

Day 1— *“Every moment is time to meditate”*

Since we are going to be practicing Satipattana meditation it means that we use sati or awareness as the lead in order to cultivate five qualities.

These five qualities are called the five faculties of mind. The five faculties are infinite awareness itself, sati; and then samadhi, we'll call it stability of mind; there's viriya, we'll call it right effort; there's saddha, which we'll call faith or confidence in yourself and the practice; and lastly wisdom which is called panna.

The word in Pali for meditation is bhavana which literally means "cultivation."

The reason why cultivation is important is because it is the nature of mind to arise and pass away every moment. The mind is discrete. It arises and passes away. But what it leaves is a legacy for the next mind that will arise. So cultivation of the right things is important so the right legacy is passed on.

So whatever you allow to live and grow in your mind, whether that quality is positive or negative, will, as you allow it to remain in the mind, grow strong and stronger because that legacy is being passed on.

That is why if we want to cultivate meditation, if we want that to grow, we have practice nonstop.

Meditation is not a part-time occupation. It's not a pastime. It's something we need to integrate into our lives so that it is always there. Because the mind is like a zero-sum game. It's either positive or negative.

We need to try to make what's in the mind every moment be something positive, because if it's not positive its going to be negative. In other words, something skillful, because otherwise it will be unskillful.

This is the nature of meditation, this need for how you cultivate. He's trying to bring this to life for you because the time for meditation is all day long, from the moment you wake up and open your eyes, until you fall asleep at night. Every moment is time to meditate.

So he's going to give you a few pointers, what he feels is most important for the practice of meditation.

The meditating mind, the mind that is doing the work of meditation, that mind needs to be a wholesome mind.

What do we mean by wholesome mind? Remember the five faculties I mentioned earlier, awareness, stability of mind, right effort, faith and confidence, and wisdom. Those are the qualities of mind and this is what we are trying to cultivate. Every moment of awareness brings these qualities of mind into the present moment.

Of these five qualities, it's when we try to make effort that often, or sometimes, defilements come in and it becomes wrong effort.

So if greed comes into the practice, it becomes wrong practice. If aversion is the motivation for practice, it becomes wrong practice. If delusion is what's present when we are practicing, it becomes wrong practice, wrong effort.

Whenever these defilements are present and motivating the practice we begin to over-exert, we begin to over-effort.

When we are striving for something, when we want something to be a certain way we start to put in too much effort. When we are dissatisfied with something we start to put in a lot of effort. When we don't know what to do we start to sort of flail about in the dark and then we still exert too much effort.

When there's not enough wisdom or understanding about how to practice correctly, what right effort is, when there's not that understanding, then there will be this sometimes too much efforting and sometimes not enough effort.

Sayadaw wants us to be particularly aware of how much effort we are putting into the practice. He is very concerned we do not over-effort. He doesn't want us to be focusing too much or trying too hard.

He doesn't want us to practice in a way that makes the mind or the body tired. When you practice meditation do you think it will make you peaceful or happy? Will it make you tired and unhappy?

If you are practicing correctly, with right effort, it will definitely bring peace and joy. But if we are putting in wrong effort, yes we will find we are getting tired as we are practicing. We will be unhappy while practicing.

The moment there are things that we want, things that we want to have, things we don't want, we don't like, we disagree with, then it begins. We start to get tired in our practice.

Simple awareness itself isn't tiring at all. All it is, is not forgetting in the present moment, to be aware.

It's easy to be aware, because all we can be truly aware of is our six senses. What we can directly be aware of.

We have six sense doors. If we are aware of one or the other of the six sense doors, and what we are experiencing through it, then awareness is present.

So to be aware of yourself, how much effort do you think it requires?

Let's try it out. Live demonstration, ourselves as guinea pigs. You are sitting. Are you aware you are sitting? Hmm? Feeling seated?

You are seeing. Are you aware that you are seeing? Yes? Are you sure?

When did you begin noticing that you are seeing? That seeing is happening? Just now? Just when Sayadaw reminded you. Then it was "oh, yeah ..."

But every day we wake up, we open our eyes and the first thing that happens is seeing beings to happen. Do we ever realize that? That is what awareness is, just this realization of our present moment experience. That's all.

So how much effort did you need to recognize that you were seeing, when he said so? Much? A lot? No?

