

# Momentary Concentration And Purification of Mind

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(Ceylon)

(Abbreviations: A. = *Anguttara Nikaya*; M. = *Manorathapurani (Anguttara Nikaya Commentary)*; D. = *Digha Nikaya*; S. = *Samyutta Nikaya*; Vis. Mag. = *Visuddhimagga (P.T.S. ed)*; Pm. = *Paramatthamanjusa (Visuddhimagga Commentary, Maha Tika; P.P. = Path of Purification (Nanamoli Thera's translation)*)

THERE are three kinds of concentration mentioned in the commentaries: "When bliss is conceived and matured it perfects the threefold concentration, that is, momentary concentration, access concentration, and absorption concentration".<sup>1</sup> Of these, momentary concentration is the shortest in duration; next comes access concentration; and thirdly absorption concentration\* which lasts the longest.

By way of occurrence, however, for the jhana-attainer developing insight, access concentration comes first; next comes fixed or absorption concentration.

concentration followed by momentary concentration thus:

1. "And it (access concentration) is the unification that precedes absorption concentration".<sup>2</sup>

2. "Then it (concentration) is of two kinds as access and absorption".<sup>3</sup> On this the *Paramatthamanjusa* comments: "Applied-thought that occurs as though absorbing (*appento*) associated states in the object is absorption (*appana*). Accordingly it is described as absorption" absorbing (*appana vyappana*)" (M. III, 73). Now since it is most important, the usage of the commentaries is to call all exalted and unsurpassed jhana states "absorption" (as well as applied thought itself), and likewise to apply the term of common usage "access" to the limited (*i.e.* sense-sphere) jhana that heralds the arising of the former,

just as the term "village access", etc., is applied to the neighbourhood of a village";<sup>4</sup>

3. (a) "Concentrating (*samadham*) the (manner of) consciousness: evenly (*samam*) placing (*adahanto*) the mind, evenly putting it on its object by means of the first *jhana* and so on. Or alternatively when, having entered upon those *jhanas* and emerged from them, he comprehends with insight the consciousness associated with the *jhana* as liable to destruction and to fall, then at the actual time of insight momentary unification of the mind arises through the penetration of the characteristics (of impermanence, and so on)".<sup>5</sup> And the comment of the *Paramatthamanjusa* is (b) "Momentary unification of the mind": Concentration lasting only for a moment. For that too, when it occurs uninterruptedly on its object in a single mode and is not overcome by opposition, fixes the mind immovably as if in absorption".<sup>6</sup>

4. (a) "These sounds are evident even to the normal consciousness", on which the *Pm.* comments: (b) "This momentary-concentration

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consciousness, which owing to the fact that the preliminary work contingent upon the sound has been performed, occurs in one who has attained the basic *jhana* and emerged for the purpose of arousing the divine ear element.<sup>8</sup>

In a recent publication entitled "The Progress of Insight by Mahasi Sayadaw U. Sobhana Mahathera of Burma" being "a treatise on Buddhist Satipatthana Meditation", and translated from the original Pali into English by Nyanaponika Mahathera, there appears on p. 5 of that work the following passage.

"But is it not said in the Commentaries that the term 'Purification of Mind' applies only to Access Concentration and Fully Absorbed Concentration? That is true, but one has to take this statement in the sense that Momentary Concentration is included in Access Concentration. For in the Commentary to the Satipatthana Sutta it is said: "The remaining twelve exercises are subjects of meditation leading only to Access Concentration." "Now in the case of the subjects dealt with in the sections of the Satipatthana Sutta on Postures, Clear Comprehension and Elements, the concentration of one who devotes himself to these exercises will be definitely only Momentary Concentration. But as the latter is able to suppress the Hindrances just as Access Concentration does, and since it is in the neighbourhood of the Noble-path-attainment-concentration, therefore that same Momentary Concentration is spoken of by the name of 'Access' (or Neighbourhood), and also the meditation subjects that produce that Momentary Concentration are called 'meditation subjects leading to Access Concentration'. Hence it should be taken that Momentary Concentration, having the capacity to suppress the Hindrances, has also the right to the name 'Access' and 'Purification of Mind'. Otherwise 'Purification of Mind' could not come about in one who has made Bare Insight his vehicle, by employing only Insight, without having produced either Access Concentration or Fully Absorbed Concentration".

