

For the Stilling of Volcanoes **Introduction to Insight Meditation**

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Contents

Preface	4
1 Volcano	5
2 The Magic of the Mind	10
3 The Main Control	12
Benefits of Mindfulness – Worlds of Difference	13
Gaining Hold on the Main Controls	16
☸ Walking Meditation	17
☸ Sitting Meditation	21
☸ Daily Activities	26
4 Insight and Concentration	28
☸ Follow-up Advice	30
5 Our Path is the Waterway	32

If a person is energetic, mindful,
 pure in his thought, word and deed,
and if he does everything with care and consideration
 in senses restrain,
he earns his living according to the Truth.

And if the person is not unheedful,
the fame and fortune of that mindful person
steadily increases.

This PDF was designed to be printed in '2-up' format. That is, in Landscape orientation with two pages per A4 sheet. The text will remain readable in this format. If one page is printed per sheet, the print will be unnecessarily large.

Preface

It is not an task easy to approach such a profound topic as Insight Meditation in simple terms. But we have to start somewhere. After some years of introducing this type of meditation, I still find a lack of introductory booklets for those without any knowledge of Buddhism. Many of them are extremely technical – loaded with ancient Indian terminology, for which words in the English vocabulary can never hope to substitute perfectly. So I have tried to come up with something easier to read and understand. Even in this booklet I have used some English words – such as ‘conditioned’ and ‘suffering’ – which need special explanation when they are used in a ‘Buddhist’ sense.

What I have offered here will give you an idea as to what to do when you decide to take the first step. Even for those who go on a retreat, the initial instructions must be repeated several times before they are understood. For a better grasp of the techniques and ideas, it would be best to consult a meditation teacher.

See what you can make out of it. If, after reading this, you go one step further in trying to practise Insight Meditation for yourself, then I have succeeded.

Sujiva
Santisukharama,
Kota Tinggi
6th November, 1994

Chapter One

Volcano

I think that the great Indian Sage, if there were volcanoes where he lived, would have used them in his teachings, as he did with the lofty, snow-capped Himalayas.

Not until recently – except in geographical magazines and on television screens – did I have the opportunity to behold these fascinating spouts from the boiling bowels of the earth. The craters that I visited on my trip to Indonesia were not the most spectacular ones, but they were enough to give me the idea that those people who devote their entire lives to studying the area of science concerning volcanic activity may not be doing so just for the sake of concern for human safety.

We live quite indifferent to, and unaware of, many things around us. Coming face to face with a volcanic crater jolted me into a sudden awareness of the superficial stability of the very earth we stand on. Where we live in Malaysia, just outside the ring of fiery volcanic regions, tremors, once in a blue moon, do occur. But earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are generally regarded as something that is not a part of our world. People living on the slopes should be more aware of the dangers, but this is not always so, for people often prefer to be like the ostrich – remaining blind to the dangers. Warnings will be issued, but still there will be casualties. The fertile soil, for one thing, promises abundant harvests, and people grow attached to their homes. The earth, the blood and the emotions soon become quite inseparable.

There are many types of volcanoes, our guide informed us: live volcanoes, sleeping volcanoes and dead volcanoes.

Living volcanoes which are active – as can be seen by their still fuming craters – can blow up at any time, although modern science has instruments that can forewarn us to some degree.

Sleeping volcanoes are dormant because they have not shown any activity for some time. But they can still ‘wake up’ when the conditions play up again. Pinatubo, of the Philippines, which blew up in 1991, had been sleeping for about 600 years.

When we are more sure of their extinction, those mounts which were once active volcanoes can be considered dead. But we can never be truly sure unless we know what’s going on underneath.

Think of the hot, molten rock called lava – cascading at great speed down those steep slopes and burning everything on its way, although it’s other things, such as pyroclastic flows, that kill people. It doesn’t need much to kill man or inflict more suffering than man can bear, but Nature’s moods are impersonal and so when they blow their tops, it’s ‘run for your lives’!

Java is the most volcano-riddled region in the world. Two of the most disastrous, Tambora and Krakatau – which have claimed many thousands of lives, not to mention property loss – exist here.

People can also be seen in the same way – active volcanoes, dormant volcanoes and dead volcanoes.

When you are in a fit of anger, consumed by lust, or buried by delusion, you are undergoing an eruption. It strikes terror in and around you, and you may lose some good things in life. Although it may not take lives, it can, and may even be, more lethal than an actual volcano. How about the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki as an example. The Japanese themselves killed some millions of Chinese in World War Two. Atrocities by man upon himself can do more than natural disasters.



Therefore, if I may add, there are three types of eruptions – minor, major and catastrophic:

- ⊗ Minor eruptions cause minor damage, such as loss of wealth and ‘face’.
- ⊗ Major eruptions cause more permanent losses, such as loss of body parts, permanent separation from loved ones and even loss of one’s own life.
- ⊗ Catastrophic eruptions cause large scale wars, massacres and other forms of unimaginable sufferings.

