

## The training of concentration (*Samādhī Sikkhā*)

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### Introduction

The training of concentration is the second and middle stage of the Noble Eightfold Path. It consists of developing the three constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path that constitute the training of concentration (*samādhī sikkhā*); (1) *Sammā vāyāma* – the right effort, (2) *Sammā sati* – the right mindfulness, and (3) *Sammā samādhī* – the right concentration. If one can exert strenuous effort to be vigilantly mindful of a meditation object, one can build up mental concentration.

The right concentration, according to *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, is the concentration associated with the four *rūpāvacara jhāna*, which are the meditative absorptions in the fine-material sphere. *Visuddhimagga* (the Path of Purification), however, extends the right concentration from the neighbourhood concentration (*upacāra samādhī*) to the concentration associated with any of the four *rūpāvacara jhāna* and the four *arūpāvacara jhāna*, which are the meditative absorptions in the immaterial sphere. To attain the right concentration one has to undertake tranquility meditation systematically.

### What is Meditation?

Meditation is a simple, practical way of training and purifying the mind to calm down, culture and develop the mind. It is, therefore, mental culture or mental development that produces so much good effect that it should be practiced repeatedly.

Meditation initially involves focusing the mind on a suitable object of meditation, and applying mindfulness to be aware of the object constantly. By being mindful of the meditation object, one controls the mind from wandering from one sense-object to another, thus preventing desires, craving, aversion, worry, remorse, distraction and vain thoughts from arising.

Thus meditation helps wholesome consciousness to arise continuously, develops wholesome positive qualities, and strengthens mental power and mind control. Since wholesome consciousness gives rise to wholesome kamma, which will bear good results in due course, meditation is the most beneficial way of living.

Besides meditation relaxes and rehabilitates the mind, building up joy, tranquility, peace and happiness immediately. It reduces tension, stress and strain, high blood pressure, and the tendency to smoke, drink or use drugs. It relieves fatigue and cures many physical and mental well-beings. Thus meditation is also an art of living happily and healthily.

### Two Types of Meditation

The Buddhist Canons describe two types of meditation (*bhāvanā*); (1) *Samatha bhāvanā* – Tranquillity meditation, and (2) *Vipassanā bhāvanā* – Insight meditation

The mental training and mental culture dealing with ‘calm or tranquility’ is called *samatha bhāvanā*, and that dealing with ‘insight’ is called *vipassanā bhāvanā*.

### Tranquillity Meditation (*Samatha Bhāvanā*)

‘*Samatha*’ means ‘tranquility, calm or quietude’ which is the concentrated, unshaken, undefiled and peaceful state of mind. It is called ‘calm’ because it calms down the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) including passions. Thus *samatha bhāvanā* is the mental training which calms down the five hindrances and develops tranquility and mental concentration.

In order to do so, the mind is focused on a meditation object, which is one’s own breath, and strenuous effort is exerted to be aware of the object constantly. Whenever the mind wanders out to other sense objects, it is brought back to the meditation object. By trying to be mindful of the meditation object continuously, one strengthens the *jhāna* factors which associate with wholesome consciousness (*kusala citta*).

When the *jhāna* factors become strong, they can suppress and temporarily eliminate the hindrances which agitate and inflict the mind. When the hindrances are totally suppressed from arising for one hour, two hours or more, the neighbourhood concentration or access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) is attained.

By meditating further one can raise the concentration to meditative absorption (*jhāna*). There are four stages of meditative absorption in the fine material sphere (four *rūpāvacara jhāna*) and four stages of meditative absorption in the immaterial sphere (four *arūpāvacara jhāna*).

*Samatha* or tranquility or concentration (*samādhī*) stands for ‘*ekaggatā cetasika*’, a mental factor which associates with every consciousness. *Ekaggatā* literally means ‘one-pointedness’; it focusses the mind on an object; it binds the mental concomitants with consciousness together to be at a state of one-pointedness on the object of meditation.

Thus *samatha bhāvanā* or tranquility meditation is the mental training which calms down and suppresses the mental hindrances by strengthening the *jhāna* factors including *ekaggatā* so as to attain the neighbourhood concentration and the higher *jhāna* concentration.

