

Anusāsani Pātihāri: The Miracle of Instruction in the Bojjhaṅga-sutta and the Girimānanda-sutta

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The original non-mystical, non-metaphysical content of the Buddhist discourses is very clear. It is emphasized in the *Kevaḍḍha-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*. However, a contradiction of it is seen in the present day popular belief among some Buddhists in Sri Lanka that there is a special supernatural power immanent in certain discourses in their *paritta* form. This article attempts to locate the origin of this belief and also the belief in cleansing and fasting preparations obligatory on the beneficiaries-to-be of the *paritta* recitations. It also suggests that the real curative potency is in the meditation technique given in the *Bojjhaṅga-paritta* and the *Girimānanda-sutta*.

The Buddha's method of delivering a discourse had the characteristic of awakening in the listener the knowledge of the real nature of existence. The method aimed at urging the listener to understand the human predicament well and the nature of the empirical world. The efficacy of applying the four noble truths to one's own individual discontent, and, seeing the cause of it clearly, are implied. Knowing and seeing the cause of discontent, suffering or unsatisfactoriness lead to the eradication of the cause which conduces to a state of calm and peace. Lastly, the detailed way to achieve that peace is also given in many a discourse.

The Buddha's approach to human affliction was holistic. His teaching was not a piece-meal, temporary *ad hoc* patch up job with the objective of getting over the existing pain or grief but comprehending totally one's own experience, seeing it as a recurrent mind-body affliction and effecting an eradication of that affliction. Needless to say, the Buddha had boundless resources of *mettā*, *karunā*, *muditā* and *upekkhā*, besides empathy with the sufferings of the 'many folk'. As he told his first disciples: "Walk, monks, on tour for the blessings of the many folk, for the happiness of the many folk, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the blessings, the happiness of *devas* and men."¹ He reached out even to the severely mentally traumatized, like Patācārā and Kisāgotami. He was even able to transform the mind of a serial killer, Aṅgulimāla, in whom perception of reality had gone hay wire and even helped him along the path of sainthood, with nothing more than the rational discourse of *anusāsani pātihāri*. We must also note here that in many of

his discourses he advocated solitude and meditation for bringing about tranquility, necessary for the attainment of a wholesome state of mind, an essential condition for the attainment of intense one-pointed-concentration to reach final liberation.

When Kevaḍḍha² requested the Buddha to display his psychic powers by performing miracles in public in order to win more and more converts, the Buddha declined to do so. He explained to Kevaḍḍha that there were three kinds of miracles to his knowledge, all of which he was able to perform: *Iddhi vidha* (psychic powers), *desanā pātihāri* (the miracle of telepathy) and *anusāsani Pātihāri* (the miracle of instruction). The latter, the Buddha said, he considered the noblest and what he valued most of all which he regularly employed in his interaction and interventions in society for the sake of bringing relief and ultimate liberation to people.

The Buddha further elaborated to Kevaḍḍha that if he displayed his psychic powers in public and if someone seeing his powers were to relate it to another, that person, if he is a cynic, might say “Sir, there is the Gandhāra charm by which such miracles are performed”. If, on the other hand, he displayed his powers of telepathy and if someone seeing it were to go and relate it to another, a person who was a skeptic, he might say “Sir, such things are possible with the Maṇika charm”

Continuing, the Buddha said “And what is the miracle of instruction? Here, Kevaḍḍha, a monk gives instructions as follows: “Consider in this way, do not consider in that; direct your mind this way, not that way; give up that, and gain this and persevere in it. This, Kevaḍḍha, is called the miracle of instruction.”

This method of altering someone’s perceptions resembles a technique used in psycho-therapy practised today by counselors and psychologists called ‘cognitive therapy’. It is a method whereby the mind’s distorted perceptions can be altered through a series of structured rational dialogues between the counselor and the client.