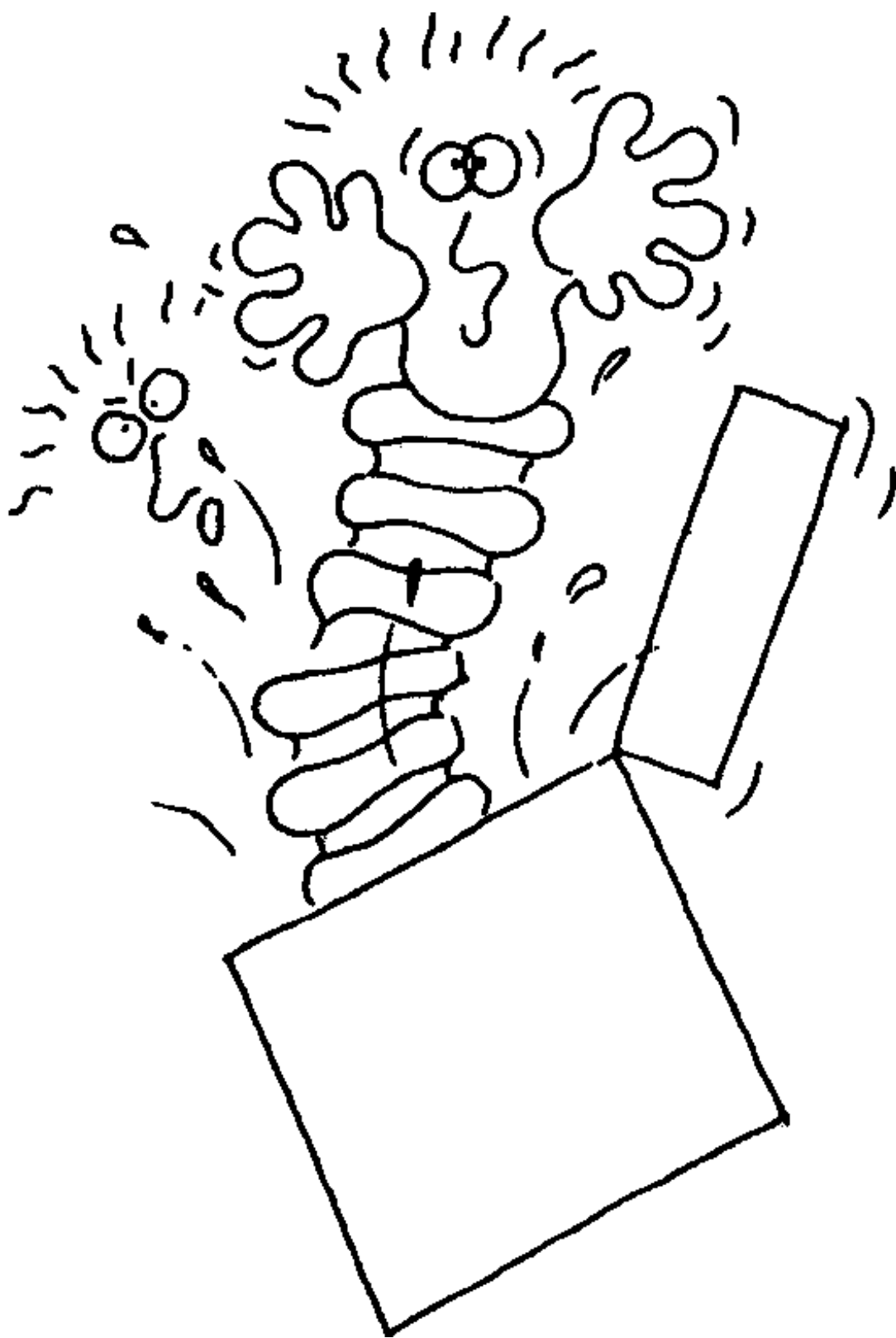
You may survive many minor eruptions but one major one is enough to drive quite a few people off their rockers. Hope (against all odds) that such unfortunate happenings will not come to you – but tragedy will eventually play its part. Look deep into your heart and you will know what I mean. Look at all the other walking volcanoes around you, and at the instability of the world, and you will be convinced. The fires of greed, hatred and delusion run deep in everyone's veins. A dormant volcano can sleep through centuries, but these defilements spew out dirt everyday.

What is it that can quell these fires? The answer is found where the problem began – hidden underground, where there are veins of hot molten lava, can also be found the cool refreshing springs of life, that is, in the Mind itself – the cooling waters of mindfulness!

Resting for a minute on the largest stupa in the world, I could see the distant volcano Merapi mixing its fumes with the clouds. Borobudur, sometimes referred to as the Mountain of Buddhas, may have actually been inspired by the presence of volcanoes.

Whilst watching the magnificent statues of our Lord, serenely seated, with various hand gestures, it occurred to me that this is a genuinely dead volcano, the fires of defilements which have long been extinct. How marvelous it is to be part of the picture with this symbol of peace!

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Chapter Two

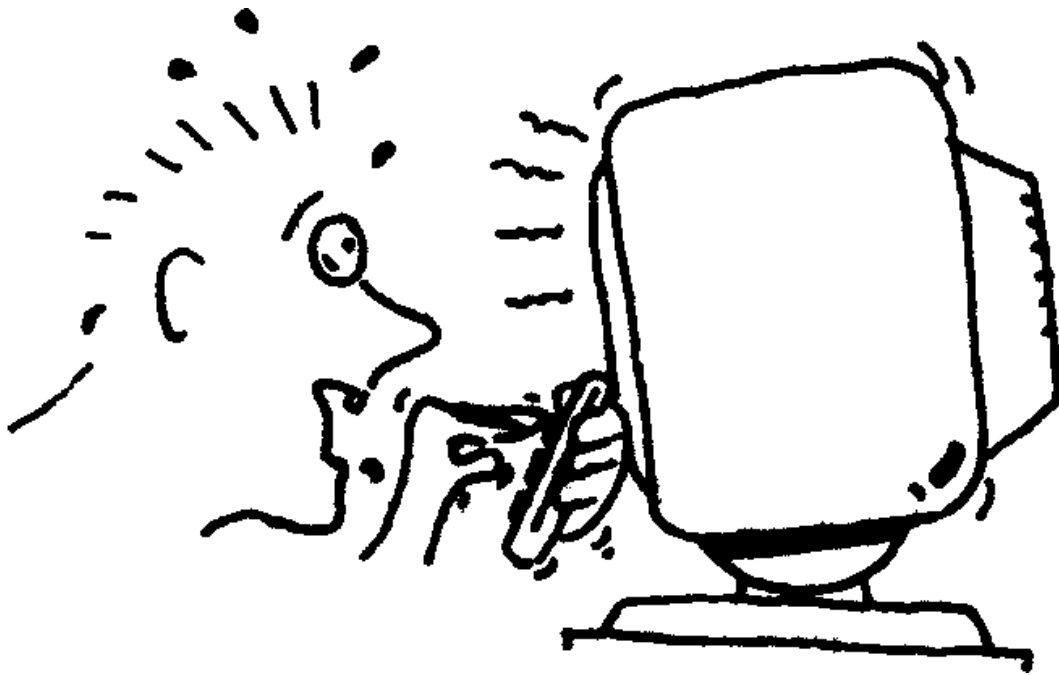
Magic of the Mind

Magic can be broadly classified into two types: White and Black. We are not talking about skin color but of mental states. Mental states are called dark or black when they are enshrouded by delusion with regards to reality. For example, in a fit of temper one is oblivious to the goodness of the other party, just as one obsessed by craving is blind to the faults of the thing he wishes to possess. Such states, as you can see, will finally lead to no good.

Mental states, on the other hand, are described as bright or white when they are pure and clear. You can experience freshness and radiance when you are mindful and at peace. It is not difficult to understand why happiness follows such people, like a shadow that never seems to leave them.

The mind is indeed a magician's box. Out of it come things beyond your comprehension. You may liken it to a television set, a computer, a transistor radio and more – all in one. When everything is in order then you can have all the fun you want, but if it gets out of hand, then it's the gates of Hell opened wide.

You may be acquainted with what kids play with nowadays – video games. They put you into all sorts of situations, ranging from participating in the World's Grand Prix, or fighting aliens, to saving damsels in distress. You are even given a choice of vehicles, lethal weapons and who you want to be. The idea is to overcome all obstacles, shoot down all alien ships and collect the most points. However, if you do not happen to be like one of those whiz kids who have spent hours without end fiddling those buttons with nimble fingers, then you are more like a born loser. But it's all right, it's all a game, and with some practice you'll acquire the skills. Also, it won't be long before they come up with 3-D video games.



