing time and again, these cittas just arise, whether we want it or not. Seeing and hearing arise in processes of cittas and in these processes there are, shortly after seeing or hearing has fallen away, kusala cittas or akusala

cittas, but most of the time akusala cittas. Often we may not pay attention to seeing or hearing, they just pass. Also the akusala cittas which arise shortly after seeing and hearing just pass, we do not notice them. Cittas arise and fall away very rapidly. Therefore, it is hard to know whether the citta at this moment is kusala or akusala. You were wondering about the types of citta which arise when you are absorbed in a Dhamma subject. Nobody else can tell you, you have to find out yourself. When you study the Dhamma in order to understand realities there are kusala cittas, but also akusala cittas are bound to arise. When you study the Dhamma there are also seeing and hearing, and you have to find out whether kusala cittas or akusala cittas arise after seeing or hearing, which are vipākacittas, results of kamma. There is likely to be clinging to seeing, to visible object, to concepts we form up on account of what was seen. We believe that we do not particularly like what is seen, but we are still attached to all objects. We are attached to all the familiar things around us, to books, paper and pen, to the chair we are sitting in. However, when we study the Dhamma we can be reminded to be aware of whatever reality appears. Then we do not forget the goal of our study: to understand what appears now.

You write that you are inclined to slip off the Middle Way. We all do, so long as we are not sotāpannas. I quote from your letter:

"I am inclined to think, 'Well, the accumulations to enjoy are there. I might as well indulge as long as I know it is not self doing it, just desire arising'. But often I find that by going ahead and enjoying, somehow there is little awareness and more attachment. On the other hand, by suppressing the desire, such as by taking the eight precepts ¹⁴, a feeling of discomfort may be present. But this has the benefit of marking the defilement in a clear way."

Again, we cannot set any rule for citta what to decide to do at a particular moment. When we listen to the teachings and consider them we learn about kusala and akusala. When we begin to be aware we come to realize that there

¹⁴ Laypeople can, in addition to the five precepts, take three more precepts on special days such as the full moon day. These include not eating after midday, not using high and soft beds or chairs, not using adornments or perfumes.

are many moments of akusala we did not know of before we studied the Dhamma. We also learn about many different ways of kusala we had not thought of before. When understanding, paññā, develops it will see more often the disadvantage of akusala and the benefit of kusala. When we give in to enjoyment and think, "It is not self", it may be thinking with akusala citta or with kusala citta. When there is no sati and paññā we can use the thought of not self as an excuse not to develop kusala. On the other hand when sati and paññā arise and there is awareness of desire as a conditioned reality, not self, the citta is kusala.

You find that the eight precepts bring you discomfort. Nobody else can tell you to take them or not to take them. We should find out what the cittas are like which decide to take them. Do we cling to our own kusala, do we want to be perfect immediately? You may find that you notice your attachment to a soft chair or a soft bed more clearly when you take the eight precepts, but what about attachment after seeing or hearing now? Should we not find out about this so that we have less ignorance? Sincerity is indispensable for the development of satipaṭṭhāna. One has to be truthful with regard to the different cittas which arise, be they akusala or kusala. We need sati-sampajañña, sati and paññā, so that we shall know whether there is at this moment kusala citta or akusala citta. There are different levels of sati-sampajañña, which is often translated as "clear comprehension". Knowing kusala as kusala and akusala as akusala is one level of sati-sampajañña. If one wants to develop kusala one has to know whether the citta at this moment is kusala or akusala. If sati-sampajañña does not arise it cannot be known. If one wants to develop samatha one needs sati-sampajañña which knows whether there is kusala citta with calm, conditioned by the meditation subject of samatha. Sati-sampajañña in vipassanā realizes nāma as nāma and rūpa as rūpa, it realizes them as not self. Sati-sampajañña of vipassanā is supported by the other levels of sati-sampajañña, by sati-sampajañña which realizes kusala as kusala and akusala as akusala, and which sees the disadvantage of akusala and the benefit of kusala. On the other hand, sati-sampajañña of vipassanā supports all levels of kusala.

Sati-sampajañña can be developed by listening to the Dhamma and by considering it. Moreover, all other kinds of kusala have to be developed as well, since the goal is the eradication of defilements. Therefore, it is necessary to have

a finer discrimination of kusala and akusala in our daily life. If we learn about nāma and rūpa but we neglect generosity we will keep on clinging to the self. It is difficult to develop generosity when a great deal of stinginess has been accumulated, but we should get to know our true accumulations. When we notice stinginess we do not like it, we have aversion about it. Or there is regret, kukkuccha, about our akusala or about the kusala we omitted, and that is also akusala. When there is an opportunity for the arising of sati-sampajañña there is no aversion, no regret. Sati-sampajañña can realize the characteristic of stinginess as only a conditioned reality, a type of nāma. There can be more understanding of its conditions: it arises because it is so deeply accumulated. We do not want to be stingy, we may tell ourselves not to be stingy, not to speak words which express our stinginess, but stinginess still arises. We can learn from such situations. Instead of us being discouraged, sati-sampajañña can arise and see the disadvantage of akusala, and at that moment there cannot be aversion about it. There should be sati-sampajañña which realizes how often there is conceit in our relationship to others. We may feel displeased about what someone else is doing to us or saying to us. There is a kind of comparing, there is "he" and "me"; we wonder, "How can he do that to me." Then there is conceit, we cling to "our important personality". Conceit hinders generosity and mettā. Can we forgive someone else easily? Forgiving is a kind of generosity, dāna. It is "abhaya-dāna", the wish that someone else is free from harm. We should more often consider the benefit of forgiving, it helps us to have less conceit.

We may be inclined to blame someone else, we may want to tell him off. However, when sati-sampajañña arises we shall investigate our own citta and then we shall be less inclined to blame someone else. We read in the "Gradual Sayings" (Book of the Tens, Ch V, par. 4, At Kusināra) that the Buddha, while he was staying at Kusināra, said that a monk who desires to admonish another monk should do so after investigation of five conditions in himself and setting up five conditions in himself. We read that he should investigate whether he practises utter purity in body and speech, whether he has mettā established towards his fellow monks and is free from malice. If not, people around him will say that he should practise these things himself. We then read:

Then again, monks, a monk who desires to admonish another should thus investigate: Am I or am I not one who has heard much, who bears in mind what he has heard, who hoards up what he has heard? Those teachings which, lovely alike at the beginning, the middle and the end, proclaim in the spirit and in the letter the all-fulfilled, utterly purified Brahma-life, have such teachings been much heard by me, borne in mind, practised in speech, pondered in the heart and rightly penetrated by view? Is this quality manifest in me or is it not? Then, monks, if he be not one who has heard much... if those teachings have not been rightly penetrated by view, then folk are found to say to him: "Come now, let your reverence complete knowledge of the Sayings." Folk are found to speak thus.

We then read that the monk who desires to admonish another monk should investigate whether he is well-trained in the discipline. After that we read about five conditions which he has to set up in himself:

(He considers:) Do I speak in season or not? Do I speak of facts or not, gently or harshly, do I speak words fraught with profit or not, with a kindly heart or inwardly malicious? These five conditions he must set up in his own self.

We can apply this sutta in daily life. When there is sati-sampajañña it can be realized whether these conditions are fulfilled or not. It is very difficult to fulfill them, and when we see that, we may rather refrain from admonishing someone else. When we really consider this sutta it can condition the development of sati-sampajañña which knows the disadvantage of akusala and the benefit of kusala. Then kusala citta can arise because it becomes one's nature. There is no need to impose rules upon oneself or to go to particular places in order to induce kusala. Someone wrote that one should try to put as much kusala in one's mind as one can. In that case there could be an idea of self who is trying and one will certainly fail. The same person was in a meditation center and he was hoping that he, in that place, could have more mettā. However, he noticed that he could not. It shows that realities are beyond control, anattā. It can be discouraging to

see how little mettā there is in a day. We used to take for mettā what is only attachment. We were inclined to be kind to particular people only, not just to anybody we met. But it is helpful to realize that often attachment and conceit hinder mettā.

We should consider all kinds of kusala and akusala which arise in the situation of our daily life. You said that you used to separate your meditation life from daily life, but, as you know now, that is not the Middle Way. When we would just be sitting in a quiet room how could we know ourselves as we are in our daily life, in our work situation, in our relationship with others? We should be truthful and we should not pretend, even to ourselves, to be better than we really are.

The word meditation can create confusion. People associate meditation with going apart and trying to concentrate on something special. If one wants to cultivate calm to the degree of jhāna one has to live a secluded life and one has to use a meditation subject of samatha in order to make calm grow. For the development of vipassanā one does not need to go apart. One should develop it naturally, in daily life. One should come to know one's real accumulations, one's defilements. If one does not develop understanding of whatever reality appears paññā cannot grow. You asked what the difference is between paññā in samatha and paññā in vipassanā. The aims and thus also the methods to reach them are different. As regards samatha, even people before the Buddha's time saw the danger of sense impressions. They realized that seeing, hearing and the other sense impressions are often followed by defilements. Therefore, they used subjects of meditation in order to reach jhāna, because at the moment of jhāna-citta there cannot be any sense impressions. By means of jhāna defilements are temporarily subdued but not eradicated. The aim of vipassanā is the eradication of defilements through the wisdom which knows all realities as they are. The object of vipassanā is the nāma or rūpa which appears right now. The object is not a person, a body or another concept, it is a paramattha dhamma, a nāma or a rūpa. The meditation subjects of samatha can be concepts but they can also be paramattha dhammas such as the elements. However, the aim is not to realize them as not self, but the aim is to have less attachment to them. In vipassanā the object changes from moment to moment, since it is the reality appearing at the present moment. One never knows what will appear next. It is different in

samatha since one has to develop calm with a meditation subject in order to reach calm to the degree of jhāna. One may not have the accumulated skill to develop calm to the degree of jhāna. However, one can also develop calm in daily life, naturally, as the occasion arises. For example, when there is sati-sampajañña which knows the characteristic of mettā, mettā can naturally arise in daily life, without the need to think, "I should have more mettā". There can also be a moment of satipaṭṭhāna when one realizes for example mettā as a conditioned reality, a type of nāma which is not self. Moments of calm and moments of vipassanā can arise naturally in daily life, but it all depends on sati-sampajañña. As we have seen, there are different levels of sati-sampajañña and they are all beneficial.

