

Lecture 06: "The Seven Suitables and the Ten Impediments"

This is only the English version. No translation is permitted inside this document.

In the last lecture, we explored the two levels of mindfulness, the four aspects of Clear Comprehension, and how to observe our body in daily activities. The environment in which the meditator practices meditation seriously influences their progress; hence it should not be underestimated. In this lecture, I suggest a framework that may help you create an environment that supports your meditative efforts and enables you to maintain the right attitude in the face of whatever is happening around you.

Many meditation centers are limited in their facilities, and meditators rarely find the "perfect circumstances" for their practice. A perfect meditation center doesn't exist. Not perfect ourselves, we should become more fully aware of the characteristics of our environment and our relationship to them before and during our practice.#

There are two aspects of the framework which I want to share with you. The first is the "**Seven Suitables**," a list of helpful, practical considerations about one's potential environment when considering a more extended meditation period. The second is the "**Ten Impediments**," a list of ten relationships one may cultivate toward people, things, and even one's abilities, that may unwittingly hinder all meditation progress unless dealt with through the Right Understanding.*

First, I need to bring to your attention the so-called **temperaments**, how some meditation teachers in the centuries after the Buddha's death categorized their students according to their predominant ways of relating to the outside environment and their mind. The Seven Suitables are determined to some degree by knowing about these temperaments.#

Based on these temperaments, teachers would select their students' most appropriate meditation environment (and even meditation practices). There are six main temperaments, commonly explained via three pairs of positive and negative characteristics:

The first pair is ¹**greedy and devoted**. Although it seems irrelevant, upon closer inspection, we may see that ²greed and devotion are based on attachment. In this sense, greed means more "relishing sensual experiences" than "being greedy. And devotion means the acceptance of the teacher's instruction and trust that it may be helpful. "Greed" is the negative manifestation of attachment, and "devotion" is the positive one. It is said that the yogis prominent in devotion also incline toward indulging in pleasant experiences.

¹ This and the other two pairs will appear on the left side of the screen in a very simple list of the three pairs, without numbering.

² Note taking animation:

Greedy – relishing sensual experiences

Devoted – acceptance of the teacher's instruction; trust in the instruction

- both of them are based on attachment.

The second pair is **angry and wise**. ³"Anger" in this context relates to finding fault. At the same time, "wisdom" is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. These two go together because most people with an "angry temperament" are intellectually sharp.

The third pair is **deluded and dreamy**. ⁴Delusion is a lack of knowledge and mindfulness, and daydreaming is a flight of imagination, an escape from reality. Neither can fully appreciate or even attend to the fact around them.*

How Visuddhimagga distinguishes the three pairs of temperaments is remarkably similar to the ancient Indian Ayurveda distinction of three "doshas" - ⁵(1) *vāta* (wind), which corresponds to the greedy/faithful temperament, (2) *pitta* (bile), which corresponds to the angry/wise temperament, and (3) *kapha/semha* (phlegm), which corresponds to the deluded/dreamy temperament.

As I said, this "temperament system" is crucial for helping us get grounded in the Seven Suitables, as you shall see. For most of us, understanding this "temperament system" would take a lot of thought and study, and we would have trouble identifying ourselves as having this or that temperament in particular. The six states of mind arise in different situations and intensities in all of us. Sometimes we feel joyful and behave in a certain way, then become sad or desperate, and change our behavior accordingly. However, if you think you can reflect a particular one of these six temperaments, then *you* may benefit more directly from this classification system.#

The first of the Seven Suitables is the ⁶(1.) **meditation site**. The great manual of meditation teachers, the *Visuddhimagga*, suggests that ⁷those with greedy or devoted

³ Note taking animation:

Angry – finding fault

Wise – distinguishing between right and wrong

Angry <= sharp intellect => Wise

⁴ Note taking animation:

Deluded – lack of knowledge and mindfulness

Dreamy – carried away by imagination

Deluded <= ignorance of reality => Dreamy

⁵ These three will appear as a simple list next to me, but very simple only -

(1) *vāta* (wind) ~ greedy/faithful temperament

(2) *pitta* (bile) ~ angry/wise temperament

(3) *kapha/semha* (phlegm) – deluded/dreamy temperament

As I list these three doshas, this text will clearly appear at the bottom of the screen on a nice background -

You can try out a dosha (prakruti) quiz here - <https://www.joyfulbelly.com/Ayurveda/assessment/Dosha> or also here - http://www.holisticonline.com/ayurveda/w_ayurveda-dtest1.htm .

