

Vipassana Dhura Meditation Society

The Sixteen Stages of Insight

This article is the work of the late Venerable Phra Dhamma Theerarach Mahamuni, one of the most renowned vipassana teachers of his time. The original booklet was produced in 1961 by the Division of Vipassana Dhura at Mahadhatu Monastery, Bangkok, and translated by Helen and Vorasak Jandamit. A revised English version was reprinted in 1988. It is also presented, with commentary, in the book, Insight Meditation: Practical Steps to Ultimate Truth, by Achan Sobin S. Namto (Sopako Bodhi Bhikkhu). In a few places the text has been edited and augmented by the Vipassana Dhura staff.

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Note to the reader: Some meditation teachers feel that the following information should not be made available to the general public. That isn't because these teachings are for members of a select group, must be specially transmitted, or are in any sense esoteric; but because, due to the tricky nature of the mind, learning about these insights before acquiring personal meditation experience might cause you to anticipate results, thereby slowing your progress. That's why Mahási Sayádaw wrote, "It is not good for a pupil who meditates under the guidance of a teacher to get acquainted with these stages before meditation begins" (Practical Insight Meditation, p. 35).

Nevertheless, the Sayadaw agreed to the publication of his own book, The Progress of Insight, that deals with these stages. He acknowledged that the information may be helpful for many students who practice in isolation. So we decided to follow a middle path by publishing the present essay, but including a cautionary note as the Sayadaw did.

Generally speaking, we do not recommend that beginners read this article. We offer the following descriptions for those students who have no access to an instructor and are trying to make sense of a meditation experience they have had, or for those who have already reached a fairly advanced stage of insight.

Although it is natural to want to know what level you have reached and what will happen next in meditation, it is quite difficult to evaluate your own experience, even with a written guideline. You should always be aware that, no matter what you come to believe as a result of reading this article, your self-assessment may be incorrect. Besides, the mind likes to play tricks. If you cling to something you've read about, wanting it to happen, the mind may subconsciously try to mimic the experience. Without a teacher you may not be able to tell the difference between the illusion and the real thing. In order to avoid the trap of self-deception it is important to use the information given here intelligently, with continuous self-examination and scrupulous honesty.

If you are reading this because you are wondering if you have reached enlightenment, please realize that you probably haven't, although you may have reached an earlier stage of insight-knowledge. Achan Sopako Bodhi explains that when the first level of enlightenment is reached there can be no doubt about it. You would not need to ask if you'd attained it. In the words of another bhikkhu, "It cannot be missed."

The Sixteen Stages of Insight: A Manual for Checking Vipassana Progress

This manual is intended for advanced students or vipassana teachers rather than beginners. It is not meant to substitute for the personal guidance of a meditation teacher.

There are sixteen levels of vipassana-knowledge or nana ("nana," pronounced "yah-nuh," is a Pali word for "knowledge.") In each level the student realizes a more advanced insight. This knowledge is a direct vision, not a matter of thinking. The meditator who undergoes an intensive meditation retreat will usually progress through the stages more or less in order, sometimes falling back to an earlier stage, or going back and forth between several levels before passing on to the next. A student may sometimes get stuck at a certain stage, at which time the help of a competent teacher is invaluable.

The meditator does not stay at each level for an equal period of time. Some stages may last days, weeks, months or longer, others mere hours. Some of the higher stages take only a few mind-moments, or even one moment, to pass – less than one second of time. Not every student will undergo all the experiences described here, nor in the exact order presented.

As you read these pages remember that, without exception, no matter what stage has been reached or what new phenomenon has been experienced, this tenet of insight meditation applies across the board: just go on with the work of noticing mental and material phenomena as they appear, without evaluating or naming those things; then let them go. Don't cling to any experience. Whatever happens, don't be swayed or impressed by it, no matter how blissful or terrible. This advice is pertinent even to those who have reached the first level of enlightenment. If you honestly follow this rule and don't let the mind talk you into making exceptions, you can be assured your practice will be correct and you will reach the end of the path as soon as possible.