In order to have right understanding of nāma and rūpa there should be awareness of whatever reality appears through one of the six doors. This is very difficult and therefore you wonder whether in the beginning it would not be better to be aware of only what appears, for example, through the body-door. Should one not limit the object of awareness? You find that some suttas seem to suggest this. You quote the story of Pothila from the Dhammapada commentary (282, commentary to verse 282). A novice who was an arahat instructed the monk Pothila by way of a simile. If there are six holes in an anthill and a lizard enters the anthill by one of these holes, one could catch the lizard by stopping up five of these holes, leaving the sixth one open. Then he could catch the lizard in the hole by which he entered. In the same way should Pothila deal with the six doors of the senses and the mind; he should close five of the six doors, and devote his attention to the door of the mind. We then read that he was mindful of the body and began mind development. After hearing a stanza from the Buddha he attained arahatship. It was the following stanza:

From meditation springs wisdom,
 From lack of meditation wisdom dwindles away.
 He that knows this twofold path of gain and loss
 Should so settle himself that wisdom may increase.

When wisdom has reached perfection one will not be shaken anymore by gain and loss and the other worldly conditions.

What will happen if one tells oneself that one now will concentrate on only one doorway, such as the body-door? Then there would not be awareness of the reality which appears, but there is an idea of self who sets his mind on one object, who selects the object of awareness. He thinks of it and tries to concentrate on it. While he tries to control sati he will not know that each reality arises because of its own conditions, that it is beyond control. Some texts seem to stress the body, other texts emphasize feeling or other realities. Why is that? This is only to remind us not to be forgetful of the realities which appear. When there is mindfulness of hardness which appears through the bodysense one should study it with awareness in order to know that it is only a kind of rūpa, not "my body". There is also the nāma which experiences the hardness, or the nāma which feels. If one applies oneself to the "Application of Mindfulness of the Body" it does not mean that one should be aware only of rūpa. If one neglects nāma which appears one will continue to cling to an idea of self who experiences objects. One should know that it is only an element which experiences, not self. The first stage of insight is knowing the difference between the characteristic of nāma and the characteristic of rūpa. Thus, both nāma and rūpa which appear should be studied with awareness. It depends on conditions whether there is more often awareness of hardness, of visible object, of feeling, or of any other reality. This is different for different people. However, we should not deliberately limit the object of awareness, we should not set any rule, because that is desire and this hinders right awareness.

Eventually all objects appearing through the six doors have to be known. Pothila could not have attained arahatship had he been ignorant of particular objects. Some people have the inclination to develop both samatha and vipassanā. In the development of samatha one subdues attachment to sense objects. However, in order to develop insight there must be understanding of all nāmas and rūpas which appear. At the moment of mindfulness of the objects appearing through the six doors there is "restraint of the senses" (indriya saṁvara sīla). At that moment there are no conditions for akusala on account of what appears through the senses.

We may think that some suttas stress only one object as object of awareness, but it is important to read all texts. We read, for example, in the "Kindred Sayings" (V, Mahā-vagga, Kindred Sayings on the Way, Ch III, Par. 9, Feeling) that the Buddha, while he was at Sāvatthī, said to the monks:

There are these three feelings, monks. What three? Feeling that is pleasant, feeling that is painful, feeling that is neither pleasant nor painful. These are the three feelings.

In order to comprehend these three feelings, monks, the ariyan eightfold way must be cultivated....

It is difficult to know the true characteristic of feeling, to know it as nāma, different from rūpa. Don't we confuse bodily feeling and rūpa such as hardness which impinges on the bodysense? There is feeling all the time but we neglect awareness of it, we cling to feeling and take it for self. This sutta can remind us to be mindful of feeling. The following sutta (par. 10) reminds us to be aware of the sense objects. We read that the Buddha explained to Uttiya about the "five sensual elements". The Buddha said:

There are objects cognizable by the eye, objects desirable, pleasant, delightful and dear, passion-fraught, inciting to lust. There are sounds cognizable by the ear, objects desirable... there are scents cognizable by the nose... savours cognizable by the tongue... tangibles cognizable by the body, objects desirable, pleasant, delightful and dear, passion fraught, inciting to lust. These, Uttiya, are the five sensual elements of which I spoke.

Now, Uttiya, in order to abandon these five sensual elements the ariyan eightfold way must be cultivated ¹⁵.

It is not possible to try to achieve straight away detachment from the five sense

¹⁵ The P.T.S. translation has: it is by abandoning these five sensual elements that the ariyan eightfold way is to be cultivated, but this is not correct. I follow the Thai translation.

objects. Detachment can only be achieved by right understanding which realizes these objects as they are. One has to begin to be mindful of whatever object appears through one of the six doors so that understanding can gradually develop. First the clinging to self has to be eradicated and it is only at the third stage of enlightenment that attachment to sense objects is eradicated.

You asked how we can learn to discern the difference between *nāma* and *rūpa*, and in particular the difference between bodily phenomena and the experience of bodily phenomena, since that is so difficult. Is there again an idea of self who can select phenomena in order to be aware of them? We know that the difference between *nāma* and *rūpa* should be distinguished, but the objects of awareness should not be selected. We are ignorant of all phenomena which appear. Do we know visible object as it is, seeing as it is, feeling as it is? When visible object appears it can be object of awareness so that right understanding of it can be developed. Right understanding can realize visible object as *rūpa*, different from *nāma*. After a moment of awareness of visible object, it is not necessary to be aware of seeing in order to realize the difference between *nāma* and *rūpa*; we cannot direct *sati* to particular *nāmas* and *rūpas*. After awareness of visible object, *sati* may be aware of feeling or of sound; *sati* is non-self, *anattā*. When the first stage of insight knowledge arises, the difference between the *nāma* and the *rūpa* which appear is clearly known; the objects of awareness are not necessarily seeing and visible object or hearing and sound. The objects of awareness are any kind of *rūpa* which appears and any kind of *nāma* which appears, there is no selection of objects, there is no idea that they would have to appear in a particular order. When we worry about how we can know the difference between a particular kind of *nāma* and a particular kind of *rūpa* we are not developing understanding. Thus, there is no prescription one could follow so that one could find out the difference between *nāma* and *rūpa*. It all depends on the development of *sati-sampajañña*.

While we were in India Khun Sujin said that if one does not know the characteristic of *sati* it cannot be developed. On the other hand, only when *sati* arises can we know its characteristic. It seems like a vicious circle. Khun Sujin said time and again, "Develop it now". We were wondering how we could. The answer is that through the study of the teachings, through considering them,

through asking questions, intellectual understanding is gradually built up. These factors are conditions for right awareness of realities which appear. We need patience to listen and consider again and again, we should have no desire for the arising of sati. Khun Sujin said: "If there is no desire for sati it will arise, I guarantee." Why do we discuss visible object time and again? In order to be reminded to consider it with awareness. When we see, we think immediately of the people and the things around us, because we always did this. However, we can remember that what appears through the eyes is only visible object. We need to discuss many realities, and then, if there is no selection of particular objects, there will be conditions for gradually understanding the nature of rūpa and of nāma. We may believe that it is sufficient to be aware of visible object just a few times in order to know what it is. This is not enough. Visible object is in front of us but we are often forgetful of it. We do not have to think about it, it is there and it appears through the eyes. We cannot see sound, we can only see what impinges on the eyesense, visible object. There can be conditions to study with awareness nāma and rūpa, if we see that it is beneficial to have less ignorance of realities. There is also the reality which experiences visible object. It is not self, it is only an element which experiences. We often lose opportunities to study the objects which are there, every day. We have to continue to study all realities which appear through all the doorways. There should just be awareness of the reality which appears, through one doorway at a time, and we should not think or worry about it whether it is nāma or rūpa. At the moment of worry or doubt there is no awareness, the citta is akusala. We should know that enlightenment cannot be attained by developing satipaṭṭhāna only during one life-time. Awareness of realities is a new accumulation which is gradually acquired. We read in the "Gradual Sayings" (Book of the Threes, Ch XIV, par. 131, Fighting-man) that a fighting-man has three qualities: he is a far-shooter, a shooter like lightning and a piercer of huge objects. A monk who is worthy of respect should have these three qualities. We read:

Now, in what way is a monk a far-shooter?

Herein, whatsoever rūpa... feeling... perception (saññā)...activity (saṅkhārakkhandha)... whatsoever consciousness he has, be it past, present or

future, personal or external to self, be it gross or subtle, mean or exalted, far or near,- everything in short of which he is conscious,- he sees it as it really is by right insight thus: This is not mine. This am I not. This is not for me the Self. That is how a monk is "a far-shooter".

The five khandhas, all conditioned rūpas and nāmas should be realized as they are. We then read that the monk is a shooter like lightning when he understands the four noble Truths: dukkha, its arising, its ceasing and the Way leading to its ceasing. He is a piercer of huge objects when he pierces through the huge mass of ignorance.

If one wants to learn the art of shooting with bow and arrow one has to have endless patience and perseverance to learn this skill. Evenso one needs great patience and perseverance to develop satipaṭṭhāna. It has to be learnt without an idea of self who is training. The right conditions have to be there in order to be able to develop right understanding. The person who shoots from far and can hit the aim very precisely is like the person who has developed paññā which has become so keen that it can realize the true nature of the reality which appears. Paññā is as swift as lightning and it can pierce through the huge mass of ignorance. Since ignorance is a mass accumulated for aeons it cannot be eradicated within a short time.