Do you need to concentrate to know that you are seeing? No.

So what he is trying to demonstrate to you is that awareness doesn't take a lot of effort. So long as you are aware of something in your being, some sense, you are aware. It doesn't just have to be seeing, it can be any of the other senses, touching, etc.

Of the six senses, five are in the body, one of them is the mind. That's also something that you might know. Tasting, hearing, smelling, all of that. Whatever you know is fine.

He does want you to be meditating all day long. So it won't do to put in too much effort in bursts of effort, because you will run out of steam. He wants you to conserve energy so you keep going all day long.

He also wants us to lose the idea that meditation happens on a cushion or in the dhamma hall. He wants us to come to the idea that meditation is so important we need to do it whenever we remember to do it, all the time.

So although we don't need to put in a lot of effort to be aware in each moment, what is very important is that we keep trying to keep up the intention to remain aware all the time, whether it's continuous or not.

So that is the definition of right effort. Not the putting in of a lot of energy, rather the sustaining of that little bit of energy and trying to keep it going, trying to keep up the intention and the commitment and not giving up. Persevering throughout the day.

That's actually a bit harder, Sayadaw says, because in order for awareness to become constant it needs to become our habit. For something to become our habit we sort of have to pick at it all the time.

If we do persevere and we keep at it, and keep at it, a momentum will build and we will notice it starts to take on a life of its own. It starts to grow and that momentum is very important.

Without this momentum, Sayadaw says, it becomes difficult to take the practice to very much higher levels.

Sayadaw says, in the beginning it is always our personal effort, that is always on and off, on and off, and we just persevere. When we remember we keep going. We forget, we remember, keep going. Then, when that momentum builds up, you will start to notice that awareness starts to kick in on its own. That's when the flow comes in. If you practice like this over a long time it can get to the point that that natural sort of awareness isn't just kicking in once in a while, and not just for short periods, it can start to become very pervasive.

When it gets to that point, where it feels pervasive, you can really feel how it is not you practicing any more, the dhamma is around.

That's when the understanding of anatta, the idea of what anatta could be, becomes very strong.

That's why Sayadaw says continuity or at least the intention the commitment too keep it that way, is so very very important in the practice, in right effort.

Remember, it's not about using a lot of effort, it's about being steady. Steady and keep going and going.

In order to ensure that we are practicing with right effort and right attitude, Sayadaw says another thing we need to do is check in with our minds every now and then to see whether it has right attitude, whether it is making right effort. Whether some greed or some aversion or delusion is there, pushing your practice. Check in very often.

Because the nature of our minds is that as we live our lives, most often greed takes over, aversion takes over, delusion takes over, and we are going through all of our motions in daily life with these motivations. So it's not a surprise that when you come to meditate they will come and try to run the show there too.

Because what he is advocating is that we practice relentlessly, if any of this wrong stuff comes in—greed, aversion, delusion—then it's scary because it will be relentlessly greedy, averse or deluded.

Please check your mind often. When we are practicing we need to always remember, when we are practicing there are two things that are involved: the things that we know, and the mind that is knowing or trying to know.

Those things that we know, you remember the six sense doors we talked about just now, we call them objects. In general we call the thing that is being known, an object. It is called an object because its role is to be known.

What is being known, that object could be something in the body or something in the mind. But if we are talking about that which is knowing, that's just the mind. The body doesn't know. Only the mind knows.

The actual work of meditation, although it uses the object, the work is being done by the mind that knows. Meditation is the work of the mind.

The objects are already there. Whether we know them or not they are always present so we don't have to do anything to them. When we know something we don't have to change it, make it better, it doesn't have to be anything other than what it is. The object is just what it is. What we have to work with is that mind that is knowing.

In the present moment, whatever we know, whatever we can be aware of, it's an effect of the accumulation of past causes. Many causes come together to bring the present moment into condition. Because it's an effect we cannot actually change it.

What we can do in the present moment is work with the mind that knows. We can make sure it has the right attitude, that it is working in the right way. We can bring those qualities of mind to bear in the present moment by being aware and cultivate those good qualities.

First off, in the present moment, the first thing that we can do is check whether there is right view.

There we come to the fact that awareness alone is not enough. To practice vipassana effectively right view must practice together with awareness.

