

How to practise walking and sitting meditation in the Vipassana (Insight) tradition

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Vipassana is a Pali word which comes from the roots 'Vi' meaning 'clearly' and 'passana' meaning 'to know'. So it means 'to know clearly'. We know the body and mind clearly. It usually translated in English as 'Insight Meditation'. It is one of two main groups of Buddhist meditation practice. The other group is the Samatha (Concentration) group.

Although it can be practised in any position and at any time, there are four main positions for practising Vipassana (Insight) meditation formally. They are standing, walking, sitting and lying down. Standing and walking are usually practised before sitting. The walking meditation helps to build up energy and concentration to support the sitting practice. Because there is more 'happening' during the walking, many people find it a good interim step between the confusion of city life and the stillness of sitting.

The exercises described here conform to the formal practice which is taught at Wat Mahadhatu (Mahadhatu Temple in Bangkok). They in turn follow the line of teaching of the renowned Meditation Master Ven. Mahasri Sayadaw of Burma.

Note: It is advisable to learn how to practise with an experienced meditation master. Although there is nothing inherently dangerous about the walking and sitting exercises described here, it is possible for a novice meditator to become out of balance with his or her practice. The guidance of a Kalayanamitta (Good friend) is invaluable to keep meditators on course.

Standing and walking

There are a series of six exercises which progressively expand awareness of the constituent parts of each step. Here we shall look at the first of them.

Select a suitable time when you will not be disturbed. Close the door of your room and take the phone off the hook. This is 'your' time.

You will need between ten and fifteen feet of space in which to walk. Stand still with your eyes open. You should be looking at the floor ahead of you. When standing still your gaze should be focused about two metres ahead of you, but when walking, the focus point should be a little nearer, about six feet ahead. Hold your hands together in front or behind you. Try to be aware of the position of the body standing and of any tension within it. The aim is to become fully aware of the present moment. To help you focus on the present moment, make three mental acknowledgements 'Standing, standing, standing'.

Next the practitioner should become aware of the intention to walk, again making three mental acknowledgements 'Intending to walk, intending to walk, intending to walk'.

It is customary to begin with the right foot. Lift the right foot about three inches from the floor, and then place it about six inches ahead of the left foot. Focus attention on the movement of the foot from the moment it is lifted until it is set down, simultaneously making the acknowledgement 'Right goes thus'. This has the meaning of 'In this way' or 'Like this' but has a shorter sound duration and so that is why it is used.

The movement of the foot should be perceived as continuous and not divided into separate actions.

Move your point of attention to the left foot. Lift it and move it forward and put it down about six inches ahead of the right. Be aware of the movement as it is happening and simultaneously acknowledge in mind 'Left goes thus'. The acknowledgement and the movement should coincide. Continue walking, with awareness focused on the movements of the feet until you come to the end of your walk space.

Turning

Be mindful of standing as before. Make three mental acknowledgements of the body standing. Then putting attention on the feet, try to be aware of the tension there as you become aware of the desire to turn. Make three mental acknowledgements 'Intending to turn, intending to turn, intending to turn'. while, at the same time, being aware of the intention to turn.

Next, turn to the right. Move your right foot clockwise Lift the toes of your right foot keeping the heel on the ground, acknowledging (at the same time) 'turn' and as you put your toes down, acknowledge '-ning'. The angle of the movement should be about 45 degrees.

Lift your left foot straight up about three inches from the ground, saying in mind 'Turn'. Then place it parallel to the right foot, acknowledging '-ning'.

Make four pairs of these foot movements to complete a 180% turn. Note that the right heel revolves on the same spot throughout the exercise.

The practitioner should then be aware of 'Standing' and 'Intending to walk' as before and then walk back in the direction he has just come from.

This walking exercise can continue for about 15 minutes before you change to sitting meditation. At the changeover point be sure to move slowly and to be aware of your movements at all times.

Sitting meditation

Sit in a stable position on the floor or on a chair. Your back should be straight but not stiff. The blood circulation should not be obstructed. The hands should be held loosely in the lap. In Thailand the right hand is usually placed on the left with the palms facing upwards.

