

## PREFACE

It is a truism to say that nobody likes suffering and everybody seeks happiness. In this world of ours, human beings are making all possible efforts for prevention and alleviation of suffering, and enjoyment of happiness. But nevertheless their efforts are mainly directed to the physical well-being by material means. Happiness is, after all, conditioned by attitudes of mind, and yet only a few persons give real thought to mental development, fewer still who practice mind training in earnest.

To illustrate this point, attention may be drawn to the commonplace habits of cleaning and tidying up one's body, the endless pursuits of food, clothing and shelter, and the tremendous technological progress achieved for raising the material standard of living, for improving the means of transport and communications, and prevention and cure of diseases and ailments. All these strivings are, in the main, concerned with the cure and nourishment of the body. It must be recognised that they are essential.

However, these human efforts and achievements cannot possibly bring about the alleviation or eradication of suffering associated with old age and disease, domestic infelicity and economic troubles, in short, with nonsatisfaction of wants and desires. Sufferings of this nature are not overcome by material means; they can be overcome only by mind training and mental development.

Then, it becomes clear that the right way must be sought for training, stabilizing and purifying the mind. This way is found in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, a well-known discourse of the Buddha, delivered well over 2500 years ago. The Buddha declared thus:

"This is the sole way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destroying of pain and grief, for reaching the right path, for the realization of *nirvana*, namely the four foundations of mindfulness."

The four foundations of mindfulness are (1) the contemplation of the body, (2) the contemplation of feelings,

(3) the contemplation of mind, and (4) the contemplation of mind objects.

Obviously, this way should be followed by those in search of happiness, with a view to getting rid of the impurities of mind, which are the causes of their sufferings.

If one were asked whether he wishes to overcome sorrow and lamentation, he would surely say, "Yes." Then, he, nay everybody, should practice the four foundations of mindfulness.

If one were asked whether he wishes to destroy pain and grief, he would not hesitate to reply in the affirmative. Then, he, everybody, should practice the four foundations of mindfulness.

If one were asked whether he wishes to reach the right path and realize *nirvana*, the state of being absolutely free from old age, decay and death and from all sufferings, he would certainly give an affirmative answer. Then, he, everybody, should practice the four foundations of mindfulness.

How shall one practice the four foundations of mindfulness? In the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, the Buddha said, "Dwell practicing body contemplation, feeling contemplation, mind contemplation and mind objects contemplation." Without the guidance of a well-qualified teacher, however, it will not be easy for an average person to practice these contemplations in a systematic manner in order to make progress towards development of concentration and insight.

Having undergone myself a most intensive practical course of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation under the personal guidance of the Most Venerable Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw of Thaton, I imparted the technique of meditation ever since 1938 and gave personal instruction as well as through books and lectures to several thousand of yogis. In compliance with the requests of those of the earlier batches, who had benefited by my personal instructions, I wrote a treatise on *vipassanā* or insight meditation, in two volumes. The treatise was completed in the year 1944 and has been published in seven editions. In all the chapters, except in

Chapter V, dissertation and discussions are made with references to Pāli texts, commentaries and subcommentaries. In Chapter V, I chose to write in common language for easy understanding by my pupils as to how they should begin and then proceed step by step, stating full the salient features, in line with *Visuddhimagga* and some other texts.

This present book is the English translation of the said Chapter V. The first fourteen pages of the Burmese original were translated into English in 1954 by U Pe Thin, an old pupil of mine, for the benefit of those who came from abroad to our Meditation Centre. Pages 15 to 51 of the Burmese original were translated into English, in compliance with the wish of the Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera, by Myanaung U Tin, a disciple and *dayaka* of mine. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the area of our Meditation Centre, Thathana Yeikthā, is nearly twenty-four acres, with over fifty buildings to house the meditation teachers and yogis, monks as well as lay, both men and women.

The Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera put this translation in to final literary shape, after obtaining confirmation of his valuable suggestions. U Pe Thin's translation was revised by and improved upon, as to style, by Miss Mary Mc Collum, an American Buddhist lady. She practiced *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation under the guidance of Anagarika Munindra at Burmese Vihara, Bodhi-Gaya, Bihar, India. Anagarika Munindra stayed with us for a considerable period. He sent her revision to us for perusal and approval. When done, it was forwarded to the Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera. This book is, therefore, the coordination and combined publication of the aforesaid two translations, with my preface added thereto.

Chapter V of my Burmese treatise, as mentioned earlier, was written in common linguistic style. I should like to say here that the doctrinal terms found in this book without Pāli names are fully explained in "Progress of Insight," translated from my Pāli treatise into English by the Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera. His book, *The Heart of*

*Buddhist Meditation*, is itself a veritable mine of information and instruction on this subject of vital importance.

In conclusion, I would like (1) to say that I deeply appreciate the services of those who have done the translations and revisions as well as of those who are responsible for the publication of this book, (2) to urge the readers of this book not to be content with theoretical knowledge contained therein but to apply that knowledge to systematic and sustained practice, and (3) to express my earnest wish that they gain insight soon and enjoy all the benefits vouchsafed by the Buddha in the preamble of the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

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