

# The Development of Insight – A Study of the U Ba Khin Vipassanā Meditation Tradition as Taught by S.N. Goenka in Comparison with Insight Teachings in the Early Discourses

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## I. Introduction

With the present paper I investigate how key aspects of insight delineated in the early discourses have been approached in modern day Theravāda meditation practice. In order to illustrate one of the ways in which such practice has been undertaken, I take as an example what at present appears to be the most widely practiced Theravāda *vipassanā* method. This is the *vipassanā* tradition of the Burmese lay meditation teacher U Ba Khin (1899–1971), in the form as it is taught by his Indian disciple S.N. Goenka (1924). My study proceeds through the following topics:

- II.1 "Tranquillity and insight" examines the relationship between *samatha* and *vipassanā*.
- II.2 "*Vipassanā* meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka" provides a brief survey of this particular form of insight practice.
- III.1 "The significance of dependent arising" summarizes different interpretations of the doctrine of *paṭicca samuppāda*.
- III. 2 "*Saṅkhāras* in the context of dependent arising" explores the recurrent reference made by S.N. Goenka to "eradicating past *saṅkhāras*".
- IV.1 "The interrelation of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*" investigates how these four aspects of mindfulness practice relate to each other.
- IV.2 "Contemplation of *vedanā* and the four *satipaṭṭhānas*" illustrates that contemplation of feeling can be used to develop all four *satipaṭṭhānas*.
- V.1 "The three characteristics" examines how in the discourses insight into impermanence leads on to insight into the other two characteristics.
- V.2 "Full awakening" surveys the role of contemplation of *vedanā* in relation to the attainment of full awakening by the two chief disciples of the Buddha: Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna.

## II.1) Tranquillity and Insight

The degree of concentration required for various stages of awakening is a topic that has aroused much interest in modern days.<sup>1</sup> Since I have already discussed this theme elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> in the context of the present paper I would like to just briefly present what to me seem to be two central arguments.

According to the standard definition given in the discourses, once-returners are so-called because they return to 'this world', i.e. the sense-realm.<sup>3</sup> Now if all once-returners were proficient in attaining absorption, they would be reborn in a higher heavenly sphere of the form or formless realms, instead of returning to this world. This would render the very concept of a once-returner superfluous, as not a single once-returner would ever return to this world. This gives the impression that, from the viewpoint of the early discourses, attaining the two lower stages of awakening does not require proficiency in absorption attainment.

The development of absorption is, however, given considerable prominence in the discourses and its requirements are taken up from various viewpoints. This indicates that absorption attainment was considered an important aspect of the path to liberation. In fact, the standard definition of right concentration (*sammā samādhi*) as one of the factors of the noble eightfold path lists the four absorptions. This makes it improbable that such deep levels of concentration should be of no relevance at all even for the higher stages of awakening. In fact, the discourses indicate that non-returners have fulfilled the development of concentration,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Recent contributions to this topic can be found e.g. in Bodhi 2002, Bodhi 2007, Brahmāli 2007 and Wen 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Anālayo 2003: 67–91.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. MN 34 at MN I 226,25 indicates that "once-returners will make an end of *dukkha* [after] returning once to this world", *sakadāgāmino sakid eva imaṃ lokaṃ āgantvā dukkhass 'antaṃ karissanti*, with a similarly worded counterpart in SĀ 1248 at T 2, 342b26: 斯陀含，一來此世，究竟苦邊。

<sup>4</sup> According to AN 3.86 at AN I 233,22, a person who has fulfilled morality and concentration but not fulfilled wisdom destroys the five lower fetters, *sīlesu paripūrakārī hoti samādhismiṃ paripūrakārī paññāya mattaso kārī ... so pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā*. A similar stipulation is made in SĀ 821 at T 2, 210c27: 比丘重於戒，戒增上，重於定，定增上，不重於慧，慧不增上 ... 斷五下分結。 Both versions also take up the case of an arahant, who has fulfilled wisdom. This would make it clear, pace Wen 2009: 87f, that the stipulation on the 'fulfilment of concentration' intends an actual attainment, a pre-condition that has been fulfilled on reaching non-returning, not just a propensity in the sense that a non-returner will easily be able to develop concentration after having attained non-return. If that would be the case, then in regard to arahants one would have to conclude that they, too, only have the potential of fulfilling wisdom, without needing to already have completed its development on becoming arahants. In fact, on this interpretation even an arahant need not have fulfilled morality, but would only have

unlike once-returners. This suggests the development of concentrative proficiency by way of absorption attainment to be a requirement for non-return and full awakening.

In sum, it seems to me that the perspective afforded by the early discourses would be that the lower two levels of awakening — stream-entry and once-return — are within reach of those who have not developed their concentrative abilities up to the level of absorption attainment, whereas the two higher levels of awakening appear to require such concentrative proficiency.<sup>5</sup>

## II.2) *Vipassanā* Meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka

In terms of the interrelation between tranquillity and insight, meditation in the tradition taught by S.N. Goenka gradually progresses from a basis in tranquillity to the development of insight. A ten day retreat begins with a period of three days during which mindfulness of breathing is practiced, in order to build up a basis in mental tranquillity. Then follow six days dedicated to insight meditation. During the final day, the practice of loving kindness (*mettā*) is given importance.

The actual insight meditation technique is based on a gradual and systematic scanning of the body in order to develop distinct awareness of feelings or 'sensations' (*vedanā*).<sup>6</sup> Contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*) undertaken in this way yields awareness of increasingly subtler levels of sensations throughout the body. This eventually issues in the total dissolution (*bhaṅga*) of the perception of compactness of the body, which is instead experienced as a mass of constantly changing vibrations. During longer courses taught to advanced practitioners, the systematic scanning evolves into a more static and passively receptive form of observation that also includes awareness of the flux of the mind (referred to as the *bhavaṅga-citta*).

By dedicating time to the practice of mindfulness of breathing as a tool for building up a foundation in mental collectedness, the *vipassanā* tradition as taught by S.N. Goenka sees the formal development of tranquillity as a necessary found-

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the propensity of developing it, a conclusion that would be in direct opposition to what can be gathered on the moral perfection of an arahant from the early discourses. The stipulation in AN 3.86 would also have to be kept in mind when evaluating other passages, such as, e.g., the four modes of practice described in AN 4.163 at AN II 150,28. The first two modes of practice delineated there need not be taken to imply that the meditator in question has not experience of *jhāna* at all, as they may only intend to indicate that *jhāna* is not made the object of this particular meditator's development of insight.

<sup>5</sup> It needs be said, however, that the way tranquillity and insight are treated in the discourses is mainly concerned with the close interrelation between these two as essential qualities required for progress to awakening, not with how much *samatha* is required for the development of *vipassanā*, cf. in more detail Anālayo 2006/2010a.