With mettā,

Nina

Letter about Vipassanā⁹

the Hague,

July 29, 1991

Do we really want to be aware of attachment, lobha, when it appears? We may know that whatever reality appears can be object of awareness, but how is the application of this knowledge? We dislike our defilements and we would rather be free from them, but we forget that the only way to eventually eliminate them is to be aware of them so that they are known as they are. We read in "As it was said" (Khuddaka Nikāya, Itivuttaka, The Ones, Ch I, par. 9) that the Buddha said:

"Monks, the man who does not understand and comprehend lust, who has not detached his mind therefrom, who has not abandoned lust, can make no growth in extinguishing dukkha. But, monks, he who does understand and comprehend lust, who has detached his mind therefrom, who has abandoned lust, can make growth in extinguishing dukkha."

This is the meaning of what the Exalted One said. Herein this meaning is thus spoken.

By whatsoever lust inflamed
 Beings to the ill-bourn go,
 That lust, completely knowing it,
 Those who have insight do reject.
 Rejecting it, no more again
 They come unto this world at all.
 This meaning also was spoken by the Exalted One; so I have heard.

The same is said about ill-will, delusion, wrath, and spite. One may believe that

defilements can be abandoned without thoroughly knowing them, but this is impossible. Is there not a tendency to flee from one's defilements instead of facing them with courage and sincerity? So long as there is ignorance our defilements are hidden, they are covered up. When we listen to the Dhamma and consider it, and when we begin to be aware we come to know more and more the defilements which were hidden to us before. We come to know our true accumulations. As we read in the sutta, they can only be eliminated by knowing them with insight. So long as they are taken for self they can never be eradicated.

Sarah sent me some tapes which were recorded in Bangkok with discussions about the development of right understanding. These discussions were held in Khun Sujin's house and also during a trip to Kanchanaburi. Sarah said that many people want to change their character, that they want to become a better person. There is so much quarreling in daily life and people become disappointed when their life does not change for the better after they have listened to the Dhamma. They hope to be able to change themselves in a meditation center if they work very hard at it. Khun Sujin remarked that the cittas which quarrel are anattā , not self, that they arise because of conditions. Right understanding can see that there is nobody at that moment. There is only nāma which experiences and even the words are motivated by such and such realities, they do not belong to anybody. Sarah said that one's aim may be a quiet, peaceful life without quarrels. Khun Sujin explained that there is a lack of understanding at which stage quarreling will be eradicated. In fact dosa is only eradicated at the third stage of enlightenment, the stage of the "non-returner", the anāgāmī. Khun Sujin said:

"Instead of minding too much about different defilements one could develop understanding of realities, so that all akusala will become less. Ignorance which is the cause of all akusala will be eliminated by right understanding. Maybe one is just satisfied to have less quarreling, and there is no development of understanding, no elimination of ignorance, but that depends on one's inclinations."

Several of the discussions were about going to a meditation center since many people believe that that is beneficial. They think that it is helpful to be away from people. They should find out whether that is their nature and whether it helps them to become more detached, to have less clinging to a result, whether it helps them to understand their own accumulations more deeply. Is it not better to have a few moments of awareness and understanding without any desire to "plan" such moments? Some people believe that an "intensive course" in a center can be a short-cut to reach the goal. How can there be a short-cut if there is no understanding of this moment? The understanding of this very moment should be the test for our progress. Khun Sujin said:

"One has to understand the very subtle desire, when one is waiting for the arising of awareness in the future. Awareness can arise now. If there is understanding now it can be accumulated. One has to notice desire, whether it is there. Instead of having desire there can be awareness and right understanding even now. That is the meaning of the 'Middle Way'. Understanding realities with awareness, that is the moment of progress. You think that you can get rid of desire, somewhere, at some time, but what about this moment? There is lobha if there is no understanding. Desire is not self, it is a reality. If you don't understand it, you will not get rid of it. When you look at the newspaper you can develop understanding about lobha which is conditioned. You cannot do anything about it, but there can be understanding of lobha as a conditioned reality."

Different people will react differently when they hear, "you cannot do anything about it", it all depends on the understanding of the listener. It is right understanding when we realize that we cannot do anything about the realities which arise because of their own conditions. In this way we shall come to understand that they are beyond control, anattā. There is wrong understanding if one believes that it is senseless to develop kusala and right understanding since one cannot do anything about one's defilements. When people speak harsh words to us it is beneficial to realize that we cannot do anything about the hearing, since it is conditioned already. Hearing is vipāka, the result of kamma.

As Khun Sujin said, there is nobody there, there is only the experiencing. No self hears, it is only a type of *nāma*, and no self gets hurt by harsh words. When we consider this more deeply and there can be awareness of *nāma* and *rūpa*, we shall be less inclined to retort unpleasant words. We shall have more understanding of the truth that there is nobody there.

Sarah said that it was a relief to know that we do not have to do anything special for the development of understanding, such as always reading Dhamma books or going to a center. Khun Sujin replied:

"The idea of self always pushes one this or that way. The development of understanding just follows all realities. Then *lobha* cannot push you to cover up the realities which have arisen now because of conditions. Just understand any reality which is conditioned. Seeing now is conditioned and therefore it arises, it sees. Develop understanding of the reality which is already conditioned."

Jonathan said that he should have studied the Dhamma more often, that he had regret about losing opportunities for study. Khun Sujin replied:

"While talking about realities the 'perfection' of *paññā* develops by itself, even if we do not name it or talk about the resolution to develop the perfections. You would not have come from Hong Kong to have discussions if you did not have the determination to develop *paññā*. Your action shows it. When there is awareness arising just for a moment, "slipping in", and then "slipping out", it is also the development of the perfection of *paññā*. Any moment can be a moment of developing the perfections. Listening is not always convenient, but one can still develop perfections when there is no opportunity for listening or studying."

We may have regret about lack of study and we may wonder whether we should avoid particular situations like going out and enjoying ourselves, in order to have more time for study and for consideration of the Dhamma. There is still the idea of self which pushes us this way or that way. Instead we should just "follow" all

realities which appear. Alan Weller wrote a letter to me about this subject which I quote:

"I used to think that I should study the Dhamma and be alone rather than going out with friends. When we say this it seems as if there is no self indulgence when we do not go to the movies whereas in actual fact defilements are around all the time. The stories on the screen are no different from the stories in our everyday life. We have pleasant feeling or unpleasant feeling conditioned by what we see, no matter whether we are at the movies or not. All situations are the same in the sense that they consist of realities which are dukkha (unsatisfactory), anicca (impermanent) and anattā (non-self). Pleasant feeling has its own characteristic which can be understood, no matter where we are. We cannot force kusala by listening more to the Dhamma. Akusala is conditioned by accumulation, we have to accept it as it is. By listening to the Dhamma and considering it there are conditions for the development of kusala, slowly and gradually. We should follow our own accumulations wisely, sincerely, understanding them as they really are. I have accumulations to go to the movies, watch T.V. and read magazines. The interest in these is a conditioned reality which can be known. Also the interest in Dhamma is conditioned. I cannot force myself to have more interest in the Dhamma. I understand the value of reading the scriptures and considering the Dhamma and that is a condition for studying it. We cannot read all day, every day. Therefore it is best to live our life naturally according to our own accumulation and to learn to apply Dhamma in any situation.

Whenever we study the Dhamma there is renunciation, so of course sometimes we shall study rather than watch T.V., but are we doing this because of renunciation or because of desire? There can so easily be attachment. This should be seen as it is, otherwise our studying will be overmuch, too tense, not according to our own real nature. The beginning of the study of Dhamma is learning to see kusala as kusala and akusala as akusala. We should not force ourselves to have more kusala by being in a particular situation.

To sum up: any time is Dhamma time, but reading, listening to tapes, asking questions is valuable. We have to balance our own accumulation with the study of Dhamma. Too much going to the movies and we shall neglect reading and

considering. Too much reading and considering may be forced and too tense. We should be easy going, learning to see dhamma as dhamma and realizing the danger of too much self indulgence. Attachment is constantly moving us away from Dhamma."

The perfection of truthfulness or sincerity is indispensable for the development of paññā. Susie wrote to me that she realized that there are, after seeing, many moments of thinking of stories about people and things. She wrote:

"I certainly see that I get so absorbed that I don't want to hear, read or think about Dhamma. I would rather have my lobha and my story. Pretty natural."

This is sincere. If we try to force ourselves not to be absorbed in stories about people and things there is already desire for result. There is the idea of self who is "doing something" and then we are on the wrong path. Only if we naturally follow all realities, also the moments of being absorbed, we are on the "Middle Way", and then understanding can develop. Do we mind what kind of reality arises? Do we mind lack of sati? We may think that we do not mind but as understanding develops, one knows that one minds a lot. How much or how little we mind indicates to what extent understanding has developed. We can only find out ourselves. When understanding has developed more it does not matter at all which type of reality appears since they are all conditioned.