Wrong view is always at work. Our automatic view of our world is that this process of mind and matter is "me." I'm looking at me. I know me. But we can't practice vipassana using that point of view.

If we think of the body or the mind as "me," and we observe it, defilements will begin arising. We will attach to things that we experience and are observing, we will resist the things that we are observing. If we think this is a good experience we will start wanting it, or trying to create it. If we think it's not a good experience we will start denying it or pushing it away.

The mind is the worst. The moment we think it's not a good mind, hell starts.

Looking at the mind doesn't bring good news. (chuckle)

It's odd, when we look at our minds, mostly we see a lot of negative stuff running around. If we think it is "my" mind, we will start feeling pretty depressed. And if we think we have good qualities of mind, we start feeling good. That's mana, pride.

So to practice vipassana effectively then, we have to remind ourselves that these minds, these process, are also nature. So that we can observe them. When you observe yourself, this whole process of mind and matter, you want to remind yourself that the "me" is actually a process of mind and matter coming together. We want to understand that process and that's why we are observing it.

That's one very important thing to have, right view, when we practice.

There are other ways that right view can come in and that's when we practice vipassana, we are trying to observe what is happening as it is, not resisting anything. Not judging what's happening.

When practicing, three of the bugbears for yogis, where our wrong view comes in and starts working are 1) Sound, 2) Thinking mind, and 3) Pain. How should we approach these three experiences? What should our thoughts be about them? These are the main bugbears but they are not the only ones. We could have similar ideas about any of our experiences.

Sayadaw is trying to bring to life this idea of how, when we consciously or unconsciously begin to judge something as good or bad, as an experience, we are going to be trying to manipulate it. But in nature, things such as nature, they are what they are. They are neither good nor bad, they are just what they are.

So when we meditate is it good to have thinking mind, or is it good to have less thinking mind?

If we think it's better to have less thinking, then when we think there is more thinking than there should be, we will start resisting it. We will start making an effort to do something about it.

And as you go about meditating the whole day, is it good to hear sounds? Are loud sounds better for meditation or are soft sounds better for meditation? Is it better if it is quiet for meditation? Don't we all like quiet better? But do you know what happens when we think quiet is better than when it is noisy? We get just a little bit annoyed.

It doesn't matter how concentrated you are, you could be like in the depths of concentration, if you hear a sound and you think there shouldn't be sound, instantly you lose it. Our preferences will hinder the mind's work.

If we have the right idea, it can help us. If we have the right idea the mind will remain stable and steady. If we have the wrong idea then we will get sort of destabilized.

In Pali it says the proximate cause of wholesome mind, of kusala, is yoniso manasikara. I have always translated yoniso manasikara as "right attitude." In Burmese it is translated as "taking to heart in the right way." So the proximate cause of kusala, wholesome mind, is yoniso manasikara. Correspondingly, the proximate cause of akusala, unwholesome mind, is ayoniso manasikara, "taking to heart in the wrong way."

Samadhi very often mostly translated as "concentration," we call it stability of mind. But samadhi is a good state of mind. It is a kusala mind which means that the proximate cause of samadhi is yoniso manasikara, "taking to heart in the right way."

The moment we have wrong view we have wrong thought. If we think in that way, the samadhi will be destabilized. The stability of mind will slip.

And how do we view pain? Do we think pain is good or not good? Generally we think pain is a negative experience in life. It's a discomfort. The word itself feeds that image into our mind and so when we have pain, the mind's automatic reaction, whether we are conscious of it or not, is actually to not like it.

So when we do meditation and we come across discomfort in the body, or the mind, we need to check, to see this negative reaction the mind has toward this experience, and adjust it.

We need to remind ourselves that pain is not just a negative experience, pain is nature. We have a body. If we put it in positions that are difficult for it, if we remain in these positions for a long period of time, it will bring discomfort. That's natural. So pain also comes from a set of conditions. It's an effect of some causes coming together. If we see this as a process we see pain is just what it is, it's neither good nor bad.

It's only when we can accept that it is nature that we can allow it and learn from it. Otherwise we are so busy resisting pain we can't understand anything about its nature or its process.

As we go about meditating the whole day, whatever we are observing, whether it's in the body or the mind, remember we are holding the view that this is just nature, this is just a process. That's the only difference between someone who is trying to meditate, a yogi, and someone who is not trying to meditate, who is not a yogi.