⁶ The list of Seven Suitables will gradually appear one after another, numbered, covering the left side only for a few (perhaps ten) seconds when I say them. After that the list will not be visible until I mention the other point of the list. Finally the list will look like this:

The Seven Suitables

1. Meditation Site
2. Source of Sustenance
3. Subjects of Talk
4. Person or People (Who We Associate With)
5. Food
6. Climate
7. Meditation Posture

⁷ A picture of an old rotten hut will cover the screen. (A caption above will read: For the Greedy and the Devoted)

temperament will best progress in an old, uncomfortable residence, perhaps with animals creeping in. Environments lacking in comfort only afford one a few opportunities to indulge in sensual pleasure. They, thus, are more likely to cause the meditator to feel the need to meditate ardently. ⁸Conversely, a new, luxurious, comfortable residence is suggested for those meditators of an angry or wise temperament so that they *might not* be busy themselves with finding fault or judging or evaluating a habitable, new residence. Instead, with a comfortable body and mind, they will be more likely to dedicate their time to intense meditation. ⁹People with delusional temperament tend to go where the view is not closed, where the four directions are open and visible. The dreamy temperament is best countered in enclosed environments such as deep caverns screened by woods.*

Although the selection of residences for people of different temperaments seems logical enough, we shouldn't be obsessed about it, since in the scriptures, the Buddha also generally described the characteristics of a good meditation residence. For example, in the ¹⁰***Aṅguttara Nikāya's Senāsana Sutta***, we learn that a monk who has faith in the Buddha, is healthy, honest, energetic, and wise, will progress in his practice best in a residence which is ¹¹(1) at a reasonable distance from the village, where the monk can go for alms-round, (2) peaceful during the day and night, (3) inhabited by few disturbing insects or dangerous animals, (4) providing accessibility to a sufficient amount of robes, food, residence, and medicine, and (5) close to the residence of knowledgeable monks, who can answer questions and dispel doubts.#

Also, the Buddha elsewhere recommended other things to consider regarding one's dwelling place. For example, in the ¹²***Majjhima Nikāya's Vanapattha Sutta***, the Buddha suggests that a monk should not continue residing where he does not progress in his meditation practice, regardless of whether it is in accordance with the above five conditions. On the other hand, he is recommended to stay where his meditation practice progresses well, *regardless of those conditions.**

Suppose you are concerned about finding an appropriate meditation center or site for your practice. Visit several places, stay over a period, and see your progress. If the place looks like it would not endanger your health, if there is enough food and safe lodging, and if there is a teacher who can answer your questions, consider how well you might do in your mindfulness and concentration there. After you arrive, the mind may need several days, or

⁸ A picture of a beautiful, new, luxurious residence will cover the screen. (A caption above will read: For the Angry and the Wise)

⁹ (a) A monk in an open space, on a mountain, overlooking a forest and then (b) another monk in a deep cavern covered by trees. (A caption above will read: For the Deluded and the Dreamy)

¹⁰ *Aṅguttara Nikāya 10. – 2. Nāthavagga – 1. Senāsana Sutta*

¹¹ A simple list on a nice background will cover the screen –
Good Meditator Residence

(1) at a reasonable distance from the village, where the monk can go for alms-round

(2) peaceful during the day and night

(3) inhabited by few disturbing insects or dangerous animals

(4) providing accessibility to a sufficient amount of robes, food, residence, and medicine

(5) close to the residence of knowledgeable monks, who can answer questions and dispel doubts.

¹² *Majjhima Nikāya 17. Vanapattha Sutta*

even weeks, to settle down and become purified from gross defilements, so if you try to make a quick decision, you may make a poor one. Be patient!#

The second of the Seven Suitables is the (II.) **source of sustenance**. For monks, it is the village or town where the monks visit for alms-round. ¹³The journey to that site, the behavior of the people toward a monk, and the kind of food and necessities that a monk receives are worth considering. But this can be extended to anyone who meditates, not just monks. Similar to the first "Suitable" – the meditation site - those of greedy and devoted temperaments are recommended to seek out less comfortable sources of sustenance. The angry and wise would be better off in more comfortable circumstances, and the deluded and dreamy would instead seek their source of nutrition in a crowded, busy environment.

The third of the Suitables is (III.) **subjects to talk about**. The Buddha mentioned thirty-two subjects *not* suitable for discussion. ¹⁴You can see those thirty-two subjects on

¹³ A painting of monks walking on alms-round will cover the screen.