The Sixteen Stages of Vipassana Knowledge

1. Knowledge to distinguish mental and physical states (namarupa pariccheda nana).
2. Knowledge of the cause-and-effect relationship between mental and physical states (paccaya pariggaha nana).
3. Knowledge of mental and physical processes as impermanent, unsatisfactory and nonself (sammasana nana).
4. Knowledge of arising and passing away (udayabbaya nana).
5. Knowledge of the dissolution of formations (bhanga nana).
6. Knowledge of the fearful nature of mental and physical states (bhaya nana).
7. Knowledge of mental and physical states as unsatisfactory (adinava nana).
8. Knowledge of disenchantment (nibbida nana).
9. Knowledge of the desire to abandon the worldly state (muncitukamayata nana).
10. Knowledge which investigates the path to deliverance and instills a decision to practice further (patisankha nana).
11. Knowledge which regards mental and physical states with equanimity (sankharupekha nana).
12. Knowledge which conforms to the Four Noble Truths (anuloma nana).
13. Knowledge of deliverance from the worldly condition (gotrabhu nana).
14. Knowledge by which defilements are abandoned and are overcome by destruction (magga nana).
15. Knowledge which realizes the fruit of the path and has nibbana as object (phala nana).
16. Knowledge which reviews the defilements still remaining (paccavekkhana nana).

1. Namarupa pariccheda nana: knowledge that can distinguish between mental and physical states.

In this nana, or state of wisdom or knowledge, the meditator is able to distinguish nama (mental phenomena) from rupa (material phenomena). For example, he is aware that the rising and falling movements of the abdomen are rupa and that the mind which acknowledges these movements is nama. A movement of the foot is rupa and the consciousness of that movement is nama.

The meditator can distinguish between nama and rupa with regard to the five senses as follows:

1. When seeing a form, the eyes and the color are rupa; the consciousness of the seeing is nama.
2. When hearing a sound, the sound itself and the hearing are rupa, and consciousness of the hearing is nama.

3. When smelling something, the smell itself and the nose are rupa, and the consciousness of the smell is nama.
4. When tasting something, the taste and the tongue are rupa, and the consciousness of taste is nama.
5. When touching something, whatever is cold, hot, soft or hard to the touch is rupa, and consciousness of the contact is nama.

In conclusion, in this nana the meditator realizes that the whole body is rupa and the mind (or consciousness of the sensations of the body) is nama. Only nama and rupa exist. There is no being, no individual self, no "I", no "he" or "she," etc. When sitting, the body and its movement are rupa and awareness of the sitting is nama. The act of standing is rupa and awareness of the standing is nama. The act of walking is rupa and the awareness of the walking is nama.

2. Knowledge of the cause-and-effect relationship between mental and physical states (paccaya pariggaha nana).

In some instances rupa is the cause and nama is the effect, as, for example, when the abdomen rises and consciousness follows. At other times nama is the cause and rupa is the effect; for example: the wish to sit is the cause and the sitting is the effect; in other words, volitional activity precedes physical action.

Some characteristics of this nana:

- a. The abdomen may rise, but fails to fall right away.
- b. The abdomen may fall deeply and remain in that position longer than normal.
- c. The rising and falling of the abdomen seems to have disappeared, but when touched by the hand, movements can still be felt.
- d. At times there are feelings of distress of varying intensity.
- e. Some meditators may be much disturbed by visions or hallucinations.
- f. The rising and falling of the abdomen and the acknowledgment of the movements occur at the same time.
- g. One may be startled by the body bending forwards or backwards.
- h. The meditator conceives that this existence, the next and all existences, derive only from the interaction of cause and effect. They consist only of nama and rupa, mental and physical processes.
- i. A single rise of the abdomen has two stages.

3. Knowledge of mental and physical processes as unsatisfactory and nonself (Sammāsana nana).

Some characteristics of this nana:

- a. The meditator considers nama and rupa, as experienced through the five senses, as having the three characteristics anicca (impermanence), dukkha (unsatisfactoriness or suffering), and anatta (nonself).

- b. The meditator sees that one rising movement of the abdomen has three sections: originating, continuing, and vanishing. One falling movement of the abdomen has the same three sections.
- c. There are feelings of distress which disappear only slowly, after seven or eight acknowledgements.
- d. There are many nimittas (visions or mental images) which disappear slowly after several acknowledgements.
- e. The rising and falling movements of the abdomen may seem to disappear for a long or short interval.
- f. Breathing may be fast, slow, smooth, irregular or obstructed.
- g. The mind may be distracted, which shows that it is aware of the three characteristics, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself.
- h. The meditator's hands or feet may clench or twitch.
- i. Some of the ten vipassanupakilesas (Imperfections or Defilements of Insight) may appear in this nana.