Life is something like that, with the mind creating situations, but the trouble here is that you can't switch it off whenever you are tired. You can't consider getting cancer a nice game to play, can you? Nor is becoming a schizophrenic or neurotic much fun.

Even suicide will not be an answer to it all. The mind, we are told, will lead you to a worse nightmare.

How, you may ask, does this happen?

The Mind is a complex of forces, or some may prefer to call them energies. Try to sit quietly and watch your thoughts and you will see them at work. It is endlessly trying to create new situations, real or otherwise, and respond to them. It is unfortunate that many don't bother to take a good look at the machinery, and hence all those problems, problems, problems! It is there that you have all those powers, answers and the fountain of joy.

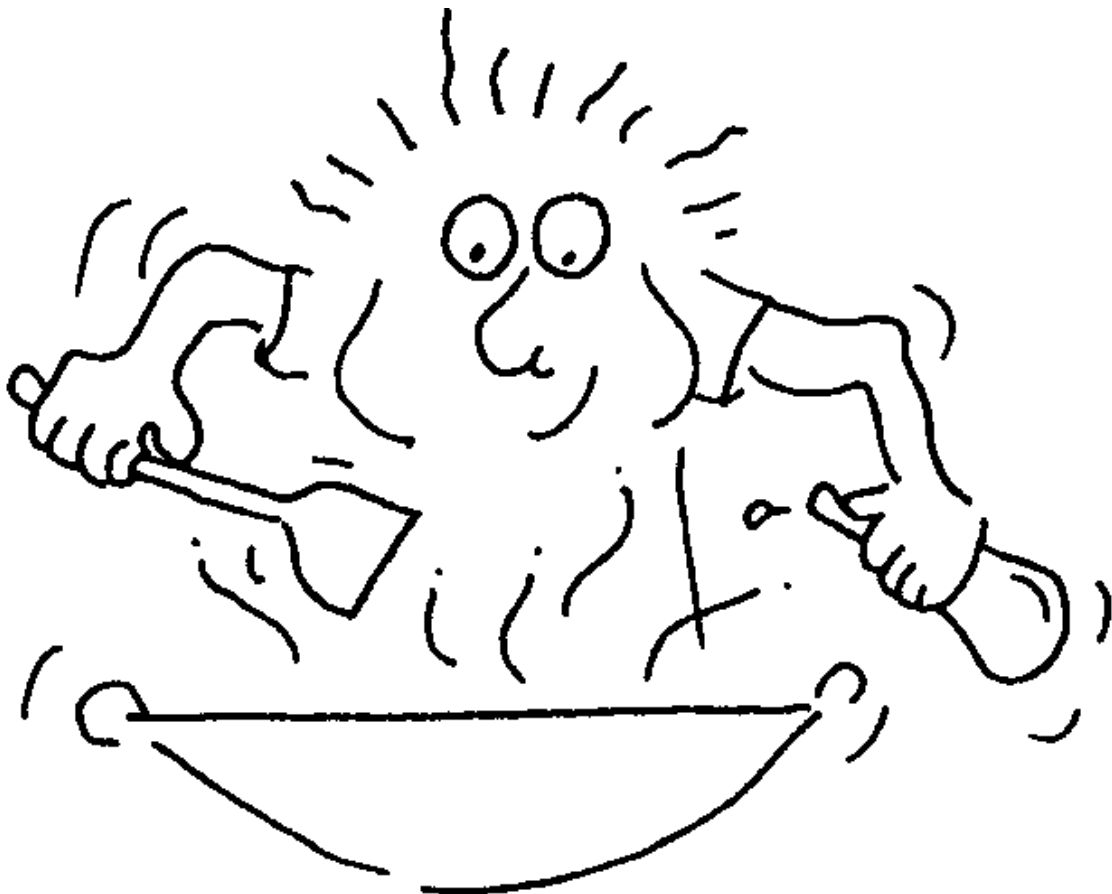
Although the whole thing can be complicated, it is not too difficult – with some useful tips on the main points of control – to make this magic box work for you.

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Chapter Three

The Main Control

The main controlling faculty of the mind is mindfulness. Remember the moments when you were calm and composed? The awareness that comes with them is also bright and clear. As a direct opposite of it are those times you were panic-stricken or completely confused. Therefore, with mindfulness you can do any job as well as you possibly can, be it driving a car, cooking a meal or answering some examination questions. But this potential is not recognized as much as other things, like faith and concentration, and so is not emphasized. If we are to develop it until it is really strong, lasting and revealing, then life will breeze by, if not ecstatically, then at least smoothly.



Benefits of Mindfulness – Worlds of Difference

Sometimes, people say, there is a thin line between sanity and insanity. The mad genius, for example, is not far from being a maniac. That's why Frankenstein was invented, and so was the Terminator. In any case, bombs of all sorts are bad. But no matter how thin a line it is, it is still a line and even if it is really thick, if you are confused, you will still miss it.

