

### Brisk walking

Brisk walking is a walk that is faster than our normal walk. It can be extended to almost a run. When we perform brisk walking, we just keep our mind on the footstep. To keep our mind on the footstep, we may say mentally "right, left, right, left..." or "stepping, stepping..." Usually walking is done in a straight line, covering a not too long distance. At the end of the walking path, we turn.

In long retreats, brisk walking is sometimes used as an exercise because of the long hours of sitting. Sometimes, if we feel sleepy, brisk walking is used. After doing brisk walking for five or ten minutes, we can then change to the moderate walk.

### Moderate walking

During a short retreat, most of the walking is done at a moderate pace. First, we must be aware of our standing posture. The standing posture is a good grounding to bring our mindfulness down at our feet. When we are standing, take a deep breath and relax. Relaxation is one of the first steps to arousing mindfulness. When we are tense, we cannot relax and be mindful. When we know that our body is relaxed, let our mind be clear, without any thinking. Just keep the mind calm, clear and mentally relaxed.

During walking meditation our eyes are downcast but not looking down. Our eyelids are half-closed when we are relaxed. Only when we really want to look at something, do we look straight ahead. Otherwise when we are relaxed, our eyes are downcast.

When the eyes are downcast, the eyes are not looking at what is on the floor. We are not focusing on anything because our awareness is brought to the soles of our feet. When we bring the awareness from the head to the soles of the feet, we will know that the body is standing erect and firm. We can say in our mind "standing, standing..." and at the same time be aware of the whole body. We have to make sure that we have the real awareness which has been described earlier—clear, steady, calm, very alert and sensitive to the sensation of the body standing. Then we bring the awareness

to the soles of the feet. The awareness is like a light shining precisely onto the spot. We keep our mind very calm and sensitive, clear and alert, and then we direct the awareness—rightly aimed.

We will feel, with the sole of the feet on the ground, the sensations there—which may be weight, texture, heat, coolness or just clear awareness.

When we find that we can feel a lot of sensations, we will normally take that for granted. We need to focus our awareness on the sensations. All these sensations are basic experiences before the other form of thought processes—the idea of who we are, what we are, what is happening around us—begins. When we know these sensations, we think about them and then the mind creates based on them. Therefore, sensations are a more basic form of experience and existence, the beginning before all complicated things arise.

When we have become aware of the sensations, we then start walking—right step, left step, right step, left step, saying in our minds "right step, left step, right step, left step." Mentally saying "right step, left step" helps us keep our minds on the object; otherwise we will start thinking.

Usually the hands are folded in front of or at the back of the body. The feet should not be lifted too high; otherwise, you will not be stable. The space between our feet should not be too far apart, otherwise your walking will not be stable too. The pace of walking should be moderately slow and you should just take steps which are half the normal distance. When you move more slowly, you will find the feet as if gliding parallel to the ground. You do not have to purposely lift your leg up high. When the body shifts forward, the heel automatically turns up; you do not have to turn your heel to the maximum, only slightly.

Then push the foot forward and step down. The stepping down should be levelled, like a slow natural walk. Make sure that you are mindful, clear, stable, peaceful, and very alert, aiming precisely at what is happening at the footstep. It may seem a very simple process, but the mind is really unruly. It may not be focused at the foot for long but goes somewhere else—thinking, or it becomes dull—there is no more mindfulness.

*Whatever bliss in the world is  
found in sensual pleasures  
And whatever there is of  
heavenly bliss,  
These are not worth  
a sixteenth part  
Of the bliss of craving's  
destruction.*



*Sometimes during a stretch of walking, the thinking can arise many times and you may have to stop many times.*

### Thinking during walking meditation

There are two types of “thinking:”

- 1 We know that we are thinking. Once we know that we are thinking, the thinking goes away. In this case, we do not have to stop walking.
- 2 We know that we are thinking but we are unable to stop thinking. In this case, we have to stop and say in our mind “thinking, thinking...” When we are aware of the thinking, it will go off. When the thinking goes off, we are aware again. Then we can bring our mind to the sole of the feet and start once again.