### Insight Meditation (*Vipassanā bhāvanā*)

‘*Vipassanā*’ means ‘insight’ or ‘to see things as they really are in many special ways’. It is the intuitive insight into the true nature of all physical and mental phenomena of existence. ‘*Vipassanā*’ stands ‘*paññā cetasika*’, a mental factor which associates with wholesome consciousness. ‘*Paññā*’ literally means ‘knowledge or wisdom’.

*Vipassanā bhāvanā* or insight meditation develops the *paññā cetasika* by constantly investigating and contemplating on the three characteristic marks of all psycho-physical phenomena, namely, impermanence (*aicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and impersonality or non-self (*anatta*).

*Vipassanā bhāvanā* develops insight wisdom (*Vipassanā ñāṇa*) one after another until the Path wisdom (*magga ñāṇa*) and its Fruition wisdom (*phala ñāṇa*) are realized. Then the meditator becomes a noble person (*ariyā*) and enjoy the unique bliss of *Nibbāna* as much as he or she wishes.

### The Role of Meditation in the Noble Path

The Eightfold Noble Path is made up of eight constituents which can be classified as Threefold Noble Training – viz., the Training of Morality, the Training of Concentration, and the Training of Wisdom. The purpose of the Threefold Training is to eradicate all the defilements which are the root causes of all suffering. The objective of the Threefold Training is to realize *Nibbāna* and enjoy eternal peace and happiness.

The Ten Defilements (*kilesā*) are; (1)*Moha* – ignorance of the realities, delusion (2)*Lobha* – desire, craving, attachment (3)*Dosa* – anger, hatred, aversion (4)*Māna* – pride or conceit (5)*Diṭṭhi* – wrong view (6)*Vicikicchā* – skeptical doubt (7)*Uddacca* – restlessness

(8)*Thina* – sloth or laziness (9)*Ahirika* – lack of moral shame and (10)*Anotappa* – lack of moral dread.

These defilements have been thriving and flourishing in the minds of worldlings from time immemorial, and they have grown like a big tree. Now, if we want to destroy a big tree, we must cut off the branches first, then the trunk and dig out the roots and burn them all.

In the same way to eradicate all defilements, we must first undertake the training of morality to cleanse our minds from coarse, inflated and aggressive defilements called *vīṭikkama kilesa*. These are the branches of the big *kilesā*-tree. If we stop the training, these coarse, aggressive defilements will grow up anew just as the tree grows up new branches.

Now after cutting off the branches, we must cut the trunk of the tree. This is similar to undertaking the training of concentration after establishing good morality. To accomplish the training of concentration, we undertake tranquility meditation. This will calm down, subdue, and suppress the defilements which have arisen, and are agitating and inflicting the mind. These awoken and active defilements are called *pariyuṭṭhā kilesa*.

Among these, the five most active ones – *lobha*, *dosa*, *thina*, *uddhacca* and *vicikicchā* – are known as the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). When we attain the neighbourhood concentration or the higher *jhāna* concentration, all these agitating defilements including the hindrances are well subdued and suppressed.

Now, after cutting the trunk of the tree, the roots still remain underground, and they will grow into a new tree again. In the same way, when the active defilements are subdued, latent or dormant defilements known as *anusaya kilesa* still remain. They are like the roots of defilements, capable of growing into *pariyuṭṭhāna kilesa* and *vitikkama kilesa* very quickly. So the *anusaya* must be uprooted and destroyed completely in order to eradicate the defilements, the cause of suffering, once and for ever. It is like digging out the roots and burning them so as to destroy the tree once and forever.

To eradicate the latent defilements is not an easy task. It is indeed the most profound and difficult task in the world. To accomplish this task we must undertake insight meditation very ardently, strenuously and correctly. *Vipassanā bhāvanā* accomplishes the training of wisdom. Only the highest wisdom, that is the four stages of Path wisdom, can eliminate and destroy the *anusaya* completely.