There is also evidence in the Buddhist canon that the Buddha allowed his disciples to use some of his discourses in the form of *paritta*, that is, protective recitations for the purpose of warding off evil influences or bringing about a cure of an illness. These *paritta* recitations are, among others, *Ratana-sutta*, *Karaṇīyametta-sutta*, *Khandhaparitta*, *Moraparitta*, *Dhajaggaparitta*, the *Aṅgulimālaparitta*, *Āṭānāṭṭiya-sutta*, *Girimānanda-sutta* and the *Bojjhaṅgaparitta*.

There is a strong popular belief in the magical properties of *pirit* chanting among Buddhists in Sri Lanka. E.R. Sarchchandra was one of the earliest Sri Lankan scholars to focus on the ‘magical’ elements of the folk religion that had been absorbed by Buddhism without altering the spirit of The Buddha’s teaching. In his anthropological study, *The Folk Drama of Ceylon*, he states, “The institution of *pirit* is one of the more conspicuous examples of a ceremony of a magical nature being absorbed by Buddhism. The *suttas* used for this purpose exist in the Pāli canon itself, and this makes it likely that in some form, the practice of reciting them for benedictory purpose began in India.”³

It is popularly believed by some Sri Lankan Buddhists that the *Bojjhaṅga paritta* recitations have a miraculous power. It is believed that the sick are cured through listening to the chanting of these *paritta* recitations. It is explained that the cure lies in the way the words are put together and the way their sound vibrations carry and by the fact that these words were uttered by the Buddha himself from his blessed lips (*siri mukhayen*, in Sinhala), words invested with the Buddha’s extraordinary powers (*anubhavayen*, in Sinhala). To the present writer, there is a discrepancy in this believed- in miraculous power invested in words on the one hand and the Buddha’s statement made to Kevaḍḍha. To the latter, the Buddha stated very clearly that he believed only in *anusāsani pāṭihāri*, the miracle of instruction. Since the instruction is enshrined in the *Bojjhaṅga*, there is really no need to go looking in it for miraculous sounds and vibrations. The Buddha’s non-mystical, non-metaphysical stand is too well known to be ignored.

The focus of this article is *anusāsani pāṭihāri* and its relationship to the *Bojjhaṅga paritta* and the *Girimānanda-sutta*. The former is based on the seven factors of enlightenment which contains an advanced meditation exercise given to a disciple who is on the brink of attaining enlightenment. We can assume, therefore, that the advanced meditator’s mind is developed and quick. This *sutta* appears in the *Samyutta-nikāya*⁴ as an exposition of the seven factors of enlightenment which is a meditation exercise that should be practised. In the same *Bojjhaṅgasamyutta* section, the discourse on the seven factors of enlightenment discussed above appears again⁵ recited by the Buddha for Ven. Mahā Kassapa who was ill and in great pain. At the end of the Buddha’s recitation, Ven. Mahā Kassapa was released from the pain and the illness. Immediately after that discourse, in the text, there is the same *sutta* recited⁶ by the Buddha, this time for Ven. Mahā Moggallāna who was ill and undergoing a great deal of pain and at the end of the recitation he, too, was relieved of the illness and the pain. After this the same *sutta* appears again in the text⁷ recited this time by Ven.

Mahācūṇḍa, at the request of the Buddha, when he himself was ill and undergoing a great deal of pain, and likewise, the Buddha too was relieved of the pain and the illness at the end of the recitation.

It is significant that the *Bojjhaṅga Paritta[s]* were recited for two *arahants* by the Buddha and on a third occasion by an *arahant* for the Buddha. The reason is obvious. The meditation on the seven factors of enlightenment can be accomplished only by an *arahant*. Therefore, what is being suggested here is that the cure of the illness would have come about through the actual engagement in that meditation.

