

(1) The first step illustrates the power of hearing. The first mental state, placement (setting the mind,) is attained through the power of hearing by way of (2) Fixing the mind on the object of concentration (3) with the rope of the power of mindfulness (4) and the hook that is the power of introspection. From here (5) until the seventh mental state, complete pacification (thoroughly pacifying,) a flame is depicted decreasing in size at each progressive stage until it becomes absent. This presence and absence and difference in sizes of the flame denotes the measure of effort and strength required of mindfulness and introspection. (6) The elephant represents the mind, and its black colour, the mental factor of laxity (sinking). (7) The monkey represents distraction and its black colour the mental factor of excitement. (8) Through the power of thinking the yogi achieves the second mental state, called (9) continuous placement (continuous setting.) (10) The five sense objects are the objects that trigger the mental factor of excitement. (11) From here, the black colour, beginning from the head changes into white. It denotes the progress in the clear grasp (clarity aspect) of the object of meditation, and prolonged fixing of the mind (stability aspect) on the object of meditation. (12) The yogi has put the rope of mindfulness around the neck of the elephant. Through the power of mindfulness, the third and fourth states, patchy placement (resetting) and close placement (closely setting) are attained. (13) To return and fix the strayed mind on the object of concentration. (14) The hare seated on the elephant represents the subtle aspects of the mental factor of laxity (sinking). At this stage, one recognizes the distinct nature of the subtle and gross aspects of the mental factor of laxity (sinking). (15) The elephant looking back means that having perceived the diversion (going out) of the mind, it is again brought back to the object of concentration. (16) Maintaining a clear conception of even the smallest details of the object of concentration. (17) Through the power of introspection the fifth and sixth mental states, taming (disciplining) and pacification (pacifying) are attained. (18) The monkey walks behind the elephant holding its tale. The arising of the mental factor of excitement preceding the actual state of absorption is greatly reduced. (19) At the time of calm abiding (samatha) meditation even though thoughts of virtue arise, these have to be eliminated and the mind tenaciously projected on the object of concentration. The reason is that such thought, in spite of its virtuous nature will act as distraction. Such elimination is not necessary when one is not doing calm abiding (samatha) meditation. (20) Introspection arrests the mind from drifting astray, and because of its sheer loftiness, the mind is drawn towards absorption. (21) The mind is tamed or disciplined. (22) The mind is pacified. (23) Through the power of effort or endeavor, the seventh and eighth mental states, complete pacification (thoroughly pacifying) and making single-pointed (making one-pointed). (24) The mind becomes perfectly pacified. At this stage the arising of the subtlest laxity (sinking) and excitement will not be possible. Even when they occasionally arise, they will be immediately removed with the slightest effort. (25) Here the black colour of the elephant has completely faded out, and the monkey is placed in the tree. The meaning represented is: bereft of the distracting factors of laxity and excitement, the mind can be settled continuously in absorption on the object of concentration with perfect ease and steadfastness, beginning with the application of a slight amount of the powers of mindfulness and introspection. (26) One-pointedness of mind. (27) Through the power of familiarity, the ninth mental state, Even placement (setting in equipoise) is attained. (28) Perfect equanimity. (29) Physical and mental pliancy and bliss. (30) the attainment of calm abiding or samatha together with (31) physical and mental pliancy and bliss. (32) The roots of cyclic existence (samsara) are destroyed with the joint power of calm abiding (samatha) and special insight (vipasana) with emptiness (sunyata) as the object of concentration. (33) The flame represents the dynamic forces of mindfulness and introspection. Equipped with this power, one examines the nature and the sublime meaning of emptiness (sunyata), the knowledge of the ultimate reality of all objects, material and phenomenal.