Sometimes during a stretch of walking, the thinking can arise many times and you may have to stop many times. Another thing that can happen is boredom. As we walk, we may start looking around. When we find ourselves

looking around, we must say mentally “looking, looking.” When we find that we are not doing what we should be doing, we stand and bring the mind back to “standing, standing” and start all over. When the mind is no more mindful, it is as if our motorbike has overturned, or if we are surfing, it is as if the surfboard has overturned in the water and we have to bring ourselves back to balance again. This is “surf walking” and the waves are all the phenomena around. Once we find ourselves losing mindfulness, we should stand and balance ourselves with mindfulness and start all over.

At certain times, the mind tends to be very disturbed. Even when we stop and mentally say “thinking, thinking...” the mind still thinks. In this case, we have to resort to the fast walking “right, left, right, left...” keeping a continuous pace.

### Observation in walking meditation

Once we get into the feel of it and there is no more thinking, the mind follows a certain rhythm. When the mind follows a certain rhythm and pace of walking, it is easier to follow the processes. It is just like when we are dancing, we get into the rhythm of the dance.

We will find the mind following our walking at a certain pace—at a certain rhythm—comfortably, and if we keep at it, the awareness and the concentration will build up. Thus, there are three processes here:

- 1 **Arousing the awareness**—we tell ourselves to relax and clear our mind; to be mindful of what is happening every time we think, whether the mind is dull, or wanders elsewhere. When we think, or when the mind is dull or wanders elsewhere, it means we are not mindful, so we need to bring back the awareness and stabilise ourselves.
- 2 Once our mindfulness is aroused, we follow the object with awareness—the footsteps “right, left, right, left...” Unlike shooting a fixed target, this is more like shooting a moving object—like a video camera following movement.
- 3 Once we can follow the object over a period of time, we come to the third phase of meditation—the actual phase of insight meditation—**observation**. If we cannot follow the object properly, the observation cannot be done very well.

During this third phase of meditation, observation of the walking must be done at a much slower pace. Here, we are observing the sensations, eg, when we lift our hind foot, there is a feeling of a pulling force. How this is being experienced will depend on how clear and sharp our aim is at that process. At that point when our foot starts lifting, what is the sensation like? To give an example, if we are lifting our bag, how do we feel? When the muscles pull, we can feel the tension of lifting up. If the bag is not so heavy, we do not feel the tension; we just feel the lifting movement. We do not choose what to experience. We just direct our mind onto the object and allow our mind to pick up the experience.

When we lift our leg, we mentally say “lifting, lifting” and we observe the lifting sensations.

When we push, we mentally say “pushing, pushing” and we note the pushing sensation. The pushing sensation is like when we push our cart in the supermarket. How does the pushing feel like? Of course, it might feel a bit heavier after

*Discomfort in the guise of pleasure,  
The unloved in the guise of love,  
Suffering in the guise of bliss  
Overpower the heedless one.*

a meal, but if our mind feels light then the movement is faster and we feel only the pushing sensations.

When we step, we mentally say "stepping, stepping" and feel the stepping sensations. It is like putting our bag down again. How do we feel? There is a kind of relaxing sensation. Therefore, as we put our foot down, touching the floor, we can feel the sensations of the sole again. We follow each step—the sequence or the series of processes of the sensations—happening from the calf to the sole. It is here that we begin to discover what is happening before the conceptualisation takes place. It is the reality that is happening within us all.

### SITTING MEDITATION

Having done walking meditation, we proceed to the sitting posture. As in walking meditation, we should first relax. We take a deep breath to relax. Relaxation is one of the first conditions for mindfulness to arise. Having relaxed ourselves and made the mind clear, we then direct our awareness to the abdomen. When we breathe in and out, there is a movement at the abdomen, which comes with the breathing. We call the outward movement or upward movement, the "rising." We call the downward or the inward movement, the "falling." Beginners may not be so aware of this sensation, so one is advised to put the hand or fold it at the abdomen.