We learn from these *paritta* recitations that *arahants* do experience physical pain like any other human being. It is the psychological component of fear, (*bhaya*) and grief and despair (*domanassūpāyasā*) which originate from the defilements of *taṇhā* (craving), *māna* (conceit of the ego concept) *diṭṭhi* (wrong view). All these defiling characteristics an *arahant* does not possess for he has reached the end of craving. They do not have clinging to the mind-body aggregates and to the life continuum. So, why, we may ask, is an *arahant* unable at times to surmount physical pain through meditation and attain *saññāvedayita nirodha* which he would have experienced so many times before? What follows here is an attempt to answer this question.

The three *paritta* recitation set out, are three identical meditation exercises, (*kammaṭṭhāna*), called the seven factors of Enlightenment. This is the most advanced meditation exercise that enables a meditator to exit the round of existence. When Ven. Mahākassapa was sick and undergoing great pain the Buddha visited him and having put several questions to him about the excruciating pain he was undergoing, recited the meditation exercise with which Ven. Mahākassapa was, no doubt, already familiar. A *kammaṭṭhāna* is not given for its ‘magical potency’ but to be put into practice. However, it still remains unanswered why the Buddha had to give the *kammaṭṭhāna* to Ven. Mahākassapa who was already familiar with it and, furthermore, one who had practised it and ‘gone to the other shore’. Perhaps the answer is that the Buddha recited the *sutta* so that Ven. Mahākassapa hearing it could follow it mindfully and swiftly concentrating on the various mental events prescribed in the exercise, focus mindfully (*satisambojjhaṅga*) on the meditation object of the *kammaṭṭhāna*, i.e., the pain. Then investigating it, trace it to its point of arising, delving deep into the experience (*dhammavicayasambojjhaṅga*), and persevering with energy (*viriyasambojjhaṅga*) thereby surmount the physical phenomena just as a sea gull would take off from the shore and ascend into the sky of peerless clarity and painlessness, experiencing sheer rapture, (*pītisambojjhaṅga*)

and tranquility, (*passaddhisambojjhaṅga*). From here results one pointed concentration (*samādhisambojjhaṅga*) and equanimity (*upekkhāsambojjhaṅga*). With the achieving of these steps in the meditational exercise, (in which we can recognize the cognitive events and states of consciousness) we are led to believe that the illness abated. It is almost as if the recitation provided the necessary gentle nudge or stimulus to fasten the mind on the steps in the meditation exercise. In other words it was an induced meditation exercise to a certain extent.

It is also most likely that the Buddha's powerful thoughts of *mettā* and *karunā* would have had a tranquilizing effect on Ven. Mahākassapa's mind – body interaction, making it relaxed and suitably conditioned to start the meditation. The Buddha also recited the identical *Bojjhaṅgaparitta* to Mahāmoggallāna and when the Buddha himself was suffering from a painful illness, he requested Mahācunda to recite the *paritta* for him.

The word *bojjhaṅga* means constituents of enlightenment. As these constituents are seven in number, they are often referred to as *Sattabojjhaṅga*. As the *sattabojjhaṅga* here is employed as a *paritta*, and that meditation exercise is an exclusive preserve of *arahants*, it appears to be a form of induced meditation on the seven factors of enlightenment whereby the patient, already a perfected one and familiar with its practice, is gently coerced into practising it by listening to it being chanted. It is like helping the ailing *arahant* to go on a mind-body tour, as it were, with penetrative concentration. The Buddha believed that one must effect one's own release by oneself and that the *tathgata[s]* are there only to show the way as the stanza goes: “*Tumhehi kiccam ātappam, akkhātro tathāgata*”

The *Bojjhaṅga-sutta* asserts that the insight provided by the meditation when focused on pain (penetrating deep into that experience very thoroughly, like a laser beam, perhaps, penetrating into the physical and mental phenomena of the mind-body interaction) does the work of reducing the pain and curing the illness connected with the pain.