Now when we attain the right concentration, the mind becomes very powerful. It radiates very bright and penetrative light. With the help of this meditation light, we can

penetrate our body and mind with our mind-eye to observe the ultimate realities – *citta*, *cetasika* and *rūpa*, which are the fundamental units of all psycho-physical phenomena. These *nāmas* and *rūpas* are arising and dissolving very rapidly and incessantly in accordance with the law of Dependent Origination (*Paṭṭiccasamuppāda*) and the *Paṭṭhāna* Causal Relations.

In *Vipassanā bhāvanā* we must perform the right investigation (*sammā saṅkappa*) into these *nāma* and *rūpa* and their causal relations in order to develop the right understanding (*sammā diṭṭhi*) of all psycho-physical phenomena. After developing ten insight knowledges (*vipassanā ñāṇa*), we shall attain the Path wisdom (*magga ñāṇa*) and its Fruition wisdom (*phala ñāṇa*). The Path wisdom in four stages can eradicate ignorance or *avijjā* or *moha* completely. And when *avijjā* is eradicated, all the remaining defilements are also totally eliminated. We shall be enlightened to the four Noble Truths and become noble persons (*ariya*) who can enjoy the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna* as much as they wish.

### The Purpose and Objective of Tranquility Meditation

The purpose of tranquility meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*) is to accomplish the training of concentration (*samādhi sikkhā*). In order to accomplish the training of concentration, we must train and culture our mind to make it free from all defilements.

To achieve this purpose, we try to focus our mind on a meditation subject prescribed by the Buddha for the purpose tranquility meditation. We must establish ourselves in morality before we undertake tranquility meditation. The training of morality subdues and prevents the inflated, aggressive defilements (*vitikkama kilesa*) from arising in the mind.

But the moderate defilements that have arisen in the mind keep agitating the mind to make it restless and distracted. By focusing the mind on the meditation subject, we directly control the mind and prevent it from becoming restless and distracted. By doing so we develop wholesome minds (*mahākusala citta*) and the *jhāna*-factors which associate with the wholesome minds.

As the *jhāna* factors become more and more developed, they calm down and subdue the hindrances as well as other defilements. When all the defilements are well subdued and suppressed, the access *jhāna* and the access or neighbourhood concentration are attained. By meditating further, one can attain *jhāna* and *jhāna* concentration when the mind can be kept free from defilements for longer periods.

The objective or goal of tranquility meditation is to attain the right concentration (*sammā samādhi*) which is equivalent to the concentration associated with the four *rūpāvacara jhāna*. The right concentration is used as the basis for insight meditation.

### Mental Concentration and the Need to develop it

Mental concentration is the concentrated, unshaken, undefiled and peaceful state of mind. It is also the state of one-pointedness of mind or profitable unification of mind.

It is synonymous with '*samādhi*' which stands for '*ekaggatā cetasika*'. '*Ekaggatā*' is rendered here as 'unification of mind' in the sense of agreement and harmony of consciousness and its concomitants in focusing on a single object. It is sometimes rendered 'one-pointedness' in that sense, or in the sense of the focusing of a search-light.

In *Samādhi Sutta* and many others, the Buddha exhorted the bhikkhus to develop concentration to be able to see things as they really are.

*"Samādhim bhikkave bhāvētha samāhito bhikkhave bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti."*

"Oh monks, try to develop mental concentration. The monk, who has developed concentration, will be able to see things as they really are."

The normal human eye has very limited vision. It cannot see in the dark whereas many animals such as dogs, cats and rats can move about in the dark.

Again the normal human mind is shielded and blinded by the hindrances as well as other defilements. When these defilements are driven away, though temporarily, by undertaking tranquility meditation and attaining the access concentration or the *jhāna* concentration, the mind becomes pure and very powerful. It radiates very bright and penetrative light which can pass through bodies and walls.

This bright and penetrative light is the most powerful weapon for undertaking insight meditation. With the help of this light one can observe objects nearby as well as those which are far away from one's mind-eye while keeping the eyes closed. Also one can scan layer after layer of one's body in detail just like scanning with ultra-sound. One can also analyze one's mind and body in detail to observe the ultimate realities- *citta*, *cetasika* and *rūpa*, which evade the detection even by the latest science equipment.