Close your eyes and focus the mind inwards. Be aware of the movements of the abdomen which accompany breathing. Put your attention on a point about the size of a fingertip, just below the navel, on the surface of the skin. Feel/attend to this point as it moves in concert with natural breathing. Do not try to control your breath in any way. Allow the needs of the body to determine when and how you breathe. As you breathe in (inhale) this point will move away from the spine and up and out a little. As it does so, say in mind 'Rising'.

As you breathe out (exhale) this same point will fall back towards the spine and drop down just a little. As it does so, say in mind 'Falling'. Notice which movement takes longer (in time); is it the 'Rising' or the 'Falling'?

Do not try to follow the passage of the air in and out of the nostrils or into the lungs. Initially if the meditator finds it difficult to focus attention on the movements of the abdomen, various aids can be employed, such as wearing a tight belt, or rubbing a little balm on the spot on the abdomen where attention is to be centred.

While practising Insight meditation, focusing attention on the movements of the abdomen - the rising and falling - forms the base practice. However all sensations, perceptions, thoughts and emotions are also an integral part of the meditation and should be attended to as well.

This method of practice is described in detail in the Mahasatipatana Sutta - the 'Great Mindfulness' Sutta. In this Sutta, meditators are encouraged to practise the 'Four Foundations of Mindfulness'. These are:-

Mindfulness of the body, ie. The position and movements of the body

Mindfulness of feelings/emotions, all of them whether they are positive, negative or neutral, and whether they are strong or weak. This group also includes awareness of physical sensations such as pain or numbness.

Mindfulness of mental contents, ie. thoughts, daydreams, perceptions of all kinds eg. sounds, colours, pictures in the mind etc.

Mindfulness of the underlying state of mind. You know how the mind is in the present. Is it clear or confused? Is it awake or sleepy? Is it focused or vague?

So there is no aspect of present experience which does not have a place in Vipassana (Insight) meditation. Consequently, you allow all the thought, sensations and emotions to come into your field of attention, acknowledge them appropriately, and then allow them to change or pass in their own time.

If a sound occurs, put your attention on your ears, acknowledge the sound; 'Hearing, hearing, hearing'. You may need to make three, five, ten or more acknowledgements until the sound dies away by itself or until it no longer disturbs you. Then very gently bring your attention back to the rising and falling. If your attention 'follows' a sound,

at the point when you become aware of what has happened, acknowledge it 'Knowing, knowing, knowing' and then gently direct your attention back to the movements of the abdomen. Similarly if there is a smell, acknowledge it 'Smelling, smelling, smelling'.

Thinking is dealt with in the same way. It should not be assigned greater importance than hearing or seeing for example. When you become aware that are or have been thinking, put your attention on your chest and say in mind 'Thinking, thinking, thinking'. This means that you acknowledge the act of thinking, You know that thinking has taken place. Then very gently return your attention to the rising and falling movements of the abdomen.

There may be times when thoughts crowd in. At such times remember that it is the nature of the mind to think - just acknowledge the thoughts, let them come, see them clearly and let them go.

When physical sensations such as pain occur, do not move. Instead put your attention on the place where the sensation is occurring, allow it to come fully into your awareness, acknowledge it appropriately eg. 'Pain, pain, pain' three or more times until the sensation becomes less intense or fades away, then return your attention to the rising and falling. If that sensation occurs again, please deal with it in the same way, without moving. If however, it occurs a third time, and it is unbearable, you may move. But please do so mindfully, being aware of your movements at all times and being aware of the new sensations that arise as a result of the movement. Then return your point of attention to the rising and falling.

When physical sensations or emotional feelings come into the mind, simply acknowledge them and allow them to pass. This remains the same whether the sensation or feeling is negative or positive, pleasant or unpleasant, or indifferent. Try not to be drawn away by any feeling, sensation or thought. Simply employ Sati (bare-awareness- a better translation than 'mindfulness') to know whatever occurs. Sati is awareness without bias or prejudice.

The length of time already spent walking. So, if you have practised walking for fifteen minutes, then you would practise sitting meditation for a further fifteen minutes. The timing does not have to be exact. You do not need to use a timer.

Vipassana is inclusive in that it does not seek to exclude any part of the experience of the present moment. The exercises (only the first are given here) gradually and systematically build up concentration and energy levels. This enhanced concentration and well-directed energy, together with Sati - bare awareness of all that occurs in the present moment - create the ideal conditions for the meditator to have direct experience of the ultimate truth which is our real nature.