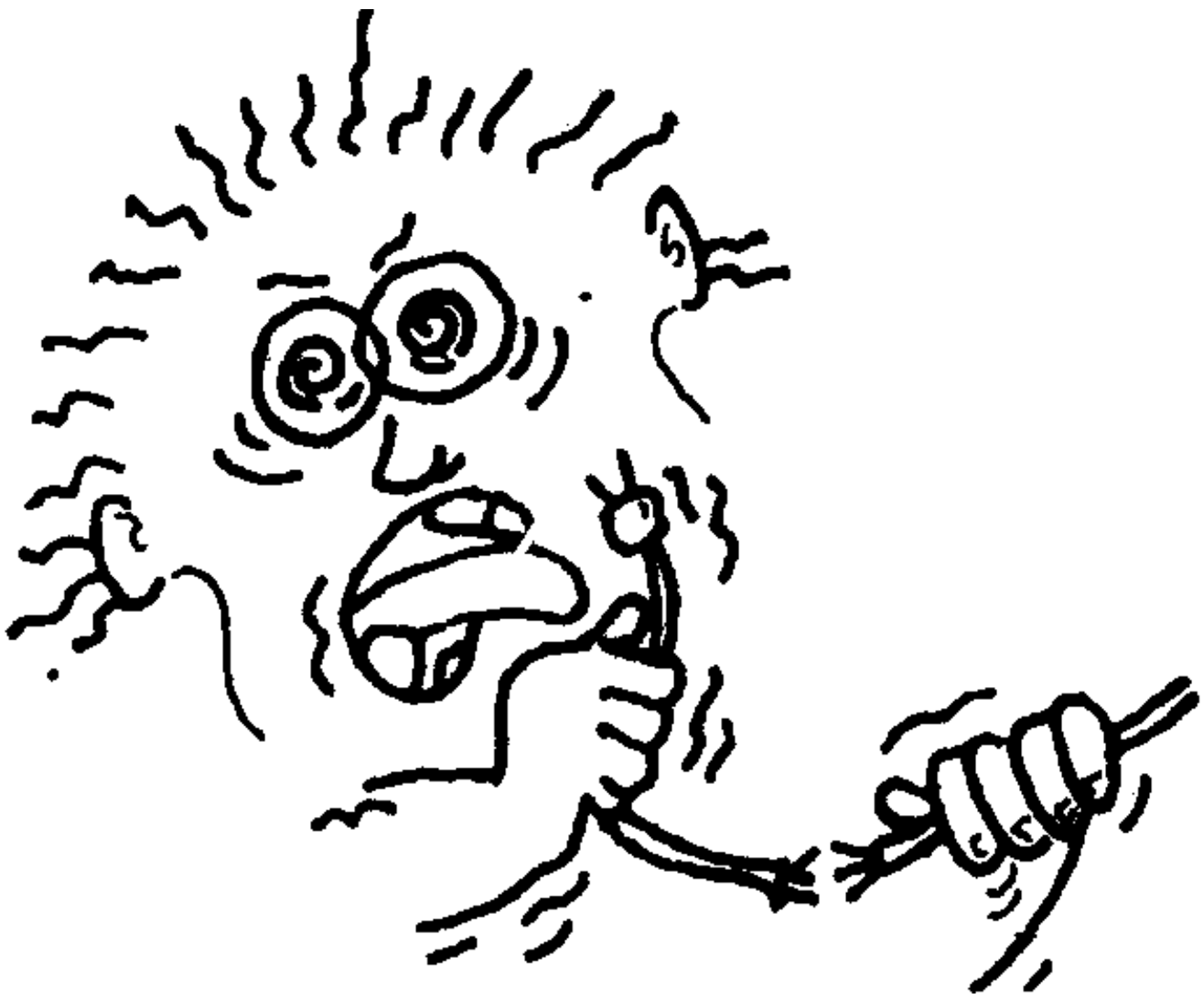
Mindfulness actually is the line. When you are unmindful, such as when you are in a rage, you are indeed not different from a madman. It is only a matter of degree. When you have zero mindfulness over an extended period, then you can safely conclude that you are crazy. So, if you don't want to go mad then hang on to your dear mindfulness, for on the other side, that is, at the bottom, is living hell. Sanity is indeed a thin line. It really does not need much, so to speak, to break a person. Lock him up without contact for a few days or weeks and there you are, someone fit for the mental ward.



If you are a meditator, you'll have a fighting chance and maybe even end up saner than anyone else. But they may still call you mad because you are different. I remember how some people considered a friend mad because he was not his usual excitable and irritable self after a retreat. They were satisfied only when they managed to infuriate him. Can you imagine how this can be so, when they themselves are supposed to be regular meditators? Who then is mad? But if you're really mindful then you know for yourself, without doubt, that your mind is clear and thinking rationally. It is they who are confused.

If it goes without saying that with mindfulness the mind is pure of defilements such as greed, anger and delusion, then it will also mean that it draws the line between genuine happiness and suffering. We can understand why anger and delusion are suffering but not greed, especially when it comes with joy. That is because joy tends to muffle the real state of mind. Take away the joy and what do you have left? There will be a really restless state of craving and tenacious clinging. It is like someone who is hungry. Therefore, if you will have real happiness, then look for peace of mind that is born of purity and mindfulness.

It is a kind of happiness that is truly satisfying, strengthened by noble purpose. No sensual pleasure can be equal to it. Besides, it can be freely obtained (as long as you practice), and you don't have to pay anything to acquire it.



Mindfulness can also be the deciding factor between life and death. A lot of careless mistakes and oversights end in death. It may be just a slip on the stairs, a ladder, or along the road. Traffic accidents claim lives daily. Then there are electrical short circuits, or even choking through unmindful eating. It not only means your life, but also others. What happens after that? If you are mindful at the moment of death, it can mean a happy rebirth. If not it can mean hell. Buddhists believe in the Law of Karma (Law of Retribution). Mindfulness means meritorious karma and defilements mean unwholesome karma. All these – done throughout one’s life – also add to the store of forces that decides what will happen next – heaven or hell.

Last but not least, Mindfulness is also the factor that differentiates between Nibbana and Samsara (Cycle of birth and death, suffering). In the Noble Eightfold Path, the fulfillment of morality, concentration and understanding depends on the building up of mindfulness. Without mindfulness, there cannot even be any moral base. Finally, the culmination of insight is that extremely strong and sharp mindfulness that penetrates through the thick veil of ignorance to realize that everlasting Peace, Nibbana. So until then, please try to be as mindful as possible, to get out of the cycle of birth and death, suffering, Samsara.

Gaining a Hold on the Main Controls

Now that you realize (I hope) how important it is to have mindfulness, you may, perhaps, be interested to know how to go about cultivating it to make all the difference.

The main idea is to develop this awareness until it becomes habitual and continuous, and then apply it for more specialized purposes, such as gaining knowledge and skills.

To begin with, let me offer you certain suggestions which will be definitely be helpful in some way. These are simple exercises which you can safely try out. They come under three sub-headings:

- ⊗ Walking Meditation
- ⊗ Sitting Meditation
- ⊗ Mindfulness of Daily Activities.

Walking Meditation

Can you imagine the extent of things which involve walking? You walk to the office, walk for exercise, for sight-seeing, to the dinner table, to ease yourself and many other wonderful – as well as unmentionable – things.

But one can feel and think quite differently when taking a casual walk along an isolated beach in the light of dawn, than when taking a walk heading for the dentist's chair. It's all in the state of mind. And mind you, that state of mind can determine where you will end up and how you fare. If you walk so unmindfully, you may end up either in the hospital or the grave. Of course, nowadays many people cut down on the walking, they go on wheels. At such speeds that modern technology provides, you may have to come up with even more mindfulness to ensure safety.

Let me offer you a few tips to start off your walking meditation:

- ❁ To learn walking mindfully, you have to find a quiet spot with a fair distance, at least thirty feet. Preferably on a straight, clean and level path, without anyone around to stare at what you are about to do. Failing this, any distance of up to ten steps will also do.
- ❁ First, you must try to bring to mind the clear awareness of your own standing posture. It's not visualization, but feeling one's body as it is – the tension, firmness and maybe a bit of swaying. Make sure you are relaxed, with a straight posture. Hold or fold your hands together to help keep your composure. You may close your eyes and make the mind free, calm, relaxed and happy. Learn to let go of all your problems and thoughts. They are not worth clinging on to all the time. Give your mind a break. Just be with the present moment and be aware.