Some of the points raised in this paragraph are discussed below.

A. The author, while admitting that the commentaries state that "the term 'Purification of Mind'

applies only to Access Concentration and Fully Absorbed Concentration", introduces the view that "Momentary Concentration is included in Access Concentration".

The reader will note that according to the passage quoted at 3 (a) and 4 (b) above Momentary Concentration cannot be included in Access Concentration. Momentary Concentration is shown there definitely, and in plain language, to emerge after *jhana*-attainment during the actual time of insight practice done by one who has risen from *jhana*.

In this connection the author cites on p. 4 a passage from the commentary to the *Visuddhimagga* (*Paramatthamanjusa*), reproduced at 3 (b) above, to indicate it seems, the strength of Momentary Concentration. And he mentions without realising the implication, or in spite of it, that the passage he cites is in 'explanation of the Chapter relating to Respiration Mindfulness'. The reader knows that Respiration Mindfulness is a serenity (*samatha*) subject of meditation. And Bare Insight, the author claims, has no truck with *jhana*. Furthermore this passage from the *Paramatthamanjusa* is none other than the comment on this very passage of the *Visuddhimagga*, reproduced at 3 (a) above, which declares that Momentary Concentration emerges "at the actual time of insight" undertaken by the newly risen *jhana*-attainer.

B. The author further asserts that "in the case of the subjects dealt with in the sections of the Satipatthana Sutta on Postures, Clear Comprehension and Elements, the concentration of one who devotes himself to these exercises will be definitely only Momentary Concentration (*ekantena khanikasamadhi yeva nama*)". In support of this assertion he does not cite any authority. Mere assertions, however, do not carry conviction. They are on the other hand rejected as unworthy of consideration. It is perhaps helpful to remember here the Buddha's instruction that concentration attained walking up and down lasts long. The commentary explains this as one of the eight attainments. (*samapatti*).<sup>9</sup>

C. "Momentary Concentration having the capacity to suppress the Hindrances, has also the right to the name 'Access' and 'Purification of Mind'". This seems to be a rather

poor attempt to counter the charge that the new Burmese method of meditation based on the movement of the abdomen is bereft of the 'Purification of Mind'. In fact the published Sinhala translation of a sermon delivered by U. Sujata Thera, the Burmese pupil and accredited representative in Ceylon recently of U. Sobhana Mahathera, completely ignores the 'Purification of Mind'. It states that there are these six purifications, namely: (1) purification of view (*ditthi-visuddhi*), (2) purification of transcending doubt (*kankhavitara-visuddhi*), (3) purification of knowledge (and vision) of what is and is not the path (*maggamagganana (dassana) visuddhi*), (4) purification of knowledge (and vision) of practice (*patipadanana (dassana)visuddhi*), (5) purification of virtue (*silavissuddhi*), (6) purification of the knowledge of rise and fall (*udayavyayanavisuddhi*). Having produced mundane purification, to convert it to supramundane purification, one should produce insight".<sup>10</sup>

This list has only six purifications, and it eliminates the purification of mind or consciousness which is the main subject under discussion here, and the purification of knowledge and vision; the purification of virtue which is the first is shifted to the fifth place; and a new purification, 'the purification of knowledge of rise and fall' is introduced. In addition to these six purifications two more, viz., mundane purification and supramundane purification, are mentioned. But though in the treatise here discussed the seven purifications are correctly mentioned in due order a new definition of the purification of mind or consciousness is put forward. And this is done arbitrarily.