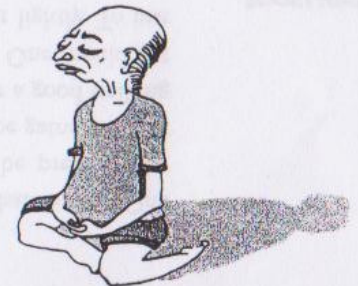
To feel the movement better, take a few deep breaths. When the abdomen rises, we mentally say "rising" and when it falls, we mentally say "falling." When our mind is thinking, sleepy or dull, then we cannot feel the "rising" and "falling" sensations at all. When the "rising" and "falling" sensation is not there, this usually means that we are not mindful. It is the same way as in walking meditation, first be mindful and then follow the object precisely.

Once we can follow the "rising" and "falling" of the abdomen with mindfulness, concentration will be built-up. When the

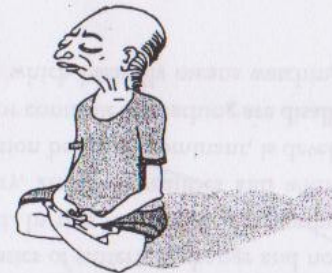
## VARIOUS SITTING POSTURES



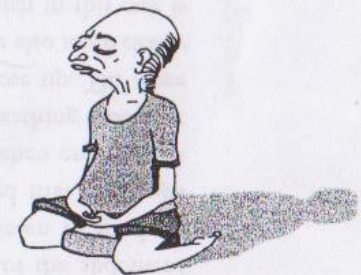
Both legs are placed evenly on the ground one in front of the other.



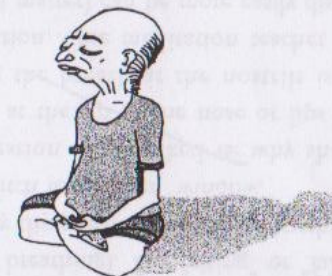
One leg is placed in front whilst the other is curled to the back.



Both feet are placed right up onto the thighs.



Both legs are curled to the back.



One foot is placed on the calf (lower part of the leg) while the other is tucked underneath.

in sitting. The labelling can be said to point to a window to which we direct our mindfulness. It helps us hold our mind to the meditation object and thereby, develops the concentration which sees, through mindfulness and bare attention, the realities that occur there. Here, we cannot choose what we see; we only direct our mindfulness to the "window" and observe whatever arises.



### Touching

One initially observes the area where the posterior and legs are in contact with the seat. A number of touch points can be discerned. One can watch these touch points systematically to increase concentration. The time spent in observing one point varies with the state of mind and clarity of the object. The clearer the object, the longer one can watch it. On the other hand, if it is vague and one is sleepy, one should move more quickly from one object to another. "Touching" is also noted alternately with "sitting." As in watching other objects, we are actually watching the characteristics of the elements arising and passing away when we note "touching." (Refer to diagram on opposite page for the location of touch points given by a manual of Vipassana. The "model" used is, however, not the one in the original drawing).

*The clearer the object, the longer one can watch it.*

### Rising and Falling

When sitting, the beginner is also taught to watch the "rising" and "falling" of the abdomen. The "rising" and "falling" can also be considered as windows through which we see more and more things. One is told that when one watches the rise and fall, one is actually noting the wind element as expressed by movement or motion. But ultimately, one also watches many other things.

One is also initially taught to start by watching the "rising" and "falling" of the abdomen. This is to help us build up our concentration. But, in no way should one be obsessed with the rise and fall to the extent that we try to "hold on" to it or control it (by

unnatural breathing). The "rising" or "falling" is also not constant and it may disappear while one is watching it, in which case, one should switch to another "window."