<sup>6</sup> For surveys of the U Ba Khin tradition cf. e.g. Kornfield 1977/1993: 235–255, Solé-Leris 1992: 136–152, and Gruber 1999: 45–60.

dation for the growth of insight. During longer courses, practitioners are encouraged to develop concentration up to the level of the first absorption (*jhāna*). Nevertheless, access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) is reckoned a sufficient basis for the attainment of the lower two stages of awakening, that is, for stream-entry and once-return. Attempting to progress to the higher stages of absorption is therefore not recommended to those who have not yet reached once-return, as until then the gaining of liberating insight should be given foremost priority. Hence it is only after once-return has been accomplished that the development of tranquillity by way of the higher stages of absorption comes into its own.

By progressing from a first period of observing the sensations created by the breath process to a comprehensive contemplation of sensations in the whole body, the shift from tranquillity to insight in the *vipassanā* tradition as taught by S.N. Goenka takes place gradually. The structured approach of systematically scanning the body helps the practitioner to avoid distraction during the practice, thus providing some continuity in the development of mental collectedness even at a stage where priority is given to the arousing of insight into impermanence.

Nevertheless, the gradual scanning of the body is a form of practice that operates in the realm of variegated sensory experience and has as its purpose the development of insight into the three characteristics. Therefore, it clearly falls into what modern meditation traditions refer to as *vipassanā*.<sup>7</sup>

The training in the *vipassanā* tradition as taught by S.N. Goenka then culminates in a form of practice where insight unfolds in a passively receptive mind. At this stage, the mind is free from the hindrances and thereby has become so firmly established in present moment awareness of the impermanent nature of sensations that it no longer needs the support of systematic scanning.

### III.1 The Significance of Dependent Arising

Insight into dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) appears to stand in a rather close relationship to awakening. This suggests itself from the circumstance that the discourses report that the Buddha reviewed his insight into dependent arising right after his awakening;<sup>8</sup> a topic he had already taken up for reflection before the night of his realization.<sup>9</sup> Hence dependent arising can safely be assumed to be of central importance for the development of liberating insight.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The term *samatha* in its modern use stands instead for a mode of practice that eventually leaves sensory experience behind to develop a unitary type of experience. For a practical example illustrating this basic difference cf. Anālayo 2006/2010a: 108.

<sup>8</sup> Ud 1.1 at Ud 1,6 and its parallel T 212 at T 4, 775c19.

<sup>9</sup> SN 12.10 at SN II 10,1, with a parallel in SĀ 285 at T 2, 79c28; a Sanskrit fragment parallel has been reconstructed by Waldschmidt 1957/1967: 312 and Tripāṭhī 1962: 89–94.

<sup>10</sup> On the significance of insight into dependent arising in relation to the decisive breakthrough to stream-entry cf. Bodhi 2009: 68f.

In spite of this importance, interpretations of this particular aspect of Buddhist doctrine vary. According to the commentarial tradition, the twelve links of dependent arising involve three life times. The earliest explicit occurrence of this mode of explanation in the Pāli canon appears to be found in the *Paṭisambhidā-magga*,<sup>11</sup> a work that according to von Hinüber (1996/1997: 60) "probably ... was composed too late ... to be included into the Abhidhammapiṭaka, which was already closed, while the end of the Khuddakanikāya always remained open for additions". In the Sarvāstivāda tradition, the same mode of interpretation is found in the *Jñānaprasthāna* and thus in what is part of the canonical Abhidharma.<sup>12</sup>

In the Pāli canon, the *Paṭisambhidā-magga* has as its predecessor the *Vibhaṅga*, the second and perhaps earliest book in the canonical Abhidharma collection of the Theravāda tradition. Regarding the topic of dependent arising, the *Vibhaṅga* presents an alternative mode of interpretation, which applies each of the twelve links of dependent arising to a single mind-moment.<sup>13</sup> The *Vibhaṅga* explains that, when considered from this viewpoint, the reference to 'birth' in the context of the twelve links can be understood to refer to the arising of mental states.<sup>14</sup> A similar interpretation can be found in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* of the Sarvāstivāda tradition.<sup>15</sup>

The same *Vibhaṅga*, however, also follows the traditional mode of interpretation — which it designates as the approach based on the discourses (*suttanta-bhājanīya*), in contrast to the approach based on the Abhidharma (*abhidhamma-bhājanīya*) — according to which 'birth' stands for actual rebirth.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, while the *Vibhaṅga* clearly testifies to the ancientness of the

<sup>11</sup> Paṭis I 52,19; Bodhi 2000: 741 note 50 points out that SN 12.19 at SN II 23,ult. constitutes a precedent for the fourfold division that underlies the three-lives scheme; for parallels cf. SĀ 294 at T 2, 83c24 and the Sanskrit fragments reconstructed in Tripāṭhī 1962: 140.

<sup>12</sup> T 1544 at T 26, 921b17 distinguishes the twelve links into three time periods, with the first two (ignorance and *saṅkhāras*) pertaining to the past, whereas birth, old age and death pertain to the future.

<sup>13</sup> Vibh 144,2.

<sup>14</sup> Vibh 145,14: "what is [meant by] 'conditioned by becoming there is birth'? The birth of those [mental] states, their being born, appearing, fully appearing and manifesting — that is reckoned to be [the meaning of] 'conditioned by becoming there is birth'", *tattha katamā bhavapaccayā jāti? yā tesam dhammanam jāti sañjāti nibbatti abhinibbatti pātubhāvo, ayam vuccati bhavapaccayā jāti*.

<sup>15</sup> T 1545 at T 27, 118c13, which applies the twelve links to a state of mind, explaining that "the arising of [mental] states like this is 'birth'", 如是諸法起即是生; cf. also the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* 3.25 in Pradhan 1967: 133,1, which proclaims that all twelve links can be found in a single moment, *ekasmin khalvapi kṣaṇe dvādaśāṅgāni bhavanti*.

<sup>16</sup> Vibh 137,13: "what is [meant by] 'conditioned by becoming there is birth'? The birth of these or those living beings in this or that category of living beings, their being born, coming into existence, appearing, fully appearing, the manifesting of [their] aggregates, the acquiring of [their] sense-spheres — that is reckoned to be [the meaning of] 'conditioned by becoming there is birth'", *tattha katamā bhavapaccayā jāti? yā tesam tesam sattānam tamhi tamhi sattanikāye jāti sañjāti okkanti nibbatti abhinibbatti khandhānam pātubhāvo, āyatanānam paṭilābho, ayam vuccati bhavapaccayā jāti*.

idea that the twelve links can be applied to a single mind-moment, it at the same time presents an interpretation of the link of 'birth' as standing for actual rebirth as the original intention of the discourses. Notably, the *Vibhaṅga* sees these two approaches as complementary viewpoints, not as contradictory positions.

In modern times, Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa (1979/1992) and Bhikkhu Ñāṇavīra (1987: 16–40) have argued against the three lives interpretation of dependent arising, with a critical reply in defence of the traditional explanation offered by Bhikkhu Bodhi (1998).