The Ten Imperfections of Insight (vipassanupakilesas):

An inexperienced meditator may be confused by any of the following experiences, mistakenly believing that he or she has reached nibbana. Though not in themselves obstacles, the meditator may be tempted to cling to these experiences, believing them to be important, rather than continuing to note the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena in the present moment. At such time the guidance of a teacher is invaluable.

Obhasa (illumination)

Obhasa is the first defilement of insight.

The meditator may be aware of the following manifestations of light:

- a. He may see a light similar to a firefly, a torch or a car headlamp.
- b. The room may be lit up, enabling the meditator to see his or her own body.
- c. He or she may be aware of light that seems to pass through the wall.
- d. There may be a light enabling one to see various places before one's eyes.
- e. There may be a bright light as though a door had opened. Some meditators lift up their hands as if to shut it; others open their eyes to see what caused the light.
- f. A vision of brightly colored flowers surrounded by light may be seen.
- g. Miles and miles of sea may be seen.
- h. Rays of light seem to emit from the meditator's heart and body.
- i. Hallucinations such as seeing an elephant may occur.

Piti (Joy or rapture)

Piti is the second defilement of insight. There are five kinds of piti.

1. Khuddaka piti (minor rapture)

This state is characterized by the following:

- a. The meditator may be aware of a white color.
- b. There may be a feeling of coolness or dizziness and the hairs of the body may stand on end.
- c. The meditator may cry or feel terrified.

2. Khanika piti (momentary rapture)

Characteristics of this piti include:

- a. Seeing flashes of light.
- b. Seeing sparks.
- c. Nervous twitching.
- d. A feeling of stiffness all over the body.
- e. A feeling as if ants were crawling on the body.
- f. A feeling of heat all over the body.
- g. Shivering.
- h. Seeing red colors.
- i. The hair on the body rising slightly.
- j. Itchiness as if ants were crawling on one's face and body.

3. Okkantika piti (flood of joy)

In this piti:

- a. The body may shake and tremble.
- b. The face, hands and feet may twitch.
- c. There may be violent shaking as if the bed is going to turn upside down.
- d. Nausea and at times actual vomiting may occur.
- e. There may be a rhythmic feeling like waves breaking on the shore.
- f. Ripples of energy may seem to flow over the body.
- g. The body may vibrate like a stick which is fixed in a flowing stream.
- h. A light yellow color may be observed.
- i. The body may bend to and fro.

4. Ubbenka piti (uplifting joy)

In this piti:

- a. The body feels as if it is extending or moving upwards.
- b. There may be a feeling as though lice are climbing on the face and body.
- c. Diarrhea may occur.
- d. The body may bend forwards or backwards.
- e. One may feel that one's head has been moved backwards and forwards by somebody.
- f. There may be a chewing movement with the mouth either open or closed.
- g. The body sways like a tree being blown by the wind.
- h. The body bends forwards and may fall down.
- i. There may be fidgeting movements of the body.
- j. There may be jumping movements of the body.
- k. Arms and legs may be raised or may twitch.
- l. The body may bend forwards or may recline.
- m. A silver gray color may be observed.

5. Pharana piti (pervading rapture)

In this piti:

- a. A feeling of coldness spreads through the body.
- b. Peace of mind sets in occasionally.
- c. There may be itchy feelings all over the body.
- d. There may be drowsy feelings and the meditator may not wish to open his or her eyes.
- e. The meditator has no wish to move.
- f. There may be a flushing sensation from feet to head or vice versa.
- g. The body may feel cool as if taking a bath or touching ice.
- h. The meditator may see blue or emerald green colors.
- i. An itchy feeling as though lice are crawling on the face may occur.

3. Passadhi

The third defilement of vipassana is passadhi which means "tranquility of mental factors and consciousness." It is characterized as follows:

- a. There may be a quiet, peaceful state resembling the attainment of insight.
- b. There will be no restlessness or mental rambling.
- c. Mindful acknowledgement is easy.
- d. The meditator feels comfortably cool and does not fidget.

- e. The meditator feels satisfied with his powers of acknowledgement.
- f. There may be a feeling similar to falling asleep.
- g. There may be a feeling of lightness.
- h. Concentration is good and there is no forgetfulness.
- i. Thoughts are quite clear.
- j. A cruel, harsh or merciless person will realize that the dhamma is profound.
- k. A criminal or drunkard will be able to give up bad habits and will change into quite a different person.