¹⁴ Because there will not be sufficient time to talk about all 32 kinds of speeches, the list will completely cover the screen only for a short while. The viewers may pause the video to read the subjects and think about them.

The Thirty-Two Subjects of Idle-Chatter

1. Kings (Presidents and Governments – Their Abilities)
2. Thieves
3. Ministers of State (Politicians)
4. Armies (Their Abilities)
5. Dangers (Not Related to Present Time and Residence)
6. Wars (Armed conflicts)
7. Food
8. Drink
9. Clothes
10. Beds
11. Flowers
12. Perfumes
13. Relatives (Their character)
14. Vehicles
15. Villages
16. Hamlets
17. Cities
18. Countries
19. Ladies
20. Gentlemen
21. Heroes
22. Roads
23. Talk by the Well
24. The Dead

25. Miscellaneous (Rambling Chitchat)
26. The World (Origin etc. Speculations)
27. Seas (Origin etc. Speculations)
28. Improvement and Decline
29. Travellers
30. Virgin Lads
31. Virgin Maids
32. Water-Carrying Maidens

/1-28 are mentioned in SN 56. *Sacca Saṃyutta* – 1. *Samādhivagga* – 10. *Tiracchānakathā Sutta*, the rest has been probably added from various Commentarial sources. (Translated from the Burmese "*Sukha Hmat-Su*" by Dagon U Htun Myint)/

the screen now, pause the video to look at them closely. We can roughly categorize them as **talking about different kinds of people, places, objects of sensual pleasure, and pseudo [syūdo] -scientific theories.***

Of course, some of these subjects do have to be broached in certain situations. For example, you may need to discuss food ¹⁵if you go to a monastery in a foreign country where you are unfamiliar with the cuisine and have particular health concerns. ¹⁶Or if a guerrilla uprising starts near your monastery, you may need to discuss how to stay safe. So, it's *less* an injunction against ever broaching those "32 subjects" than a warning to ¹⁷**choose our subjects mindfully so that our speech is timely, beneficial, and pleasant.#**

In a number of the Buddha's discourses *throughout the scriptures*, He described ten subjects for talking conducive to the development of wisdom.

The first two -- speech reflecting ¹⁸(1) **minimal desires** and (2) **contentment** -- are closely related. For example, it is common for the human mind to generate many ideas about ¹⁹what to buy or how to improve one's residence, but talking to other meditators about it would only disturb their practice. A mind not used to a calm, peaceful state will try to escape and fall back into its earlier habits. It's beneficial to have a good teacher who is open to discussing what is needed and suggesting how you can stay satisfied with whatever is available; this can help you overcome the escaping maneuvers of your mind and peacefully continue in your practice.

The next two are the pair of (3) **Seclusion** and (4) **Not Associating with the Other Gender**. These are again closely related. The intention is not simply to avoid society altogether and always stay alone.*

It's more about the conditions that enable one to develop wisdom. When returning to or dealing with the community, the meditator can then put the wisdom acquired into practice and share it with others. Discussing these topics may encourage the meditator to appreciate solitary conditions and continue their noble endeavors.

¹⁵ A painting of a typical Burmese dining table filled with various oily and fried curries will cover whole the screen.

¹⁶ A painting of a guerrilla fighter will cover whole the screen.

¹⁷ Appears from the bottom of the screen – Choose your subject of talk mindfully, so that your speech is timely, beneficial, and pleasant.

¹⁸ This will be a numbered list at a side of the screen. Points will appear one after another, finally making up these ten:

Suitable Topics for Talking

1. Minimal Desires
2. Contentment
3. Seclusion
4. Not Associating with the Other Gender
5. Arousing Effort
6. Attainment of Virtue
7. Attainment of Concentration
8. Attainment of Wisdom
9. Attainment of Deliverance
10. Attainment of the Knowledge and Vision of Deliverance

¹⁹ Paintings of people shopping in a shopping mall and then people repairing a house will entirely cover the screen until I finish the sentence.

The next four refer to one's gradual development on the Noble Path.#

(5) **Effort**, which usually grows from faith and the right attitude, supports (6) **virtue**, (7) **concentration**, and thereby attainment of (8) **wisdom**. The final two subjects, (9) **deliverance** and (10) **the experience of it**, are related to the final goals of the Noble Path. **Deliverance** is the purity of the mind from all mental defilement. And **the experience of it** is a complete understanding of mental and physical reality. Speaking about these subjects may inspire others to continue without flagging in developing their wisdom.