So, with the help of this meditation light, one can readily undertake insight meditation, systematically investigating the true natures of the ultimate realities to develop insight

knowledge one after another and finally to realize *Nibbāna* with the Path wisdom and the Fruition wisdom.

### The Subject of Meditation (*Kammaṭṭhāna*)

To undertake tranquility meditation or insight meditation we need a suitable object or focus our attention on as consciousness cannot arise without a sense-object striking a sense-organ.

A meditation subject serves as the ‘place or base’ as well as the ‘subject of meditation’ for carrying out the act of meditation. It also serves as the ‘working ground’ or ‘training ground’ for training the mind in order to develop and culture it. In developing and culturing the mind, the meditation subject must not provoke lust or aversion.

The subject of tranquility meditation should be one of the forty subjects prescribed by the Buddha himself. The subject of insight meditation is the three characteristic marks of existence – viz., impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and not-self (*anatta*).

### Forty Subjects of Tranquility Meditation (*Samatha Kammaṭṭhāna*)

There are seven classes of meditation subjects. They are; (1)*Kasiṇa* – ten *kasiṇa* subjects or devices, (2)*Asubha* – ten loathsome subjects, (3)*Anussati* – ten recollection subjects, (4)*Brahmavihāra* – four subjects of divine abiding, (5)*Āruppa* – four subjects of immaterial states, (6)*Āhārepaṭikūla-saññā* – one subject of perception of repulsiveness in nutriment and (7)*Catudhātuvavatthāna* – one subject of defining the four elements.

(1). ‘*Kasiṇa*’ means ‘whole’ or ‘complete’. It is so called because it should be observed wholly or completely in meditation, and also because the light issuing from the conceptualized sign or image is extended to all directions without limitation.

Because it should be observed wholly, the shape of *kasiṇa* should be circular with its diameter equal to one span and four fingers, i.e. about one foot, if it is observed from a distance of two and a half cubits or 3 feet 9 inches. There are ten kinds of *kasiṇa*. They are; (1) *Pathvīkasiṇa* – earth *kasiṇa*, (2) *Āpokasiṇa* – water *kasiṇa*, (3) *Tejokasiṇa* – fire *kasiṇa*, (4) *Vāyokasiṇa* – air *kasiṇa*, (5) *Nīlakasiṇa* – blue *kasiṇa*, (6) *Pītakasiṇa* – yellow *kasiṇa*, (7) *Lohitakasiṇa* – red *kasiṇa*, (8) *Odātakasiṇa* – white *kasiṇa*, (9) *Ālokakasiṇa* – light *kasiṇa* and (10) *Ākāsakasiṇa* – space *kasiṇa*.

By meditation on *kasiṇa* one can develop the five *rūpāvacara jhāna* and then proceed to develop the four *arūpāvacara jhāna*. After attaining all these *jhāna* in all the

*kasiṇa*, one can practise further to develop five mundane supernormal powers (*lokiya-abhiññā*).

(2) ‘*Asubha*’ refer to the ten signs of foulness or the ten kinds of corpses which may be found in some cemeteries or charnel grounds or battle fields where dead bodies are not buried or cremated and where flesh-eating animals such as dogs, jackals, wolves and vultures frequent.

In modern days any kind of corpse which shows the repulsive nature of the body is a suitable a suitable subject for meditation.

Worldlings are, as a rule, very strongly attached to their bodies as well as to others’ bodies by lust (*rāga*). The best way to suppress this list and the best remedy to cure the *rāga*-disease are *asubha bhāvanā*. So, it was made a compulsory meditation subject at the time of the Buddha.

The ten signs of foulness or the ten kinds of corpses are as follows. (1)*Uddhumātaka* – the rotten, bloated corpse, (2)*Vinīlaka* – the blue, black corpse with patchy discolouration, (3)*Vipubbaka* – the festering corpse with pus oozing out, (4)*Vicchiddaka* – a corpse cut in the middle, (5)*Vikhāyitaka* – a gnawed corpse, (6)*Vikkhattaka* – a scattered corpse, (7)*Hatavikkhattaka* – a cracked and scattered corpse, (8)*Lohitaka* – a blood-smeared corpse, (9)*Puḷuvaka* – a worm-infested corpse and (10)*Aṭṭhika* – a skeleton. In *asubha bhāvanā* the highest concentration attainable is the first *rūpāvacara jhāna samādhi*.

