

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST EDITION (EXTRACTS)

The original Burmese version of this book of Dhamma was written by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma. This has been painstakingly translated into English as is presented now, by a well-known and prominent writer U Htin Fatt (Pen-name Maung Htin), who is one of the members of the Mahāsi Translation Committee of this Sāsana Yeiktha. The book is intended for foreign yogis in particular for this benefit. It is hoped that they will find the text of this translation with its original style of expression and essence truly preserved, really enlightening.

The leading item in this treatise is one of the famous Suttas relating to an incident that occurred on the eve of Buddha's mahā-parinibbāna when an ascetic by the name of Subhadda called on the Buddha and made queries to find out the truth of the Dhamma. In answer to these queries, Buddha with deep compassion elucidated the Dhamma and the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path as the only way leading to the end of suffering and the cessation of the round of rebirths. Buddha discovered and called it the Middle Path

(majjhima patipadā) between the two extremes, namely, indulgence in sensual pleasures which is one extreme, and self-torture in the form of severe ascetism-harmful, painful and deplorable, is the other. The Path comprising the eight steps signify eight mental factors. They are interdependent and interrelated. Taken in all they constitute three essential groups of spiritual development Sīla (Morality), Samādhi (Mental concentration), and Paññā (Insight-wisdom).

Buddha has pointed out that a living being is the Aggregates of five factors, one of them being material and the remaining four psychic. They are the tangible corporeal matter-the physical body, the sensations, the perceptions, the tendency formations (volitions) and the consciousness, and are known as panca-khandā or Five Aggregates. In fact, it is these five aggregates that the Buddha has summed up all the mental and physical phenomena of existence.

In this book "Nibbāna via the Noble Eightfold Path", it is clearly manifested that all sufferings arising out of craving for life can be eradicated by perfect training of the mind through Vipassanā Bhāvanā-which is aimed at direct insight

Vipassanā Bhāvanā-which is aimed at direct insight into the true nature of reality. Vipassanā meditation means observing every phenomenon occurring at the six-sense doors. Through such meditation, the true nature of the five aggregates, or mind and body is grasped and seen in the light of the characteristics of Impermanence, Unsatisfactoriness and Non-Self (*Anicca, Dukkha* and *Anatta*). Such seeing or knowledge is known as Insight (Vipassanā-ñāṇa). The process of gaining various stages of Ñāṇa has been vividly described therein brief.

This method - the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path has been preserved and handed down to us in the form of written texts known as scriptures and by a long line of Arahats and samaṇas in an unbroken continuity since the life time of Buddha well over 2500 years ago.

In reading through this book, one is given to understand very clearly that for a person without right or correct understanding and faith, no progress can be made for attaining true wisdom in his right effort in the exercise of meditation.

Eminently well versed in scriptures (pariyatti) as well as in the field of practical vipassanā, the

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Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, the Author, is capable of giving us inspiring guidance as to how liberation from *dukkha* can be achieved. This is simply due to his great gift as a distinguished teacher of *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation. In the text of this book the process of purification or refinement of the moral, mental and spiritual perceptions has been explained with lucidity in a very simple and easy way. To Buddhists, the correct way to overcome all sufferings and attain the ultimate goal of Nibbāna is to follow the right Path. This is the only way for purification of the mind, for the overcoming of all vices and defilements of mind and for the cessation of all sufferings. According to Buddhism, realization of Nibbāna through mindfulness is the ultimate objective. *Nibbāna*, in a nutshell, is the supreme state of being absolutely free from all *kilesās* (defilements) and all kinds of sufferings from rebirth.

May all beings be happy.

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