A question often asked is: why should one not watch the breathing at the tip of the nose or lips instead of the abdomen? Watching the breath at the nostrils is well-known to produce concentration. One meditation teacher remarked that *nama-rupa* (mind and matter) can be more easily discerned when one watches the "rising" and "falling" of the abdomen. The breathing (noted) at the abdomen is clearly grosser than that at the nose tip. The three characteristics of suffering, change and non-self are also more clearly manifested. In this way, Right Concentration, which in this case is momentary, aimed at realities and with mindfulness rather than concentration being predominant, is developed. Again, visualisation, counting or controlled breathing are disallowed here (as one is doing Vipassana which basically means watching realities).

### Walking

Beginners are usually advised to do more walking than sitting. One teacher had remarked that every sitting should be preceded by walking. He also pointed out that Arahatsip can be gained by just walking alone. Meditators have confirmed that after a good walking meditation session, they have a better sitting session. One should not underestimate the importance of walking or take it lightly. To just sit and neglect walking will make one like a lame man, walking on one leg! Walking serves many purposes in Vipassana. Firstly, one is unable to sit all the time and walking very mindfully bridges what would otherwise be termed as wide gaps or periods of non-mindfulness in our meditation. Continuity of mindfulness has always been stressed as otherwise, the concentration needed to develop insight cannot arise.

By itself, walking is also Vipassana *bhavana* (cultivation of insight). Every step is watched in detail. Also, it is the mind that directs the walking. "There is no one that walks..."—this knowledge will come

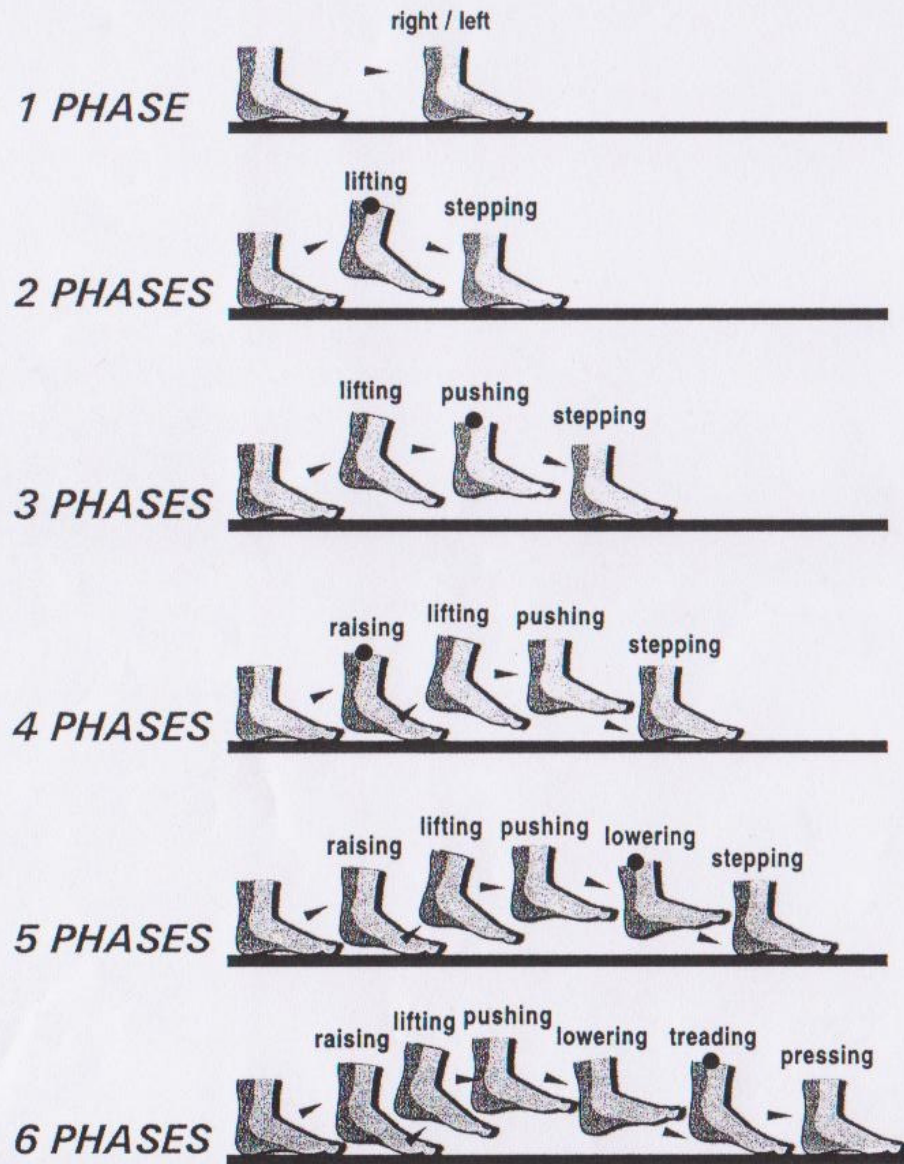
*This world is subject to torment;  
Afflicted by contact, it calls a  
disease "self";  
For however it is conceived  
It is ever otherwise than that."*