- ⊗ Now, after having gathered your calm composure, start walking, keeping the attention at the lower part of the moving foot, below the calves. Walk freely (with eyes opened) at a pace you feel most comfortable and relaxed with. To help keep the mind at the feet you may mentally say right, left or walking, walking – or whichever word you prefer. And remember, don't think, just keep the mind in the present moment.
- ⊗ When it's time to turn, be aware of the turning action.
- ⊗ Whenever the attention runs to thoughts, you will then have to recall your awareness, noting mindfully: thinking, thinking – and then return to the footsteps. If tension or boredom creep up, you will again have to stop walking, to bring back your awareness in the way you did. While standing, note tension or boredom mindfully, before resuming the walking meditation.
- ⊗ I would advise you to walk at a certain rhythm which the mind can catch on to. Once caught on, it will tend to flow along. Then, maintain that rhythm for the time being.
- ⊗ When you feel much calmer or somewhat tired, then you can slow down your pace, and at the same time be even more relaxed mentally and physically. People who have gained concentration in this way can walk for an hour or more, and yet feel as if only a minute has passed. They feel weightless and seem to be walking on clouds. You can end up very blissful!
- ⊗ There is, however, one thing to add. When you feel really relaxed, keep your mind keenly aware as it flows along with the footsteps. Try to feel or sense the sensations that flow along – the tension, pulling and pushing forces, the lightness or weight and, finally, the contact of the soles on the ground.
- ⊗ To help the beginner gain a keener perception of this, teachers have devised a method breaking each step into

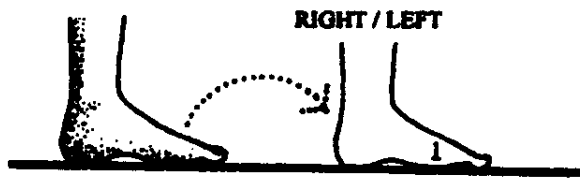
various phases, starting from two to six. Although three phases are sufficient for most people, they can be increased progressively – but only when one is ready for it.

- ⊗ During an intensive retreat or formal meditation exercise, the standard procedure is to do one hour of walking meditation, dividing it into three periods – the first twenty minutes for one-phase walking, a second twenty minutes for two-phase walking and the final twenty minutes (adding up to one hour) for three-phase walking.
- ⊗ The principle behind this is to gradually bring the mind to a more concentrated awareness, which can come about with slowing down, and a more thorough observation. As to the most suitable type of walking, it will be the type that arouses the most mindfulness.
- ⊗ The phases of the steps, from one to six, are:
 1. right/left
 2. lifting, stepping
 3. lifting, pushing, stepping
 4. (heels) raising, lifting, pushing, stepping
 5. raising, lifting, pushing, lowering, stepping
 6. raising, lifting, pushing, lowering, treading, pressing.

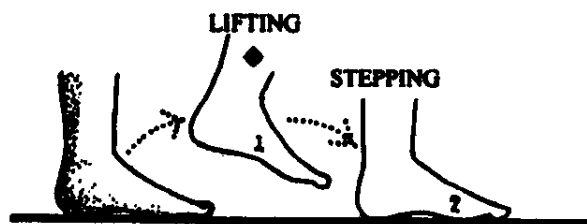
(Refer to **Diagram A** on various phases of walking)

- ⊗ At each phase of a step, when observing closely, one will be able to perceive the sensations or forces that can be felt along with it. One can actually experience it as a flow of tension, thrusting forces, or a spread of hardness when stepping.
- ⊗ To make the picture complete, the intentions that arise prior to each length of walking, the intentions to stop, to turn, are also mindfully noted.

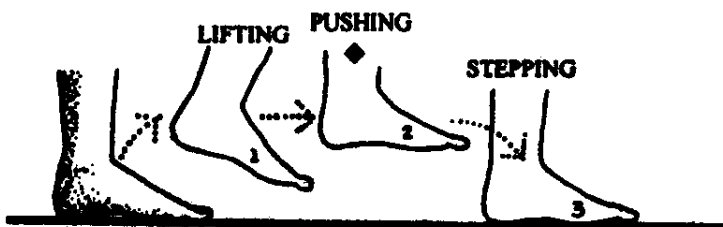
PHASES OF STEPS IN WALKING MEDITATION



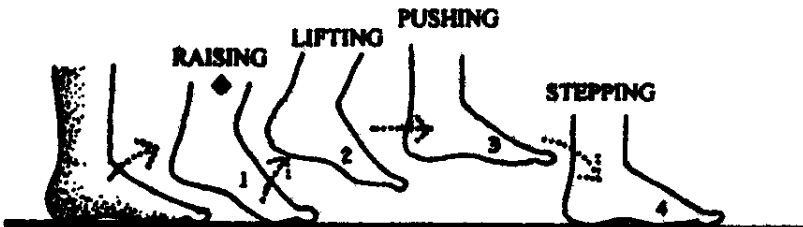
1 PHASE



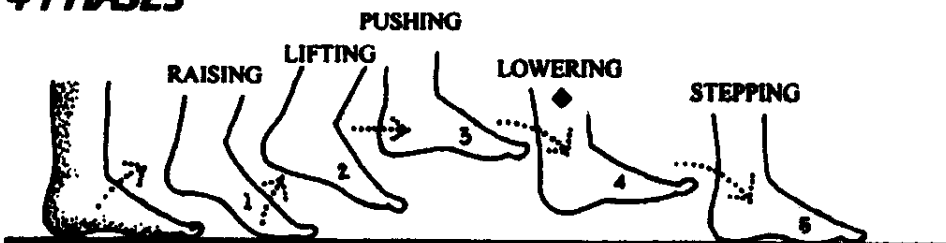
2 PHASES



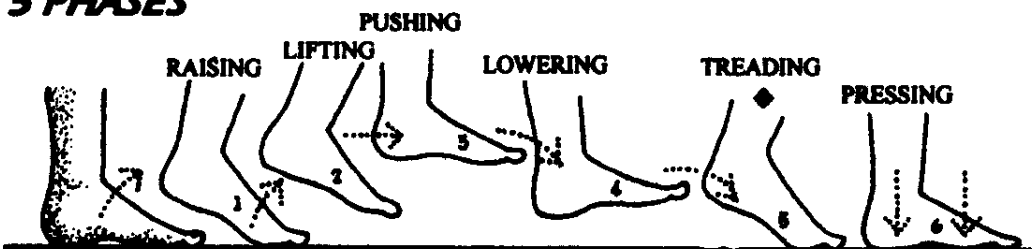
3 PHASES



4 PHASES



5 PHASES



6 PHASES

◆ Indicates new phases to note.