(3) ‘*Anussati*’ means repeated reflection or recollection or constant mindfulness. In *Aṅguttaranikāya Ekadhamma Pāḷi* the Buddha said, “Oh Bhikkhu, If one of the ten *anussati* is practiced and developed repeatedly, making it a habit, then it will lead to the disgust of the endless round of rebirth, to the abandonment of attachment, to the cessation and pacification of lust and other mental defilements, to the insight of the three characteristic marks of existence, to the enlightenment of the four Noble Truths, and to the realization of *Nibbāna*.”

The ten *annussati* are; (1)*Buddhānussati* – recollection of the Buddha, (2)*Dhammānussati* – recollection of the Dhamma, (3) *Samgānussati* – recollection of the Saṃgha, (4)*Sīlānussati* – recollection of morality, (5)*Cāgānussati* – recollection of generosity, (6)*Devatānussati* – recollection of deities, (7)*Upasamānussati* – recollection of peace, (8)*Maraṇānussati* – recollection of death, (9)*Kāyagatāsati* – mindfulness of the thirty-two parts of the body and (10)*Ānāpānassati* – mindfulness of breathing.



The eight anussatis (Nos 1-8) will develop the mind to the state of access concentration (*upacāra samādhī*), *kāyagatāsati* to the first *rūpāvacara jhāna*, and *ānāpānassati* to the five *rūpāvacara jhāna*.

(4) ‘*Brahmavihāra*’ means ‘noble living’ or ‘sublime living’ or ‘divine abiding’. Anyone who is in the engrossing state of *jhāna* while practicing one of the four *brahmavihāra* is said to be living nobly and sublimely like brahmas is said to be living nobly and sublimely like brahmas, or he is in the sublime or divine state of living. These four kinds of *brahmavihāra* are; (1)*Mettā* – loving-kindness, (2)*Karuṇā* – compassion, (3)*Muditā* – sympathetic and appreciative joy, and (4)*Upekkhā* – equanimity.

Systematic meditation on *mettā*, *karuṇā* or *muditā* can develop the four *rūpāvacara jhāna* in the fivefold method whereas *upekkhā* can lead to the fifth *rūpāvacara jhāna*.

(5) ‘*Āruppa*’ means ‘immaterial states or bases’. They are used as meditation subjects to develop the four *arūpāvacara jhāna*. There are four immaterial states or bases. They are; (1)*Ākāsānañcāyatana* – the base consisting of boundless space, (2)*Viññāṇaṇcāyatana* – the base consisting of boundless consciousness, (3)*Ākincaṇṇāyatana* – the base consisting of nothingness and (4)*Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana* – the base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception.

In practice one has to develop the five *rūpāvacara jhāna* first by meditating on one of the *kaṣīṇa*, and then making the fifth *jhāna* as the base, one climbs higher to four *arūpāvacara jhāna* by meditating on the *āruppa* in the order described above.

(6) ‘*Āhārepaṭikūla-saññā*’ is divided into *āhāre*, *paṭikūla* and *saññā*. ‘*Āhāre*’ means ‘nutriment or food’, ‘*paṭikūla*’ ‘repulsiveness’, and ‘*saññā*’, ‘perception’. So ‘*āhārepaṭikūlasaññā*’ is the meditation intended to develop the perception of repulsiveness on food. This perception will subdue the craving for good food (*rasa-taṇhā*).

(7) ‘*Catudhātuvavatthāna*’ is divided into *catudhātu* and *vavatthāna*. ‘*Catudhātu*’ means the four primary elements – viz., *pathavī*, *āpo*, *tejo* and *vāyo*. ‘*Vavatthāna*’ means the knowledge of characterizing the elements.