Now back to the Seven Suitables. The fourth on the list is the (IV.) **person or people** who we associate with. ²⁰It is related to one's teacher and companions on the Noble Path. From the ²¹*Aṅguttara Nikāya's Vijjā Sutta*, we learn that ²²a good teacher is one who is faithful to the original teaching, virtuous, learned, and experienced in answering and explaining. The Buddha also suggests that the most inspiring teacher has attained the highest level of Enlightenment. But such teachers are rare, and you are probably better off sticking with a helpful and competent teacher who is accessible rather than searching for decades for the perfect teacher who you may never find. If the teacher or your companions disturb you in your practice, drag you into idle chatter, or require too much time, you are better off going elsewhere.

The fifth of the Seven Suitables is (V.) **food**. As I mentioned earlier, food is one of the subjects that are not recommended for discussion; however, if we talk about it in relation to our practice as opposed to its sensual dimension of taste, it can be very beneficial. Ancient scriptures suggest that ²³some people prefer sweet food, some salty, etc., and adhering to their preference supports their meditation practice. Even today, there are people who can stay healthy by eating what they like.

An interesting story worth sharing here is the ²⁴²⁵Dhammapada narrative about Mātika Mātā. She invited monks to receive her support during the three months of rain retreat. The monks explained to her how to meditate, and following that instruction, she soon became Enlightened and acquired the ability of telepathy. Through the supernatural power of telepathy, she learned what foods were the most suitable for the monks and supplied them accordingly. At the end of the Rains, all the monks had attained the ultimate

²⁰ A painting of a monk teaching other monks will cover the screen.

²¹ *Aṅguttara Nikāya 10 - 1. Ānisaṃsavaggo - 10. Vijjā Sutta*

²² A note taking animation -

A Good Teacher

- faithful to the original teaching

- virtuous

- learned

- experienced in answering and explaining

(- has attained the highest level of Enlightenment)

²³ A single painting which consists of six portions, each with a heading at the top, will cover the screen: (1) Sweet – mangoes, (2) Salty – potato soup, (3) Sour – pickled cucumber, (4) Spicy/Hot – chilli paprika, (5) Bitter – bitter gourd, (6) Umami – tomatoes.

²⁴ *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā v. 35 - Aññatarabhikkhuvatthu*

²⁵ A slideshow will contain four pictures – (1) monks talking to a lady in a forest's open space, (2) a lady meditating, (3) a picture of a monk "thinking" of a certain kind of food, (4) a group of monks meditating.

goal of their striving – not directly because of what they ate, of course, but because having their food needs met so appropriately enabled them to meditate with fewer hindrances.

What one likes to eat and what are appropriate food choices may not be the same thing. If you are unsure what you most desire to eat as a sensual pleasure is also best for your body and health, you might consult a doctor or knowledgeable people you trust. If you are inclined toward vegetarian food or if you have any specific dietary needs, it is in your interest to eat accordingly. In most meditation centers, if you explain that your nutritional needs are for health reasons, your request will usually be supported.*

For prospective meditators who wish to travel abroad to meditate – let's say, to a Theravādin country in Southeast Asia – it would be beneficial to read up on the cuisine, as well as recommendations from other foreign yogis who spent time there. For example, ²⁶ you may encounter oily food to which you are not accustomed, with a lot of salt or MSG (monosodium glutamate). Or else it may be pretty spicy or lack what you consider to be a balanced diet. Being proactive about this before you travel is very helpful. You know what you'll probably be experiencing and have a plan which may help you avoid food-related health issues that some foreign yogis encounter abroad. ²⁷ For example, some yogis find it very helpful to pour hot water into certain dishes that contain too much oil, salt, or both. The oil and salt leach into the water, and you can pour the liquid into a different pot and eat the less salty or oily food. In any case, you can always approach your teacher to ask for their help if you experience any difficulties in this regard. **Regardless of wherever you are meditating, what is never advisable is to spend your time criticizing the food.** That will not help *anybody*, least of all yourself, and only serve to destroy whatever peace of mind you had, or could have, acquired.#

The sixth of the Seven Suitables is (VI.) **climate**. It is easy for an unfamiliar climate to hinder our meditation. Especially if you travel abroad to meditate, you may end up in a much more hot and humid place than you are accustomed to. Not all monasteries have fans or air-conditioners, especially more rural sites. As with food, the best advice is to be proactive about this issue and learn as much as possible before traveling. ²⁸ This also relates to clothing because while you must dress appropriately for the climate, you should likewise respect local customs and traditions. Some yogis think it is better to persevere through discomfort rather than use ²⁹ air-conditioners, fans, or even mosquito nets as these are

