

CHAPTER FOUR

INSTRUCTION ON WALKING MEDITATION

VIPASSANA MEDITATION PRACTICE can be accomplished adopting various postures, standing, sitting, walking, eating, lying, etc. It can be practiced at anytime. The most common postures are sitting and walking. People usually start with sitting and alternate it with walking.

Unlike sitting, in walking meditation you keep your eyes open. This is closer to how we would be doing in our working life. If you master walking meditation, you will find it easier to apply it to your working day and thereby improve general awareness in daily life.

Similar to choosing breathing in and out as our primary object, the primary object in walking is the movement of our feet, lifting and placing. Contemplating lifting as we lift our foot off the ground and placing as we place it on the ground. However, we must not look at our feet. We look straight ahead and downward at an angle of 40 degrees or three meters. This is to help us avoid the obligation of making any eye contact with other people. If we look straight down we may become dizzy and be unable to develop concentration (*samadhi*). If we look too far ahead, we will not be able to develop contemplation, as there will be many distractions.

The hands may be clasped together either in front or at the back, or folded in front of the chest. They must not swing by the sides.

You then walk slowly, much slower than usual speed, noting *lifting, placing, lifting, placing*, until you reach the end. Now stop, noting *stopping, stopping*. Turn back, observing *turning, turning, turning*. Stand for a while to make a mental note of *standing, standing, standing*. Then start walking again noting, *lifting* and *placing*. At the beginning, the distance must not be less than ten paces or more than thirty. It is preferred that one chooses to make between 20-30 paces if possible. If it is too short, your mind will tend to wander and you may feel frustrated. If it is too long, you will have difficulty developing concentration.

After walking like this back and forth, for about five or six rounds, you add another primary object — *lifting, forward, placing*, while walking. Then as you are about to turn, you note the intention to turn; *intention, intention, intention*. Turning and standing should be observed as described earlier. However, this time before you lift your feet, please note intention to do so saying in mind; *intention, intention, intention* — and then proceed with *lifting, forward* and *placing*. In other words, at this stage, in addition to "*lifting, forward and placing*", you have to add "*intention to turn and intention to lift your feet*". The intention to turn and the intention to lift your feet are mental objects, "*lifting, forward and placing*" are physical objects.

If during your walking you hear a sound that has become so overwhelming, you stop and note; *hearing, hearing, hearing* three or four times. Likewise, if a numbness or pain develops and become very dominant, stop walking for a while and note it three or four times. If a thought enters your mind and becomes so prominent, stop your steps for short while

and note; *thinking, thinking, thinking* and then continue the walking. The speed at which you walk is decided by you to suit your own need. You will discover your own pacing just as you make an effort to discover your correct posture in sitting. Ways to observe sensations and thoughts are almost the same as in sitting meditation. However, one does not contemplate seeing what is on the path. Instead, keep bare attention on the movements of the feet as the primary object. Some find walking meditation easier. People should be encouraged to do it more as it is the first step towards achieving general mindfulness in daily life. Walking meditation helps to balance many things, including blood circulation and the attentiveness of the mind.

As concentration improves, there comes a time when one should begin to increase observing the moving of the feet in more details. Nevertheless, to avoid pressure of having to cope with too much detail before one is ready for it; one should only increase in observing movements in detail with the approval of the teacher. The teacher would advise when one should indeed direct the mind from merely focusing on the walking to focusing on things of a more investigative nature.