4. Sukha

The fourth defilement of vipassana is sukha which means "bliss" and has the following characteristics:

- a. There may be a feeling of comfort.
- b. Due to pleasant feelings the meditator may wish to continue practicing for a long time.
- c. The meditator may wish to tell other people of the results which he has already gained.
- d. The meditator may feel immeasurably proud and happy.
- e. Some say that they have never known such happiness.
- f. Some feel deeply grateful to their teachers.
- g. Some meditators feel that their teacher is at hand to give help.

5. Saddha

The next defilement of vipassana is saddha which is defined as fervor, resolution or determination, and has the following characteristics:

- a. The practitioner may have too much faith.
- b. He or she may wish everybody to practice vipassana.
- c. He may wish to persuade those he comes in contact with to practice.
- d. He may wish to repay the meditation center for its benefaction.
- e. The meditator may wish to accelerate and deepen his practice.
- f. He or she may wish to perform meritorious deeds, give alms and build and repair Buddhist buildings and artifacts.
- g. He may feel grateful to the person who persuaded him to practice.
- h. He may wish to give offerings to his teacher.
- i. A meditator may wish to be ordained as a Buddhist monk or nun.
- j. He may not wish to stop practicing.

- k. He might wish to go and stay in a quiet, peaceful place.
- l. The meditator may decide to practice wholeheartedly.

6. Paggaha

The next defilement of vipassana is paggaha which means exertion or strenuousness and is defined as follows:

- a. Sometimes the meditator may practice too strenuously.
- b. He may intend to practice rigorously, even unto death.
- c. The meditator overexerts himself so that attentiveness and clear comprehension are weak, causing distraction and lack of concentration

7. Upatthana, which means "mindfulness," is the next defilement of vipassana, and it is characterized by the following:

- a. Sometimes excessive concentration upon thought causes the meditator to leave acknowledgement of the present and inclines him to think of the past or future.
- b. The meditator may be unduly concerned with happenings which took place in the past.
- c. The meditator may have vague recollections of past lives.

8. Nana

The next vipassanupakilesa is nana which means "knowledge" and is defined as follows:

- a. Theoretical knowledge may become confused with practice. The meditator misunderstands but thinks that he is right. he may become fond of ostentatiousness and like contending with his teacher.
- b. A meditator may make comments about various objects. For example when the abdomen rises he may say "arising" and when it falls he may say "ceasing."
- c. The meditator may consider various principles which he knows or has studied.
- d. The present cannot be grasped. Usually it is "thinking" which fills up the mind. This may be referred to as "thought-based knowledge," jinta nana.

9. Upekkha

The ninth defilement of vipassana is upekkha which has the meaning of not caring or indifference. It can be described as follows:

- a. The mind of the meditator is indifferent, neither pleased nor displeased, nor forgetful. The rising and falling of the abdomen is indistinct and at times imperceptible.
- b. The meditator is unmindful, at times thinking of nothing in particular.
- c. The rising and falling of the abdomen may be intermittently perceptible.

- d. The mind is undisturbed and peaceful.
- e. The meditator is indifferent to bodily needs.
- f. The meditator is unaffected when in contact with either good or bad objects. Mindful acknowledgement is disregarded and attention is allowed to follow exterior objects to a great extent.

10. Nikanti

The tenth vipassanupakilesa is nikanti which means "gratification" and it has the following characteristics:

- a. The meditator finds satisfaction in various objects.
- b. He is satisfied with light, joy, happiness, faith, exertion, knowledge and even-mindedness.
- c. He is satisfied with various nimittas (visions)

4. Udayabbaya nana

The fourth nana is udayabbaya nana which means, "knowledge of contemplation on arising and falling." In this nana:

- a. The meditator sees that the rising and falling of the abdomen consists of 2, 3, 4, 5 or six stages.
- b. The rising and falling of the abdomen may disappear intermittently.
- c. Various feelings disappear after two or three acknowledgements.
- d. Acknowledgement is clear and easy.
- e. Nimittas disappear quickly, for instance after a few acknowledgements of "seeing, seeing."
- f. The meditator may see a clear, bright light.
- g. The beginning and the end of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen are clearly perceived.
- h. While sitting, the body may bend either forwards or backwards as though falling asleep. The extent of the movement depends on the level of concentration. The breaking of santati or continuity can be observed by the expression of the following characteristics:
 1. If the rising and falling movements of the abdomen become quick and then cease, anicca (impermanence) appears clearly but anatta (nonself) and dukkha (unsatisfactoriness) still continue.
 2. If the rising and falling movements become light and even and then cease, anatta (nonself) appears clearly. However, anicca and dukkha continue.
 3. If the rising and falling of the abdomen becomes stiff and impeded and then ceases, dukkha is clearly revealed, but anicca and anatta continue.