The four primary elements form the basis of all corporeal phenomena. They are present in every part and particle of our body. So they must be characterized by their distinct properties. The meditation on *āhārepaṭikūlasaññā* and *catudhātuvavatthāna* lead to the neighbourhood concentration.

## Temperament (*Carita*)

Different persons have different temperament or personal nature. Six types of temperament are to be noted. They are; (1)*Rāgacaritā* – greedy temperament, (2)*Dosacaritā* – hating temperament, (3)*Mohacaritā* – deluded temperament, (4)*Saddhācaritā* – faithful temperament, (5)*Buddhicaritā* – intelligent temperament and (6)*Vitakkacaritā* – speculative temperament.

In accordance with six types of temperament six types of persons are to be noted. The greedy-natured person, who has greedy temperament, used to dress smartly, likes perfumes and ornaments, and indulges in sense pleasure. The hate-natured person, who has hating temperament, is generally short-tempered and gets angry easily even over trivial things. The dull-natured person, who has deluded temperament, is generally perplexed, distracted and wavering with skeptical doubt.

The faithful-natured person, who has faithful temperament, is generally very pious and venerates the sacred Triple Gem frequently. The intelligent-natured person, who has intelligent temperament, relies on reasons and would not believe easily. The ruminating-natured person, who has speculative temperament, thinks over this and that without accomplishing much.

## Suitability of Kamma $\ddot{t}$ hāna to *Caritā*

The right coupling of temperament with meditation subject is beneficial for quick development of mental concentration (*samā $\ddot{d}$ hi*).

(1) The greedy-natured person with greedy temperament should exercise one of the ten signs of foulness (*asubha-kamma $\ddot{t}$ hāna*) or *kāyagatāsati kamma $\ddot{t}$ hāna* as these meditation-subjects can subdue lust and passion effectively.

(2) The hate-natured person with hating temperament should practise the four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra-kamma $\ddot{t}$ hāna*) or one of the four colour *kasiṇa*, that is *nīla*, *pita*, *lohita* and *odāta kasiṇa*. These meditation subjects are pure and serene and can delight persons who practise them.

(3) The dull-natured person with deluded temperament as well as the ruminating-natured person with speculative temperament should practise *ānāpānassati*. The minds of these persons are restless and distracted because of restlessness (*uddhacca*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*) and applied thought (*vitakka*). In *ānāpānassati*, the in-going breath and the out-

going breath have to be noted mindfully. As the in-breath and the out-breath occur rhythmically, *ānāpānassati* can arrest the mind and calm down a restless mind quickly.

(4) The faithful-natured person with faithful temperament should practise *Buddhānussati*, *Dhammānussati*, *Saṃgānussati*, *Sīlānussati*, *Cāgānussati*, and *Devatānussati*. The faith (*saddhā*) in this person is already strong, and it will be further strengthened to great benefits by undertaking these *anussati*.

(5) The intelligent-natured person with intelligent temperament should exercise *upasamānussati*, *marañānussati*, *āhārepaṭikūlasaññā* or *catudhātuvavatthāna*. These meditation subjects are deep and subtle, and thus they can stimulate and strengthen the wisdom of the intelligent-natured person.

(6) The meditation subjects which are suitable to all types of persons are the earth *kasiṇa*, the water *kasiṇa*, the fire *kasiṇa*, the air *kasiṇa*, the light *kasiṇa*, the space *kasiṇa* and the four immaterial states (*ārūpa*)

The above coupling is made in the form of direct opposition and complete suitability. But actually there is no meditation subject nor profitable development that does not suppress greed, hatred, and delusion, and promote faith, mindfulness, mental concentration, wisdom, etc.

## Conclusion

This is the practical meditation in summary of training of concentration. If the meditators understand the summary this much, they have a firm understanding of what meditation practice is and so they will understand how to practice meditation. Following these instructions, making effort, applying mindfulness, may all of beings be able to be peaceful in the world.

May all beings share this merit which we have thus acquired for the acquisition of all kinds of happiness! May beings inhabiting space and earth, deities and others of mighty power, share this merit of ours! May they long protect the Teachings!

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