Practical Meditation Exercises (Excerpts)

Mahasi Sayadaw

The Basic Practice

Preparatory Stage

If you sincerely desire to develop contemplation and attain insight in this your present life, you must give up worldly thoughts and actions during the training. This course of action is for the purification of conduct, the essential preliminary step towards the proper development of contemplation. You must also observe the rules of discipline prescribed for laymen, (or for monks as the case may be) for they are important in gaining insight. For lay people, these rules comprise the Eight Precepts which Buddhist devotees observe on the Observance Days (*uposatha*) and during periods of meditation. An additional rule is not to speak with contempt, in jest, or with malice to or about any of the noble ones who have attained states of sanctity. If you have done so, then personally apologize to him or her or make an apology through your meditation instructor. If in the past you have spoken contemptuously to a noble one who is at present unavailable or deceased, confess this offense to your meditation instructor or introspectively to yourself.

The old masters of Buddhist tradition suggest that you entrust yourself to the Enlightened One, the Buddha, during the training period, for you may be alarmed if it happens that your own state of mind produces unwholesome or frightening visions during contemplation. Also place yourself under the guidance of your meditation instructor, for then, he can talk to you frankly about your work in contemplation and give you the guidance he thinks necessary. These are the advantages of placing trust in the Enlightened One, the Buddha, and practising under the guidance of your instructor. The aim of this practice and its greatest benefit is release from greed, hatred and delusion, which are the roots of all evil and suffering. This intensive course in insight training can lead you to such release. So work ardently with this end in view so that your training will be successfully completed. This kind of training in contemplation, based on the foundations of mindfulness (*satipattana*), had been taken by successive Buddhas and noble ones who attained release. You are to be congratulated on having the opportunity to take the same kind of training they had undergone.

It is also important for you to begin your training with a brief contemplation on the "Four Protections" which the Enlightened One, the Buddha, offers you for reflection. It is helpful for your psychological welfare at this stage to reflect on them. The subjects of the four protective reflections are the Buddha himself, loving-kindness, the loathsome aspects of the body, and death.

First, devote yourself to the Buddha by sincerely appreciating his nine chief qualities in this way:

Truly, the Buddha is holy, fully enlightened, perfect in knowledge and conduct, a welfarer, world-knower, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and mankind, the awakened one and the exalted one.

Secondly, reflect upon all sentient beings as the receivers of your loving-kindness and identify yourself with all sentient beings without distinction, thus:

May I be free from enmity, disease and grief. As I am, so also may my parents, preceptors, teachers, intimate and indifferent and inimical beings be free from enmity, disease and grief. May they be released from suffering.

Thirdly, reflect upon the repulsive nature of the body to assist you in diminishing the unwholesome attachment that so many people have for the body. Dwell on some of its impurities, such as stomach, intestines, phlegm, pus, blood. Ponder on these impurities so that the absurd fondness for the body may be eliminated.

The fourth protection for your psychological benefit is to reflect on the phenomenon of ever-approaching death. Buddhist teachings stress that life is uncertain, but death is certain; life is precarious but death is sure. Life has death as its goal. There is birth, disease, suffering, old age, and eventually, death. These are all aspects of the process of existence.

To begin training, take the sitting posture with the legs crossed. You might feel more comfortable if the legs are not interlocked but evenly placed on the ground, without pressing one against the other. If you find that sitting on the floor interferes with contemplation, then obtain a more comfortable way of sitting. Now proceed with each exercise in contemplation as described.