D. "And since it is in the neighbourhood of the Noble-path-attainment-concentration, therefore that same Momentary Concentration is spoken of by the name of 'Access' (or Neighbourhood), and also the meditation subjects that produce the Momentary Concentration are called 'meditation subjects leading to Access Concentration'". But 'neighbourhood of the Noble-path-attainment-concentration' is in the post-*jhanic* sphere. The author, while insisting on tarrying in the non-*jhanic* sphere which he claims for bare insight, tries to appropriate the benefits of the *jhanic* sphere and of

those beyond it to which he is not entitled. Since he is clinging to an imaginary sphere of contemplation he can only expect to reap imaginary results thereby, results which are not in the realm of fact but of fiction.

E. "Hence it should be taken that Momentary Concentration, having the capacity to suppress the Hindrances, has also the right to the name 'Access' and 'Purification of Mind'". At D above the author admits that momentary concentration is in the neighbourhood of the path. But one does not go to the neighbourhood of the path to attain 'Purification of Mind'. On the contrary 'Purification of Mind' has to precede the approach to the neighbourhood of the path both for him whose vehicle is serenity (*samathayanika*) and for him whose vehicle is bare insight (*suddhavipassanayanika*) according to the *Visuddhimagga* at the beginning of the chapter on the purification of view (*ditthivisuddhi*).<sup>11</sup> One whose vehicle is bare insight remains in that category even after attaining the consummate state.<sup>12</sup> One only hopes that the new Burmese method

of meditation does not insist further that when he whose vehicle is bare insight attains to the consummate state he is still bereft of *jhana*, for all first path-attainers (*maggalabhi*) are *jhana*-attainers. The Buddha says that only one who has the five faculties (*pancendriya*) at least at minimum strength can attain the plane of the noble ones (*ariyabhumi*); and he in whom these five faculties are entirely absent is an outsider (*bahiro*), standing amidst the hosts of commoners (*puthujjanapakkhe thito*),<sup>13</sup> and the fifth of these faculties is that of concentration (*samadhindriya*) defined by the Buddha as the four *jhanas*,<sup>14</sup> the power of concentration with which the noble one (*ariya*) is endowed is also defined as the four *jhanas*,<sup>15</sup> and right concentration of the noble one consists of the four *jhanas*.<sup>16</sup>

F. "Otherwise 'Purification of Mind' could not come about in one who has made Bare Insight his vehicle, by employing only Insight, without having produced either Access Concentration or Fully Absorbed Concentration".

Assuming that the 'Purification

of Mind' of the doer of pure (or bare) insight comes about 'without having produced either Access Concentration or Fully Absorbed Concentration', the author has tried to show how it is supposed to happen. In this attempt he has dislodged 'Momentary Concentration' from its rightful place, and has succeeded in producing a mist of confusion, which he tries to clear away with a series of arguments. He finally comes to the conclusion embodied in the last sentence of the section on 'Purification of Mind' at p. 5 of his treatise and which is reproduced above. But since he begins with the dislodgment, and in the process alters the nature and function of an important term under discussion, the arguments deduced from this position are invalid as is his conclusion. However some of these arguments are discussed in paragraphs B to E and shown to be untenable for other reasons as well. Purification of Mind indeed 'could not come about in one who has made Bare Insight his vehicle by employing only Insight, without having produced either Access Concentration or

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**Fully Absorbed Concentration?**

According to the *Visuddhimagga* insight begins only after one has been established in the purification of virtue (*silavisuddhi*) and the purification of mind or consciousness (*cittavisuddhi*). They are compared to the root, and the five purifications beginning with the purification of view (*ditthivisuddhi*) are compared to the trunk, of a tree.<sup>17</sup>