A yogi is one who uses all the experiences of the six sense doors to develop sati, samadhi and panna—awareness, stability of mind, and wisdom.

But if you are not a yogi, you still have the six senses, you still experience through the six sense doors but you develop greed, aversion and delusion towards them, or because of them.

If we have the knowledge, if we have the right information, we can use these six sense doors and the experiences of them to develop our good qualities of mind. It becomes meditation. You are all yogis, right?

So use the six sense doors, use every moment you have with the six sense doors to develop awareness, stability of mind and wisdom and you'll be yogis.

There is no experience in the world that disturbs you—you concentration or your awareness. For a vipassana yogi every experience and every object never hinders the practice. They only support the practice because it's something you can be aware of and therefore you can develop stability of mind and wisdom.

When we talk about defilements we are talking about hindrances. When we say hindrance, hindrances are not the thing we experience, not the object. It's in the mind that is meditating. If there is greed or aversion in the mind when we practice, if the mind is averse to what is being experienced, or greed or delusion, that is the hindrance, not the experience itself. Having anger is not the defilement or the hindrance. If we are resistant to the anger, that resistance is the defilement in the practice. Does that make sense?

But when you understand the practice then you can take the resistance in the mind, and observe that as well, and then it becomes an object and it's not a hindrance any more. It becomes part of the practice.

In the Satipattana Sutta you have body consciousness, feeling consciousness, mind consciousness and dhamma consciousness. When we get to dhamma consciousness then the hindrances become the objects.

Sayadaw has covered everything he needs to about the attitude to meditation, and our job henceforth is only three: First, have right view, second, be aware of right view, third, continue to be aware of right view.

That one always makes people laugh. There's not a lot to do, just these three.

So when you do want to do a sitting meditation, whether it is in the hall or out there in nature, or in your room, when you are sitting, Sayadaw says, you can be aware of anything in your body, or something that is happening in the mind, anything in mind. You can start with your breath if that is what you usually do, you can do rising and falling if that's what you do, or body-scanning or whatever you like.

But he wants you to know that when awareness gets better what happens is that awareness knows more. So there is no need to try to keep the mind on only one object. Don't become blinkered and obsessed with one object.

So you can start with one object because that's a beginning. But if you begin to find as you continue to be aware that other things are filtering into your awareness and you

know other things, please allow yourself to know these things and to acknowledge them.

You might find that you are watching your breath, and then you notice the mind is thinking, you also notice some heat in the body. It just means that awareness is getting better. It doesn't mean you are getting distracted. The more you are aware of, the more it is a sign that your awareness is expanding and you know more. It means the ability of the mind to know is increasing.

The whole objective of meditation is not to quiet the mind. The objective of the meditation is to know. To know whatever is happening as it is. If it is quiet, then it's quiet. If it's not quiet, it's not quiet. Just know that.

Acknowledging what you are experiencing in the moment, whatever you experience in the moment, acknowledge it for what it is, whatever you notice of your experience in the moment, acknowledging it for what it is. And letting yourself continue to know that and what else you could know. You are not trying to change your experience.

What are we doing as we wander around throughout the day, sitting, standing, whatever. We are trying to know, being aware of whatever is happening in the body and the mind. So if in any moment you begin to feel that you are knowing three or four different things at a time, it can grow into that, don't be alarmed. Don't think you are distracted. Don't judge it. Just know that is a good sign.

When Sayadaw uses the word "wandering mind" it just means you are unconscious. You don't know you were lost in thought. That's when there is wandering mind. But if you are thinking and you are know there is thinking, that's not wandering mind, that's when you are aware there is thinking mind. When awareness expands it becomes really good that you know a lot of things. A lot of things are happening, you know it clearly and it is really fast.

The mind and the process of mind and matter is really, really fast. We don't usually see at that speed, but when awareness becomes really good it can see that speed.

When there are thoughts, please don't fight them. Thoughts are nature. The nature of the mind is to think. One of the definitions of the mind is "that which thinks is mind." So what matters is for us to acknowledge if we know there this thinking mind, there is thinking mind.

Don't be interested in the story, what you are thinking about, but rather in the fact that the mind is thinking. It's a process that is happening. At the beginning, if you are not used to acknowledging the mind is thinking, go back to whatever else you were being aware of. Don't stay just with the mind, you can then get lost in thought.