According to Jurewicz (2000), the formulation of dependent arising by way of twelve links may involve a criticism of a Vedic creation myth.<sup>17</sup> This would be in line with a general tendency evident in the early discourses of re-interpreting ideas and conceptions prevalent in ancient India in order to express Buddhist teachings.<sup>18</sup>

From a practical viewpoint, the principle of conditionality itself would be of central importance, which operates in relation to each of the twelve links — be this in the present moment or over three lifetimes. This much can be gathered from a Pāli discourse, according to which "dependent arising" refers to this principle of specific conditionality, whereas the twelve links are things that are dependently arisen.<sup>19</sup>

Thus insight into dependent arising could be developed based on observing the basic principle of conditionality that operates between any of the twelve links. Here the conditional relationship between feeling (*vedanā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) would be an obvious choice, given that it is based on feelings that craving arises. It is at the moment when craving arises that the dependent arising of *dukkha* can be intercepted, by avoiding reactions that are under the influence of craving in relation to whatever *vedanā* is experienced. For this purpose, contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*) recommends itself, since it is through mindfulness of feelings and sensations that the way of reacting to them will come into the light of awareness.

The tendency of reacting to *vedanā* with craving has its root in ignorance, mentioned at the beginning of the series of dependent arising, according to which

<sup>17</sup> For a recent discussion cf. Jones 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Rhys Davids 1921: 132 captures this tendency by speaking of "pouring new wine into the old bottles", which Herschok 2005: 4 sees as a "general strategy of accepting, but then pointedly revising the meaning" of contemporary conceptions. For other examples cf. e.g. Norman 1991/1993 or the recent study by Gombrich 2009. Behind this tendency stands a mode of thought that has been referred to as "inclusivism" by Hacker 1983: 12, which Schmithausen 2005: 171 explains as "the tendency to include, in a subordinate position and, if necessary, with some modifications, important elements of rival institutions or movements into the framework of one's own theory or practice"; cf. also Ruegg 2008: 97–99.

<sup>19</sup> SN 12.20 at SN II 26,5 explains that "this suchness, this non-falseness, this non-otherwiseness, this [principle of] specific conditionality — that, monks, is reckoned to be dependent arising", *yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā, ayam vuccati, bhikkhave, paṭicca-samuppādo*.

*saṅkhāras* depend on ignorance. Hence I now turn in more detail to the impact of *saṅkhāras* under the influence of ignorance on the experience of *vedanā*, which is at the same time a key aspect of the *vipassanā* meditation taught by S.N. Goenka.

### III.2 *Saṅkhāras* in the Context of Dependent Arising

Whatever attitude one may take in regard to the significance of the whole scheme of twelve links, there can be little doubt that in the early discourses *saṅkhāras* do at times stand for something that has a conditioning influence beyond a single life span.<sup>20</sup> This can be seen, for example, in passages according to which unwholesome *saṅkhāras* generated by way of body, speech or mind lead to a type of rebirth whose nature corresponds to the unwholesome nature of these *saṅkhāras*.<sup>21</sup> Another instance relates the growth of *saṅkhāras* to renewed existence in the future.<sup>22</sup> The way this takes place is highlighted in more detail in yet another passage, which explains that one's intentions, plans and underlying tendencies constitute a basis for consciousness, which in turn leads to the descent of name-and-form and therewith to the remaining links of dependent arising.<sup>23</sup>

The reference to underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) in this passage is of particular interest in the present context, since according to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* several of these underlying tendencies stand in a close relationship to feelings

<sup>20</sup> For a survey of various nuances of the term *saṅkhāra* cf. Anālayo 2006/2010b.

<sup>21</sup> MN 57 at MN I 389,30: "having generated an afflictive bodily *saṅkhāra*, having generated an afflictive verbal *saṅkhāra*, having generated an afflictive mental *saṅkhāra*, one arises in an afflictive world", *sabyābajjhaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharitvā sabyābajjhaṃ vacīsaṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharitvā sabyābajjhaṃ manosāṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharitvā, sabyābajjhaṃ lokam upapajjati* (cf. also AN 4.232 at AN II 231,8). A similar statement is made in a Tibetan parallel, D *mngon pa ju* 168a5 or Q *tu* 194a3, for a study and translation of which cf. Skilling 1979.

<sup>22</sup> SN 12.64 at SN II 101,13: "when there is growth of *saṅkhāras*, there is the production of renewed existence in the future", *yattha atthi saṅkhārānaṃ vuddhi, atthi tattha āyatim punabbhavābhiniḅbatti*, with a similarly worded parallel in SĀ 374 at T 2, 103a4: 行增長故, 當來有增長.

<sup>23</sup> SN 12.39 at SN II 66,8: "monks, what one intends, what one plans, what one has an underlying tendency towards, that is the basis for the establishment of consciousness; this basis being there, consciousness becomes fully established; consciousness being fully established and having come to grow there is the descent of name-and-form, conditioned by name-and-form there are the six sense-spheres, conditioned by the six sense-spheres there is contact, conditioned by contact there is feeling ..." (etc.), *yañ ca, bhikkhave, ceteti yañ ca pakappeti yañ ca anuseti, āramaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā, āramaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti, tasmim patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe nāmarūpassa avakkanti hoti, nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanam, saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā ...* (etc.). The parallel SĀ 360 at T 2, 100b3 differs in that, instead of continuing after the descent of name-and-form with the six sense-spheres etc., it directly proceeds to birth, old age, disease, death etc., 若思量, 若妄想者, 則有使, 攀緣識住, 有攀緣識住故, 入於名色, 入名色故, 有未來世生, 老, 病, 死, 憂, 悲, 惱, 苦, 如是純大苦聚集.

(*vedanā*).<sup>24</sup> In other words, it is at the point of experiencing feelings that the underlying tendencies to react with desire, aversion or ignorance manifest. The growth of insight into the impermanent nature of feelings can in turn gradually eradicate those tendencies, by eliminating their root condition of ignorance.

It is against this background that the repeated reference to "eradicating past *saṅkhāras*" in the instructions given during a course in the *vipassanā* tradition as taught by S.N. Goenka could be understood. Although this expression is not found in the discourses,<sup>25</sup> the term *saṅkhāra* as the second link in the dependent arising of *dukkha* would cover the above-mentioned underlying tendencies of the mind, all of which are rooted in ignorance.<sup>26</sup> These tendencies are the result of past reactions and in turn influence the way one reacts in the present. This reaction then again strengthens or weakens those tendencies, depending on how one reacts.

The instructions given during a course taught by S.N. Goenka clarify that an eradication of such 'past *saṅkhāras*' will only take place when the experience of *vedanā* is combined with insight into impermanence. Thus instead of reacting to *vedanā*, the experience of *vedanā* takes place with detachment and equanimity, due to clear awareness of the impermanent nature of any feeling or sensation. In this way, a gradual de-conditioning takes place.