Jonathan remarked that he is just as happy to know dosa as to know generosity, because in the end all realities have to be known as they are. It is very beneficial to be reminded that we should find out how much we mind about the realities which appear. It teaches us to become more sincere. Without noticing it we may have preference for particular realities and we may neglect being aware of certain other realities. We may want to know seeing but we are unhappy about the thinking which arises on account of what we saw, and thus we may neglect that reality. We dislike dosa, and thus we may neglect that reality when it appears. Khun Sujin said:

"One can benefit from having lobha or dosa. One can see to what extent one has accumulated these realities. Isn't it useful? One can see one's akusala. Otherwise one could not know how much one has. No one likes it, but instead of disliking it why not use it as an opportunity for the development of understanding. It is very beneficial to understand akusala in detail. It always arises and it is there, from morning to night, but it is not understood as such. Paññā can see akusala as a conditioned nāma, so that the idea of self will be eliminated from all akusala of all levels. If there is no understanding of akusala how can one know whether one has less akusala or more? If there is no understanding of akusala can one say that one has developed understanding? "

Several times during the discussions Khun Sujin pointed out that awareness can "slip in" very naturally, and then "slip out", just as naturally as thinking or hearing which slip in and out. They come and go and we do not have to do anything about these realities, since they arise because of conditions. We should understand the nature of anattā of awareness instead of trying to have awareness. Are we glad when there is a moment of awareness? That shows our clinging. There are many conditions necessary for the arising of awareness, such as reading, discussing and considering the characteristic of the reality which appears as not self. When we remember that many conditions are necessary we shall be less inclined to induce sati. If one tries hard to make awareness arise one thinks that there is awareness, but it is not right awareness. We may mistakenly think that there is awareness of realities when we are only thinking about realities such as softness or the experience of softness. In some meditation centers people have to sit for one hour, then walk for one hour, but there is no right understanding of the object of awareness. They may hear the teacher say that softness is rūpa and that the experience of softness is not self. They learn by heart that there are six doorways and they recite for themselves the objects which can appear through these doorways. This can be a level of sati since sati accompanies each kind of kusala citta, but there is no development of direct understanding of the reality appearing at the present moment. Khun Sujin stressed again that whenever sati arises it is time to develop understanding. We have heard this before, but don't we forget? When paññā is being developed

there will be less doubt about awareness. We shall be less inclined to think, "Was there awareness or was it only thinking?" Khun Sujin said:

"There is touching many times, but when awareness arises there is the beginning of understanding of softness as a reality, or of touching as just a moment of experiencing. That moment is not thinking about the idea of softness or thinking about touching, because it is the moment of experiencing very naturally, it is the moment of developing understanding. There is awareness and understanding without any expectation, because it is time to develop understanding when awareness is aware, not when you want to be aware. One knows how much understanding there is when awareness arises."

When Sarah asked what the characteristic of visible object is, Khun Sujin gave a very meaningful answer which is well worth considering:

"A reality. Can anybody do something about it at this moment? It appears now, it has its own characteristic, nobody can change it."

Visible object is just a reality, it is not a person or a tree, as we used to think. When we hear that it is a reality and that we cannot do anything about it, it reminds us of the nature of anattā of visible object. It appears already and understanding of it can be naturally developed. It seems that we see immediately a chair or a flower, but if there were no thinking could there be any idea about visible object? Seeing and thinking arise closely one after the other and gradually their different characteristics can be known.

By developing satipaṭṭhāna one will have a deeper understanding of kamma and vipāka. Someone remarked that it is a relief to understand kamma and vipāka, to know that things have to happen and that it is of no use to try to control one's life. Khun Sujin remarked that when one thinks, "It is kamma, it is vipāka", it is not as precise as the direct understanding of kamma and vipāka which is acquired through awareness of the realities which appear. We say that seeing

and hearing are vipāka, but we just repeat what is in the text. Our understanding is still superficial. When there is awareness and direct understanding of these realities there will be a clearer understanding of what vipāka is. There are different stages of insight, vipassanāñāṇa, and at each stage paññā realizes the nature of the realities which appear more clearly. As paññā develops kamma and vipāka will be seen more clearly. While one is developing understanding one should not expect clear understanding of realities immediately. Khun Sujin remarked that the sharp and keen understanding is the result which will arise later, one should not have expectations. One is on the right way and one does not mind when and where there will be result, it will arise when it is the right time. There can be understanding of seeing right now, one does not have to waste time.

When right understanding is developed in daily life it can condition more patience in the different situations. Situations change all the time and life can be complicated. We may be overburdened by work or we may have problems concerning our relatives. I will quote a conversation about the perfection of patience between Khun Sujin and Sarah.

Khun Sujin: "If there are no difficult situations how does one know that right understanding can cope with them, that it can know the different realities which appear? When there is more understanding of realities as not self there is more patience. When there is patience it can be understood as 'nobody'."

Sarah: "Is there more patience because one tries less to control realities?"

Khun Sujin: "There is less attachment to self."

Sarah: "Will there be less frustration about situations?"

Khun Sujin: "And also less disturbance while one thinks about other people. One understands that there is no permanent being. Sound arises and falls away, it does not belong to any one. When people speak the sound is conditioned by the nāma-kkhandhas and these also fall away. There is only the thinking of a story about people and things all the time. It is the same as when we watch T.V., read the newspaper or dream about things. What is seen is only visible object. When there is patience one is not disturbed by any circumstances.

One may be inclined to think of a self who cannot bear anymore such or such situation. Patience is a condition not to have aversion. We have to cope with many situations. The growth of the perfections must be in daily life, in any situation."

Sarah: "I do not quite understand the perfection of determination or resolution, it seems that it is just thinking."

Khun Sujin: "Thinking and taking action."

Sarah: "Following the kusala way?"

Khun Sujin: "When I go to the Bovornives Temple to give lectures or I am preparing the tapes for the radio I do not have to think about which perfections I am developing. The action shows the perfections.

It is not self but sankhāra-khandha (the khandha of 'activities' or 'formations') which conditions the thinking, 'I will do as much kusala as possible', and also the action in accordance with the thinking. Resolution is not only thinking. One needs the perfection of sincerity or truthfulness in order to conform one's deeds and speech with one's thinking to perform kusala. For example, you have the intention to have right speech but when the situation arises for right speech it depends on whether you have sincerity to act according to your resolution. Sincerity can condition kusala at such a moment. Then you develop kusala not for fame, admiration and other selfish motives."

When we notice the unwholesomeness of someone else we find it difficult to have kusala citta. Khun Sujin asked, "When one thinks of Saddam Hussein, what type of citta is thinking?" The person who has no understanding about kusala and akusala can be object of mettā. When he commits ill deeds he does not know that it is akusala. We can have mettā instead of dosa when there is awareness. Then we do not follow the opinion of others who dislike such a person. When we have aversion about someone's bad deeds we accumulate more akusala.

Khun Sujin had reminded us in India to become like a dustrag which serves for wiping the feet. A dustrag takes up filth and is undisturbed by it. One should become as humble as a dustrag. Sāriputta, who could forgive anybody, no matter

whether that person treated him in an unjust manner, compared himself with a dustrag. He had no conceit. When right understanding has been developed one will cling less to the self, there will be more humbleness. During the discussions Khun Sujin said again:

"I would like to be a dustrag. I follow the way to be one, it is my resolution. Our resolution means that we take action by developing understanding and mettā."

It is beneficial to be reminded again of the dustrag, because humbleness seems to go against our nature. As understanding develops it must lead to letting go of nāmas and rūpas. What we take for self are only impermanent nāmas and rūpas. When their impermanence has been realized can they be as important as before?

We read in the "Vinaya" (VI, Parivāra, Ch XII, The Lesser Collection, 163) how the monk should behave while approaching the Sangha when it is convened for the investigation of a legal question. We read:

... he should approach the Order with a humble mind, with a mind as though it were removing dust. He should be skilled about seats and skilled about sitting down. He should sit down on a suitable seat without encroaching on (the space intended for) monks who are Elders and without keeping newly ordained monks from a seat. He should not talk in a desultory fashion, nor about inferior (worldly) matters. Either he should speak Dhamma himself or should ask another to do so, or he should not disdain the ariyan silence...

The commentary (the Samantapāsādikā) adds to "with a mind as though it were removing dust": "like a towel for wiping the feet." The Vinaya contains many useful reminders about behaviour which laypeople can apply too in their own situation. Some people believe that when they do not harm or hurt others by bad deeds such as killing or stealing, they have good sīla. However, should we not know the akusala cittas which arise in the different situations of our daily life?

Should we not see the danger of the slighter degrees of akusala, since we keep on accumulating it from life to life? It is important to know our akusala more in detail, even when we perform seemingly unimportant actions. When we are in a hurry to take a seat in bus or train, is the citta kusala or akusala? Do we speak about others in a desultory way? Through awareness we can be more careful in our actions and speech, we can become more considerate. Further on in this section of the Vinaya we read:

... he should not speak waving his arms about, he should be unhastening, he should be considerate, he should not be quick tempered, with a mind of loving kindness he should be gentle in speech; merciful, he should be compassionate for welfare; seeking for welfare, he should not be frivolous in speech; limiting his speech, he should be one who masters hostility, and is without irascibility.

When we speak, do we sometimes wave our arms about? We may think that we do not harm others by such a gesture, but should we not find out whether there is at such moments kusala citta or akusala citta?

If we want to become like a dustrag all love of self and conceit must eventually be eradicated. Right understanding should be developed while we are busy, while we are in the company of others. Akusala cittas are bound to arise in our dealings with others and also when we are alone, but when akusala citta appears we have the opportunity to know akusala as it is.

We are already disturbed by a loud noise, for example, the noise of traffic or the sound of a radio which is too loud. Khun Sujin asked Sarah whether she is disturbed by sound and Sarah answered that she is disturbed many times, that it conditions dosa. I shall quote the conversation about this subject:

Khun Sujin: "It depends on understanding, not you, whether hearing can be realized as just a moment of experiencing. When dosa appears there must be understanding too of the dosa as not self. Understanding has to develop on and on, one should not stop with awareness, then one will not come to know the

dosa as not self."

Sarah: "After a moment of awareness there is a lot of thinking and aversion."

Khun Sujin: "That is how one can realize to what extent understanding has been developed. The development can be very short, just one moment, or more than that."

Sarah: "Usually one moment."

Khun Sujin: "That is not enough. One realizes that one has to continue to develop understanding."

There should not be an idea of self who has to continue to develop understanding, but knowing that one moment of awareness now and then is not enough can condition the continuation of development. There may be awareness of sound just for a moment, but, when there is thinking about it with lobha or dosa we stop short, and there is forgetfulness. It is helpful to be reminded that there are so many realities we are still ignorant of. All realities which appear have to be known in order to eliminate the idea of self. It takes more than a lifetime, as Khun Sujin often said.

