

## The Practical approach to the Enlightenment through the Buddhist Meditation

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Buddhism starts from the point of the Buddha's Enlightenment. And thereby, the teaching of the Buddha becomes the way to the solution for the problems of human beings, i.e., the cessation of suffering. When it works it becomes meaningful. But, nowadays, the enlightenment has become rather treasure in the casket than in use. As the materialism goes extreme and the morality too extremely corrupted, the world urgently needs to balance it. Therefore, this is the high time to call for enlightenment.

Then, what does the enlightenment mean? It simply means the total cessation of all kinds of suffering, or the solution for the existence. Then, now our concern comes on the possibility of enlightening in this very life. Before we deal with the possibility of enlightenment here and now, first of all I would like to trace the enlightenment appearing in the *Suttas* in four stages in two ways: One way is *Theravāda Vipassana* Meditation and the other way is *Mahāyāna Zen* meditation.

In *Theravāda Vipassana* meditation, four stages of Enlightenment are rather clearly mentioned in comparison with *Mahāyāna Zen* tradition. It talks about 10 fetters or bonds that tie us to this *samsāric* world of existence and as we overcome these fetters, we progress to higher state of enlightenment. I will show this in a diagram in comparison with *Zen* tradition. Actually, there are no criteria to distinguish states like 10 fetters in *Zen*, but there are some mystery words left by the enlightened one from which we can have clue to judge their state. They use some specific type of words, and we call it "*Malhugu*" in Korean. If I interpret I would say in simple parlance "*Some-words beyond the ineffability*". Ten fetters or bonds that tie us to this *samsāric* world of existence are shown below<sup>1</sup>:

1. The belief in a permanent personality, ego
2. Doubt, extreme skepticism
3. Attachment to rites, rituals, and ceremonies
4. Attachment to sense desires
5. Ill-will, anger
6. Craving for existence in the Form world (heavenly realms)
7. Craving for existence in the Formless world (heavenly realms)
8. Conceit
9. Restlessness
10. Ignorance

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<sup>1</sup> (from Anguttara Nikāya 10.13)

COMPARISON BETWEEN <i>VIPASSANA</i> AND <i>ZEN</i>		
Term:	Type of Noble Disciple	Malhugu in Zen Tradition
<i>sakkāya-dīṭṭhi</i> "personality belief."	<i>Sotāpanna</i>	"Mountain is mountain, river is river". "Raise your mindfulness at every object".
<i>vicikicchā</i> "skeptical doubt."		
<i>sīlabbata-parāmāsa</i> "adherence to wrongful rites"		Disciple was meditating, and then the master came with the brick and started polishing it. Sitting in the presence of the disciple. Then the disciple questioned as to what he was going to do by polishing a brick. The master replied in no time that he was going to make a mirror by polishing it: This shows that the disciple's way of sitting was not awakening but mere attachment. <sup>2</sup>
<i>kāma-rāga</i> , "sensual desire."	<i>Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi</i>	Two meditators were discussing about their progress in meditation. One answered like this: two cows were fighting on the sea side, one cow was black and other was white color. Mingling with each other they disappeared sinking in the sea towards horizon: shows overcoming liking and disliking
<i>Paṭigha</i> , also <i>byāpāda</i> , "ill-will or hatred."		
<i>rūpa-rāga</i> "attachment to the form realms."	<i>Arahant</i>	
<i>arūpa-rāga</i> "attachment to the formless realms."		
<i>māna</i> "conceit" all forms of evaluation.		Take a cup of tea: One says when Zen master Joju was meeting people, a guest approached to him then master asked him whether he had come here earlier, then the guest answered in positive. Then master Joju asked him to have a cup of tea. On other occasion another guest approached to him. The master question him also whether he had visited there before. Then the guest answered in negative. The master invited him also to have a cup of tea. Seeing this, an attendant questioned the master why he had treated both guest in the same way. Then the master asked the attendant also to have a cup of tea. <sup>3</sup>
<i>uddhacca</i> "restlessness."		
<i>avijjā</i> ignorance of the Four Noble Truths		Two meditators were discussing about their progress in meditation. One said like this: "when I feel hungry I eat; when I feel sleepy I sleep."