Today, the *Bojjhaṅgaparitta-sutta* is recited to the sick in the devout belief that merely listening to the recitation itself has a therapeutic effect in the way the words are put together and pronounced to produce a particular sound and vibration which is thereby invested with a certain magical power. Perhaps tranquility is attained thereby, but whether the root cause of pain can be eradicated by merely listening to the chanting is the question. When the *Bojjhaṅga* is recited as a miraculous curing device it seems to miss the focus of the meditation exercise for which it

was, no doubt, originally meant. If the original intention of the exercise is adhered to as a *kammaṭṭhāna*, pure and simple, it becomes a dynamic instrument of therapy. But only an *arahant* can achieve that. The following is a translation of the *Bojjhaṅga*, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment:

On one occasion, the Blessed one was dwelling at Rājagah, in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrel’s Sanctuary. Now, on that occasion, the Venerable Mahākassapa was dwelling in the Pippali Grove, sick, afflicted, gravely ill. Then, in the evening, the Blessed One emerged from seclusion and approached the Venerable Mahākassapa. He sat down in the appointed seat and said to the Venerable Mahākassapa:

“I hope you are bearing up, Kassapa, I hope you are getting better. I hope that your painful feelings are subsiding and not increasing, and that their subsiding, not their increase, is to be discerned.”

“Venerable Sir, I am not bearing up, I am not getting better: Strong, painful feelings are increasing in me, not subsiding, and their increase, not their subsiding, is to be discerned.”

“These seven factors of enlightenment, Kassapa, have been rightly expounded by me; when developed and cultivated, they lead to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. What seven? The enlightenment factor of mindfulness has been rightly expounded by me; when developed and cultivated, it leads to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna ...the enlightenment factor of equanimity has been rightly expounded by me; when developed and cultivated, it leads to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. These seven factors of enlightenment, Kassapa, have been rightly expounded by me; when developed and cultivated, they lead to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

“Surely, Blessed One, they are factors of enlightenment! Surely, Fortunate One, they are factors of enlightenment!”

This is what the Blessed One said. Elated, the Venerable Mahākassapa delighted in the Blessed One’s statement. And the Venerable Mahākassapa recovered from the illness. In such a way the Venerable Mahākassapa was cured of his illness.

The popular belief puts aside the deeper meaning of the *Bojjhaṅga* meditation in favour of a supernatural interpretation of its effectiveness in direct contradiction to the Buddha's words in the *Kevaḍḍha-sutta*. This kind of belief is no doubt embedded in the Sri Lankan folk culture. Such beliefs in 'yantra mantra' (occult practices) are to be found in the Vedas and the *Brahmaṇas*. It is not unlikely that they had a direct influence on Sinhalese folk culture which reflects many aspects of *brahmanic* Indian cultural beliefs. In the Yajurveda, for instance, instructions are set down for the performance of rites and rituals strictly according to certain prescribed ways of performing them. It was thought that the gods were rendered helpless by the performance of such rites and rituals and thereby the *brahmaṇa* priests exalted themselves above the Vedic gods they were supplicating at first and later manipulating.⁸

No doubt the *Bojjhaṅgaparitta* when recited according to the traditional tenets of oral recitation has a tranquilizing effect. It may even effect a faith cure depending on the extent of the patient's faith and the power of the reciter's thoughts of *mettā* and *karuṇā*. Beyond that, on rational grounds, we have to admit that belief in the miraculous potency invested in mere physical phenomena such as verbalized sounds fall into the category of mysticism which the Buddha and early Buddhism consistently eschewed. There is nothing metaphysical in the Buddha's core doctrines of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, *idappaccayatā* and *anatta* as expressed in statements such as Assaji's to Sāriputta related in the *Mahāvagga* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.⁹

*Ye dhammāhetuppabhavā
Tesaṃ hetu tathāgata āha
Tesañ ca yo nirodho
Evam vādi Mahāsamaṇo*

Those things which proceed from a cause,
Of these the Truth Finder has told the cause
And that which is their stopping – the great recluse
Has such a doctrine.

And, of course, the famous declaration in the *Mahāatañhāsankhaya-sutta*, D.I.