Basic Exercise I

Try to keep your mind (but not your eyes) on the abdomen. You will thereby come to know the movements of rising and falling of it. If these movements are not clear to you in the beginning, then place both hands on the abdomen to feel these rising and falling movements. After a short time the upward movement of exhalation will become clear. Then make a mental note of **rising** for the upward movement, **falling** for the downward movement. Your mental note of each movement must be made while it occurs. From this exercise you learn the actual manner of the upward and downward movements of the abdomen. You are not concerned with the form of the abdomen. What you actually perceive is the bodily sensation of pressure caused by the heaving movement of the abdomen. So do not dwell on the form of the abdomen but proceed with the exercise. For the beginner it is a very effective method of developing the faculties of attention, concentration of mind and insight in contemplation. As practice progresses, the manner of the movements will be clearer. The ability to know each successive occurrence of the mental and physical processes at each of the six sense organs is acquired only when insight contemplation is fully developed. Since you are only a beginner whose attentiveness and power of concentration are still weak, you may find it difficult to keep the mind on each successive rising movement and falling movement as it occurs. In view of this difficulty, you may be inclined to think, "I just don't know how to keep my mind on each of these movement." Then simply remember that this is a learning process. The rising and falling movements of the abdomen are always present and therefore there is no need to look for them. Actually it is easy for a beginner to keep his or her mind on these two simple movements. Continue with this exercise in full awareness of the abdomen's rising and falling movements. Never verbally repeat the words, rising, falling, and do not think of rising and falling as words. Be aware only of the actual process of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. Avoid deep or rapid breathing for the purpose of making the abdominal movements more distinct, because this procedure causes fatigue that interferes with the practice. Just be totally aware of the movements of rising and falling as they occur in the course of normal breathing.

Basic Exercise II

While occupied with the exercise of observing each of the abdominal movements, other mental activities may occur between the noting of each rising and falling. Thoughts or other mental functions, such as intentions, ideas, imaginings, are likely to occur between each mental note of rising and falling. They cannot be disregarded. A mental note must be made of each as it occurs.

If you imagine something, you must know that you have done so and make a mental note, **imagining**. If you simply think of something, mentally note, **thinking**. If you reflect, **reflecting**. If you intend to do something, **intending**. When the mind wanders from the object of meditation which is the rising and falling of the abdomen, mentally note, **wandering**. Should

you imagine you are going to a certain place, note **going**. When you arrive, **arriving**. When, in your thoughts, you meet a person, note **meeting**. Should you speak to him or her, **speaking**. If you imaginarily argue with that person, note **arguing**. If you envision or imagine a light or colour, be sure to note **seeing**. A mental vision must be noted on each occurrence of its appearance until it passes away. After its disappearance continue with Basic Exercise I, by being fully aware of each movement of the rising and falling abdomen. Proceed carefully, without slackening. If you intend to swallow saliva while thus engaged, make a mental note **intending**. While in the act of swallowing, **swallowing**. If you spit, **spitting**. Then return to the exercise of noting rising and falling.

Suppose you intend to bend the neck, note **intending**. In the act of bending, **bending**. When you intend to straighten the neck, **intending**. In the act of straightening the neck, **straightening**. The neck movements of bending and straightening must be done slowly. After mentally making a note of each of these actions, proceed in full awareness with noticing the movements of the rising and falling abdomen.

Basic Exercise III

Since you must continue contemplating for a long time while in one position, that of sitting or lying down, you are likely to experience an intense feeling of fatigue, stiffness in the body or in the arms and legs. Should this happen, simply keep the knowing mind on that part of the body where such feelings occur and carry on the contemplation, noting tired or stiff. Do this naturally; that is, neither too fast nor too slow. These feelings gradually become fainter and finally cease altogether. Should one of these feelings become more intense until the bodily fatigue or stiffness of joints is unbearable, then change your position. However, do not forget to make a mental note of **intending**, before you proceed to change your position. Each movement must be contemplated in its respective order and in detail.

If you intend to lift the hand or leg, make a mental note **intending**. In the act of lifting the hand or leg, **lifting**. Stretching either the hand or the leg, **stretching**. When you bend it, **bending**. When putting it down, **putting**. Should either the hand or leg touch, **touching**. Perform all of these actions in a slow and deliberate manner. As soon as you are settled in the new position, continue with the contemplation in another position keeping to the procedure outlined in this paragraph.

Should an itching sensation be felt in any part of the body, keep the mind on that part and make a mental note, **itching**. Do this in a regulated manner, neither too fast nor too slow. When the itching sensation disappears in the course of full awareness, continue with the exercise of noticing the rising and falling of the abdomen. Should the itching continue and become too strong and you intend to rub the itchy part, be sure to make a mental note, **intending**. Slowly lift the hand, simultaneously noting the actions of **lifting**; and **touching**, when the hand touches the part that itches. Rub slowly in complete awareness of **rubbing**. When the itching sensation has disappeared and you intend to discontinue rubbing be mindful by making the usual mental note of **intending**. Slowly withdraw the hand, concurrently making a mental note of the action, **withdrawing**. When the hand rests in its usual place touching the leg, **touching**. Then again devote your time to observing the abdominal movements.