Such gradual de-conditioning is based on three key aspects of the practice:

- the scanning of the body with awareness grounds the practitioner in the direct experience of sensations in the present moment;
- the maintenance of equanimity counters reacting to the pushing force of the underlying tendencies;

<sup>24</sup> MN 44 at MN I 303,8 explains that "the underlying tendency to desire tends to underlie ... pleasant feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion tends to underlie painful feeling, the underlying tendency to ignorance tends to underlie neutral feeling", *sukkhāya ... vedanāya rāgānusayo anuseti, dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo anuseti, adukkhamasukkhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo anuseti*. The same statement is found in the parallel version MĀ 210 at T 1, 789c1: 樂覺者 ... 欲使也, 苦覺者 ... 恚使也, 不苦不樂覺者 ... 無明使也, whereas a Tibetan parallel differs, as in each case it speaks of the feeling leading to an "increase" of the respective defilement, instead of referring to a respective "underlying tendency", cf. D *mngon pa ju* 9b5 or Q *tu* 10b7: *bde ba'i tshor ba la 'dod chags rgyas par 'gyur ro, sdug bsngal gyi tshor ba la zhe sdang rgyas par 'gyur ro, bde ba yang ma yin sdug bsngal ba yang ma yin pa'i tshor ba la gti mug rgyas par 'gyur ro*.

<sup>25</sup> The notion that *saṅkhāras* of the past can become the object of contemplation, however, is implicit in the standard catechism on the five aggregates, which in the context of a description of how to contemplate not-self applies the qualification "past, present, and future" (*atītānāgata-paccuppanna*) to each aggregate and hence also to *saṅkhāras*, cf. e.g. MN 35 at MN I 235,2 and its parallel SĀ 110 at T 2, 36c29.

<sup>26</sup> Taking *saṅkhāras* as representative of the underlying tendencies rooted in ignorance would also help to understand the notion that "deep-seated *saṅkhāras* come to the surface and are eliminated when one continues to practise *vedanānupassanā*", cf. de Silva 1990: 178. Such a proposition need, however, not necessarily imply that "kamma gets expiated by giving rise to *vipāka*", as suggested by *ibid.* p. 173, since not all feelings are the result of karma, cf. SN 36.21 at SN IV 230,13 and its parallel SĀ 977 at T 2, 252c21; cf. also Anālayo 2003: 168f.



- the continuous awareness of the impermanent nature of what is experienced provides the all important input of insight that counters ignorance.

In this way, the dependent arising of *dukkha* can be intercepted at the crucial junction between feeling and craving. This takes place by gradually eradicating the mental conditionings — *sankhāras* — which, because of being rooted in ignorance, are responsible for reacting to *vedanā* by way of craving.

#### IV.1 The Interrelation of the Four *Satipaṭṭhānas*

The *Ānāpānasati-sutta* states that mindfulness of breathing, which features in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* as one of the body contemplations,<sup>27</sup> can be developed in such a way that the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) are fulfilled.

Moreover, each of these — that is contemplation of the body, of feelings, of mental states and of dharmas — can on its own become the basis for the fulfilment of the awakening factors and thereby issue in the attainment of liberation.<sup>28</sup>

Judging from this presentation, there would be no reason why it should not be possible to use also another of the various practices described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* in order to develop all four *satipaṭṭhānas*. In the case of contemplation of feeling, for example, it should therefore be possible to practice all four establishments of mindfulness based on contemplation of feeling.

Applying this perspective to the case of the *vipassanā* tradition as taught by S.N. Goenka, in addition to offering a direct entry point to the crucial link in dependent arising between *vedanā* and craving, the contemplation undertaken in this tradition could in principle also be employed to explore aspects of the body, of the mind and of dharmas.

The *Ānāpānasati-sutta* makes it clear that this is not an absolute requirement, as according to its presentation contemplation of feelings alone can suffice for the breakthrough to liberation. Nevertheless, for the sake of a better understanding of the potential of the *vipassanā* tradition as taught by S.N. Goenka, I now survey the four *satipaṭṭhānas* from the viewpoint of how they could be related to this particular form of Theravāda meditation practice.

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<sup>27</sup> This is the case for the first four of the sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing, cf. MN 10 at MN I 56,12, with a parallel in MĀ 98 at T 1, 582c12.

<sup>28</sup> MN 118 at MN III 83,21 and its parallel SĀ 810 at T 2, 208a25 describe how mindfulness of breathing fulfils the four establishments of mindfulness, and at MN III 85,8 and T 2, 208b15 state that any of the four establishments of mindfulness can become the basis for fulfilling the seven factors of awakening. For a comparative study of these two discourses cf. Anālayo 2007; for a study of the awakening factors cf. Gethin 1992: 146–189 and Anālayo 2003: 233–242.

## IV.2 Contemplation of *Vedanā* and the Four *Satipaṭṭhānas*

### IV.2a) Contemplation of the Body

A regular scanning of the body in accordance with the instructions given by S.N. Goenka would directly foster an increase of *kāyagatāsati*, awareness of the body. This would make bodily postures and movements conscious in a way that naturally leads to awareness of the four postures and to clear comprehension in regard to one's bodily activities, as described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*.

The importance of developing *kāyagatāsati* is in fact a recurrent theme in the early discourses, according to which such awareness of the body provides an important anchoring in bodily experience that counters the tendency to sensory distraction.<sup>29</sup> During a course in the *vipassanā* tradition as taught by S.N. Goenka, the need to develop continuous mindfulness of bodily sensations is repeatedly stressed, which indeed results in such an anchoring in bodily experience.

The increased awareness of the body developed through the technique of scanning the body would also strengthen sensitivity in different bodily parts. This could theoretically become a basis for contemplating the anatomical constitution of the body or its nature as consisting of the four elements (in terms of hardness, cohesion, warmth and motion); though these practices are not directly encouraged in the tradition.

### IV.2b) Contemplation of Feelings

Regarding contemplation of feelings, given that the method taught by S.N. Goenka is based on observing sensations within the framework of the body, I need to briefly explore the significance of the canonical distinction between bodily and mental feelings.<sup>30</sup>

According to the *Salla-sutta*, the experience of bodily pain can result in just bodily feelings, or in bodily as well as mental feelings.<sup>31</sup> The difference is that in the second case, in addition to the physical pain there is mental anguish about being sick or hurt, which causes the arising of mental feelings in addition to the anyway experienced bodily feelings.

Now in both cases, the pain that arose at the body sense-door is experienced

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<sup>29</sup> The importance of being anchored in the body through *kāyagatāsati* for establishing sense-restraint is illustrated in SN 35.206 at SN IV 200,5 and its parallel SĀ 1171 at T 2, 313b5 with the image of a strong post to which various wild animals are bound, making it impossible for them to go wherever they want. Another simile to illustrate the same importance describes a man who has to carry a pot brimful of oil on his head through a crowd that is watching a dancing girl, being followed by another man ready to cut off his head with a sword if he spills the oil, cf. SN 47.20 at SN V 170,2 and its parallel SĀ 623 at T 2, 174b21.

<sup>30</sup> For a more detailed discussion cf. Anālayo 2009b: 81–84.

<sup>31</sup> SN 36.6 at SN IV 208,7 and its parallel SĀ 470 at T 2, 120a9.

by the mind. In fact, a *vedanā* is always a mental event, being part of "name" (*nāma*) in name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*).<sup>32</sup> Without the mind, there will not be any feeling or sensation.