*Imasmim sati idam hoti
Imassa uppādā idam uppajjhati
Imasmim asati idam na hoti
Imassa nirodho idam nirujjhati*¹⁰

When this exists, that comes to be
 With the arising of this, that arises
 When this does not exist, that does not come to be
 With the cessation of this, that ceases.

These statements clearly indicate Early Buddhism's non-metaphysical stand.

Perhaps a short elaboration on this point is not out of place here. The above statements refer to the doctrine of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* and the unsubstantial, transient nature of all component things, particularly focusing on the five aggregates of clinging, their interdependence, impermanence and the absence of any abiding essence in them. These doctrines are central to the Buddhist philosophy and are discussed exhaustively in the texts. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* demonstrates causality and conditionedness of all material and mental phenomena. It is apparent that the causal sequence is a ceaseless circuit of the five aggregates of clinging.¹¹ A great deal of light is shed on the doctrine of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* when the process of cognition is discerned in it very clearly, for then, with the starting point of the circuit in ignorance, synonymous with unsatisfactoriness, (*dukkha*) the succession of mental events therefrom, conditioned by internal and external forces that lead to unwholesome states of mind and physical acts, can be comprehended experientially and empirically through insight meditation and extra-sensory perception. Buddhism does not concern itself with concepts of the transcendent, mysticism or metaphysics, speculation, logic, inference or even reason. It is concerned with what can be known experientially and is wholly concerned with psychology and ethics which underlie the path to the goal, Nibbāna. To that extent it is pragmatic. As the Buddha said, he does not teach anything other than *dukkha* and how to attain liberation from it.

Ongoing medical research into the human mind-body from the 1950's has revealed the fact that meditation reduces stress and has a therapeutic effect on the mind-body organism¹². It is also known to medical science through research that meditation can achieve the astonishing feat of controlling respiration to a level where the meditator requires very little oxygen enabling such a yogi to be sealed up in a box for several hours. The ability to control body temperature is how half naked yogis are able to withstand the perishing cold of dizzy Himalayan heights as they meditate in a half squatting posture at the edge of steep cliffs for several hours. These are facts brought to light through recent medical research. This is clear evidence of the power of mind over matter.¹³

More relevant to our subject here of the effects of meditation, particularly insight meditation, on reducing pain, are the latest research finding published in the *Science Daily of April 5, 2011*, the Journal of Neuroscience¹⁴. It states that meditation produces powerful pain-relieving effects in the brain.

We found a big effect – about a 40 per cent reduction in pain intensity and a 57 per cent pain reduction in pain unpleasantness. Meditation produced a greater reduction in pain than even morphine or other pain-relieving drugs which typically reduce pain ratings by about 25 per cent.¹⁵

Now, let us see where the belief in the miraculous power of words and their vibrations come. Raimunda Panikkar takes great pains to explain the Vedic belief regarding this subject.¹⁶ He says that in the recitation of the Sma Veda the sounds of words, their specific syllables and their vibrations produce a miraculous power. He says fasts and other austerities have to be undertaken beforehand or during participation in a recitation. Participation implies an integral participation in the total act of prayer, not only gods and men but the whole world, whole creation. According to the instructions laid down in the Sma Veda, “The Entire Universe vibrates at the sound of an authentic prayer. All is interconnected and then the fasting of the body is related to the cleansing of the mind for only a clean mind can sustain a bodily fast...The recitation belongs to the very nature of the Vedic Word which is actualized in the sound vibrations. The sacramental character of the word is seen in its necessary connection with sound as its physical element. The *śruti* indeed needs to be heard”¹⁷

Panikkar further explains the Vedic interpretation of speech as personified in the goddess Vac:

The origin and place, the locus, of the Word is prayer, the sacred formula, the brahmaṇa priest or Brahman, the spirit. The Word is not only sound, not only idea and intelligibility, it is also action, spirit, the unique word permeating everything. This is the right and the deepest theological or philosophical question. Metaphysics and Linguistic analysis meet in Vāc¹⁸