- ❁ If you can do this, you may actually arrive at a point where you completely forget about yourself, and what is left is the process of awareness with its objects. Then you have begun the journey within, the path to realize the Nature of Who and What we really are. Then all conflicts with Reality, due to ignorance, which is the root problem of suffering, may finally see the end.

Sitting Meditation

The same principle used in walking meditation is applicable to sitting meditation, only with a difference of basic objects. What principle?

The principle of three steps in mindful observation:

1. To be mindful
2. To follow or attend to the object of observation mindfully.
3. To observe into the Nature of the object without thinking and concepts.

Nature, here, refers to the process of sensations which goes to make up the object which we are observing.

While one is walking, one mindfully follows the footsteps and observes the process of sensations that make it up. Sitting meditation makes use of the sensations of the abdomen as one breathes. Some, however, use the sensation of the breath at the nose tip.

- ❁ Usually, people who meditate will sit cross-legged with their back straight and their eyes closed. Those with stiff knees can sit on chairs. Do not lean back, as this will not be too helpful in keeping up the awareness, although it will do very well if you intend to relax completely into sleep, in which case you might as well lie down.

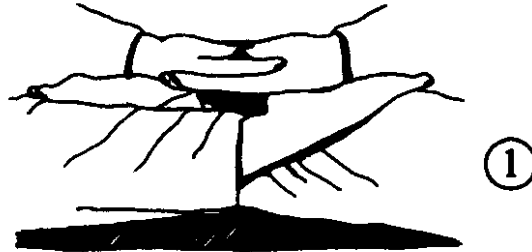
(Refer to **Diagram B** on various sitting postures)

VARIOUS SITTING POSTURES

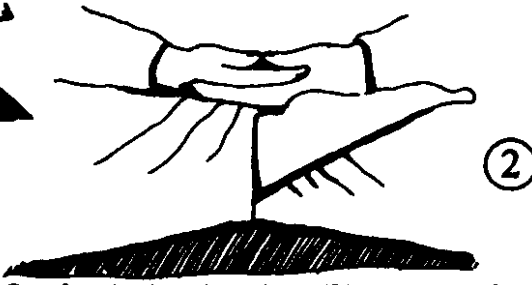
A CROSS-LEGGED SITTING



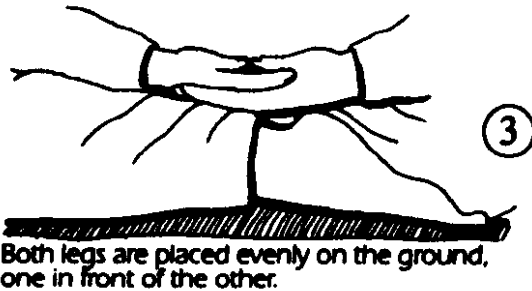
Front View



Both feet are placed right up onto the thighs.



One foot is placed on the calf (lower part of the leg while the other is tucked underneath).



Both legs are placed evenly on the ground, one in front of the other.

B SIDE-LEGGED SITTING



Front View



Side View

- ❁ Breathe normally and, as you do, keep the mindful attention on the sensations of the movement as the abdomen rises and falls.
- ❁ Mentally, say ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ in conjunction with the respective movements.
- ❁ To help beginners keep track of the sensations of motion, they may rest their palm lightly on that area, until they become familiar with the object.
- ❁ When the mind wanders to other objects, such as thoughts, sounds, itches and so forth, recall your awareness as soon as you realize, noting mentally: thinking, hearing, etc. and then return to your original object.
- ❁ You will notice, when you try to do this, how intractable and slippery the mind is. Well, at least you are getting to know yourself better and doing something about it!
- ❁ With practice, the mind will wander less and stay with the rising and falling movements. Then you can proceed to the next step of thorough observation. At first you can only perceive up and down movements. With effort you can notice much more. The movements vary greatly from time to time. They can be long or short, fast or slow, smooth or jerky, and so on. Even within the rising movement there can be many various sensations arising and passing away. Again, it finally ends up as mere processes of the mind and its object.

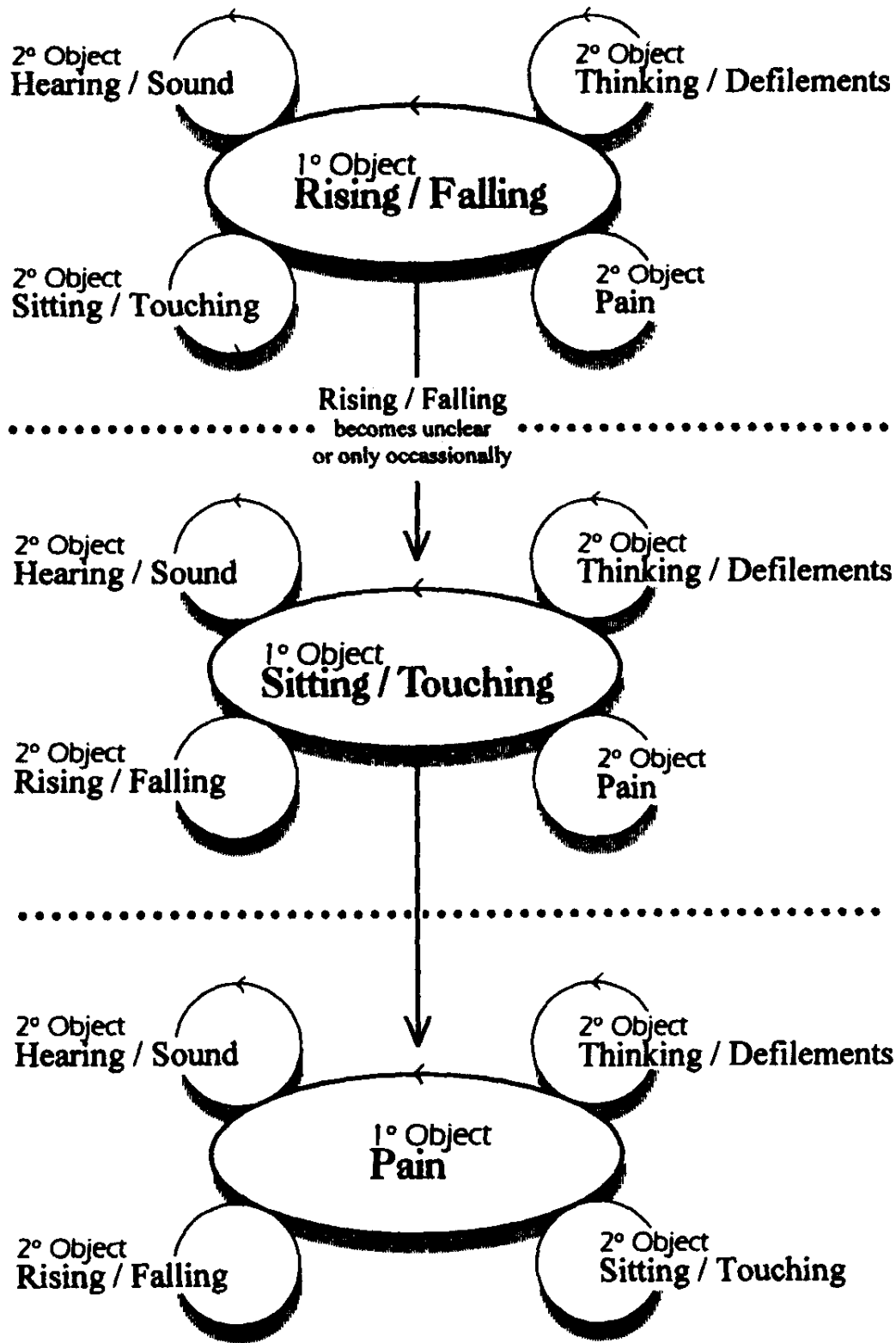
- ❁ Finally, pain is often the last to call before you give up. Try to ignore it if it is minor, but if it stands out and grabs your attention, then you will have to make it your main subject of observation.
- ❁ The idea is to make use of it to train in mindfulness (and also, in this case, patience). The three-point observation principle also holds water here. You first have to watch pain with mindfulness. Then watch it for some time without being irritated by it. If you can do that, then you can look into the Nature of the pain, whether it is hard, hot or numb. It could also be pulling, twisting or cutting. There are more types than you can imagine, and it can be very interesting.