Yet, these same feelings are not experienced only in the mind. The bodily feeling of pain is evidently an experience that also involves the body. Moreover, even mental feelings of anguish will have an effect on the body. That mental pain or mental pleasure has an effect on the body is in fact explicitly depicted in the discourses. Examples would be descriptions of how the purely mental feelings of joy and happiness experienced during absorption affect the whole body,<sup>33</sup> or how the mental displeasure at being rebuked can have such bodily effects as sagging shoulders and dropping of the head in shame.<sup>34</sup>

The point of the distinction between bodily and mental feelings in the early discourses, then, is not that some feelings are only experienced in the body, others only in the mind. Instead, this distinction refers to where they originate from. That is, the point at stake is which sense-door has been the basis for the coming into being of pleasant or painful feeling, whose experience usually involves the body as well as the mind.

Hence contemplating sensations within the framework of the body would also cover mental feelings, in as much as their experience affects the body. In fact, in the above mentioned example regarding the mental feelings of joy and happiness experienced during absorption, awareness of how the body is pervaded by such happiness is explicitly reckoned as a form of contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), making it clear that these mental feelings can be experienced by directing awareness to their effect on the body.

In sum, then, the average experience of *vedanā* has a bodily and a mental component, and thus can be approached from each of these two aspects. The *vipassanā* tradition taught by S.N. Goenka has chosen to focus on the bodily manifestation of *vedanā*, as this is easily discernible and at the same time provides an anchoring of the practitioner in the present moment experience of the body. Such giving priority to the bodily experience of sensations does not mean, however, that feelings arisen at any of the other sense-doors will necessarily be ignored, as these can also be experienced based on the way they affect the body.

#### IV.2c) Contemplation of the Mind

In regard to contemplation of the mind, awareness of feelings undertaken in this way can enable detecting the arising of unwholesome mental states at an early stage of their formation. Often enough, the first evaluative input provided by feeling leads to subsequent mental reactions tinged by desire and aversion. If already

<sup>32</sup> MN 9 at MN I 53,11 and MĀ 29 at T 1, 463c25.

<sup>33</sup> MN 119 at MN III 92,25 and its parallel MĀ 81 at T 1, 555b18, translated in Kuan 2008: 158.

<sup>34</sup> MN 22 at MN I 132,28, where the parallel MĀ 200 at T 1, 764a7 does not mention the sagging shoulders.

at the stage of feeling the underlying tendencies to desire and aversion are noticed, it becomes possible to nip the reaction in the bud.

With seasoned practice of contemplation undertaken in this way, a remarkable potential unfolds, as it becomes possible to catch the first arising of mental reactions at the level of *vedanā*. Such quick recognition of the affective attitude underlying a particular thought or experience takes place without getting carried away by the thought itself, since the basic mode of contemplation automatically combines such recognition with remaining well grounded in the physical experience of the body through awareness of sensations.

#### IV.2d) Contemplation of Dharmas

In relation to this *satipaṭṭhāna*, the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* provides another important indication, namely that contemplation of dharmas can be undertaken by contemplating:

- impermanence,
- fading away,
- cessation,
- relinquishment.<sup>35</sup>

Such contemplation is a natural outcome of the practice taught by S.N. Goenka, where noting the impermanent nature of *vedanā* leads to insight into their constant fading away and cessation, which in turn issues in relinquishment of one's affective involvement with them.

Contemplation of dharmas in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* begins with awareness directed to the hindrances. Here the above-mentioned potential of quickly recognizing mental conditions through continuous awareness of *vedanā* is of considerable significance, as quick recognition of the arising of a hindrance is crucial for smooth progress of the meditation practice. Thus contemplation of *vedanā* can go a long way in alerting the more proficient practitioner to the initial stages of the arising of a hindrance. This thereby enables their overcoming through mere mindful observation, as often enough they have not yet gathered sufficient strength to overpower the mind.

Contemplation of dharmas in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* also covers the five aggregates. The above-mentioned experience of the dissolution (*bhaṅga*) of bodily and mental phenomena through sustained practice of the *vipassanā* meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka would fulfil the basic principle underlying con-

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<sup>35</sup> MN 118 at MN III 84,27: "Monks, at the time when a monk trains contemplating impermanence ... contemplating fading away ... contemplating cessation ... contemplating relinquishment ... at that time, monks, in regard to dharmas a monk dwells contemplating dharmas", *yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu aniccānupassī ... virāgānupassī ... nirodhānupassī ... paṭinisaṅgānupassī ... sikkhati, dhammesu dhammānupassī, bhikkhave, tasmīṃ samaye bhikkhu viharati*. The parallel SĀ 810 at T 2, 208b10 differs in as much as it speaks of contemplating "impermanence", "eradication", "fading away" (or "dispassion") and "cessation", 無常, 斷, 無欲, 滅; cf. also Anālayo 2007: 146f.

templation of the rise and fall of the five aggregates,<sup>36</sup> as such experience reveals how all aspects of body and mind are in constant change.

Another object of contemplation of dharmas in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* are the six sense-spheres. With higher stages in the practice of contemplation of *vedanā*, it becomes possible to remain well grounded in awareness of bodily sensations with whatever happens at any sense-door.<sup>37</sup> Undertaken in this way, meditative practice yields a comprehensive and continuous awareness of impermanence.

Such a mode of practice could also be implicit in a description in the discourses, according to which mindfulness and clear comprehension (*satisampajañña*) can be developed by clearly knowing:

- feelings as they arise, remain and pass away;
- perceptions as they arise, remain and pass away;
- thoughts as they arise, remain and pass away.<sup>38</sup>

The progression from feelings to perceptions and thoughts in this description could be significant, since once awareness of the impermanence of feelings is well established, the arising of any perception or thought becomes naturally part of the overall experience of impermanence that remains rooted in contemplation of *vedanā*.<sup>39</sup>

As already mentioned above, the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* indicates that contemplation of *vedanā* can on its own lead to the development of the awakening factors. Hence even if practice is not developed in such a way as to cover all four *satipaṭṭhānas*, the key requirement for liberating insight — establishing the awakening factors — would be possible.

The awakening factors receive in fact considerable attention in the instructions given during longer courses taught by S.N. Goenka. In these he describes how the joy (*pīṭi*) and the deeper levels of tranquillity (*passaddhi*) experienced during advanced practice should lead up to a condition of equanimity (*upekkhā*) in order for the decisive breakthrough to awakening to take place.

The culmination point of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice is insight into the four noble

<sup>36</sup> Gethin 1986: 43 notes that contemplation of the impermanent nature of the five aggregates stands out in the discourses for its eminent potential to issue in liberating insight.

<sup>37</sup> That this would be a more advanced form of practice can be seen from the indication given by U Ba Khin 1977/1993: 251 who, after noting that "one can develop the understanding of impermanence through any of the six organs of sense", remarks that, however, "one should have oneself well established in the understanding of impermanence through body feeling before any attempt is made through other sense-doors".

<sup>38</sup> AN 8.9 at AN IV 168,12: "known feelings arise, known they are present, known they disappear, known perceptions ... known thoughts arise, known they are present, known they disappear", *viditā vedanā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abhattam gacchanti, viditā saññā ... viditā vitakkā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abhattam gacchanti*, with parallels in SĀ 275 at T 2,73b24, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 6 at T 2, 375b10, and fragment SHT VI 1226: 5Vb in Bechert 1989: 22.