Letter about Vipassanā¹⁰

the Hague,

Oct. 2, 1991

Our daily life is complicated, we are busy with our work and there are always problems which disturb us. It seems that there is very little opportunity for wholesome deeds. We believe that we see the value of the Dhamma, but we find it hard to apply it. We read in the "Gradual Sayings" (I, Book of the Threes, Ch VI, The Brāhmins, par. 51, Two people):

Now two broken-down old brāhmins, aged, far gone in years, who had reached life's end, one hundred and twenty years of age, came to see the Exalted One... As they sat at one side those brāhmins said this to the Exalted One:

"We are brāhmins, master Gotama, old brāhmins, aged, far gone in years... but we have done no noble deeds, no meritorious deeds, no deeds that can bring assurance to our fears. Let the worthy Gotama cheer us! Let the worthy Gotama comfort us, so that it may be a profit and a blessing to us for a long time!"

"Indeed, you brāhmins are old... but you have done no deeds that can bring assurance to your fears. Indeed, brāhmins, this world is swept onward by old age, by sickness, by death. Since this is so, self-restraint in body, speech and thought (practised) in this life:- let this be refuge, cave of shelter, island of defense, resting-place and support for him who has gone beyond.

Life is swept onward: brief our span of years.

One swept away by old age has no defence.

Then keep the fear of death before your eyes,

And do good deeds that lead to happiness.

The self-restraint of body, speech and thought

In this life practised, meritorious deeds,
these make for happiness when one has died.”

These two brāhmins were sincere, they realized that there are most of the time akusala cittas. Is it not the same for us? There are more often akusala cittas than kusala cittas after seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or the experience of tangible object. We are attached to all the sense objects; attachment, lobha, is following us like a shadow throughout our lives. If the object which is experienced is unpleasant our attachment conditions aversion, dosa.

Khun Sujin spoke about the sutta on the two old brāhmins in the Bovornives Temple, explaining that it deals with our daily life. I would like to quote her explanation:

“Conditions are different for different people. Some people think of themselves all the time, they do not do anything for their relatives or friends. From morning until night they are busy with their work, making a living for their family, and they have to face many problems with regard to their duties. If one does not accumulate kusala so that it becomes one's nature, kusala citta will not arise very easily. One should accumulate kusala when one is in the company of other people, while one is working or while one has free time, otherwise there may not be any opportunity for kusala. When one takes a rest after a busy day there is likely to be lobha. One clings to self, one looks for pleasure, for distraction. Then one thinks that there is no time for kusala.

The two old brāhmins had faced many problems concerning their families. However, this is the case with all of us. We are bound to have moments that we are worried and disturbed. All kinds of problems arise each day. If there are no problems concerning our house, our family, or our work, there are numerous other occasions for worry. We are worried in this life, but we should remember that there was also worry in former lives. These worries belong to the past. Even so the worry in this life cannot stay. There was worry in the past and there will also be worry in future lives. One worries about sickness and pain. Also in former lives there was worry about sickness, although we do not know from

which diseases we were suffering. In this life we may have the same diseases or other ones we did not have before, but there is worry just as there was in past lives during the cycle of birth and death, and there will be worry again in lives to come.

We should not forget to consider again and again eight 'grounds for a sense of urgency' (Vis. IV, 63): birth, ageing, sickness and death, the sufferings connected with unhappy rebirth, the suffering in the past rooted in the cycle of rebirths, the suffering in the future rooted in the cycle of rebirths, and the suffering in the present rooted in the search for nutriment.

We cannot remember the sufferings of the past but they are not different from those arising in the present life, and also those in the future will not be different. If one has a house one is bound to worry about it again and again. If one has duties concerning one's daily work one is bound to worry again and again. Since we have a body we shall worry again and again about our health. We should ponder over the truth concerning the suffering in this life connected with the search for nutriment. We are actually searching food for dukkha. That is why we are continuously going around in the cycle, always travelling, time and again searching food for dukkha.

Whenever we experience a pleasant object through the eyes we continue to search food for dukkha. We search as it were for dukkha in the cycle of birth and death. Whenever there is hearing and we are attached to sound we are already searching for dukkha. Attachment is the cause of dukkha in the cycle. We never stop searching for dukkha. Through the nose we smell fragrant odours, the scent of flowers, of perfums, and then we keep on searching for dukkha all around, everywhere. We search for dukkha when we taste flavour through the tongue, or when we experience tangible object through the bodysense. When we think of different subjects don't we search for dukkha ? We are searching for dukkha everywhere from morning until night. If we don't realize this we cannot be freed from the cycle of birth and death.

Before defilements can be eradicated, before detachment, alobha, can arise and become powerful, so that selfishness can be given up, we should know the characteristic of the cause of dukkha, the food for dukkha. This is lobha, attachment, which searches all around. Lobha is the cause of dukkha whereas

alobha, detachment, is the cause of happiness. When one has less attachment to the objects which appear through the six doors is there not less searching for dukkha? The next life will be again like this life and the cycle will be very long if paññā does not know the characteristics of realities as they are. Paññā should be developed to the degree that it realizes the four noble Truths and enlightenment is attained.

In the next life there will be happiness and sorrow, and this depends on kamma. If one has right understanding about kamma and one has determination for kusala one will not be negligent.”

These were Khun Sujin's words.

The sutta on the two old brāhmins is followed by another sutta which is partly similar. The Buddha said to the two old brāhmins that the world is all ablaze with old age, sickness and death. We then read that he spoke the following verse:

When a house is burning, goods removed therefrom,
 Not which are burned, will be of use to him
 who removes them. So the world is burned
 By old age and death. Then save yourself by giving.
 What is given is well saved.
 The self-restraint of body, speech and mind
 In this life practised, meritorious deeds,
 These make for happiness when one has died.

Through the development of right understanding of nāma and rūpa we shall see the danger of akusala and the benefit of kusala. We shall come to see the disadvantages of being born again and again. At this moment we do not see that life is dukkha. We are searching for dukkha so long as we are attached to nāma

and rūpa. We can develop more understanding of the dukkha in our life by studying what the scriptures and the commentaries state about this subject. Although our understanding of dukkha is only theoretical it is beneficial to study the different aspects of dukkha. The study of the Dhamma in detail is a condition for the growth of paññā. Through the development of satipaṭṭhāna there can gradually be direct understanding of the truth.

The commentary to the "Book of Analysis" (Vibhaṅga), the "Dispeller of Delusion", "Sammohavinodanī", elaborates on the different aspects of dukkha ¹⁶. We read in the section on the "Classification of the Truths" (Ch IV, Saccavibhaṅga) about the many kinds of dukkha. We read about dukkha, suffering (93):

Herein, bodily and mental painful feeling are called "suffering as suffering" (dukkha-dukkha, intrinsic suffering), because of their individual essence, because of their name and because of painfulness. Bodily and mental pleasant feeling are called "suffering in change" (vipariṇāma-dukkha) because of being the cause of the arising of pain through their change. Indifferent feeling and the remaining formations of the three planes are called "suffering in formations" (saṅkhāra-dukkha) because of their being oppressed by rise and fall...

Saṅkhāra dhammas, conditioned dhammas, which arise and fall away cannot be a refuge, thus they are dukkha.

Under the section about birth we read that birth is dukkha. The commentary explains that birth is suffering since it is the basis for the arising of suffering. Birth is the foundation of many kinds of dukkha when it occurs in the unhappy planes, and it also is the foundation of dukkha in happy planes. In the human plane there is suffering rooted in the descent into the womb. The commentary describes the suffering of the unborn being because of heat of the mother's body, because of cold when his mother drinks cold water, because of all the pains when his mother gives birth. In the course of an existence there is pain in one who kills himself, who practises self-torture, who through anger does not eat or

¹⁶ See also Visuddhimagga XVI, 32-61.

who hangs himself, or who undergoes suffering through the violence of others. Old age is dukkha. The commentary explains that it is called suffering as being the basis for both bodily and mental suffering. We read:

...For the person of one who is aged is weak like an aged cart. Great suffering arises in one struggling to stand or to walk or to sit; grief arises in one when his wife and children are not as considerate as before. Thus it should be understood as suffering through being the basis for these two kinds of suffering.

Furthermore:

With leadenness in all one's limbs,
 With all one's faculties declining,
 With vanishing of youthfulness,
 With undermining of one's strength,
 With loss of memory and so on,
 With growing unattractiveness
 To one's own wife and family,
 And then with dotage coming on,
 The pain that mortals undergo,
 Alike of body and of mind-
 Since ageing causes all of this,
 Old age is thus called suffering.

Death is dukkha. The dying moment is only one moment of citta which falls away and then there is another life, but one is no longer the same person. Death is called suffering because it is the basis for both mental and bodily suffering. There is bodily suffering before dying and also mental suffering. When one loses one's possessions one is unhappy, but at death one loses everything, one loses one's body, one loses one's life as this particular person. Death is the greatest

dukkha. We are attached to our possessions and we may be inclined to stinginess. If we remember that at death we have to leave everything behind it can be a condition to be less stingy. Stinginess can condition akusala kamma leading to an unhappy rebirth. "If we want to save things for ourselves we actually save them for Hell", Khun Sujin explained. The commentary states that those who, because of akusala kamma, are destined for an unhappy rebirth, have great fear and grief shortly before dying. At that moment the akusala kamma they committed or an image of Hell can appear to them. Thus we see that death is the basis for bodily and mental suffering.

