

The Ten Imperfections of Insight (vipassanupakilesas):

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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)