²⁶ A nice background will cover the screen, and three BnW pencil drawings (A5 portrait and two A6 landscapes) will gradually slide in and cover all of the screen. (1) an A5 pencil drawing of a very oily dish with MSG sprinkled over it will slide from the right side into the left half of the screen. Then (2) an A6 (landscape) pencil drawing of a meal with many chilli paprica will slide from the right halve's bottom and land at the top of the right half. Then (3) an A6 (landscape) pencil drawing of a table with three different fish-dishes will slide from the right halve's bottom and cover the remaining space.

²⁷ A video of pouring water into a curry-pot and then another photo of filtering the curry from the water will cover the screen.

²⁸ A painting of a well-clothed Burmese yogi man and woman.

²⁹ Small paintings of these (A7 portraits) will slide into the screen from the right side as I am talking - (1) air-conditioner, (2) electric fan, (3) mosquito net over a bed. I and my background will be visible, the three pictures will gradually slide in and stay by the right side like watermarks until I stop talking about them. Small paintings of these (A7 portraits) will slide into the screen from the right side as I am talking - (1) air-conditioner, (2)

available. But if they become sick or weak on account of their heroism, what has been gained? I would suggest trying the opposite. The facilities are there for the comfort of the meditators, so they can stay healthy, happy, and energetic in their noble endeavor.

The last of the Suitables is (VII.) **meditation posture**. It refers to the position that enables one to meditate for longer periods with fewer hindrances. We looked at the range of postures in **Lecture 04**.³⁰ Although most meditators prefer a sitting practice, walking practice, or both, there are some meditators who prefer standing or lying, and they progress on the Path just as well. At times, one's choice of posture may be quite restricted, such as for³¹ someone who is confined to a bed for health reasons. Each meditator needs to carefully consider their bodily condition and energy in choosing their meditation posture. Your decision about meditation posture is best made by being realistic and honest about your health and body dispositions.*

Now I'd like to share what are called the Ten Impediments. Like the Seven Suitables, these are *not* simply a list of issues to reject or totally avoid. Instead, we are advised to mindfully observe how they affect our meditation practice, and balance our attitude toward them.#

The first of these is³² (1) **dwelling place**. Even if a meditator has chosen a residence according to his or her temperament, there is a danger of becoming attached to the facilities or even the architecture there. According to the³³ **Atinivāsa Sutta** of **Aṅguttara Nikāya**, residing too long in one place may lead to possessing³⁴ **too many things, too much medicine, undertaking too many duties, inappropriately associating with people, and developing a sense of importance associated with being there.** It is recommended that one

electric fan, (3) mosquito net over a bed. I and my background will be visible, the three pictures will gradually slide in and stay by the right side like watermarks until I stop talking about them.

³⁰ The screen will be covered by a nice background, and then volunteer videos from Lecture 04 will gradually slide in and cover whole the screen – (1) sitting in the half-lotus posture, (2) walking over a Sakhangyi walkpad, (3) standing meditation, (4) lying-down meditation.

³¹ A painting of a sick person lying in the bed, with a thermometer in his/her mouth will cover the screen with a nice effect (not sliding).

³² These will appear in the way the Seven Suitables appeared on the screen. Finally they will make up this list:

Ten Impediments

1. Dwelling
2. Family
3. Gain
4. Class
5. Building
6. Travel
7. Dear Ones (Their Health)
8. Affliction
9. Books
10. Supernormal Powers

³³ *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 5 – 23.(5). *Dīghacārikavagga* – 3. *Atinivāsa Sutta*

³⁴ point by point will randomly appear on the screen in red color

stay somewhere with the *understanding* that one could leave at any time, and without concerns, based on how their meditation practice is proceeding.

³⁵A *Visuddhimagga* story about a monk staying in a famous village monastery in Sri Lanka called **Thūpārāma**. He was satisfied there, even though he didn't receive rich support from the villagers, perhaps because it was where a number of Relics of the previous four Buddhas were enshrined. A friend-monk of his once came for a visit from a forest monastery and was distressed upon seeing the unfortunate life of his friend. So he invited the village monk to his forest monastery, where monks were abundantly supported. At first, the village monk agreed, but he also noticed how easily his more well-off friend became attached even to the meager offerings given by the villagers, which caused him to doubt the wisdom of going away to the forest monastery. The forest monk became abashed at his attachments in the face of the simplicity of the village monk and suggested that maybe his friend was better off just staying where he was after all.