After that, you can proceed to discover its process – how it arises, changes and breaks up. It is possible to gain deeper understanding of your own Nature through observation of pain. Pain is part of your individual makeup. When you cannot bear it any longer, then it's time to get up.

(Refer to **Diagram C** on flow chart)

FLOW CHART ON PRIORITY OF OBJECT

Shift of Primary and Secondary Objects in Systematic Noting (Sitting Meditation)



1° & 2° refers to primary and secondary objects respectively.

Daily Activities

One of the first things to learn is about mindfulness itself. We read about it, hear about it – now we're getting to know it through direct experience. It's not just knowing something. It's knowing it with a clear, steady mind. In that way you can't be wrong. Besides, there cannot be any defilements – attachment, anger, delusion, sloth, restlessness, skeptical doubts, jealousy, and so on. Once you can define it, it is not difficult to call it up. It's just a matter of will. How wonderful it is to be mindful all the time! But before that can be so, you will have to be able to distinguish clearly between the states of mindfulness and non-mindfulness. After that, it is up to you to practise, practise and practise.



In a way, maintaining mindfulness is comparable to making a journey. There you are, on your bicycle, going along the rough roads and crossing torrential streams. You need to keep an eye on the road, balance your bicycle and keep on paddling. It takes considerable trials and errors before you acquire the skill. Similarly, in life or in meditation one needs to have experience in handling the various situations and objects that one comes across. And when something particularly trying comes along, one can become bogged down for quite a while until he has learned to get over it. Pain is an example. It is also an inescapable feature of life.

Once one is able to know what this mindfulness – and maintenance of it – are all about, then one may go on to be mindful of all one's own activities as best as one can, and as often as is practical. It will begin from the moment one wakes up from slumber, one notes mindfully the opening of the eyes. In the same way one maintains mindfulness when one gets up, washes, eats, drinks and so on, throughout the day – until one finally lies down to sleep again at the end of the day.

During eating, for example, one will have to mindfully note the actions involved step-by-step. Firstly, the intention to eat, then the looking at the food, the stretching of the hands, the scooping of the food, the bringing to the mouth, the opening of the mouth, chewing, biting, swallowing and all other steps. During a meditation retreat, one can afford to slow down one's actions to help concentrate the awareness as much as possible. In fact, one can be quite oblivious to the surroundings. Finally one will, as in sitting and walking, be left with mere processes.

However, at home or at work, one will not be able to practise mindfulness in this concentrated manner. Usually one will be able to do so only at a general level. Only when one is free can one resume one's mindfulness during the formal exercises with the desired intensity.

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Chapter Four

Insight and Concentration

The next thing that you need is to be able to differentiate between concentration and mindfulness. It will determine the direction you are heading – whether you are on the path to tranquility or insight development.

Most meditation methods emphasize concentration. They bring the mind to focus on one point or object, thereby achieving strength of concentration. The results are very peaceful states, and in extreme cases give rise to supernormal powers. Isn't this what people are hoping to achieve? No wonder most head towards that direction!

For Buddhists, that way does not lead completely away from all our sufferings, although it can lighten them considerably for a period of time. The answer to the predicament is Insight, which is the realization of the real Nature of the world as it is, freed from concepts. In simple words, all mental and material processes that make up this world are really impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self. Seeing thus, one turns away from them and finds refuge in the unconditioned state, the everlasting peace of the absolute reality, Nibbana. Without realizing the unsatisfactory state of conditioned existence, one is greatly attached to it and, therefore, emancipation is impossible.

To develop this Insight, mindfulness is emphasized as the main feature, and concentration steps down to second place as another necessary factor.

To differentiate between mindfulness and concentration we can quote their characteristics:

- ❁ Concentration holds on to and fixes the mind to the object. It is like when you are holding tightly to something and not letting go. It is also like when you are staring at the television screen, unable to tear yourself away from it.
- ❁ Mindfulness, however, is like making a careful observation of what is happening on the television screen.

In other words, concentration pins the mind to its object, while it is mindfulness that carefully and thoroughly gets a good look at it. When you have found out what that thing really is, then you have developed insight wisdom.

From here we can conclude that concentration can come without mindfulness, but when mindfulness is present, to some degree, there is concentration.

Normally in tranquillity practice, although concentration is the main objective, there must also be mindfulness to bring it about. But that mindfulness is not as thorough as you would achieve in Insight meditation. Besides, its objects differ, i.e. a conceptual one with tranquillity practice.