Then, I will refer to one event of each state of enlightenment. First of all, we will see the *Sotāpanna* who shattered off lower 3 fetters and we call her/him as *Ariya* or Saint. But, when we have the word "saint", we rather think of something special and abnormal or something miraculous. But, in case of *Visākhā* who was a *Sotāpanna* at the age of 7 years, who after getting married gave birth to 10 sons and 10 daughters, still much being involved in sense desire. Ones like *Visākhā* are said to be attached to the round because of so many lives where they took pleasure in the sense objects. Even after becoming a *Sotāpanna*, it is said that *Visākhā* would spend a long time in *samsāra* - but only in very good conditions - because of so much accumulated clinging to sense pleasures. *Sotāpannas* have eliminated all wrong views; but they still have the type of *lobha* (desire) that arises for sense objects. As we see in the above diagram, *Sotāpannas* still have their own tendency of *Kāmarāga*, sensual pleasure and *paṭigha*, ill-will. So, seemingly, on the face of it, we are not able to distinguish *Sotāpanna* from ordinary.

<sup>2</sup> This is the story of what happened between the Zen master Hoeyang and Majo, who were the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> patriarchs of the Chinese Zen tradition.

<sup>3</sup> One of the famous Zen master in China called Joju.

Many writings say that *Sotāpanna* person cannot believe that any *dhamma* lasts or is 'theirs'. They know that this type of *lobha* is conditioned and so are not fooled into thinking it is self. But this is wrong. Though *Sotāpanna* just experienced the cessation of consciousness one second, if she/he does not continue their practice on the arising object they do not have that knowledge<sup>4</sup>. But, when they recover that awareness of appearing and disappearing on the objects then they understand immediately those are impermanent, non-self. Then, they are gradually detached from the objects. One thing different from ordinary is that she/he understands when they are in suffering, they recognize suffering as suffering – this is actually very important point – whereas ordinary do not, or cannot think suffering as suffering, but they take them for granted as an inevitable part of life.

I have seen many *Sotāpannas* who after attaining *Sotāpatti* didn't practice and immediately back to their own sensual pleasure, even try to use this *Sotāpanna-hood* as their part of Ego, like a prize. Thereby, I couldn't see any wisdom on them but stronger *māna*, conceit. They may return to the wisdom of this *Sotāpanna* state, after experiencing the extreme suffering as she/he couldn't hold this Ego anymore, then they release this ego yielding to wisdom. So, when we think of *Ariya*, saint in Buddhism, we should have a clear meaning of this word. Not for like extraordinary psychic power but knowingness to some extent, of the way to reduce suffering.

Then, having understood this suffering as suffering, they try to overcome and set into practice again. Then, they, somehow, sometime later, attain *Sakadāgāmi*. A *Sakadāgāmi* (once-returner) has eradicated the first three fetters of the 10 fetters to enlightenment and greatly weakened the fourth and fifth; attachment to sense desires and ill-will. Such a person will be re-born to either the human or heavenly realm and will attain enlightenment there.

According to *Visākha*'s story who was a *bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā*'s ex-husband, when he attained *Sakadāgāmi* he didn't make any change in his Marriage life with the wife *Dhammadinnā* but he wanted to end the marriage life after attaining *Anāgāmi*. *Mahānāma*<sup>5</sup> known as *Sakadāgāmi* was advised to practice higher concentration to remove sensual pleasure for further progress to enlightenment. Further *Isidatta* and *purāṇa*<sup>6</sup> story shows that celibacy is not compulsory to attain *Sakadāgāmi*. Thus *Sotāpanna* and *Sakadāgāmi* can still enjoy sensual pleasure and they live normal lives depending on their nature. Some might renounce the world and become monks and nuns; others might stay as laypeople but live a simple life without husband or wife; others might take 8 precepts; while still others indulge in sense pleasures as is their nature. What they can never do is going back to having a wrong view. This is not non-retrogressive, nor can they ever drink alcohol or lie or steal or kill even an ant. Even *Sakadāgāmi* too, there is no saintly look as we think for the concept of saintliness. We have to think this term more practically. The transformation happens innerly in the busiest way in the mind. Just she/he becomes more aware what brings her/him suffering due to understanding of suffering as suffering.