If the meditator has good concentration he may experience a ceasing of breath at frequent intervals. He may feel as if he is falling into an abyss or going through an air pocket on a plane, but in fact the body remains motionless.

5. Bhanga nana

This is the fifth insight knowledge. It means "Knowledge of contemplation on dissolution," and it has the following characteristics:

- a. The ending of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen are clear.
- b. The objects of the meditator's concentration may not be clear. The rising and falling movements of his abdomen may be vaguely perceived.
- c. The rising and falling movements may disappear. It is, however, noticed by the practitioner that rupa disappears first, followed by nama. In fact, the disappearance takes place almost simultaneously because of the swift functioning of the citta (mind).
- d. The rising and falling movements are distinct and faint.
- e. There is a feeling of tightness enabling one to see the continuity of rising and falling. The first state of consciousness ceases and a second begins, enabling the meditator to know the ceasing.
- f. Acknowledgement is insufficiently clear because its various objects appear to be far away.
- g. At times there is only the rising and falling; the feeling of self disappears.
- h. There may be a feeling of warmth all over the body.
- i. The meditator may feel as though he is covered by a net.
- j. Citta (mind or consciousness) and its object may disappear altogether.
- k. Rupa ceases first, but citta remains. However, consciousness soon disappears as well as the object of consciousness.
- l. Some meditators feel that the rising and falling of the abdomen ceases for only a short time, while others feel that the movement stops for 2-4 days until they get bored. Walking is the best remedy for this.
- m. Uppada, thiti, and bhanga, that is, the origination, persisting and vanishing stages of both nama and rupa are present, but the meditator is not interested, observing only the stage of vanishing.
- n. The internal objects of meditation, i.e., rising and falling, are not clear; external objects such as trees seem to shake.
- o. One has the impression of looking at a field of fog; everything appears vague and obscure.
- p. If the meditator looks at the sky it seems as if there is vibration in the air.
- q. Rising and falling suddenly ceases and suddenly reappears.

6. Bhaya nana

The sixth stage of knowledge is bhaya nana or "knowledge of the appearance as terror." The following characteristics can be observed:

- a. At first the meditator acknowledges objects, but the acknowledgements vanish together with consciousness.
- b. A feeling of fear occurs but it is unlike that generated by seeing a ghost.
- c. The disappearance of nama and rupa and the consequent becoming nothingness induce fear.
- d. The meditator may feel neuralgic pain similar to that caused by a nervous disease when he is walking or standing.
- e. Some practitioners cry when they think of their friends or relatives.
- f. Some practitioners are very much afraid of what they see even if it is only a water jug or a bed post.
- g. The meditator now realizes that nama and rupa, which were previously considered to be good, are completely insubstantial.
- h. There is no feeling of happiness, pleasure or enjoyment.
- i. Some practitioners are aware of this feeling of fear but are not controlled by it.

7. Adinava nana

The seventh knowledge is "knowledge of the contemplation of disadvantages." It has the following characteristics:

- a. The rising and falling movements appear vague and obscure, and the movements gradually disappear.
- b. The meditator experiences negative, irritable feelings.
- c. Nama and rupa can be acknowledged well.
- d. The meditator is aware of nothing but negativity caused by the arising, persisting and vanishing of nama and rupa. The meditator becomes aware of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself.
- e. In contrast to former days, acknowledgement of what is perceived by the eyes, nose, tongue, body and mind cannot be made clearly.

8. Nibbida nana

This is, "Knowledge of dispassion." It has the following characteristics:

- a. The meditator views all objects as tiresome and ugly.
- b. The meditator feels something akin to laziness but the ability to acknowledge objects clearly is still present.
- c. The feeling of joy is absent; the meditator feels bored and sad as though he has been separated from what he loves.