<sup>39</sup> According to U Ba Khin 1977/1993: 250, the *vipassanā* method he teaches "includes contemplation on the changing nature of thought-elements ... at times the attention will be on impermanence of matter only. At times the attention may be on impermanence of thought-elements".

truths. Such insight is a natural outcome of the mode of practice undertaken in the *vipassanā* tradition as taught by S.N. Goenka, given that awareness of *vedanā* as the condition for craving inevitably leads to a growing appreciation of *dukkha*, its arising, its cessation, and the path to be undertaken to reach that cessation. To the progression from impermanence to *dukkha* and beyond I now turn in more detail.

## V.1 The Three Characteristics

According to the standard definition of the faculties (*indriya*) in the Pāli discourses, the chief aspect of wisdom is insight into arising and disappearance, that is, into impermanence. The same definition adds that such awareness should be penetrative, so that it leads to freedom from *dukkha*.<sup>40</sup>

This passage indicates that contemplation of impermanence is necessary for the development of wisdom. Other discourses present insight into the impermanent nature of any of the five aggregates or any of the six sense-spheres as a way of fulfilling the path-factor of right view,<sup>41</sup> which according to the *Mahācattārī-saka-sutta* and its parallels is the forerunner of the entire noble eightfold path.<sup>42</sup>

Contemplation of arising and passing is also a key aspect of mindfulness practice mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. In the case of feelings, for example, one should be aware of their nature to arise, to pass away, and to arise and pass away.<sup>43</sup> Meditation practice undertaken in this way is of such importance that it

<sup>40</sup> E.g. SN 48.9 at SN V 197,19: "a noble disciple is wise, endowed with wisdom regarding the arising and disappearance [of phenomena], which is noble and penetrative, which leads to the complete destruction of *dukkha* — this, monks, is reckoned to be the faculty of wisdom", *ariya-sāvako paññavā hoti udayatthagāminiyā paññaya samannāgato ariyāya nibbedhikāya sammā-dukkhakkhayagāminiyā, idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, paññindriyaṃ* (the same definition for wisdom as a power (*bala*) can be found in AN 5.2 at AN III 2,25). The parallel SĀ 647 at T 2, 182c10 instead speaks of insight into the four noble truths.

<sup>41</sup> SN 22.51 at SN III 51,12: "he sees the body as impermanent, that is his right view; seeing rightly he becomes disenchanted ... and with the destruction of desire and delight his mind is reckoned to be liberated, well liberated", *rūpaṃ aniccan ti passati, yāyaṃ hoti sammādiṭṭhi, sammāpassaṃ nibbindati ... nandirāgakkhayā cittaṃ vimuttaṃ suvimuttan ti vuccati* (the same is then repeated for the other aggregates); SN 35.155 at SN IV 142,1: "he sees the eye as impermanent, that is his right view; seeing rightly he becomes disenchanted ... and with the destruction of desire and delight his mind is reckoned to be well liberated", *cakkhuṃ aniccan ti passati, sāyaṃ hoti sammādiṭṭhi, sammāpassaṃ nibbindati ... nandirāgakkhayā cittaṃ suvimuttan ti vuccati* (the same is then repeated for the other senses), with a close parallel in SĀ 188 at T 2, 49b8: 正觀察眼無常 ... 是名正見, 正觀故生厭 ... 離喜貪故, 我說心正解脫。

<sup>42</sup> MN 117 at MN III 71,24, MĀ 189 at T 1, 735c13 and D *mngon pa nyu* 44b4 or Q *thu* 84a5.

<sup>43</sup> MN 10 at MN I 59,23: "he dwells contemplating the nature of arising in feelings, he dwells contemplating the nature of passing away in feelings, he dwells contemplating the nature of arising and passing away in feelings", *samudayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharati, vayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharati samudayavayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharati*, with a similar instruction in the parallel EĀ 12.1 at T 2, 568c13: 彼習法而 ... 亦觀盡法, 復觀習盡

marks the difference between mere *satipaṭṭhāna* and what can count as its 'development', *satipaṭṭhānabhāvanā*.<sup>44</sup>

Based on a thorough appreciation of impermanence, insight needs to proceed to the other two characteristics (*lakkhaṇa*). This progression is depicted in a standard catechism found in the discourses, which according to tradition also served as the instruction that led the first five monk disciples of the Buddha to full awakening. According to this instruction, each of the five aggregates — and therewith the whole of one's subjective experience — is first to be seen as impermanent. Given that it is impermanent, one next comes to realize that there cannot be any lasting satisfaction in it, that is, what is impermanent is *dukkha*.<sup>45</sup> This then leads to the insight that, whatever is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and of a nature to change, cannot be appropriated as 'mine', or identified with as 'I', let alone taking it as a 'self'.<sup>46</sup>

The same basic pattern underlies a set of perceptions, which proceed through the following three steps:

- 'perception of impermanence',
- 'perception of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent',
- 'perception of not-self in what is unsatisfactory'.<sup>47</sup>

The way these perceptions are formulated indicates that progression from one characteristic to the next does not require a change of object. Instead, it involves a change of perspective. What has been seen with insight as impermanent, is now seen as unsatisfactory; in fact it is precisely because it is impermanent that it is unsatisfactory. And what is unsatisfactory is then contemplated as not-self; again, it is precisely because it is unsatisfactory that it makes no sense to hold on to it as 'mine' or to identify with it in terms of 'I am this' or 'this is my self'.<sup>48</sup>

These passages show how the three characteristics build on each other. The same progression is a central feature in the *vipassanā* meditation tradition taught by S.N. Goenka, where importance is first given to laying a firm foundation in continuous awareness of impermanence as the key aspect of insight meditation. During longer courses, practitioners are then urged to proceed from contemplation

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<sup>44</sup> SN 47.40 at SN V 183,15.

<sup>45</sup> SN 22.59 at SN III 67,25 and SĀ 34 at T 2, 7c20.

<sup>46</sup> SN 22.59 at SN III 67,27: "what is impermanent, unsatisfactory and of a nature to change, is it appropriate to regard it as 'this is mine', 'I am this', 'this is my self'? *yaṃ paṇāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāmadhammaṃ kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassituṃ: etaṃ mama, eso 'ham asmi, eso me attā tī?* The monks reply that this is not appropriate. The parallel in SĀ 34 at T 2, 7c21 proceeds similarly.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. DN 33 at DN III 243,3: *anniccasaññā, anicce dukkhasaññā, dukkhe anattasāññā*, with a counterpart in DĀ 9 at T 1, 52b5: 無常想, 無常苦想, 苦無我想; for a reconstruction of the corresponding Sanskrit fragments cf. Stache-Rosen 1968: 148.

<sup>48</sup> Gombrich 2009: 9 captures this dependence of not-self on impermanence by commenting that much of the misunderstandings surrounding the term *anattā* could be avoided if one were to translate it as 'no [unchanging] self'.

of impermanence to an appreciation of *dukkha* and of not-self, in order to prepare them for the breakthrough to awakening.