*Sakadāgāmi* though he doesn't have strong sensual pleasure and ill-will, she/he still has them to some degree, due to these, they get suffering, again, realizing suffering as suffering, they try to practice harder. So, in the process to Enlightenment,

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<sup>4</sup>In fact, a stream-enterer can be living in negligence, such as when he or she neglects to regularly retire into seclusion for the purpose of meditative practice and, due to neglecting the practice, gains neither concentration nor deeper insight (S.V. 398).

<sup>5</sup>MA. II. 61

<sup>6</sup>A. III. 347, A.V.138.

realizing suffering as suffering is the strongest motive and teacher as being the first Truth. Then, one day, they attain *Anāgāmi*.

An *Anāgāmi* (non-returner) has completely eradicated the first five fetters and never returns to earth or any other world system (planet, solar system). Such a person is re-born to a heavenly realm and attains enlightenment from there. As we see in the story of *Visākha* ex-husband of *Bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā*, who was an *Anāgāmi*, since he removed sensual pleasure completely he did not necessarily need marriage life. From here, we may have some saintly outlook from them.

In *Zen* tradition, there is a story: one disciple came to his master and showed his attainment making some sort of sign. He drew a circle with stick then he removed this circle with his feet. The master without saying anything He shut the door with a bang. The other day, another disciple came and he too showed the process of his practice. He too drew a circle and removed it but again he drew a new circle on it. Then, the master smiling entertained him into his room. In *Mahāyāna*, if one, after attaining Enlightenment, does not share his *Bodhi of Enlightenment* to the world then she/he is called a great thief. In *Theravāda Suttas*, this trend seems to be not much emphasized. The Buddha often says that so and so attained *Anāgāmi* without returning to this earth, he will attain final Enlightenment there. But, in *Mahāyāna Zen* tradition, it is strongly emphasized. If one does not return to the world with his enlightenment, they say that it is totally useless. I think, this is the state of this *Anāgāmi*, returning to the world could be helpful to remove *Anāgāmi*'s remaining five fetters.

Overcoming *Anāgāmi*'s five higher fetters she/he attains *Arahant*. The last stage is the *Arahant*, and is marked by the eradication of the last five Fetters. This state is not restricted by age, sex or social status. It is open to lay people as well as ordained monks and nuns. The *Arahant* will continue to live for his body's natural span.

I would refer to the story of *Santati*, the king's minister who attained *Arahantship* on the elephant. He was sad seeing the dancer's death caused as the result of entertaining him. With knife-like pains, he sought for solace before the Buddha, then the Buddha uttered this stanza:

*Purge out the things belonging to the past  
Let there be naught to rise in future times.  
If what's twixt past and future you don't grasp,  
You will be one who wanders forth serene.*<sup>7</sup>;

Listening to this stanza, instantly, he attained *Arhantship* and entered into *Nibbāna*. We may wonder how *Santati* could attain *Arahantship* after listening to only one stanza. We may be advised to listen to his past story but somehow the moment of entering into *Arhantship* has happened at that very moment of hearing a stanza.