- d. The practitioner may not have experienced boredom before but now he really knows what boredom is.
- e. Although previously the meditator may have thought that only hell was bad, at this stage he feels that only nibbana, not a heavenly state, is really good. He feels that nothing can compare with nibbana, so he deepens his resolve to search for it.
- f. The meditator may acknowledge that there is nothing pleasant about nama and rupa.
- g. The meditator may feel that everything is bad in every way and there is nothing that can be enjoyed.
- h. The meditator may not wish to speak or meet anybody. He may prefer to stay in his room.
- i. The meditator may feel hot and dry as though being scorched by the heat of the sun.
- j. The meditator may feel lonely, sad and apathetic.
- k. Some lose their attachment to formerly desired fame and fortune. They become bored realizing that all things are subject to decay. All races and beings, even the Devas and Brahmas (gods), are likewise subject to decay. They see that, where there is birth, old age, sickness and death prevail. So there is no feeling of attachment. Boredom therefore sets in, together with a strong inclination to search for nibbana.

9. Muncitukamayata nana

The ninth nana to be considered is muncitukamayata nana which can be translated as, "the knowledge of the desire for deliverance." This nana has the following characteristics:

- a. The meditator itches all over his body. He feels as if he has been bitten by ants or small insects, or he feels as though they are climbing on his face and body.
- b. The meditator becomes impatient and cannot make acknowledgements while standing, sitting, lying down or walking.
- c. He cannot acknowledge other minor actions.
- d. He feels uneasy, restless and bored.
- e. He wishes to get away and give up meditation.
- f. Some meditators think of returning home, because they feel that their parami (accumulated past merit) has been insufficient. As a result they start preparing their belongings to go home. In the early days this was termed, "the nana of rolling the mat."

10. Patisankha nana

The tenth nana is patisankha nana or "Knowledge of reflective contemplation." This nana has the following characteristics:

- a. The meditator may experience feelings similar to being pierced by splinters throughout his body.
- b. There may be many other disturbing sensations but they disappear after two or three acknowledgements.

- c. The meditator may feel drowsy.
- d. The body may become stiff as if the meditator were entering phalasangama (a vipassana trance) but citta is still active and the auditory channel is still functioning.
- e. The meditator feels as heavy as stone.
- f. There may be a feeling of heat throughout the body.
- g. He may feel uncomfortable.

11. Sankharupekha nana

This is "knowledge of equanimity regarding formations." This nana has the following characteristics:

- a. The meditator does not feel frightened or glad, only indifferent. The rising and falling of the abdomen is clearly acknowledged as merely being nama and rupa.
- b. The meditator feels neither happiness nor sadness. His presence of mind and consciousness are clear. Nama and rupa are clearly acknowledged.
- c. The meditator can remember and acknowledge without difficulty.
- d. The meditator has good concentration. His mind remains peaceful and smooth for a long time, like a car running on a well-paved road. The meditator may feel satisfied and forget the time.
- e. Samadhi (concentration) becomes firm, somewhat like pastry being kneaded by a skilled baker.
- f. Various pains and diseases such as paralysis or nervousness may be cured.
- g. It can be said that the characteristics of this nana are ease and satisfaction. The meditator may forget the time which has been spent during practice. The length of time spent sitting might even be as much as one hour instead of the half hour which was originally intended.

12. Anuloma nana or "conformity knowledge;" "Adaptation knowledge" follows.

This nana can be divided into the following stages:

- a. Wisdom derived from the preliminary nanas starting with the fourth.
- b. Wisdom derived from the higher nanas, i.e., the 37 bodhipakkhiyadhamma (factors of enlightenment), qualities contributing to or constituting enlightenment; the 4 iddhipada or paths of accomplishment; the 4 sammappadhara, right or perfect efforts; the 4 satipatthana or foundations of mindfulness; the five indriya or controlling faculties; and the five bhala or powers.

Anuloma nana has the characteristics of anicca, dukkha and anatta.

1. Anicca (impermanence). He who has practiced charity and kept the precepts will attain the path by anicca. The rising and falling of the abdomen will become quick but suddenly cease. The meditator is aware of cessation of movement as the abdomen rises and falls or the cessation of sensation when sitting or touching. Quick breathing

is a symptom of anicca. The knowledge of this ceasing whenever it occurs is called "anuloma nana." However, this should actually be experienced by the meditator, not just imagined.

2. Dukkha (suffering). He who has practiced samatha (concentration) will attain the path by way of dukkha. Thus, when he acknowledges the rising and falling of the abdomen or sitting and touching, he feels stifled. When he continues to acknowledge the rising and falling of the abdomen or the sitting and touching, a cessation of sensation will take place. A characteristic of path attainment by way of dukkha is unbearability. The knowledge of the ceasing of the rising and falling of the abdomen, or the cessation of sensation when sitting or touching is anuloma nana.
3. Anatta (nonself). He who has practiced vipassana or was interested in vipassana in former lives will attain the path by anatta. Thus the rising and falling of the abdomen becomes steady, evenly-spaced and then ceases. The rising and falling movements of the abdomen or the sitting and touching will be seen clearly. Path attainment by anatta is characterized by a smooth, light movement of the abdomen. When the movements of the abdomen continue evenly and lightly, that is anatta. Anatta means "without substance," "meaninglessness" and "uncontrollability."