## V.2 Full Awakening

According to an exposition by Sāriputta, stream-entry can be reached by contemplating the five aggregates from a series of related viewpoints, which begin with impermanence and *dukkha*, and culminate in not-self.<sup>49</sup> When asked about the path to the higher levels of awakening — once-return, non-return and full awakening — he describes the same mode of contemplation. That is, further progress to higher levels of awakening requires a progressive deepening of the same crucial insights.

Sāriputta's own awakening is recorded in the *Dīghanakha-sutta* and its parallels,<sup>50</sup> which report that he was present during a discourse by the Buddha that led up to the topic of the true nature of feelings. The relevant section of the discourse highlights that pleasant, painful and neutral feelings are impermanent and conditioned. Seeing this, one becomes disenchanted with feelings, dispassion arises and liberation will be gained.<sup>51</sup> On hearing this teaching, Sāriputta realized that the

<sup>49</sup> SN 22.122 at SN III 168,1 indicates that by "wisely attending to the five aggregates [affected] by clinging as impermanent, as unsatisfactory, as a disease, as a tumour, as a dart, as a misery, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not-self, one may attain the fruit of stream-entry", *pañcupādānakkhandhe aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato yoniso manasi karonto sotāpattiṭṭhānam sacchikareyya* (the present passage does not give the list of qualities in full, reading only *dukkhato pe anattato*, the full list is found in the previous paragraph of the text). According to the commentary, Spk II 334,8, this series of qualifications can be subsumed under the three characteristics. In the parallel SĀ 259 at T 2, 65b14, the five aggregates [affected] by clinging are given energetic attention to as a disease, a carbuncle, a thorn, a killer, impermanent, unsatisfactory, void and not-self, 精勤思惟, 五受陰為病, 為癰, 為刺, 為殺, 無常, 苦, 空, 非我. What has been preserved of a version of this discourse in Sanskrit fragment SHT IV 30e in Sander 1980: 85 indicates that attention should constantly be given (*abhikṣṇam manasikartavyāḥ*) to the five aggregates [affected] by clinging as a "disease", a "dart", a "misery", "impermanent", "unsatisfactory", "void" and "not-self", *ro[ga]to* (V10), *śalyataḥ* (R5), *aghataḥ* (R3 and R5), *anityato* or *anityataḥ* (V8, R3 and R5), *duḥkhataḥ* (V8, R3 and R5), *śūnyataḥ* (V8 and R3), *anātmato* (V8 and R3).

<sup>50</sup> The *Mahāvastu* also associates Sāriputta's full awakening with the *Dīghanakha-parivrājaka-sūtra*, cf. Senart 1897: 67,7, as does Xuánzàng (玄奘) in his travel records, T 2087 at T 51, 925a10, the *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-(upadeśa)-śāstra*, T 1509 at T 25, 62a23, and the *\*Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545 at T 27, 510b1. Regarding the reference to Sāriputta's attainment of cessation in MN 111 at MN III 28,25, I assume that this discourse may only be depicting his insight practice up to non-return, with which according to Vism 702,23 the attainment of cessation becomes possible (and at least the influx of sensuality is destroyed); cf. also Abhidh-k 2.43 in Pradhan 1967: 70,14, according to which the attainment of cessation is the domain of ariyans only, a position also reflected in the *\*Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545 at T 27, 780a1, and the *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 1579 at T 30, 469a6.

<sup>51</sup> MN 74 at MN I 500,25: "feeling is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen, of a nature to



Buddha was pointing to the need to relinquish feelings through direct understanding, an insight that triggered his full awakening.<sup>52</sup>

The full awakening of the other chief disciple of the Buddha, Mahāmoggallāna, is recorded in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* and its parallels. The discourse reports that the Buddha taught Mahāmoggallāna various approaches for overcoming torpor. At the end of this instruction, Mahāmoggallāna inquired about full liberation from craving. The Buddha replied by describing contemplation of all feelings as impermanent, as fading away, as ceasing and as something to be relinquished. Such contemplation leads to not clinging to anything and becoming liberated.<sup>53</sup> According to the commentary, Mahāmoggallāna reached full awaken-

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be destroyed, of a nature to disappear, of a nature to fade away, of a nature to cease ... seeing this ... a learned noble disciple becomes disenchanted with feelings, being disenchanted he becomes dispassionate and by dispassion he is liberated", *vedanā aniccā saṅkhatā paṭiccasamuppannā khayadhammā vayadhammā virāgadhammā nirohadhammā, evaṃ passam ... sutavā ariyasāvako ... vedanāya nibbindati, nibbindaṃ virajjati, virāgā vimuccati*. Several parallels to this instruction add to this awareness of the gratification, danger and escape in regard to feelings, cf. SĀ 969 at T 2, 249c15, Sanskrit fragment fol. 165a4–5 in Pischel 1904: 815, and a counterpart in the *Avadānaśataka* in Speyer 1909/1970: 193,1.

<sup>52</sup> MN 74 at MN I 501,3: "'the Well Gone One is telling us to relinquish those things through direct knowledge', on reflecting like this, the mind of the venerable Sāriputta was liberated from the influxes through not clinging", *tesaṃ tesaṃ kira no, sugato, dhammānaṃ abhiññā paṭinissaggam āhā ti. itih' idaṃ āyasmato sāriputtassa paṭisañcikkhato anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimucci*. The parallel versions represent the same more in terms of actual meditation practice. SĀ 969 at T 2, 249c29: "he contemplated those dharmas as impermanent, contemplated their arising and ceasing, contemplated dispassion, contemplated full eradication, contemplated relinquishment", 於彼彼法觀察無常, 觀生滅, 觀離欲, 觀滅盡, 觀捨. SĀ<sup>2</sup> 203 at T 2, 449b22: "he contemplated all these dharmas as impermanent, promptly realised dispassion, [thereby] discarding and relinquishing all views", 觀察諸法無常, 即便離欲證成, 棄捨諸見. Fol. 166a5 in Pischel 1904: 815 similarly refers to contemplating dispassion, *virāgānupaśyino*. According to the Tibetan *Pravrajyāvastu* in Eimer 1983: 104,21, Sāriputta reached full awakening after contemplating the relinquishment of all phenomena, dispassion, extinction, and complete relinquishing, *chos de dang de dag la spong bar rjes su lta zhing gnas pa dang, 'dod chags dang bral bar rjes su lta ba dang, 'gog par rjes su lta ba dang, rab tu spong bar rjes su lta zhing gnas pa*. The *Avadānaśataka* in Speyer 1909/1970: 194,5 reports that Sāriputta contemplated impermanence, passing away, dispassion, cessation, and relinquishment, *anityatānudarśino viharato vyayānudarśino virāgānudarśino nirodhānudarśinaḥ pratiniḥsargānudarśino*, with the Tibetan counterpart in Devacandra 1996: 718,2 similarly reading *mi rtag par rjes su lta bas gnas pa dang, 'jig par rjes su lta ba dang, 'dod chags dang bral bar rjes su lta ba dang, 'gog par rjes su lta ba dang, dor bar rjes su lta bas gnas nas*.