At another place, Panikkar says “The *Brāhmaṇas* are fascinated, one might almost say obsessed, by the position and function of the word. They are never far from ascribing to it a magic power and on occasion they virtually do so...”¹⁹

There is no doubt that the Buddha did set aside certain *brāhmanic* concepts. The canon testifies to this in innumerable places and it is also seen in the way he used certain words found in the *brahmanic* tradition but giving them a Buddhist connotation; for example, the word *brahmacariya*.²⁰

An interesting nugget of information is found in the *Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta*.²¹ Here, the Brahmin followers of their venerable teacher, Soṇadaṇḍa, try to prevail on him not to go and listen to the Buddha delivering his discourse. They said it is below his dignity for him to do so:

The Reverend Soṇadaṇḍa is a scholar, versed in the mantras, accomplished in the three Vedas, a skilled expounder of the rules and rituals, *the lore of sounds and meanings and fifthly, oral tradition...* (emphasis added)

It is quite clear from what source the belief originates regarding the miraculous sounds and vibrations present in the way syllables and words are intoned. This belief is not apparently articulated in the Buddhist scriptures. There are, of course, copious rules governing recitation with regard to rhythm, pronunciation, enunciation, etc. in the commentaries as to how *sutta(s)* and *paritta(s)* should be recited but the purpose of these instructions is more for textual preservation and for better understanding than for anything else. The efficacy of *paritta* recitation as found in the canon with regard to the *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta*, and the *Khandha-paritta*, lies in the Buddha's advice to recite them with *mettā*; other *parittas* like the *Aṅgulimālaparitta* and *Dhajaggaparitta* lie in the asseveration of a truth and confidence in it. The *Bojjhaṅgaparitta* is clearly different from these because it is based on an insight meditation of a very advanced nature. Its efficacy must lie in the actual practice of insight meditation for the purpose of allaying pain and the related illness. It was also, as has been pointed out earlier, recited by an *arahant* for an *arahant*, who would have perfected the technique of insight meditation. This is one way the efficacy of the *Bojjhaṅga* can be explained without falling into the fallacy of mysticism and metaphysics.

It must be mentioned here that the *Girimānanda-sutta*²² also contains meditation exercises for the purpose of effecting a cure. In this *sutta* venerable Ānanda informs the Buddha that venerable *Girimānanda* is seriously ill and suggests that the Buddha visit him. The Buddha instructs venerable Ānanda to recite ten meditation exercises to venerable *Girimānanda* and tells him that venerable *Girimānanda* on hearing the recitation will be cured of his illness then and there. Like the previous monks to whom the *Bojjhaṅgaparitta* was recited, venerable

Girimānanda is said to have been an *arahant*, which is again significant. However, it is not likely that he was already an *arahant* at the time the *Girimānanda-sutta* was recited for him. The argument here is that if he were already an *arahant* the *Bojjhaṅgaparitta* would have been most certainly recited for him which is the most advanced *vipassanā* meditation. Obviously venerable *Girimānanda* was not familiar with it because he was given nine meditation exercises before leading him into the *ānāpānāsati* meditation. If he had been familiar with the *Bojjhaṅga* or ready for it, the meditation would have effected a much quicker dispatch of his illness and pain, elevating him to the state of *nirodhasamāpatti* or *saññavedayitanirodha* very swiftly. The Buddha, instead, instructed venerable Ānanda to recite ten meditation exercises to him which show that he was not in the same class as the *arahants* featured in the *Bojjhaṅga-sutta*. However, the fact that he did become an *arahant* is mentioned in the *Therīgāthā*.²³

The ten *kammaṭṭhāna* (meditation subjects) given by the Buddha were contemplations on impermanence (*aniccasaññā*), non-self (*anattasaññā*), the foul (*asubhasaññā*) disadvantages or dangers inherent in the body, (*adīnavasaññā*) abandoning craving (*pahānasaññā*) dispassion, (*virāgasaññā*) cessation of *dukkha* (*nirodhasaññā*) disenchantment with the world, (*sabbaloke anabhiratasaññā*) impermanence of all dispositions/volitions, *sabbasankhāresu aniccasaññā*, and, concentration on in-breathing and out-breathing.