*Becoming something other,  
The world is held by being,  
Is afflicted by being yet delights  
in being.  
But what it delights in brings fear,  
And what it fears is suffering.  
Now this holy life is lived  
In order to abandon being.*

UDANA 2.10 (EXTRACT)

*"The perpetual wandering on in the  
round of birth and death.*

## PHASES OF STEPS IN WALKING MEDITATION



● Denotes new phases to note.

naturally by itself as the meditator conscientiously notes the ever-vanishing phenomena of physical and mental processes. Walking has also different characteristics from the sitting practice. Its objects are grosser and varied and so mindfulness can be built up easier. As such, it acts as a powerful balancing factor in that it keeps one's mind inclined towards Vipassana instead of Samatha (tranquillity meditation). In walking, we also note "turning," "seeing," "hearing," "intending," and thus, extend the practice of mindfulness into our daily activities.

The walking meditation is noted in an increasing number of phases in order to step up mindfulness and concentration. One is advised to adopt a pace that one feels most comfortable with. One should be careful in not putting the cart before the horse. Mindfulness is more important than the number of phases being noted. Once mindfulness is built up, the walking is slowed down by observing more phases, or rather, more phenomena. The beginner trying to do very slow walking can end up very tensed because he is trying to watch something he can hardly perceive.

A meditator (both a beginner or "veteran") should start his walking session with brisk steps. Brisk walking will help the mind get "accustomed" to the object. It also exercises the limbs and overcomes lethargy. Then again, there are those who "overdo" it by walking more briskly than is necessary and for too extended a period. They can end up quite distracted and exhausted. "Brisk enough to just arouse mindfulness" should be the attitude.

As one's practice advances, the walking processes are seen as a stream of mind and matter passing away in rapid succession. Walking would then be naturally very slow.

Walking may again be done in a relaxed or intense manner depending on whether energy is excessive or lacking. This is where the balancing of faculties comes in.

Other phenomena that are also watched during walking are sound, pain, intentions, seeing and hearing. One stops walking to note these if they are persistent and predominant. (See pages 33 and 34 for the diagrams on the various phases noted in walking. They are extracted from the same Vipassana manual referred to earlier).

*Trivial thoughts, subtle thoughts,  
Mental jerkings that follow one  
along:  
Not understanding these mental  
thoughts,  
One runs back and forth with  
wandering mind.*

*But having known these mental  
thoughts,  
The ardent and mindful one  
restrains them.  
An awakened one has entirely  
abandoned them,  
These mental jerkings that follow  
one along.*

UDANA 41