The second possible impediment may be one's (2) **family**. In **Lecture 02**, I mentioned that respecting one's parents is important and part of the Right Attitude. Here, the issue is related to family responsibilities. If meditators choose a meditation site mainly to conform to their family's wishes or to remain involved with family concerns, this obviously will create hindrances in their meditation practice.*

³⁶A story related to this point describes a monk who left his family for a long time. Eventually, his teacher suggested that he returns home. When he arrived, his family didn't even recognize him, and even though his relatives cared for him as a monk for three months, he didn't mention how he was related to them, and the family *still* hadn't recognized him by the time he left. This story illustrates how he had substituted *the attachment to his relatives* with an equanimous, balanced, compassionate attitude toward all living beings. Maybe it will serve as an inspiration for you someday!#

The third impediment is (3) **gain**; in a sense used here, it is an issue most related to monastics. Monks depend on the donations of laypeople. ³⁷If they reside in a very isolated place, there may be too few people, and thus too little support, to sustain them. The danger here is that instead, ³⁸they choose a residence in a more populated area with generous donations and become attached to that sense of security to follow people around to different monasteries and villages whenever invited mainly to amass more gain. In that case, the monk should recognize the attachments he has formed and *leave* that place to

³⁵ A slideshow of 4 pictures will cover the screen – (1) a picture of a well-dressed monk (with robes covering both shoulders), but with hair just one centimeter long, sweeping sandy yard in front of a large white pagoda, (2) one more monk with fully shaven head will appear coming toward the first monk from a side of the picture, (3) the second monk will appear alone on the picture with a walking stick, oil tube, and a bag for shoes in his hands, (4) the picture no.1 will simply appear again.

³⁶ A slideshow of two paintings will cover the screen: (1) a monk walking alone in the forest and then (2) a monk on alms-round receiving food in his alms-bowl from people (his parents) in front of their house.

³⁷ A painting of a monk on an almsround in a village of scarce population.

³⁸ A painting of a monk on an alms round with many, many people waiting to donate to the monk.

settle in an environment where he can live sustained just enough by the local population and thus meditate more seriously.

The next impediment is (4) **class**, which in this sense means one's students, whether the teacher is lay or monastic. ³⁹Although monks are obliged to teach Dhamma to laypeople, it is possible to take up a retreat in seclusion for several months or even years, intending to share their realized Dhamma later. ⁴⁰The grandfather of Burmese meditation retreats, Ledi Sayadaw, suggested that no teaching should occur during an intensive meditation retreat. Conversely, some people learn a lot from sharing their knowledge and experience. In the ancient scriptures, we find some cases where monks attained enlightenment by ⁴¹discussing Dhamma and meditation practice. If the number of a teacher's students grows too large and their teaching duties become too time-consuming, they may need to take a break *for their* intensive meditation retreat.

There is a related story in the ⁴²**Dhammapada** about a monk who memorized all the Buddha's teachings and helped hundreds of monks attain the highest Enlightenment. Yet he was addressed by the Buddha as "empty" because he didn't even rise to the level of his students in his own practice. Embarrassed, the great teacher left his teaching vocation to retreat into forest seclusion, fulfilling the ultimate goal only then.

The next impediment, called (5) **building**, here means more than just the structure of one's residence; it concerns the entire monastic environment. ⁴³When lay people visit a monastery, they donate financial support or material resources for building a new monastic residence or facility for the welfare of the residents, helpers, and visitors. Engaging in such projects is considered a meritorious undertaking, and the benefits can be enormous. More comfortable and newer facilities are beneficial for helpers and visitors. For the monks, *less stressed visitors* enable more time for Dhamma teaching and support, provide quieter places for resting and practice, etc.*

There are other projects that monastics and dedicated lay followers may undertake as well, ⁴⁴such as writing books, leading courses of meditation and scriptural studies, providing humanitarian support for children, the sick, or old people, and even creating a safe environment for animals. All these are most commendable and worthy efforts. However, like

³⁹ A slideshow of two paintings – (1) a painting of a monk teaching Dhamma to lay people, it is then "pushed" outside of the screen by a painting of a monk who meditates alone under a tree.

⁴⁰ A photo of Ledi Sayadaw will cover the screen together with the years of his birth and death.