But if we give ourselves the opportunity to acknowledge the thinking mind often, we will get to the point where we begin to see that this is mind. Then you can know it and not get lost in thought.

That happens only when we begin to know that we can objectively know that this is mind. Realize this is mind, mind is thinking, and then you don't get lost in thought. It won't happen.

Remember that when you do have discomfort, whether physical or mental, the first thing to check for is whether there is resistance in the mind. What is the reaction of the mind to the experience of discomfort? And there are two steps there, you check for the reaction of the mind and you see, one, whether you can adjust it. Can you remind the mind that this is nature? Does it then become more accepting so you can observe?

Step Two, you watch as long as you are able. If it becomes very uncomfortable, stop doing that. Do something that is more neutral, go to the breath or take a walk. Don't work with something very difficult for longer than you can bear. If it was a sitting posture and you have a lot of pain, change the posture.

When you do walking meditation, just walk and know that you are walking. You don't need to walk slowly, there's no need to label what you are doing. Just know you are walking. Become conscious of the forces of walking. What can you pick up about the process of walking as you watch yourself walk? You can start by knowing just one thing, just maybe feeling the step, or the movement.

The key is to sustain the awareness. Keeping aware of that one thing that you know, the movement or whatever, you'll find the awareness begins to expand and know what else is happening when you are walking.

Be aware in all of our activities, in our rooms, when we eat, when we move a hand or a leg. When we look, to pick things up, when we see in general. Notice these things as much as we can. In seeing and looking we most lack practice, so we will find we are not very skillful, we maybe won't remember to notice. We are so used to thinking that meditation has something to do with our eyes closed that we are not used to the idea that you could be aware of seeing, or with your eyes open you can be aware.

It is really not difficult. You are looking, and you can recognize that looking is happening. That action is happening. How many times a day do you think that we do this? We look. How many times a day do we look? So please practice, if you practice and make it a habit it is everywhere, it is pervasive. Every time we do something we look.

Before we turn the handle we look at the handle. We look at the door before we go towards it. We look at something before we pick it up, before we choose something, before we do anything. If we aren't skillful at noticing seeing and looking, it is difficult to keep up practice in daily life because we don't walk around all day long with our eyes

closed. Seeing is a very, very obvious object. We can't even not want to see. With our eyes open, seeing is happening.

We tend to not be able to understand what seeing is. The instant tendency of the mind is to then think of what it is seeing—I see a Buddha picture, I see the floor. But that is not the object. Those things are there that you are seeing are objects. The vision, the seeing, that's a different thing. Just acknowledge what you are seeing.

Seeing and thinking have similar natures. It's like when we watch our thoughts we get lost in thought, and so when we try to notice seeing we get lost in what we are seeing.

Only with repeated practice, perseverance, we become able to objectify so we don't get lost in it. So particularly as we go about the day, not when we are in sitting meditation or doing walking meditation, doing our other day-to-day things, please make yourself conscious of seeing and looking as much as possible. Remind yourself.

And in the beginning days of meditation, please do not speak if not necessary, just to get some momentum. In the later days, at some point, we will practice talking with mindfulness, a little bit. That's enough. Any questions? Did you find any of this confusing or disjointed? This is the time to ask questions.

YOGI: You said something about the difference between the body and the mind?

SUT: I'll just explain, it's sort of technical. In the Buddhist Abhidhamma, in the psychology of Buddhism, things are clearly defined. So although in English we may say "the body knows and it's adjusting," like that. We use the words quite loosely, I'll say. But in Buddhism it is very clearly spelled out that it's always the mind that knows. You may not be conscious of it, but the subconscious mind might be aware of something that is happening in the body. So whatever is known, is always known by the mind. If it is something that knows, it is the mind that is knowing. This is technical. It is also the mind that feels. For example, one of the physical senses is sound. Sound is an object, a sense object. And the hearing is the experience of sound. But sound is not the mind. If you are talking about the body, feeling in the body, there might be heat. Heat is not the mind, but the knowing of heat is the mind. In Buddhist terms that which knows, and that which thinks, is defined as mind. It's a definition. You call any quality that knows, the mind, and any quality that feels, the mind, and any quality that thinks, the mind. As you practice you will begin to see the difference between what is known and what is knowing. That which is being known has the nature of being the object, of being known; and then that which is knowing, which is always mind. You will begin to see this difference clearly.