One wishing to accomplish the last five purifications, whether he is one whose vehicle is serenity or one whose vehicle is insight, begins doing insight at the purification of view, because this twofold division of serenity and insight manifests itself only at the third purification, i.e., that of view and not before. But on p. 2 of his treatise the author says: "When purification of conduct has been established, the meditator who has chosen pure insight as his vehicle, should endeavour to contemplate the *Body-and-Mind (nama-rupa)*. In doing so, he should contemplate, according to their characteristics the five Groups of Grasping, i.e. the bodily and mental processes that become evident to him in his own life-continuity (at his own six sense-doors)". If the meditator follows this method he renders himself incapable of being established in the purification of view (*ditthivisuddhi*). And the *Pm.* is very clear on this: "By mere knowledge alone one is not established in the purification of consciousness.\* Without being established therein it is not possible to accomplish the higher purification",<sup>18</sup> which is the purification of view. And according to one commentary purification of consciousness is explained as the thoroughly mastered eight attainments which is the proximate cause of insight.<sup>19</sup>

Now it is common knowledge that a proximate cause always precedes and is never preceded by, the thing of which it is the cause. And another commentary, becoming more precise, says that the purification of consciousness means right concentration, and we have seen already that it is explained as the four *jhanas*.<sup>20</sup> But nowhere has purification of consciousness been explained as momentary concentration. To meet this situation the author tries to saddle momentary concentration with a role which never belonged to it, and which it is incapable

\* Also rendered 'purification of Mind'.

of fulfilling, for each purification has its special place and function. They cannot be interchanged.

**NOTES**

1. P.P. 150. (= Vis. Mag. 144: Sukham gabbham gahantam paripakam gacchantam tividham samadhim paripureti, khanikasamadhim, upacarasamadhim, appanasamadhin ti.
2. P.P. 86: (= Vis. Mag. 85: Ya ca appanasamadhim pubbhage ekagata-ayam upacarasamadhi).
3. P.P. 85. (= Vis. Mag. 85: Upacara-appanavasena duvidho).
4. Pm. 91: Sampayuttadhamme arammane appento viya pavattatiti vitakko appana. Tattha hi so appana vyappana ti nidittho. Tappamukhatavasena pana sabbasmim mahaggatanuttare jhanadhamme appanati atthakathavoharo, tatha tassa anupattitthanabhute parittajjhane upacarovoharo. Gamadinam samipatthane gamupacaradi samanna vyati aha — upacarappanavasena duvidho ti.
5. P.P. 311-12. (= Vis. Mag. 289: Samadaham cittan ti pathamajjhanadivasena arammane cittam samam adahanto, samam thapento, tani va pana jhanani samapajjiva vutthaya, jhanasampayuttam cittam khayato vayato sampassato, vipassanakkhane lakkhanapativedhena uppajjati khanikacitt' ekagga. Evam upannaya khanikacitt' ekagga-taya vasena pi arammane cittam samam adahanto, samam thapento: samadaham cittam assasissami passasissami ti sikkhati ti vuccati).
6. Pm. 278: Khanikacittakagga ti khamamattatthiko samadhi. So pi hi arammane nirantaram ekakarena pavat-tamano patipakkhena anabhibhuto appito viya cittam nicalam thapeti.
7. P.P. 447. (= Vis. Mag. 408: Tassa te sadda pakatikacittassa pi pakata honti, parikammamasadhicittassa pana ativiya pakata).
8. Pm. 402: Parikammamasadhicittassa ti dibbasotadhatuya uppadanattham padakajjhanam samapajjiva vutthitassa saddam arabbha parikammakarana-vasena pavattakhanikasamadhicittassa.
9. A. III, 30: Cankamadhigato samadhi ciratthitiko hoti. (= Cankamadhigato samadhiti cankamam adhitthahantena adhigato atthannam samapattinam annatarasamadhi—Mp. (Sinh. ed.) p.616).
10. Kanduboda Vipassana Bhavana Magazine, 1956, p. 32:  
 මට විඳද්දිය එනමි:  
 1. දිවයි විඳද්දිය, 2. කංකාවිතරණ විඳද්දිය, 3. මග්ග මග්ග ඥාණ විඳද්දිය, 4. පටිපද ඥාණ විඳද්දිය, 5. සීල විඳද්දිය, 6. උදයව්‍යය ඥාණ විඳද්දිය, 7. ලොකික විඳද්දිය ඇතිකර ගෙන එය ලෝකෝත්තර විඳද්දිය කර ගැනීමට විදර්ශනා ඇතිකර ගත යුතුයි.  
 11. Vis. Mag. 587.  
 12. Vis. Mag. 702: (referring to the attainment of cessation) Ke tam samapajjanti ke na samapajjanti ti sabbe pi puthujjana sotapannasakadagamino, sukkhavipassaka ca anagamino arahanto na samapajjanti. Attha samapattilabhino pana khinasava ca samapajjanti.  
 13. S. V. 202: Imasam kho bhikkhave pancannam indriyanam samatta paripuratta araham hoti, tato mudutarehi