The ability to know clearly the cessation of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen or the cessation of sensation when sitting and touching is called "anuloma nana."

The Four Noble Truths

In the anuloma nana, the Four Noble Truths appear clearly and distinctly as follows:

1. 1. Samudaya sacca. This truth is perceived when the abdomen begins to rise or begins to fall, and it occurs at the point that the meditator is about to enter the next nana, which is called the gotrabhu nana. Samudaya sacca is also referred to as "rupa jati" and "nama jati." It is the point of origination of both the beginning of the rising and the beginning of the falling movements of the abdomen. Nama jati is the beginning of nama and rupa jati is the beginning of rupa. Real perception and experience of these truths is called "samudaya sacca."
2. 2. Dukkha sacca. This truth is perceived when the rising and falling movements of the abdomen can no longer be tolerated because the meditator is aware of their unsatisfactory nature. He perceives that everything must die out and come to an end. In Pali this truth is given the name, "charamaranam dukkha saccam." Old age is a deterioration of nama and rupa. Death is the extinction, the breaking-up, the ending of nama and rupa. The perception of the cessation of suffering is called "dukkha sacca."
3. 3. Nirodha sacca. This truth is seen when the rising and falling movements fall away simultaneously. Jati is the limit of knowledge, and so the mental acknowledgement of the cessation of the movements of the abdomen also fades away at the same time. This constitutes the state of nibbana. In Pali this is referred to as "Ubhinnampi nissarnam." The state when dukkha and the point of origination of nama-rupa (samudaya) both cease is called "Nirodha sacca."

4. 4. Magga sacca. (The Great Truth). In this state of knowledge or wisdom, the meditator is completely aware of the rising and falling of the abdomen. He is aware of the beginning of the rising and falling, the middle of the rising and falling, and the points when the rising and falling cease. In Pali this state is know as "nirothappachanana magga saccam." When the ending of suffering and the cessation of the movements of the abdomen are clearly seen, this is termed "magga sacca."

It is necessary for the practitioner to be aware of these four truths simultaneously. It should be like blowing out a candle, i.e.:

1. It should be like the point at which the wick of the candle has been used up.
2. It should be like the point at which the wax of the candle has been used up.
3. It should be like an overwhelming brilliance which has obliterated the candle light.
4. It should be like a deep darkness.

The four characteristics of the light given here are likely to appear at the same time and at the same level as the perception of the Four Noble Truths. The state of nibbana is perceived in nirodha sacca, dukkha sacca, samudaya sacca, and magga sacca at the same time.

13. Gotrabhu nana

The next nana to be considered is gotrabhu nana or "knowledge at the moment of change of lineage." Gotrabhu nana is the knowledge which entirely separates one from the worldly state. Nama and rupa, together with citta, which has become aware of the cessation, both become peaceful and quiet. This means that one has become enlightened, having nibbana as the object. The moment when feeling breaks off, gotrabhu nana is reached.

1. Uppadam abhibhuyyati gotrabhu: knowledge which covers the arising of nama and rupa is called "gotrabhu."
2. Pavattam abhibhuyyati gotrabhu: knowledge which covers the continuance of nama and rupa is called "gotrabhu."
3. Bahiddhasamkhanranimittam abhibhuyyati gotrabhu: knowledge which covers the external nama and rupa is called "gotrabhu."
4. Anupadam pakkhandati gotrabhu: knowledge which moves toward cessation is called "gotrabhu."
5. Appavattam nirodham nibbham pakkhandati gotrabhu: knowledge which approaches discontinuance, cessation and nibbana is called "gotrabhu."
6. Uppadam abhibhuyyati anupadam pakkhandati gotrabhu: wisdom which covers the arising and then approaches the non-arising is called "gotrabhu."

To summarize, the moment that feeling breaks off the first time is called "gotrabhu nana." The meditator casts off nama and rupa. Awareness grasps nibbana as its object. This state is between lokiya (a worldly existence) and lokuttara (supramundane existence). It is not a state of worldly existence or a state of supramundane existence, because it is in between both states. It is like a man who enters a hall; one foot is outside and the other inside. You cannot say that he is outside or inside.