YOGI: (Inaudible)

SUT: The question was, there is a very subtle difference between cultivating good qualities of mind, and allowing what is manifesting to be there. Allowing what is being experienced to be there and not trying to change it. The little bridge between these two

is the word acceptance, which can be misunderstood. We often think that accepting something means surrendering to it. If there is anger in the mind, "Oh, I accept it so let my mind be angry." But that's not what it is. There is some extent to which you can't help but roll with it, because it has its momentum and you can't stop it. But what you are not doing in the present moment is feeding it. You accept that this is what is happening, but then you will do what you need to do, with awareness, you are going to be aware. You are not feeding it, you are not thinking more about what is making you angry, you are not making yourself more angry, you are trying to become aware, moment by moment. "There is anger, this is anger, this is the nature of anger. What is that like?" And you are bringing that awareness continually. You are not working at being angry you are working at being aware. So that has to become very conscious, that awareness is at work. That is the good quality that you are cultivating. So you are cultivating awareness, not anger any more, although anger will have its momentum. Don't let it eat you. When we say "accept what is happening," we are saying you are not needing to say to yourself, "I shouldn't be angry, I shouldn't be angry." Accepting is, "oh, there is anger," and then there is awareness, and awareness is where you put your energy. You put all your energy into awareness. Awareness, awareness, awareness.

YOGI: Can Sayadaw say something about how to practice while lying down?

SUT: You are allowed to practice in any posture, so certainly you are allowed to practice lying down. Just don't fall asleep. If you find your awareness is good lying down, then you are welcome to do that. When we lie down we have to be mentally alert, we have to exercise the mind more. When we lie down the mind doesn't have to support the body in postures, so all the effort has to be geared towards being aware. If we become too relaxed when we are being mindful in a lying down posture, we can fall asleep.

YOGI: It still seems difficult that even if you are aware of the process of thinking, to dissociate the sense of self from it.

SUT: There is no need to dissociate because it's about knowing what is happening in the present moment as it is. So you know there is thinking, and you know the sense of "I." Know that as well, recognize both. Because you are aware you are on top of both. That's fine. The benefit of that is that when sometimes the sense of "I" is not present, you then recognize it so clearly, because you have been recognizing it when it is there.

YOGI: Can there be awareness of awareness?

SUT: Yes there can be. When there is momentum, when the awareness is good, there can be awareness of awareness. I often give an analogy, every moment that we are aware is like putting dots down in a line. So a moment of awareness ... dot ... awareness ... dot ... awareness ... dot ... dot ... dot ... dot ... dot ... dot ... dot. When you have a lot of dots you begin to see the line. That's what it feels like when you are continuously aware, suddenly this thing that is awareness seems to come alive in your consciousness. You begin to see this thing at work. You can step back from it and that's awareness of awareness.

YOGI: What is the instruction for chronic pain?

SUT: If it's chronic you really have to work to understand it, the process of pain, really well. When we truly understand what pain is, then when there is the experience of pain, then aversion doesn't come with it. When we understand that pain is also the dhamma, that is also a dhamma object, then pain is just another object, it doesn't matter. When pain becomes dhamma, then it is no longer painful. And for yogis who don't have chronic pain, we challenge ourselves to face pain, discomfort and so on, so we begin to understand the nature of pain. So that if we have real pain, we have some understanding and can face it with more equanimity. For those with chronic pain, you have to learn on the go. What is the mind's feeling towards the pain? What is the mind's attitude toward the pain? What stance does it hold to the pain, towards the pain you have? What do you already understand about your pain? You need to bring all this. When we observe pain it is so that we begin to understand the process of pain, not just in the body but how the mind is involved in the experience of pain. It is to understand this process that we observe the whole process of pain. When there is pain, pain is just a physical experience, right? But the feeling, "painful," is in the mind and the only difference in experiencing pain is whether you find it painful. There is aversion in the mind towards it, or the mind is equanimous towards it, although the physical experience is still there. So you need to work with the mind to understand how the mind is involved in the process more. How does the mind interpret pain? How does the mind create pain for itself? How does it create the experience of pain, "painfulness," and all the attendant pains for itself? So a normal person it's all together, it's all rolled up in one. But for a yogi it's different, you are starting to take it apart, find out more about it.