Sorrow (soka) is dukkha. Sorrow ruins, it rejects and destroys welfare, the commentary states. There are five kinds of ruins or losses: of relatives, of property, of health, of virtue, sīla, and of right view. When one is affected by one of these losses and one is overwhelmed by it one has sorrow. These ruins are part of our daily life. One may lose relatives when robbers kill them, or one may lose them because of a war or because of disease. It is obvious that loss of relatives, of property and of health causes sorrow. As to loss of sīla, this can cause one to worry about it and to suffer greatly. When there is loss of right view, one has wrong view, and this can condition many kinds of bad deeds which will bring unpleasant results. So long as one is attached to wrong view there is no way to become free from the cycle of birth and death. The commentary uses the words "inner sorrow" and "heart-burning". We read: "... for sorrow when it arises burns, consumes the mind like fire and makes one say: 'My mind is on fire. I cannot think of anything.' " Sorrow is compared to a dart which causes pain. It is the basis for both bodily and mental suffering. We read in the commentary that it has the characteristic of inner consuming, that its nature is to completely consume the mind and that its manifestation is continual sorrowing. We read the following verse:

Sorrow like a (poisoned) arrow
penetrates the heart of beings,
And like a spear hot from the fire
most grievously it keeps on burning.

And since it brings on many kinds
 of suffering such as disease,
 Old age and death, this too has thus
 acquired the name of suffering.

In the "Gradual Sayings"(Book of the Twos, Ch I, no. 3, TapaniṃyāSutta) we read about the burning of remorse:

Monks, there are these two things that sear (the conscience). What two?

Herein, a certain one has done an immoral act of body, he has done immoral acts in speech and thought, has omitted moral acts in body, speech and thought. He is seared (with remorse) at the thought: I have done wrong in body, speech and thought. I have left undone the good deed in body, speech and thought. And he burns at the thought of it. These, monks, are the two things that sear (the conscience).

The commentary to this sutta, the "Manorathapūraṇī", illustrates how a bad conscience can cause great sorrow. We read that two brothers killed a cow and divided the flesh. However, the younger brother wanted to have more since he had many children. They had a fight and then the older brother killed the younger one. He realized that he had committed grave akusala kamma and kept on worrying about it. He could find no rest, no matter he was standing or sitting and he could no longer digest his food, so that he finally became only skin and bone. He was afterwards reborn in Hell as a result of his akusala kamma.

Lamentation (parideva) is dukkha. It is the basis for both bodily and mental suffering. We read:

Struck by sorrow's dart a man laments,
 Yet thus makes worse the pain born of dry throat

And lips and palate, and unbearable-
So the Blessed One called lamentation pain.

Pain is dukkha. Both bodily and mental pain are dukkha, because each of these is the basis for both bodily and mental suffering. When one is afflicted by bodily pain one also suffers mentally. When one is overwhelmed by grief one may bring bodily pain upon oneself by thumping one's breast or even by committing suicide.

Woe (upāyāsa) is dukkha because it is also the basis for bodily and mental suffering. According to the commentary, it has the characteristic of frustration, its nature is moaning and it manifests itself as dejection.

Furthermore, the commentary elaborates on the kinds of dukkha which are: association with the undesired, separation from the desired and not getting what one wishes. These are also the basis for both bodily and mental suffering.

The five khandhas of clinging in short are dukkha. The commentary explains:

In the description of the khandhas as objects of clinging, "in short" (sankhittena) is said with reference to the manner of teaching. For suffering cannot be summed up in short as so many hundred kinds of suffering, or so many thousand kinds of suffering, or so many hundred thousand kinds of suffering; but it can by the manner of teaching. Therefore he spoke thus, summing up the teaching in short in this way: "There is no other suffering at all, but in short the five khandhas as objects of clinging are suffering."

According to the commentary the different kinds of suffering are generated in the five khandhas as grass is on the ground or fruits and flowers are on trees. Dukkha is inherent in the five khandhas of clinging.

The fact that, in short, the five khandhas of clinging are dukkha reminds us of the ultimate truth. There is no being in the ultimate sense, there are only the five khandhas, nāma and rūpa. They arise and then fall away immediately and thus

they are unsatisfactory, one cannot take one's refuge in them. We may say that there is nothing desirable in life, that life is dukkha, but have we realized the truth of dukkha? Right understanding of the reality appearing at this moment should be developed, because this is the only way to know the truth about nāma and rūpa.

Through the development of satipaṭṭhāna there will be more understanding of cause and result in our life, of kamma and vipāka, and more understanding of our defilements which are conditioned by our accumulations. When there is more understanding there will be less dukkha. We usually react with akusala citta when we experience pleasant and unpleasant objects. We are disturbed by the eight "worldly conditions" of gain and loss, praise and blame, honour and dishonour, bodily well-being and misery. It is kamma which is the cause of our birth and which produces the sense organs through which we experience pleasant and unpleasant objects. Seeing, hearing and the other sense-impressions are results of kamma. If it were not for kamma there could not be seeing, hearing or the experience of tangible object at this moment. We cannot see the deeds committed in the past which produce results now but we should remember that we are heirs to kamma. We have theoretical understanding of kamma and vipāka but we do not apply this knowledge in our life. We keep on clinging to the "self" and we wonder why this or that unpleasant experience had to happen to "me". We usually forget that whatever happens has to happen because of conditions. When we suffer a loss there are sorrow, lamentation and woe, we complain and we are sorry for ourselves. When such moments arise there can be mindfulness of them so that we learn that they are only conditioned realities. When paññā has developed to the degree that the first stage of insight can arise nāma is known as nāma and rūpa as rūpa, their different characteristics are clearly distinguished. This stage can only be reached when understanding has been developed of all kinds of nāma and rūpa which appear through the six doors. When a stage of insight arises there is no self, no world, there are only nāma and rūpa which are conditioned. With each stage of insight there is also a growth of understanding of the "ownership of kamma", of kamma and result (kammassakata ñāṇa). The development of satipaṭṭhāna is the only way to be able to apply in daily life one's knowledge of kamma and result. Instead of reacting to the worldly conditions with akusala citta there will be more conditions to react wisely. Eventually there

can be more patience and equanimity towards the adversities of life.

Letter about Vipassanā 11

We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (I, Sagāthā-vagga, Ch I, The Devas, 3, The Sword Suttas, § 1, By impending Sword) that a deva said to the Buddha:

As one downsmitten by impending sword,
As one whose hair and turban are aflame,
So let the bhikkhu, mindful and alert,
Go forth, all worldly passions left behind.

The Exalted One said:

As one downsmitten by impending sword,
As one whose hair and turban are aflame,
So let the bhikkhu, mindful and alert,
Go forth, leaving personality-belief behind.

Just as the person who has been struck by a sword or whose hair and turban are aflame will not be neglectful but apply energy to remedy his dangerous situation, evenso should the bhikkhu not be neglectful, but mindful and alert. The Buddha repeated what the deva said, but he changed one line, and this change is very meaningful. The deva spoke about subduing the sense pleasures, but so long as they have not been eradicated, will one be bound by clinging to them. They cannot be eradicated when there is still the wrong view of self. We read in the commentary to this sutta, the “Sāratthappakāsinī”, that the Buddha, in view of this, wanted to change the deva’s verse, using the same similes but applying them to the magga-citta of the sotāpanna (the streamwinner, who attains the first stage of enlightenment), which citta eradicates personality-belief, sakkāya diṭṭhi.

We may easily overlook the subtle point of this sutta. We understand in theory that first of all wrong view has to be eradicated before finally, at the third stage of enlightenment, the stage of the anāgāmi (non-returner), clinging to sense pleasures can be eradicated. Even though we know this, we are still inclined to worry about our attachment to sense pleasures instead of knowing its characteristic when it appears. This is the only way to finally be able to eradicate it. “Should we hate our akusala? It is just a reality, it arises”, Khun Sujin reminded Sarah and Jonothan while they were in Bangkok. They recorded their conversations with Khun Sujin and I shall give an account of the contents of these tapes.

Khun Sujin explained that she does not think that she should get rid of all defilements now. She remarked:

“I do not think, ‘defilements are so ugly’, they are just realities. There should be understanding of them. People want to get rid of all defilements but they do not have any understanding of them. Why should our first objective not be right understanding? I do not understand why people are so much irritated by their defilements. One is drawn to the idea of self all the time, while one thinks about it whether one has less defilements or more. There is no understanding but merely thinking of kusala and akusala as ‘ours’. So long as there is ignorance there must be different degrees of akusala. We should just develop understanding of whatever reality appears. At the moment of developing understanding one is not carried away by thoughts about the amount of one’s defilements, wondering about it how many defilements one has or whether they are decreasing. Just be aware instantly!”

We may not notice that we think of kusala and akusala as “ours”, but the idea is there, deep in our mind. Khun Sujin’s reminders can help us to consider more thoroughly what motivates our actions, speech and thoughts. Is it not mostly clinging to ourselves? Sarah remarked that when she reflects on lobha she has dosa and that this “spoils the fun”. Khun Sujin answered:

“That is only reflection, not the understanding of the characteristic which is not self. Who could change the characteristic of attachment. Understanding should be developed in a natural way. This is a relief. Even if lobha arises again, we should realize it as only a reality. You can understand the characteristic of lobha we talk about a great deal. It’s nature is non-self. This way of developing understanding is the most effective way. Then there is no attachment or aversion towards the object which appears. You should not stop pleasure, it is not ‘you’.”

The object which appears is the object of which understanding should be developed. When understanding is being developed there is no attachment nor dislike of the object; no attachment when the object is kusala, no dislike when the object is akusala. We do not have to feel guilty when we enjoy ourselves, the enjoyment is only a reality. When we think of our defilements it is actually thinking of ourselves in a particular way all the time. Did we notice how busy we are with “ourselves”?