If there is pain or discomfort, keep the knowing mind on that part of the body where the sensation arises. Make a mental note of the specific sensation as it occurs, such as **painful**, **aching**, **pressing**, **piercing**, **tired**, **giddy**. It must be stressed that the mental note must not be forced nor delayed but made in a calm and natural manner. The pain may eventually cease or increase. Do not be alarmed if it increases. Firmly continue the contemplation. If you do so, you will find that the pain will almost always cease. But if, after a time, the pain has increased and becomes unbearable, you must ignore the pain and continue with the contemplation of rising and falling.

As you progress in mindfulness you may experience sensations of intense pain: stifling or choking sensations, such as pain from the slash of a knife, the thrust of a sharp-pointed instrument, unpleasant sensations of being pricked by sharp needles, or of small insects crawling over the body. You might experience sensations of itching, biting, intense cold. As soon as you discontinue the contemplation you may also feel that these painful sensations cease. When you resume contemplation you will have them again as soon as you gain in mindfulness. These painful sensations are not to be considered as something wrong. They are not manifestations of disease but are common factors always present in the body and are usually obscured when the mind is normally occupied with more conspicuous objects. When the mental faculties become keener you are more aware of these sensations. With the continued development of contemplation the time will come when you can overcome them and they will cease altogether. If you continue contemplation, firm in purpose, you will not come to any harm. Should you lose courage, become irresolute in contemplation and discontinue for some time, you may encounter these unpleasant sensations again and again as your contemplation proceeds. If you continue with determination you will most likely overcome these painful sensations and may never again experience them in the course of contemplation.

Should you intend to sway the body, then knowingly note **intending**. While in the act of swaying, **swaying**. When contemplating you may occasionally discover the body swaying back and forth. Do not be alarmed; neither be pleased nor wish to continue to sway. The swaying will cease if you keep the knowing mind on the action of swaying and continue to note **swaying** until the action ceases. If swaying increases in spite of your making a mental note of it, then lean against a wall or post or lie down for a while. Thereafter proceed with contemplation. Follow the same procedure if you find yourself shaking or trembling. When contemplation is developed you may sometimes feel a thrill or chill pass through the back or the entire body. This is a symptom of the feeling of intense interest, enthusiasm or rapture. It occurs naturally in the course of good contemplation. When your mind is fixed in contemplation you may be startled at the slightest sound. This takes place because you feel the effect of sensory impression more intensely while in a state of concentration.

If you are thirsty while contemplating, notice the feeling, **thirsty**. When you intend to stand, **intending**. Keep the mind intently on the act of standing up, and mentally note **standing**. When you look forward after standing up straight, note **looking, seeing**. Should you intend to walk forward, **intending**. When you begin to step forward, mentally note each step as **walking, walking**, or **left, right**. It is important for you to be aware of every moment in each step from the beginning to the end when you walk. Adhere to the same procedure when strolling or when taking walking exercise. Try to make a mental note of each step in two sections as follows: **lifting, putting, lifting, putting**. When you have obtained sufficient practice in this manner of walking, then try to make a mental note of each step in three sections; **lifting, pushing, putting**; or **up, forward, down**.

When you look at the tap or water-pot on arriving at the place where you are to take a drink, be sure to make a mental note, **looking, seeing**.

When you stop walking, **stopping**.
When you stretch out the hand, **stretching**.
When you touch the cup, **touching**.
When you take the cup, **taking**.
When dipping the cup into the water, **dipping**.
When bringing the cup to the lips, **bringing**.
When the cup touches the lips, **touching**.
When you swallow, **swallowing**.
When returning the cup, **returning**.
When withdrawing the hand, **withdrawing**.
When you bring down the hand, **bringing**.
When the hand touches the side of the body, **touching**.
If you intend to turn round, **intending**.
When you turn round, **turning**.

When you walk forward, **walking**.
On arriving at the place where you intend to stop, **intending**.
When you stop, **stopping**.