⁴¹ *Dhammapada v. 282 – Tucchapoṭṭhilavatthu*

⁴² A changing picture will cover the screen. (1) a picture of a monk with a cloud of many books close to his head (to signify he has memorized them), (2) the cloud will disappear and only the contour (line) of the monk's body will be visible (to signify he is "empty"), (3) the monk will appear meditating under a tree.

⁴³ A painting of kneeling lay people (in colorful clothes) as they donate an envelop to a kappiya (lay person, in white clothes) right in front of a sitting monk. (The picture will cover whole screen.)

⁴⁴ Six photos will cover the screen in a nice mozaic, or evenly distributed like a table: (1) photo of wax Mingun Sayadaw in his Mingun monastery in Sagaing, (2) Sayadaw U Tejaniya with his students in Shwe Oo Min Tawya, (3) Ven. Paññāvaṃsa as he teaches his novices in Shwe Oo Min Tawya, (4) ven. Uttarasāra with his children of the humanitarian school, (5) ven. Uttamasāra from Thabarwa Yeikthar among the beds of the old people in the hospital building, (6) ven. Uttarasāra close to a group of animals in his animal shelter.

the issues of the previous impediment – class - if even these noble undertakings become too time-consuming, one may choose to (temporarily) withdraw from them for one's own meditation retreat. The mind can then develop more profound wisdom, improve its ability to remain equanimous and loving and deal better with anger, stress, and other negative emotions that may arise when involved in those other undertakings.#

The sixth point is (6) **travel**. From the two ⁴⁵*Dīghacārika Suttas* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, we learn that too-lengthy wandering may be ⁴⁶a hindrance to learning the Buddha's teachings, achieving meditative attainments, making Good Friends, and the ability to maintain one's health. Conversely, taking a journey for a reasonable amount of time and reasonable distances may bring about the opposite – ⁴⁷support in learning the Buddha's teachings, achieving meditative attainments, making Good Friends, and staying healthier.

⁴⁸The Buddha, Himself, is reported to have traveled a lot, but He would stay as long as a few months in different places to teach Dhamma to the local population and provide inspiration. In the spirit of the Middle Path, neither the extreme of *traveling too much* nor *residing too long in one place* are conducive to our progress, and each person should decide for themselves what is best in this regard, in accordance with their own practice.

The seventh of the Impediments is (7) **close relatives and companions on the Path**; what is meant here is their ⁴⁹illness, namely illness of one's monastic teacher, companions, students and relatives. If they are sick, we should treat them with care and medicine so they get healthy as soon as possible. The illness of our relatives and companions may cause worry and anxiety in our minds, disturbing our meditation practice. Therefore, treating them is the solution to the worry and thereby for the impediment of their illness. The duty of treating somebody can be understood as the opportunity to reflect on the reality of one's body and mind regarding another person's situation. Loving-kindness practice, meditating on death, and reflecting on the thirty-two parts of the body can improve thanks to caring for the patient.

The next, (8) **affliction**, is similar to the previous, but here it refers to one's own health. Many meditators are unaware of the importance of health in their practice. However, poor health can be a significant impediment to our practice, and the Buddha was clear that we should try to maintain our health and avoid sickness and injury when possible. And if we get sick or injured, we may appreciate the advice of the Buddha in the ⁵⁰*Aṅguttara Nikāya's Gilāna Sutta* - even as we are being treated, to use our present

⁴⁵ *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 5 – 23.(5). *Dīghacārikavagga* – 1.-2. *Dīghacārika Sutta*

⁴⁶ each point will randomly appear on the screen in red color

⁴⁷ each point will randomly appear on the screen in green color

⁴⁸ A slideshow of two paintings – (1) a painting of the Buddha walking by a forest path and (2) a painting of the Buddha giving Dhamma talk to lay people.

⁴⁹ A slideshow of three paintings – (1) a picture of a sick monk on a bed. (No thermometer.); (2) a picture of a monk nursing the sick monk. (3) a picture of the two monks meditating in a forest, together.