It is interesting to note what the Buddha meant by some of these contemplations. For instance, the passage on impermanence runs as follows:

And what Ānanda is the idea of impermanence? Herein a monk who has gone to the forest or the root of a tree or a lonely place thus contemplates: Impermanent are (objective) forms, impermanent are feelings, perceptions, dispositions, consciousness. Thus he abides seeing impermanence in the five aggregates of grasping.

Another passage runs:

And what Ānanda, is the idea of the foul?

Herein a monk examines just this body, upwards from the soles of the feet, downwards from the top of the head, enclosed by skin, full of manifold impurities (and concludes): there are the hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, nerves,

bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, bowels, stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, mucus, synovial fluid, urine, brain. This Ānanda is called “the idea of the foul”.

And what Ānanda, is the idea of the disadvantage?

Herein a monk who has gone to the forest...thus contemplates: ‘this body has many ills, many disadvantages. Thus, in this body arise diverse diseases, such as disease of eyesight and hearing, of nose, tongue, trunk, head, ear, mouth, teeth; there is cough, asthma, catarrh, fever, decrepitude, belly-ache, swooning, dysentery, griping, cholera, leprosy, imposthume, eczema, phthisis, epilepsy; skin-disease, itch, scab, tetter, scabies; bile-in-the-blood (jaundice), diabetes, piles, boils, ulcers; diseases arising from bile, from phlegm, from wind, from the union of bodily humours, from changes of the seasons, from stress of circumstances, or from the ripeness of one’s karma; also cold and fear, hunger and thirst, evacuation and urination.’ Thus he abides, observant of the disadvantages in the body. This, Ānanda, is called “the idea of the disadvantage”

Another very significant passage is the following:

And what, Ānanda, is the idea of distaste?

Herein a monk, by abandoning, by not clinging to those grasping of systems, those mental standpoints and dogmatic bias that are in the world, delights not therein. This is called “the idea of distaste”

What is meant in the above passage seems to be disenchantment with all the world and the translation of *upāyupādāna* as ‘grasping of systems’ must mean grasping of the five aggregates of clinging and the translation of *adhiṭṭhānābhinivesānusatayā* given as “those mental standpoints and dogmatic bias” can be understood as those deeply rooted latent *anusayā* or clinging to wrong views and distorted perceptions, etc.

These are just a few meditational subjects chosen at random from the *Girimānanda-sutta*. As can be seen they form a very discursive set of meditation subjects involving deep philosophy, perhaps allowing venerable Gīrīmānanda, to reflect on the philosophic aspects of a number of meditational subjects which would have prepared and composed his mind sufficiently in the direction of detachment and seeing clearly the

three signata in the mind-body organism and bringing the mind to a state of calm and tranquility before shifting the mind's focus to the *ānāpānāsati* meditation which is both a tranquility (*samatha*) meditation as well as an insight – *vipassanā*– meditation. From this point onwards the *ānāpānāsati* meditation runs as follows:

And what, Ānanda, is the idea of concentration on in-breathing and out-breathing? Herein a monk who has gone to the forest or root of a tree or a lonely place, sits down cross-legged, holding the body upright and setting mindfulness in front of him, he breathes in mindfully and mindfully breathes out. As he draws in a long breath he knows: A long breath I draw in. As he breathes out a long breath he knows: A long breath I breathe out. As he breathes out a short breath he knows: A short breath I breathe out.

He puts into practice the intention: I shall breathe in, feeling it go through the whole body. Feeling it go through the whole body I shall breathe out. Calming down the body-aggregate I shall breathe in. Calming down the body-aggregate I shall breathe out.