If one's aim is to really look within, to discover who and what one really is, then mindful observation must be borne in mind as the main factor. Then one is like a scientist, making a close and thorough observation of his subject. Once there is enough, one gets the full picture with all its details. That is when mindfulness is transformed into insight. So in insight meditation, one observes with concentrated awareness on the objects, eg. rising/falling of the abdomen, sitting/touching, pain, thinking, right foot/left foot, etc., and will soon discover that all these (including the observing mind) are just processes that arise and pass away so rapidly. The meditator then realises that all these processes are changing (impermanent), beyond individual control, and unsatisfactory. In insight meditation this also means an abandoning of clinging to the false self, and there is a return to original nature.

The abolishing of the "I am" – that is truly supreme bliss.

~ Udana ~

Follow-up Advice

Welcome to my favorite world. This world with nobody around, just mental and material processes going on. This is what I find most meaningful. This is where the real meaning of life is! When you are really aware of these things, there's no place for attachment, anger, hallucinations and all those negative qualities. They just don't fit in when one is really aware of these things. There you are – the peace and meaning to live by, and that is to discover the final journey within, to be home with the absolute.

Unfortunately, the scope of this little booklet is such that I can only give an introduction to what Insight meditation is, and the basic exercises. There are definitely many more steps to be taken and it will be best if you approach the people who have done it

before and are able to give you suitable advice. It is, of course, preferable that you attend a more complete course, under a qualified instructor, on a part-time basis or at an intensive retreat.

For those who are daring enough to try, using just the basic knowledge contained in this booklet, I have one or two more things to say.

Firstly, these minimal instructions are meant only for those without any serious psychological problems. If one is under medication or treatment for mental abnormalities, it is stressed further that this booklet is insufficient. They have to get in touch with a qualified teacher.

Secondly, if one gains concentration, one may meet with various experiences. There may be joyful feelings, visions, voices, or even fear. The simplest step is to note them mindfully. They should eventually subside and pass away within a minute. Do not be attached or panic if they don't. If worst comes to worst, just open your eyes and get up. Do this also if the mind goes into worse states of restlessness when the sitting progresses after half an hour. This can happen when your mind is burdened by tons of problems or unresolved issues. Do quick walking instead. The principle is to be **Mindful**. If mindfulness does not increase, but worsens instead, something is wrong.

Last, but not least, seize an opportunity to attend an intensive course or retreat on Insight (Vipassana) meditation. The progress and understanding of the practice in a retreat of about ten days can be better than that achieved in a period of one year, done by oneself on a daily basis.

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Chapter Five

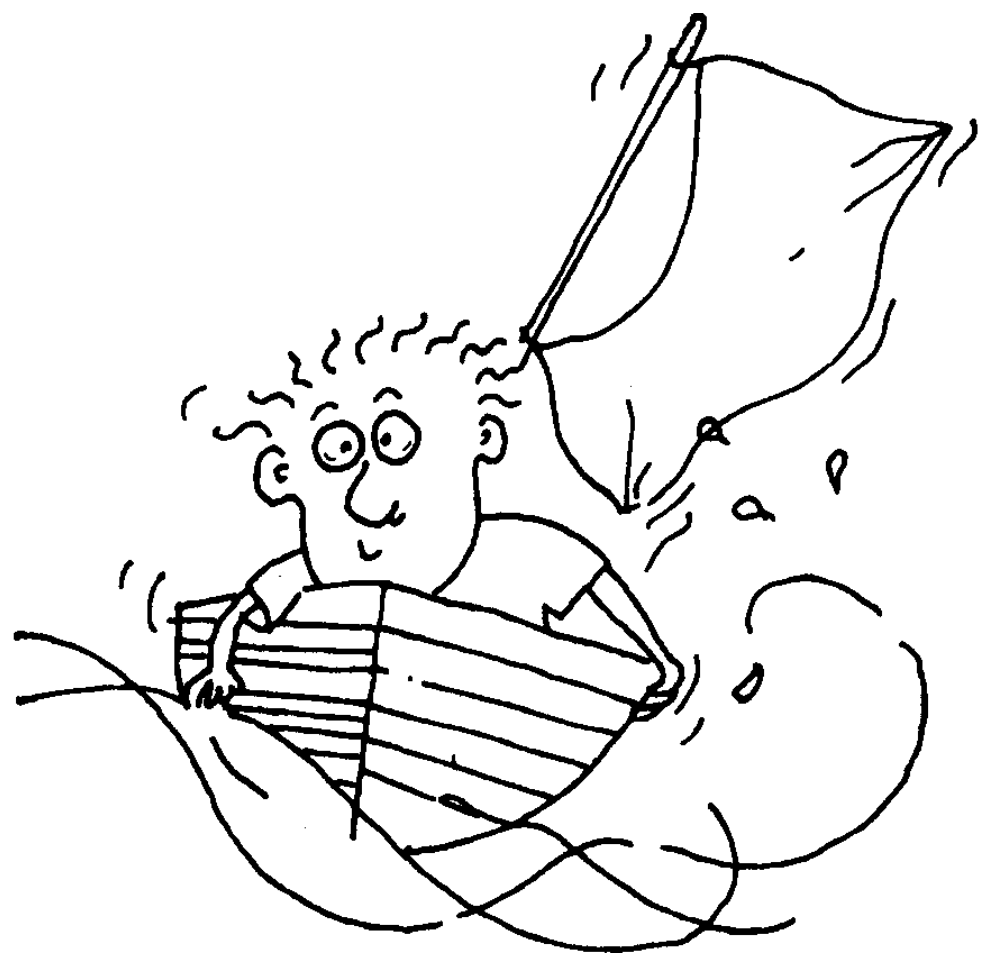
Our Path is a Waterway

Water is an element that we are all quite familiar with. Especially for us in the hot climate, it brings a thrill even when we touch it. When it comes in a pure form in nature, it's even more exciting. This element has a strong similarity to the universal processes in Nature, in that it 'flows'. In Nature, it flows from the future to the present and into the past. Each event is like a wave, and these waves can be strong. Whether we sink or swim will depend very much on a number of things. Beings who are infatuated and intoxicated by sensual pleasures are described as those swept away by floods. They may think how blissful it is at first but the wise, with far-sightedness, will think otherwise.



To remain afloat we must have mindfulness. It keeps our head above the waters and, with energy, works towards safer shores. If mindfulness is well developed, we are as if on a boat, riding along the waves to Nibbana, which is described as the Safe Island.

Insight Meditation is itself a process of processes. At first we try to keep ourselves afloat with strong continuous mindfulness. After that, the practice becomes a journey of discoveries. Every experience we come across undergoes minute scrutiny. Our mind is like a microscope of ever-increasing powers of magnification; we discover the secrets of existence which we have misunderstood for so long. With each realization we move closer and closer to where the waves break and cease altogether – that is, absolute reality, the utter end of all Suffering. Is that not the noblest aim for which man may live? Wonderful knowledge like this should not be postponed. Hop on board the Ship of Mindfulness!



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