If you remain standing for some time continue the contemplation of rising and falling. But if you intend to sit down, note **intending**. When you go to sit down, **walking**. On arriving at the place where you will sit, **arriving**. When you turn to sit, **turning**. While in the act of sitting down, **sitting**. Sit down slowly, and keep the mind on the downward movement of the body. You must notice every movement in bringing the hands and legs into position. Then resume the practice of contemplating the abdominal movements.

Should you intend to lie down, note **intending**. Then proceed with the contemplation of every movement in the course of lying down: **lifting, stretching, putting, touching, lying**. Then take as the object of contemplation every movement in bringing the hands, legs and body into position. Perform these actions slowly. Thereafter, continue with noting rising and falling. Should pain, fatigue, itching, or any other sensation be felt, be sure to notice each of these sensations. Notice all feelings, thoughts, ideas, considerations, reflections; all movements of hands, legs, arms and body. If there is nothing in particular to note, put the mind on the rising and falling of the abdomen. When sleepy, make a mental note, **sleepy**. After you have gained sufficient concentration in contemplating you will be able to overcome drowsiness and you will feel refreshed as a result. Take up again the usual contemplation of the basic object. If you are unable to overcome the drowsy feeling, you must continue contemplating drowsiness until you fall asleep.

The state of sleep is the continuity of sub-consciousness. It is similar to the first state of rebirth consciousness and the last state of consciousness at the moment of death. This state of consciousness is feeble and therefore, unable to be aware of an object. When you awake, the continuity of sub-consciousness occurs regularly between moments of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and thinking. Because these occurrences are of brief duration they are not usually clear and therefore not noticeable. Continuity of sub-consciousness remains during sleep - a fact which becomes obvious when you wake up; for it is in the state of wakefulness that thoughts and sense objects become distinct.

Contemplation should start at the moment you wake up. Since you are a beginner, it may not be possible yet for you to start contemplating at the very first moment of wakefulness. But you should start with it when you remember that you are to contemplate. For example, if on awakening you reflect on something, you should become aware of the fact and begin your contemplation by a mental note, **reflecting**. Then proceed with the contemplation of rising and falling. When getting up from the bed, mindfulness should be directed to every detail of the body's activity. Each movement of the hands, legs and rump must be performed in complete awareness. Are you thinking of the time of day when awakening? If so, note **thinking**. Do you intend to get out of bed? If so, note **intending**. If you prepare to move the body into position for rising, note **preparing**. As you slowly rise, **rising**. Should you remain sitting for any length of time, revert to contemplating the abdominal movements.

Perform the acts of washing the face or taking a bath in due order and in complete awareness of every detailed movement; for instance, **looking, seeing, stretching, holding, touching, feeling cold, rubbing**. In the acts of dressing, making the bed, opening and closing doors and windows, handling objects, be occupied with every detail of these actions in sequence.

You must attend to the contemplation of every detail in the action of eating;

When you look at the food, **looking, seeing**.
When you arrange the food, **arranging**.
When you bring the food to the mouth, **bringing**.
When you bend the neck forwards, **bending**.
When the food touches the mouth, **touching**.
When placing the food in the mouth, **placing**.
When the mouth closes, **closing**.

When withdrawing the hand, **withdrawing**.
Should the hand touch the plate, **touching**.
When straightening the neck, **straightening**.
When in the act of chewing, **chewing**.
When you are aware of the taste, **knowing**.
When swallowing the food, **swallowing**.
While swallowing the food, should the food be felt touching the sides of the gullet, **touching**.

Perform contemplation in this manner each time you take a morsel of food until you finish your meal. In the beginning of the practice there will be many omissions. Never mind. Do not waver in your effort. You will make fewer omissions if you persist in your practice. When you reach an advanced stage of the practice you will also be able to notice more details than those mentioned here.