- arahattaphalasacchikiriyaya patipanno hoti, tato mudutarehi anagami hoti, tato mudutarehi anagamiphalasacchikiriyaya patipanno hoti, tato mudutarehi sakadagamim hoti, tato mudutarehi sakadagamiphalasacchikiriyaya patipanno hoti, tato mudutarehi sotappanno hoti, tato mudutarehi sotappannaphalasacchikiriyaya patipanno hoti. Yassa kho bhikkhave imani pancindriyani sabbena sabbam sabbatha sabbam natthi tamaham bahiro puthujanapakke thitot vadami ti.
14. S.V. 196: Kattha ca bhikkhave samadhindriyam datthabbam. Catus jhanesu.
  15. S.V. 220: Yam samadhindriyam tam samadhibalam.
  16. D. II, 313.
  17. Vis. Mag. 443: Ettha pana yasma imaya pannaya khandh-ayatana-dhatu-indriya-sacca-paticcasamuppada-dibheda dhamma bhumi. Silavisuddhi ceva cittavisuddhi ca ti ima dva visuddhiyo miam Ditthivisuddhi... nanadassanavisuddhi ti ima panca visuddhiyo sariram. Tasma tesu bhumisu tesu maggesu uggaha-paripucchavassena nanaparcayam katva mulabhuta dve visuddhiyo sampadova sarirbhuta pancavisuddhiyo sampaden-ten bahavetabba.
  18. Pm 744: Nahikeyalena jananamattena cittavisuddhyam patitthito nama hoti. Na ca tattha apatitthaya upari visuddhim sampadetum sakkati.
  19. Sv. III, 1062; Pts-a. I, 127.
  20. Pts-a. III, 609.

**MAHA NAYAKA THERA'S MISSION TO THAILAND**

THE Maha Nayaka Thera of the Siyam Nikaya in Ceylon, the Ven. Amunugama Rajaguru Sri Vipassi, left by plane for Thailand on July 4 with five other bhikkhus on a historic mission of friendship.

This is the first ever visit of a Maha Nayaka Thera from Ceylon to Thailand since the establishment of the Siyam Nikaya in Ceylon after the re-establishment of the Upasampada (higher ordination) of Buddhist monks in 1752.

At the airport, the Maha Nayaka Thera and the party were received by the Governor-General, Mr. William Gopallawa, Ministers of State and others.

This historic visit of a Maha Nayaka Thera would display our gratitude to the Maha Sangha and the Thai people for having helped the Maha Sangha to re-establish the higher ordination in Ceylon, said Mr. I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla, Minister of Cultural Affairs.

The Charge d'Affaires of Thailand in Ceylon, Mr. Kim Devahastin, said that the people and the royalty of Thailand were eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Maha Nayaka Thera and his party. The already cordial relations between the two countries would be further strengthened by this visit.

The Maha Nayaka Thera thanked the Thai royalty and the government of Ceylon and said that the visit recalled the State patronage accorded to the Maha Sangha and Buddhism by ancient kings.

(Continued on page 27)