We develop understanding and at times there is some awareness, but when we have problems in our daily life we become frustrated and we find it difficult to be aware of realities. Khun Sujin said:

“When there is no awareness there has not been enough listening and not enough intellectual understanding of the objects of insight. One may think that it is enough to know that there are nāma and rūpa, but their characteristics have to be realized. Knowing the details of realities can help one to see their nature of anattā. This is very important for the growth of paññā. One has to become ‘a person who has listened a lot’, in Pāli: bahussutta, in order to attain enlightenment.”

Sarah asked Khun Sujin questions about the object of right understanding and about details one has to know. I shall quote from their conversation occurring during a traffic jam in Bangkok which lasted for hours:

Khun Sujin: “One has to know the details of each of the six doorways, of the way realities are conditioned, of realities as dhātus, elements, of the āyatanas, bases or sense-fields ¹⁷. The Buddha taught for fortyfive years about nāma and rūpa. Sāriputta understood as soon as he heard the word ‘dhamma’, he understood realities as nāma and rūpa. For us it is different, we have to listen again and again and to consider what nāma is and what rūpa is. Seeing right now is an experience, it is just a reality. One has to consider and listen and discuss a great deal about these subjects.”

Sarah: “We have considered seeing and discussed about the details of realities a great deal, I wonder how much more we should hear about it.”

Khun Sujin: “Until awareness is aware with understanding right now. That is why the Buddha taught for fortyfive years about nāma and rūpa. The Abhidhamma is the essence of his teachings. He taught about paramattha dhammas so that one can see the difference between paramattha dhammas and concepts. He taught the conditions for realities. Knowing which cetasikas accompany citta helps one to see the nature of anattā. It is amazing that there are so many conditions needed for one moment of experiencing visible object, and then that moment is gone completely. It is all very intricate, not everyone can understand this instantly.”

Sarah: “It never is enough, one can always know the object more precisely and in a more detailed way.”

Khun Sujin: “Otherwise we underestimate the Buddha’s wisdom, we may think that he used just common, ordinary words. He taught us, so that by listening and considering more and more we could one day become a sotāpanna ¹⁸. By gradually developing understanding we can acquire full understanding of realities which appear. Right understanding of visible object and seeing is the only way to eradicate the latent tendencies of ‘I see’, and ‘me’, which are there all the time. Whenever there is feeling, it is ‘me’ again. The Buddha taught about five khandhas ¹⁹, he taught in many different ways in order to help people to

¹⁷ The five senses and the mind, the five sense objects and mental objects have been classified as āyatanas.

¹⁸ There are four stages of enlightenment: the stage of the sotāpanna (streamwinner), the sakadāgāmi (once-returner), the anāgāmi (non-returner) and the arahat, the perfected one. At each stage defilements are progressively eradicated until they are all eradicated at the attainment of arahatship.

¹⁹ Conditioned realities are classified as five khandhas or aggregates: the khandha of rūpa, physical phenomena,

consider more, to understand more, so that, when there is awareness, right understanding can gradually develop.“

Sarah: “When there is no awareness we become impatient. Why is there not more awareness?”

Khun Sujin: ”There are not enough pāramīs (perfections) accumulated.”

Sarah: ”Which pāramīs?”

Khun Sujin: “All pāramīs are needed. We should not be careless about them and we should not neglect any one of them. Paññā is needed above all, the other nine pāramīs are the “attendants” of paññā. Without paññā the other pāramīs cannot develop.”

We read in the commentary to the “Cariyāpiṭaka”, the “Paramatthadīpanī”, that the aspiration (to become a Buddha) and also great compassion and skilful means are conditions for the pāramīs. We read:

“Therein, skilful means is the wisdom which transforms dāna (and the other nine virtues) into requisites for enlightenment.”

At the moment there is right understanding of realities there is no clinging to “my kusala”. However, we usually cling, we want to be “the good person”. We find that it feels better to have kusala citta, and then there is clinging again. When we observe the five precepts or eight precepts, there is likely to be clinging, do we want to be better than others who do not observe precepts? When we think of the development of mettā, we may be wondering how much mettā we have already, we may try to “measure” it. Then we are again thinking of “my kusala”, instead of developing mettā. We should not underestimate the accumulation of defilements. We do not notice the lobha that clings to “self”, that wants the “self” to be good. Khun Sujin remarked that when there is no understanding there is lobha.

of vedanā, feeling, of saññā, perception or memory, of saṅkhāra, mental factors or cetasikas, except feeling and perception, and viññāṇa, consciousness.

When we try to have mettā instead of anger, is there clinging to “self”? Jonathan said that when he is about to lose his temper he tries to be patient. It is unpleasant for the people around oneself if one gives in to anger. We may see that anger is useless and then sati can arise which prevents the arising of anger. There is no “self” who tries, but sati which performs its function. This is one level of sati but it is not sati of satipaṭṭhāna accompanying paññā which sees realities as nāma and rūpa, not self. When there is wrong view of self who tries to stop anger it does not work. Khun Sujin remarked:

“One should not cling to the idea of ‘I have lots of anger, I try not to have it.’ Then there is only thinking with the idea of self all the time. I don’t mind what level of akusala will arise, even if it is strong anger. It arises and then it is gone, it cannot stay. What about the present moment? I always encourage people to have right understanding instead of trying to control with the idea of self. If that is the case they will never reach the level of understanding realities, not even understanding based on reflection about nāma and rūpa. There can be awareness of anger you have talked about a great deal. When it arises and performs its function it is there for you to see its characteristic as ‘just a reality’, instead of thinking about it.”

Sarah was wondering whether it would not be useful sometimes to set rules for one’s behaviour. She was wondering how one can correct unwholesome speech. Khun Sujin reminded her that whatever one is doing or not doing, it is not self. Don’t we forget that all the time? We know that we have not eradicated the clinging to the idea of “self”, but we do not realize how deeply rooted wrong view is. Khun Sujin said:

“Even when one wants to set rules there is no self, it is only thinking. The only way to get rid of the self is to understand all situations. One should not set any rules, there should only be development of understanding of realities. Unwholesome speech can be corrected by paññā which sees its danger and that is one level of sati. Another level is sati of satipaṭṭhāna. The most precious

moment is the moment of being aware. If one forces oneself, sets rules or clings to a certain practice it does not help one to understand this moment, one's thinking, seeing or hearing."

Instead of being aware of this moment we are carried away by our thinking of stories about other people or events which took place. We think of other people's lobha, dosa and moha and this conditions aversion. We cannot change someone else because each moment is conditioned. Instead of thinking of other people's faults, we should ask ourselves: what about our own citta which thinks? We may be troubled by thinking about a bad experience in the past but then we need right understanding to start anew. "Forget yesterday", Khun Sujin said.

"Satipaṭṭhāna saves one from akusala moments", she remarked. If there can be awareness of our own akusala which arises, the object is a paramattha dhamma, and there is no involvement in concepts. We have heard this before, but we have to hear it again and again before it sinks in. Our goal is the understanding of the reality appearing at this moment. We do not go any further than this moment. If we think of problems or situations there is no understanding of the reality appearing at this moment, Khun Sujin said.

Through right understanding of nāma and rūpa we shall be more convinced of the truth of kamma and vipāka. This moment of seeing or hearing is result of kamma, a deed done in the past. We cannot know which kamma of the past produces result at a particular moment, but it is helpful to know that a pleasant or unpleasant result is conditioned by a deed we performed. Nobody can prevent the result from taking place. We cannot blame other people. When we, for example, are disturbed by the noise of a radio or the noise made by the neighbours' children, we can remember that hearing is vipāka and that thinking with aversion is akusala citta which arises at another moment. Then the object of citta is the present reality and we are not carried away by thinking of concepts. When confidence in the truth of kamma and vipāka arises there will be less fear and worry. If we cannot sleep we may worry about it, but we should know that this is conditioned. When we are fast asleep, without dreaming, there are bhavanga-cittas (life-continuum) which do not experience the objects impinging on the senses and the mind-door, and these cittas are results of kamma. Khun

Sujin said to Sarah and Jonothan:

“When you understand dhamma as dhamma, you see that everything occurs because of conditions. We fall asleep and get up again, because of conditions. When there are problems, it is because of conditions. There are just different realities, and even though realities appear, ignorance cannot understand them. We take realities for ‘something’ all the time. But awareness can ‘flash in’ any time, because of conditions, and that is the right awareness.”

Khun Sujin said that one actually lives alone and that it is most helpful to realize this. We have heard this before, but it becomes more meaningful when there is more understanding of the difference between the moment the object of citta is a paramattha dhamma and the moment we are thinking of a concept of a person or a thing. If we are disturbed by other people it seems that there are people, but what is the reality? Only a citta which thinks. When we are back to the present reality, the paramattha dhamma, we know that we are living alone, and such a moment is beneficial. There are only *nāma* and *rūpa*, no people. When we are thinking, we live in our own world of thinking. No matter in the past, in this life or the next life, one always lives alone.

During the discussions Khun Sujin stressed that we should see dhamma as dhamma. We may say that everything is dhamma, just a reality, but right understanding has to grow through awareness of realities, so that they can be seen as just dhammas, no person or thing, no self. We have to hear this again and again, but Sāriputta, when he heard a few sentences about realities, understood immediately and realized dhamma as dhamma. He had accumulated *paññā* for aeons. We read in the “Vinaya” (Book of the Discipline, Part 4, Mahāvagga I, 23, 3-5) that Sāriputta asked Assaji what the doctrine was the Buddha had taught him. Assaji answered that he was not long gone forth and could therefore not teach dhamma in full, but only briefly. Sāriputta asked him to explain the meaning of it, saying that he did not need a great elaboration. We read:

Then the venerable Assaji uttered this terse expression of dhamma to the wanderer Sāriputta:

“Those dhammas which proceed from a cause (hetu), of these the Truthfinder has told the cause.

And that which is their stopping (nirodho)- the great recluse has such a doctrine.”