Advancement in Contemplation

After having practiced for a day and a night you may find your contemplation considerably improved. You may be able to prolong the basic exercise of noticing the abdominal movements. At this time you will notice that there is generally a break between the movements of rising and falling. If you are in the sitting posture, fill in this gap with a mental note of the fact of sitting in this way: **rising, falling, sitting**. When you make a mental note of sitting, keep your mind on the erect position of the upper body. When you are lying down you should proceed with full awareness as follows: **rising, falling, lying**. If you find this easy, continue with noticing these three sections. Should you notice that a pause occurs at the end of the rising as well as at the end of the falling movement, then continue in this manner: **rising, sitting, falling, sitting**. Or when lying down: **rising, lying, falling, lying**. Suppose you no longer find it easy to make a mental note of three or four objects in the above manner. Then revert to the initial procedure of noting only the two sections; rising and falling.

While engaged in the regular practise of contemplating bodily movements you need not be concerned with objects of seeing and hearing. As long as you are able to keep your mind on the abdominal movements of rising and falling it is assumed that the purpose of noticing the acts and objects of seeing is also served. However, you may intentionally look at an object; two or three times, note as **seeing**. Then return to the awareness of the abdominal movements. Suppose some person comes into your view. Make a mental note of **seeing**, two or three times and then resume attention to the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. Did you happen to hear the sound of a voice? Did you listen to it? If so make a mental note of **hearing, listening** and revert to rising and falling. But suppose you heard loud noises, such as the barking of dogs, loud talking or shouting. If so, immediately make a mental note two or three times, **hearing**, then return to your basic exercise. If you fail to note and dismiss such distinctive sounds as they occur, you may inadvertently fall into reflections about them instead of proceeding with intense attention to rising and falling, which may then become less distinct and clear. It is by such weakened attention that mind-defiling passions breed and multiply. If such reflections do occur, make a mental note **reflecting**, two or three times, then again take up the contemplation of rising and falling. Should you forget to make a mental note of body, leg or arm movements, then mentally note **forgetting**, and resume your usual contemplation on abdominal movements. You may feel at times that breathing is slow or that the rising and falling movements are not clearly perceived. When this happens, and you are in the sitting position, simply move the attention to **sitting, touching**; or if you are lying down, to **lying, touching**. While contemplating touching, your mind should not be kept on the same part of the body but on different parts successively. There are several places of touch and at least six or seven should be contemplated.

Basic Exercise IV

Up to this point you have devoted quite some time to the training course. You might begin to feel lazy after deciding that you have made inadequate progress. By no means give up.

Simply note the fact, **lazy**. Before you gain sufficient strength in attention, concentration and insight, you may doubt the correctness or usefulness of this method of training. In such a circumstance turn to contemplation of the thought, **doubtful**. Do you anticipate or wish for good results? If so, make such thoughts the subject of your contemplation; **anticipating, or wishing**. Are you attempting to recall the manner in which the training was conducted up to this point? Yes? Then take up contemplation on **recollecting**. Are there occasions when you examine the object of contemplation in order to determine whether it is mind or matter? If so, then be aware of **examining**. Do you regret that there is no improvement in your contemplation? If so, attend to the feeling of regret. Conversely, are you happy that your contemplation is improving? If you are, then contemplate the feeling of being happy. This is the way in which you make a mental note of every item of mental behaviour as it occurs, and if there are no intervening thoughts or perceptions to note, you should revert to the contemplation of rising and falling. During a strict course of meditation, the time of practice is from the first moment you wake up until the last moment before you fall asleep. To reiterate, you must be constantly occupied either with the basic exercise or with mindful attention throughout the day and during those night hours when you are not asleep. There must be no relaxation. Upon reaching a certain stage of progress with contemplation you will not feel sleepy in spite of these prolonged hours of practise. On the contrary, you will be able to continue the contemplation day and night.

Summary

It has been emphasized during this brief outline of the training that you must contemplate on each mental occurrence, good or bad; on each bodily movement large or small; on every sensation (bodily or mental feeling) pleasant or unpleasant; and so on. If, during the course of training, occasions arise when there is nothing special to contemplate upon, be fully occupied with attention to the rising and falling of the abdomen. When you have to attend to any kind of activity that necessitates walking, then, in complete awareness, each step should be briefly noted as **walking, walking** or **left, right**. But when you are taking a walking exercise, contemplate on each step in three sections; **up, forward, down**. The student who thus dedicates himself or herself to the training day and night, will be able in not too long a time, to develop concentration to the initial stage of the fourth degree of insight (knowledge of arising and passing away) and onward to higher stages of insight meditation (*vipassana bhavana*).