I would refer to some story in *Zen* tradition, as you know, *Zen* started from the Master *Bodhi Dharma*, second master was *Haega*, when *Haega* was preaching in the town a man came and pleaded to cure him. The man said that he was in serious disease because of his bad *karma*, sin. Listening to him, *Haega* said "Can you show me your sin?" then, this man suddenly realized there is nothing called sin, but just his own mis-grasping, when he understood this instantly, his disease disappeared. Then he became the 3<sup>rd</sup> master of *Zen* tradition named *Sungchan*. He wrote the very famous

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<sup>7</sup>“*Yaṃ pubbe taṃ visodhehi, pacchā te mātu kiñcanaṃ;Majjhe ce no gahessasi, upasanto carissasī*”ti. (su. ni. 945)

stanza called “*Sinsimmyung*”, summarizing in this : “Don’t distinguish anything, then at that moment, you will be enlightened.” So, enlightenment comes not from anything but clear and right perception at the specific moment.

Those were in the history, then how about now, for us? Can we be enlightened here and now in this very life in this 21<sup>st</sup> century amongst strong materialism? Of course, Yes.

We found in the *Suttas*, many of them were instantly enlightened after listening to the Buddha’s sermon without any intense meditation course or PhD degree of Buddhism, no seminar attending. Even the kings too attained some enlightenment amongst business of the secular world, like king *Bimbisara* known as *Sotāpatti*. How about heavenly king *Sakka*, he too attained *Sotāpatti*.

We should refer to the event of Enlightenment of five *bhikkhus*. For their perfect Enlightenment, they needed only 2 *Suttas*. Enlightenment comes through the way of perception, so, it depends on the sharpness of the awareness not the long period, when there is awareness, there, automatically *pañña* is revealed. So, knowledge is not much necessary. We can pay attention to the way of *Satipaṭṭhāna*’s teaching, some misunderstand it as all of them should be practiced step by step. Then, at the end of the course, we might have the chance of enlightenment. But, it is wrong. Each item has same refrain that says to observe arising and disappearing of that each and every phenomena. The more she/he is aware of disappearing of phenomena the closer to be enlightened. When one follows each phenomenon closely, it actually means the awareness of consciousness being caught up just by following consciousness, then, they shortly experience the cessation of consciousness. This is so called the moment of *Sotāpatti*. It appears as if the man who is going in the dark night, suddenly sees a flash of lightning. It happens while walking meditation, while eating in the dining room, while sitting, while listening. Actually, through my teaching experiences, while observing the sound, they experience this more. Because the end of sound is easy to be aware of:

*I quoted from my meditation student’s records: “I was observing mind and body while walking meditation when the bell was ringing giving the sign of the end of walking meditation, I was observing the bell-sound, just closely following (anupassana) up until the end of the sound. The just moment the sound disappeared completely, my mind (consciousness) that followed it too disappeared absolutely. I felt “I am” disappearing”- new to this meditation, this was 5<sup>th</sup> day.*

*I quoted from my meditation student’s record: After experiencing the cut-off stillness between thought and thought: “when I went out to have breakfast, the things outside appeared new and clear, even the stones too looked ripe and tender, as if they are going to talk to me. Flying birds appeared to me like slow motion”.*

I can bring the example of *Dipama*<sup>8</sup> who was a woman Buddhist master. Under her instructions, so many enlightened ones appeared and it didn’t take longer time,

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<sup>8</sup>Dipa Ma **The Life and Legacy of a Buddhist Master** Amy Schmidt, BlueBridge Books 05/05 Paperback ISBN: 0-97424-055-9: Dipa Ma Bura, who died in 1989 at the age of 78, was the first truly accomplished meditation master in the Theravada tradition to teach in America. Among her devoted students were Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg, and Joseph Goldstein — all members of the Insight Meditation Society. In this presentation of the life and teachings of Dipa Ma, Amy Schmidt has gathered many quotations and anecdotes that reveal the startling

sometimes few days. Among her devoted students were *Jack Kornfield*, *Sharon Salzberg*, and *Joseph Goldstein* — all members of the Insight Meditation Society.