When the wanderer Sāriputta had heard this terse expression of dhamma, there arose dhamma-vision, dustless, stainless, that “Whatever is of the nature to uprise all that is of the nature to stop.” He said: “If this is indeed dhamma, you have penetrated as far as the sorrowless path, unseen, neglected for many myriads of aeons.”

Sāriputta understood directly the four noble Truths: dukkha, the cause of dukkha, its ceasing and the way leading to its ceasing. We have intellectual understanding of the four noble Truths, but they can be directly realized without having to think about them. We cannot imagine how this is possible so long as paññā has not been developed to that degree. Seeing now arises because of conditions, it is part of the cycle of birth and death. Seeing has to fall away, thus it is dukkha. Sāriputta immediately understood that right understanding of the reality arising at the present moment leads to the elimination of ignorance and craving which are the conditions for being in the cycle of birth and death, the conditions for seeing, hearing and the other realities which arise. He understood the reality of the present moment as dhamma, arising because of conditions. He penetrated its characteristic of anattā.

For us it is difficult to see dhamma as dhamma because ignorance covers up the truth. We read in the commentary to the “Book of Analysis” (the “Vibhaṅga”, the second book of the Abhidhamma), in the “Dispeller of Delusion” (Sammohavinodanī, I, Ch VI, Classification of the Structure of Conditions, 140) about ignorance which is opposed to understanding. We read:

That is to say, knowledge is understanding. It makes known and plain the four

Truths with each meaning and each cause. But this ignorance when it arises does not allow that (understanding) to make that (dhamma) known and plain; thus, because of its opposition to knowledge, it is unknowing. Also seeing is understanding. It sees quality. But ignorance when it arises does not allow it to see, thus it is unseeing....

We then read that whenever ignorance arises it does not allow understanding to penetrate, to grasp and to rightly consider the truth. Thus, each time it arises it blocks and hinders the operation of understanding. This text reminds us of the activity of ignorance which is unnoticed, because when there is ignorance we do not know that there is ignorance. It is very treacherous.

We need to develop understanding of paramattha dhammas life after life, in order to see dhamma as dhamma, to see it as anattā. We cling to the idea of “our whole body”, but when there is touching, hardness is the dhamma which appears. The idea of the whole body is only in one’s memory. Khun Sujin said:

“When there is touching, where is your head, where are your legs? Only in your memory. When there is touching you may not realize it as merely a moment of experiencing an object. Deep in your mind there is still the idea of ‘something’. For instance, when you touch something in the dark you like to know what it is, thus there is still ‘something’. There are only six doors, and one object is appearing at a time. It does not stay, waiting for you to touch it.”

Several conditioning factors are needed for the experience of hardness, such as the rūpa which is hardness and the rūpa which is bodysense. Also these conditioning factors are themselves conditioned. Hardness and softness are characteristics of the Element of solidity, one of the four Great Elements and this is conditioned by the other three Elements of cohesion, heat and motion arising together with it. The rūpa which is bodysense is produced by kamma. The experience of tangible object through the bodysense is vipāka, the result of kamma. We see how intricate the combination of different conditioning factors are; they are just there for a moment of experiencing hardness. We cannot direct

the coming together of these factors and none of them can last. They are only present for an extremely short while, they are insignificant dhammas.

Some people want to concentrate on rūpas of the body. By focussing on one point of the body they believe that they can notice the rūpa which is bodysense. The bodysense is all over the body but when tangible object impinges on the rūpa which is bodysense, it does so only on one point. That extremely small particle is then the rūpa which is the physical base for body-consciousness, and it is also the doorway through which tangible object is experienced. When a rūpa like heat or hardness is impinging on the bodysense it can hurt and painful feeling arises. But can we directly experience the rūpa which is the bodydoor, arising and falling away where there is impingement at that moment? It falls away immediately. It is useless to try to find out where the impingement was. Then we continue to think of realities and there is no awareness of other realities which present themselves, such as seeing or visible object. We cannot help it that we think of the part of the body which hurts, but we should know that this is only thinking, a conditioned reality. If one tries to focus on one part of the body, one should ask oneself, what about this moment? If we are aware of what appears at this moment there is only that dhamma, and there is no need to find out where there is impingement on the bodysense. Khun Sujin explained that one does not own anything:

“One thinks of one’s whole body and of one’s possessions as belonging to oneself, but there isn’t anything one owns, not even visible object in this room. It arises, appears and falls away. The succession of different rūpas which are visible object conditions the concept of ‘something’. We can see how fast citta arises and falls away, it can lure us like a magician. If we do not know this there is ‘I’ and ‘mine’ all the time. Does sound belong to anyone? If it is your voice, does it belong to you?

Visible object is just a rūpa out of twentyeight rūpas. It is the only reality that can be seen. We find our thoughts about visible object so important, but visible object is only a kind of rūpa. When one has understanding of visible object and of thinking, one sees the difference between the absolute truth and the conventional truth. One knows how and when conventional truth begins.”

When we have more understanding of the difference between seeing and paying attention to shape and form, it will be clearer when the object of citta is just one reality, appearing through one of the six doors, and when the object is a concept. In the absolute sense there is no owner of anything, but does it then make sense to try to acquire possessions? There was a discussion about this topic in the house of our friends Ivan and Ell. Ivan used to think that when one contemplates Dhamma one should have fewness of wishes. Then there is no need to expand one's business in order to make more money. Now he understands that satipaṭṭhāna should be developed in a natural way, that one should not try to change one's life style. If one is a layman one should not try to live the monk's life, a life of contentment with little. Khun Sujin said:

“We have lobha, no matter whether we work or do not work. We work because we were born. Working is only seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. You don't have to change yourself or prepare yourself for Dhamma, you don't have to devote all your time to it, but develop understanding of this very moment, in order to see it as just dhamma. Seeing and visible object are just dhammas, everything in one's life is dhamma. But one does not see dhamma, one does not understand dhamma as it is. One tries to spend time on dhamma, to change one's life, but just now there is dhamma. If we talk more about realities or dhammas and we begin to understand dhamma as it is, then, at times, awareness can arise for a very short moment. That is the true awareness. If you try to devote your time to dhamma, and you sit, trying to watch realities, true dhamma does not appear. It is awareness which can be aware if there is enough understanding of realities. We should not force ourselves to have awareness, then there is lobha again. Dhamma is very natural, no need to reserve time for it or prepare oneself for it. One needs more understanding as condition for awareness to arise any time by itself. Then it is the right sati, the sammā-sati.”

We may wonder whether watching T.V. would hinder the arising of sati. While

we watch there are many conditions for attachment, or, when the movie is frightening we have fear. Khun Sujin said about this: “Each move is conditioned, that is the meaning of anattā.” In other words, if we want to watch T.V. this wish is conditioned already. Also while we watch there is seeing, hearing or thinking, one reality at a time. Realities appear, no matter whether we watch or do not watch T.V. There is one world at a time appearing through one of the six doorways. These six worlds should be separated until there is no self. Realities appear because of their own conditions, not because of our wish. Khun Sujin said:

“Hardness is already there as object of which right understanding can be developed. Visible object appears. There is no need to do anything.”

When Sarah asked why we always have so much lobha, Khun Sujin answered:

“It is the function of lobha to cling, that is why there is clinging. We cannot change its characteristic or function. This reminds us that lobha is dhamma, it arises because of its own conditions, it is there as object of which right understanding can be developed.”

The Buddha taught the monks, the nuns and the layfollowers, men and women, to develop satipaṭṭhāna, each in their own situation and each following their own life style, so that they would see dhamma as dhamma. We read in the “Gradual Sayings” (Book of the Eights, Ch VII, § 10, Earthquakes) that the Buddha, while he was at Cāpāla Shrine, gave Ānanda three times the opportunity to ask him to live on for his full life-span. Ānanda did not ask him to do so, since his heart was possessed by Māra. After Ānanda had left, Māra came and said to the Buddha that he should now pass away. After his enlightenment the Buddha had said to Māra that he would not pass away until his disciples were able to practise the Dhamma and to proclaim it. Since this was now the case Māra asked him to pass away. The Buddha answered that he would pass

away after three months. We read that he “cast away the sum of life” and that there was a great earthquake. In this sutta we are reminded of what is to be expected of the Buddha’s followers. The Buddha had, after his enlightenment, said to Māra:

I shall not pass away, O Evil One, until my monks shall be disciples, learned, trained and courageous, who have attained peace from bondage, who are erudite, Dhamma-bearers, perfect in righteousness of Dhamma, perfect in the right practice, who live in accordance with Dhamma- till they have taken Dhamma as their teacher and can proclaim it, teach it and make it known, can establish it, open it, analyze it and make it plain to others- till they can confute any counter-teaching which has arisen, and which may well be confuted by Dhamma, and can set forth sublime Dhamma.

We read that the Buddha had said exactly the same about the nuns and the layfollowers, men and women. The commentary to this sutta, the “Manorathapūraṇī, explains “erudite”, in Pāli: bahussutta, as having listened to the three Piṭakas (Parts of the teachings). The commentary then adds that one is bahussutta as to “pariyatti”, the theory, and as to “pativedha”, the realisation of the truth. One should be “Dhamma-bearer” in both ways. This reminds us that it is not enough to only listen and read. There should also be the application of what one has heard so that the truth can be directly experienced. The disciples should be perfect in righteousness of Dhamma. We read that the commentary states:”They practise the Way of vipassanā which is the Dhamma fitting to be ariyan Dhamma.”

The Buddha’s followers should take Dhamma as their teacher. Khun Sujin reminded Sarah and Jonothan again that we should not be dependant on someone else. She said:

“Take Dhamma as your teacher, do not depend too much on others. The understanding of realities depends on your own consideration. I do not like to depend on others. It has to be my own struggle to understand the teachings. You

do not need someone else to tell you how much understanding you have. This present object will tell you.”

There is visible object now. We can check whether it is understood as just dhamma or whether there is still “something” in it. Nobody else has to tell us. Dhamma is our teacher.