<sup>53</sup> AN 7.58 at AN IV 88,16: "whatever feeling he feels ... he dwells contemplating those feelings as impermanent, dwells contemplating their fading away, dwells contemplating their cessation, dwells contemplating their giving up; dwelling like this ... he does not cling to anything in the world, not clinging he is not agitated, not being agitated he by himself attains Nirvāṇa", *yaṃ kiñci vedanaṃ vediyati ... so tāsu vedanāsu aniccānupassī viharati, virāgānupassī viharati, nirodhānupassī viharati, paṭinissaggānupassī viharati, so ... viharanto na ca kiñci loke upādiyati, anupādiyaṃ na paritassati, aparitassaṃ paccattaṃ yeva parinibbāyati*. A similar instruction in the parallel MĀ 83 at T 1, 560b5 describes "contemplating" feelings as "impermanent", as "rising and falling", as to be "eradicated", as "fading away", as "ceasing", and as to be "relin-

ing through this instruction.<sup>54</sup>

The cases of these two chief disciples of the Buddha thus provide clear examples of how contemplating the impermanent nature of *vedanā* can issue in the final breakthrough to full awakening.

## VI. Conclusion

In sum, the foregoing has shown how key aspects of the development of insight delineated in the early discourses could be approached through modern day Theravāda meditation practice as exemplified in the U Ba Khin *vipassanā* tradition, taught by S.N. Goenka.

A description of the actual technique of gradually scanning the body as such, however, does not seem to be found in the discourses.<sup>55</sup> In fact, when describing the experience of dissolution of the body and the mind, the instructions given during a *vipassanā* course taught by S.N. Goenka employ terms like *kalāpa* or *bhavaṅga*, which appear to stem from a later period than the early discourses.<sup>56</sup> The same is true of other modern day *vipassanā* meditation traditions, whose techniques as such cannot be found in the early discourses and which draw upon the fully developed Theravāda system, using terminology that came into use considerably later.

Nevertheless, such modern practices do seem to present viable modes of implementing the instructions on the development of insight found in the early discourses. In as much as they conform to the basic pattern laid out for the practice of insight by giving importance to a direct experience of the three characteristics, they can rightfully lay a claim to being in accordance with the original instructions. In fact, the generality of the instructions found in the early discourses in a

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quished", 觀無常, 觀興衰, 觀斷, 觀無欲, 觀滅, 觀捨, cf. also T 47 at T 1, 837c7.

<sup>54</sup> Mp IV 44,23.

<sup>55</sup> VRI 1990/2002 discusses a stanza in Ud 3.1 at Ud 21,11, which describes "a monk who leaves behind all karma, shaking off the dust of what formerly had been done", *sabbakammajahassa bhikkhuno, dhunamānassa purekataṃ rajam*. According to the introductory narration, the Buddha spoke these verses in relation to a monk who was enduring painful feelings that were the result of former deeds. VRI 1990/2002: 26 understands the reference to *dhunamānassa purekataṃ rajam* as representing a process of "combing out all the old defilements from the fabric of consciousness" and assumes that these verses "set out the complete technique of Vipassana meditation" (p. 24). This interpretation seems uncertain, as elsewhere in the discourses the verb *dhunati* has a figurative sense, standing e.g. for shaking off Māra's army, SN 6.14 at SN I 156,ult. and Th 256, or for shaking off doubt by being given an explanation, Sn 682 (cf. in more detail Anālayo 2009a: 16). Moreover, according to the commentary on this passage, Ud-a 165,2, the monk in question was an arahant, so that, at least from the commentarial perspective, his shaking off (or 'combing out') was not leading him any further on the path to liberation.

<sup>56</sup> For a detailed study of the *bhavaṅga* cf. Gethin 1994; arguments in favour of a relative earliness of the concept are advanced by Wijesekera 1976, on which cf. also Cousins 1981: 45 note 4. On the late nature of the concept of *kalāpas* cf. Nāṇatiloka 1952/1988: 247, Karunadasa 1989: 142, Bodhi 1993: 14, and Ronkin 2005: 58f.

way leaves it up to practitioners to develop their own more precise methods of putting those instructions into practice, thereby enabling them to proceed on the path to awakening in the way best suited to their own particular capacities and proclivities. In the end, it is precisely this that really counts, namely that one actually walks the path to awakening.

"You have to make an effort,  
Tathāgatas [just] teach [you how],  
Practitioners who meditate,  
Are [going to be] released from Māra's bondage."

*Tumhehi kiccam ātappaṃ  
akkhātāro tathāgatā  
paṭipannā pamokkhanti  
jhāyino Mārabandhanā.*<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Dhṛ 276. Ling 1962: 65 comments that this stanza gives "a useful summary of what the Canon as a whole has to say on the subject" of reaching liberation from Māra. A parallel in Patna Dharmapada 359, Cone 1989: 198, similarly reads *tubbhehi kiccam ātappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā, paṭipannā pramokkhanti, jhāyino mārabaṃdhanā* (= 360 in Roth 1980: 129). The Sanskrit *Udāna* collection, 12.9 and 12.11 in Bernhard 1965: 195, has its counterpart verses, with some minor variations, in separate stanzas: *yuṣmābhir eva karaṇīyam, ākhyātāras tathāgatāḥ ... pratipannakāḥ prahāsyanti, dhyāyino mārabandhanam*, the same pattern recurs in the Tibetan version, 12.9 and 12.11 in Beckh 1911: 40: *de bzhin gshegs pa ston pa ste, khyed cag rnam kyis bya dgos so ... ting nge 'dzin la rab zhugs te, bdud kyi 'ching ba spang bar gyis* (Zongtse 1990: 131 reads *gnas te* instead of *zhugs te*). A to some extent comparable set of verses can be found among the Chinese *Dharmapada* and *Udāna* collections, which begins by indicating that "I have taught you the Dharma" or "I have taught the path", followed with the instruction that "you should make an effort yourselves, having received the words of the Tathāgata", T 210 at T 4, 569b24: 吾語汝法 ... 宜以自勗, 受如來言, T 212 at T 4, 683c8: 吾已說道 ... 宜以自勗, 受如來言, T 213 at T 4, 783b5-7: 吾已說道迹 ... 宜以自勗勵, 諦受如來言, for a parallel in a Tocharian fragment cf. no. 27b4-6 in Sieg 1949: 46; cf. also Sieg 1931: 495.

## Abbreviations:

AN	<i>Āṅguttara-nikāya</i>
D	Derge edition
DĀ	<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i> (T 1)
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
DN	<i>Dīrgha-nikāya</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125)
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i>
Paṭis	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i>
Q	Peking edition
SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
SĀ <sup>2</sup>	'other' <i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 100)
SHT	Sanskrihandschriften aus den Turfanfunden
SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
Sn	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
Spk	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī</i>
T	Taishō edition (CBETA)
Th	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Ud	<i>Udāna</i>
Ud-a	<i>Paramatthadīpanī</i>
Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

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