14. Magga nana

The next nana to be considered is magga nana. It can be translated as "knowledge of the path." In this nana, defilements have been broken off (samucchedpahara). Magga nana has the following characteristics:

- a. The destruction of some defilements and preparation for the destruction of others. It constitutes a cleansing.
- b. There is clear and complete knowledge of the path.
- c. There is a deep knowledge of dhamma which leads to nibbana.
- d. Magga nana is a deep knowledge of dhamma which is necessary to reach nibbana.
- e. It is a deep wisdom which enables the practitioner to eradicate defilements.

Characteristics of magga nana are:

1. 1. After the breaking off of sensation, awareness of the stream of nibbana lasts for a moment. Some defilements are completely destroyed. Sense of self (ego), skeptical doubt and a misunderstanding of rules and rituals will be cut off during this nana. This nana has nibbana as its object. Nibbana can be reached. There is no doubt about what is right and wrong, about heaven and hell, about the path, the result of the path and nibbana. There is no doubt concerning life after death. This nana is supramundane.
2. 2. Anuloma nana is the last nana in which there is anything happening. After that there is no awareness of anything. Feeling and awareness suddenly cease. It is like a person who is walking along a road and suddenly falls down a hole. The object and the mind which is trying to acknowledge the object both cease to function in the state of nibbana. This cessation is called "gotrabhu nana." This state of wisdom encompasses the cessation of awareness and form.
3. 3. After gotrabhu nana has lasted a moment, that is termed magga nana. Upon realizing this stage (magga nana) one experiences a feeling of surprise. One is completely happy and at ease. No state of worldly happiness can compare with this realization. The abandoning of the defilements is like a flash of lightning - and then the thunder.

15. Phala nana

The fifteenth nana is called phala nana or "the knowledge of fruition." This occurs in the next moment after magga nana. The mind has come to know what's happened and has nibbana as the object. This state lasts for two or three moments. Whenever magga nana happens, phala nana follows immediately. There is no interim state. Phala nana, like magga nana, is supramundane. Magga nana is the cause and phala nana is the result. The way of entering gotrabhu nana, magga nana and phala nana is as follows:

1. 1. The first cessation of sensation is gotrabhu nana and it has nibbana as its object. It lies between the mundane and the supramundane existences.
2. 2. The midway cessation of sensation is magga nana and it has nibbana as its object. It is supramundane. At this point, defilements are eradicated.

3. 3. The final cessation is called phala nana and it has nibbana as its object. It is also supramundane. The eradication of the defilements during magga nana is called "samucchadpahara" and means the complete eradication of defilements. In phala nana those defilements are prevented from reoccurring. This lack of reoccurrence is termed "Patipasamphana Pahara," in phala nana. This process may be compared to extinguishing a fire. Imagine a piece of wood which is on fire. If you want to put the fire out you must throw water on the wood so that the flames die down, but the wood will continue smoldering. However, if the wood is doused with water again two or three times the fire will be completely extinguished. This parallels what happens when a meditator eradicates defilements during magga nana. The power of defilements still continues so it is necessary to purge it again during phala nana. Patipasamphana Pahara is like the second and third applications of water to put out the fires of defilements.

16. Paccavekkhana nana

The sixteenth nana is called "paccavekkhana nana" or "knowledge of reviewing." In this nana there is a knowledge and contemplation of the path, the fruit, and nibbana. There is a knowledge of those defilements which have been eradicated and those which still continue.

1. There is a contemplation of having followed the path.
2. There is a contemplation of the fact that a result has been obtained.
3. There is a contemplation of the defilements which have been eradicated.
4. There is a contemplation of the defilements which remain.
5. There is a contemplation of the fact that nibbana, which is an exceptional state of awareness, has been known and experienced.

In addition, while the meditator is acknowledging rising and falling, he comes upon the path, the fruit and nibbana. At the moment he enters the path, the fruit and nibbana, three conditions occur: anicca, dukkha and anatta as previously mentioned. "Paccavekkhana nana" means that, when the meditator is acknowledging the rising and falling motions of the abdomen, he is aware of the total cessation of the rising and falling. After the cessation, when awareness returns, the meditator contemplates what has happened to him. After this he goes on acknowledging the rising and falling movements, but they seem much clearer than normal. Considering what has happened is called "paccavekkhana nana."