⁵⁰ *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 5 – 3.(13.) *Gilānavagga* – 1. *Gilāna Sutta*

circumstances as an opportunity to meditate on the ⁵¹**unattractiveness of the body, the reality of consumed food, non-delight in the entire world, impermanence in all conditioned phenomena, and the perception of death.**

The ninth Impediment is (9) **books**, specifically memorizing important Buddhist texts. ⁵²Memorizing scriptures is considered very important to understanding the text in them, and the monks and nuns who dedicate themselves to this task greatly serve all meditators in preserving the original words and meaning. The great monks of times past and present who humbled themselves to memorize thousands of pages of scriptures have always advocated the great value in doing so. Some scholars would appreciate certain texts more if they memorized them, as by doing so, they would grasp connections and find details that otherwise escape them.*

On the other hand, **memorizing requires enormous time, perseverance, and planning.** It is not easy to meditate in those circumstances. The great meditation manual, the *Visuddhimagga*, suggests that one should have no attachment whatsoever to one's accomplishment in memorizing even numerous scriptures and other texts. Otherwise, one may develop a conceit that they *know more than others* or even more than their teacher. If that conceit arises, it should be identified, analyzed, and mindfully observed *without attachment* until it disappears.#

Finally, there is the Impediment of (10) **supernormal powers.** ⁵³Also known as psychic powers, psychic potency, and spiritual powers, the Buddha commonly discusses these abilities even in the oldest strata of Buddhist scripture. In just one of a myriad such passages, the Buddha says: ⁵⁴**"Bhikkhus, to whatever extent I wish, I wield the various kinds of spiritual powers: having been one, I become many; having been many, I become one; I appear and vanish; I go unhindered through a wall, through a rampart, through a mountain as though through space; I dive in and out of the earth as though it were water; I walk on water without sinking as though it were earth; seated cross-legged, I travel in space like a bird; with my hand, I touch and stroke the moon and sun so powerful and mighty."***

Although supernormal powers are commonly mentioned throughout the scriptures, including exact instructions on how to attain them, they are not necessary for the attainment of deep wisdom; and a number of monks who attained the ultimate goal of the

⁵¹ These will appear one after another, floating in random places at the lower part of the screen, perhaps in white color. Only the text will appear, with the background of the main video.

⁵² A painting of many young Burmese novices memorizing texts from books.

⁵³ A picture of a monk walking in the air, high above a plain grassland.

⁵⁴ This text will cover whole screen as I am reading it. Below the text the citation will be mentioned: "The Connected Discourses of the Buddha – Translation of Saṃyutta Nikāya", Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, Boston; p.673 (*Saṃyutta Nikāya* 16.9. *Jhānābhiniñña Sutta*)

Noble Path, such as the Venerable Susīma, possessed none of them.⁵⁵⁵⁶ On the other hand, the chief villain of the Buddhist scriptures, Devadatta, possessed them, but because of his evil actions, they did him no good as he, upon death, reappeared in a nether world. The desire to attain supernatural powers is considered of a lower grade than making genuine efforts to free oneself from mental defilements. The **attachment** to meditative absorptions and the **conceit** that arises from acquiring supernatural abilities is detrimental to the Noble Path. It is, therefore, recommended to develop meditative absorptions only for the sake of purifying the mind; worldly powers may be a natural by-product of high meditative attainments but should never be our focus.#

In the next lecture, we will dig deep into the **Five Hindrances** - the notorious obstacles on the path of meditation - and various ways to deal with them.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ A slideshow of two paintings will cover the screen – (1) Devadatta on a mountain ready to hurl a stone at the Buddha below, (2) Devadatta swallowed by the earth.

⁵⁶ Mention the full reference at the bottom of the screen – "Devadatta's attainment of jhana is mentioned in Jatakaṭṭhakathā – Jātaka no.10, Sukhavihārijātakavaṇṇanā"

⁵⁷ At the end of the Lecture, before acknowledgements, the screen will be all covered by a black background and over that this text will appear in white for 10 seconds -

The manner in which Visuddhimagga distinguishes the three pairs of temperaments is remarkably similar to the ancient Indian Ayurveda distinction of three "*doshas*" -

- (1) *vāta* (wind), which corresponds to the greedy/faithful temperament,
- (2) *pitta* (bile), which corresponds to the angry/wise temperament, and
- (3) *kapha/semha* (phlegm), which corresponds to the deluded/dreamy temperament.

You can try out a *dosha* (*prakruti*) quiz here -

<https://www.joyfulbelly.com/Ayurveda/assessment/Dosha>

or also here -

http://www.holisticonline.com/ayurveda/w_ayurveda-dtest1.htm .

VIDEO MEDITATION COURSE - MEDITATION IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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- Lecture 10: The Four Bases of Success and the Five Controlling Faculties.
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The 62 Meditation Practices and the Lectures Where They Are Explained

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