*Extracting from Dipa Ma book: "I could be aware of all subtle phenomena arising and disappearing. It was like a bubble as if bursting out right now. There is only arising and disappearing then stillness again. The intention arises then disappears. There was a huge space between thought and thought. Due to awareness, great transformation arose. I felt as if I went out somewhere at which there is no-body, no thing: "I" was not there."*

By the way, now to talk about the way of approaching to enlightenment, I would like to mention about two western enlightened persons. One is *Eckhart Tolle*<sup>9</sup>, and the other is *Lester Levenson*.<sup>10</sup>

*"I felt myself fall into that void. I have no recollection of what happened after that. ...I opened my eyes. Without any thought, that soft luminosity filtering through the curtain was love itself. Tears came into my eyes. I got up and walked around the room. I recognized the room, and yet I knew that I had never truly seen it before. Everything was fresh and pristine, as if it had just come into existence. As if I had just been born into this world." – From Eckhart Tolle's book [The Power of Now]*

*"With many diseases Lester Levenson was told he would not live much longer. He was at the end of the line. This made him realize that the accumulated knowledge of man was of no use.*

*"I went through my life then I found happiness equated to one's capacity to love rather than to being loved. Therefore, I began correcting all my thoughts and feelings. During three months period, all the ailments, I had in my physical body corrected. All my miseries dropped away. And I ended up in a place in which I was happy all the time without sorrow". – From Lester Levenson's book [Keys to the Ultimate Freedom]*

I found the common thing; when they really want enlightenment, more than anything else, it comes. According to *Lester Levenson's* expression, "you must want to know

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presence and many spiritual gifts of this diminutive woman. These tributes come from her American and Calcutta students and from some family members.

<sup>9</sup>Eckhart Tolle (born 1948) is a German-born Canadian resident, best known as the author of: *The Power of Now* and *A New Earth*, which were written in English. In 2011, he was listed by the Watkins Review as the most spiritually influential person in the world. In 2008, a New York Times writer called Tolle "the most popular spiritual author in the [United States]"

<sup>10</sup>Lester Levenson was a man who had mastered life's greatest challenge. In 1952, at age 42, Lester, a physicist and successful entrepreneur, was at the pinnacle of worldly success, yet he was an unhappy, very unhealthy man. He had many health problems including depression, an enlarged liver, kidney stones, spleen trouble, hyperacidity, and ulcers that had attacked his stomach and formed lesions. He was so unhealthy, in fact, that after having his second coronary, his doctors sent him home to his Central Park South penthouse apartment in New York City to die. Lester was a man who loved challenges. So, instead of giving up, he decided to go back to the lab within himself and find some answers. Because of his determination and concentration, he was able to cut through his conscious mind to find what he needed. What he found was the ultimate tool for personal growth - a way of letting go of all inner limitations. He was so excited by his discovery that he used it intensively for a period of three months. By the end of that period, his body became totally healthy again. Furthermore, he entered a state of profound peace that never left him through the day he died on January 18, 1994.

Truth as much as a drowning man wants air.” Then what is the transformation after the realization I agree with the *Lester Levenson*’s word:

*“One of the things that happened in this process was my identification with others. I saw we are all related, we are all inter-connected - each mind is like a radio broadcasting and receiving station; that we are all tuned into each other unconsciously - that we are just not aware of it.”*

*Arahant* has no-self therefore “*you are me*”. I think when we consider others as if myself, that is the last and the best transformation we would meet in the process of practice. Thereby, enlightening is not looking saintly in fantastic way but most caring way of other beings. It leads to the state that “*Now*” is the most important time and “*the one who is in front me*” is most important person whosoever. And this is the climax of the causality, I think.

Nowadays, we think the world is fast developing day by day. But, day by day people despise other beings thinking others are inferior to themselves by mostly measuring in materiality. This is not the real development. This is like building the house over and over towards the sky but the down part is decaying and about to break up.

As we know the materiality which consist of earth, water, heat and wind cannot move but with the support of consciousness. If human-beings using materiality ignore other beings’ mind, then this collective mind will move unconsciously finding out the outlet. Earthquakes or Tsunamis cannot arise alone.

Now is the crucial time we should be enlightened into the higher spirituality, thereby the world and the earth is purified. With the caring and respecting others, we can build morality again which will be resulting in total peace for all.

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