He puts into practice the intention: Feeling the thrill of zest I shall breathe in and out; feeling the sense of ease I shall breathe in and out. Calming down the mental factors I shall breathe in and out.

He puts into practice the intention: Gladdening my mind I shall breathe in and out. Composing my mind...detaching my mind I shall breathe in and out.

He puts into practice the intention: contemplating impermanence... dispassion... ending... contemplating renunciation I shall breathe in and out.

This, Ananda, is called 'the idea of concentration on in-breathing and out-breathing.'

Now, Ananda, if you were to visit the monk Girimānanda and recite to him these ten ideas, there is ground for supposing that on his hearing them that sickness of his will straightway be allayed." And so it was.

One may observe that by the time venerable Girimānanda finally begins on the *ānapānasati* meditation he is sufficiently detached from the mind-body organism, having contemplated it from the perspective of the three signata, he is composed, not shifting from one meditation subject to another and ready to focus steadily on one meditation object. The initial meditation exercises would certainly have provided him with insights into the mind-body, so relevant to pain and illness. Then at this point, the *ānapānasati* meditation commences, guiding him deeper and deeper into the mind-body, the rhythmic in-breathing and out-breathing composing his mind further, settling it on the object of meditation, then raising him into a state of zest, tranquility, happiness and finally one-pointed penetration into the source of pain and illness.

There is no magic, mysticism or metaphysics involved here in these *paritta[s]*. The difference between the *Bojjhaṅga* and the *Girimānanda-sutta* is that whereas the *Bojjhaṅga* gets off the ground and into the swing of concentration on mental events and mental states very rapidly, the *kammaṭṭhāna* given to venerable Girimānanda consists of a fairly long preliminary preparation before drawing him into deep absorption. The reason suggested here is that the efficacy of the *Bojjhaṅga* can be experienced only by *arahants*.

ABBREVIATIONS

- V. *Vinaya Piṭaka*
 D. *Dīgha-nikāya*
 S. *Samyutta-nikāya*
 A. *Aṅguttara-nikāya*
 M. *Majjhima-nikāya*
 Thag. *Theragāthā*

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NOTES

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- ¹ Vin.I.ii 1-12.2 *Mahavagga*, ed.Oldenbergh, PTS 1997
- ² *Kevaḍḍha-sutta*, D.I. No.11
- ³ E.R. Sarachchandra, *The Folk Drama of Ceylon*, Dept. of Cultural Affairs, Govt. of Ceylon (1952) 1966
- ⁴ S.V 46 *Bojjhaṅgasamyutta*
- ⁵ Ibid. 14 (4) iii i
- ⁶ Ibid. 15 (5) iii 2
- ⁷ Ibid. 16 (6) iii 3

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- 8 See M.Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol.2.University of Calcutta, 1933.
- 9 Book of the Discipline IV, trans. I.B.Horner, PTS p.55; also see Jā 1.85
- 10 The Long Discourses of the Buddha. Trans. Maurice Walsh, Wisdom Publication, Somerville, Mass. (1987) 1995, p.223and *Mahatāṅhāsankhaya-sutta*, Trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikku Bodhi, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (M.i) BPS,1995.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 See Dr. D.B.Nugegoda, *Overcoming Psychological Stress*, Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Allied Sciences, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, 2010, pp. 68 - 96
- 13 Google Internet: Latest medical researches on meditation.
- 14 APA, Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center (2011 April 5) Demystifying Meditation: Brain Imaging Illustrates How Meditation Reduces Pain.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Raimund Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience of the Divine, Mantramañjari*, pp. 34 – 35.
- 17 Op.Cit. pp. 99
- 18 p.106
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 See Jotiya Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, (1982) 2007
- 21 D 1.4; *Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta*
- 22 *Gradual Sayings (A)* Vol. V. Trans. F.L.Woodward, PTS. Oxford (1936) 1994, pp. 74 - 75
- 23 *Thag.* Psalms of the Brethren trans. Mrs. Rhys Davids, London, PTS (1936) 1994, p.193.