

Advanced Class - Review
Theory and Practice of Meditation 2010/2011
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Q What is the purpose of Buddhist meditation?

A The purpose is freedom from suffering. This is achieved by purifying the mind by eliminating defilements so that one can see things as they really are.

Q What do you mean by see things as they are?

A At present we see our mind and body (*nama rupa*) as desirable, joyful, permanent, and self. We need to see it as undesirable, suffering, impermanent, and not self.

Q What are the defilements that we need to eliminate?

A *Nivarana Dhamma*- the five hindrances and *Anusaya Dhamma* the seven latent hindrances.

Q What are the two types of Meditation that the Buddha taught to achieve this?

A Tranquility (*Samatha*) Meditation and Insight (*Vipassana*) Meditation.

Q Why is Tranquility Meditation also known as Concentration (Samadhi) meditation?

A It is also known as Concentration Meditation because in addition to calm it also leads to one pointedness or concentration.

Q Were these two meditations available before the time of the Buddha?

A Tranquility Meditation was available before the Buddha. Insight Meditation is only found in the teachings of the Buddha.

Q How many types of Tranquility Meditation did the Buddha teach?

A The Buddha taught forty types (objects) of Tranquility Meditation which he recommended based on the nature of the person.

Q What is the most commonly used type of Tranquility Meditation?

A Breathing Awareness Meditation.

Q What is the purpose of Tranquility meditation?

A The purpose is to subdue the defilements known as the five hindrances (*Nivarana Dhamma*) so that you will have the calm and stable mind required for insight and wisdom to arise.

Q What are the five hindrances or defilements that disturb our meditation?

A Sensual desire, anger & hatred, sloth & torpor, restlessness & remorse and doubt in the Buddha's teaching

- Q** What did the Buddha recommend to protect us from these hindrances?
- A** The Buddha recommended the four protective meditations - Impurities of the body for sensual desire, loving kindness for anger and hatred, Meditation on death for sloth and torpor and meditation on the qualities of the Buddha for doubt in the teachings.
- Q** What did the Buddha recommend for restlessness and remorse?
- A** He recommended Breathing Awareness Meditation. As a restless mind is common to most people Breathing Awareness which the Buddha himself used is the most popular form of Tranquility Meditation.
- Q** Should the meditator use one of the protective meditations if he has strong defilements?
- A** Yes, he should use the appropriate protective meditation and switch to Breathing Awareness later.
- Q** How does one begin meditation?
- A** One begins by finding a place of solitude such as a monastery, under a tree in a forest or empty house. Then one sits on the floor, using a small cushion if required, in the lotus, half lotus or Burmese meditation position. If a chair is required that is acceptable. If so, make sure that your feet are firmly placed on the floor. One shuts the eyes, keeps the body relaxed and the back straight. Then you place the right hand on top of the left and let it rest comfortably on the lap.
- Q** How does one find the object of primary focus (*sathi nimitta*)
- A** I recommend that you take three deep breaths and focus on the area between the upper lip and the nostrils to find the place that you feel the sensation of breath as it enters or leaves the body. This point is your object of primary focus. Then you let the breath come naturally and watch the breath as it goes in and out while keeping your mind focused on the point of touch (*sathi nimitta*).
- Q** Can you give an example?
- A** When a carpenter cuts a log with a straight saw he keeps his eyes and mind focussed on the point of cutting but he is aware of the saw taking a long pass or a short pass. Similarly your mind should be on the point of touch, your object of primary focus but you should be aware of the breath being a long breath or a short breath. You should not force or regulate the breathing. You should instead be aware of the current status.
- Q** Can you give another example?
- A** When a gate keeper watches people enter and leave a building, he examines each person at the entrance. His attention is on the person at the gate. He does not follow you inside or outside when you are leaving. He is aware that you have come and gone (aware of breath going in and out) but his primary focus has not

changed it is with the person at the gate (point of touch of breath as it enters or leaves the body).

Q My mind keeps running from one thing to another. What should I do?

A It is the nature of the mind to be restless and run from one thing to another (monkey mind). You have to be patient and determined. Each time the mind runs away from its primary object bring it gently back to the point of touch. Then keep it there and be aware of the breath. You have to be non-judgemental and patient and bring it back again and again. Great effort and consistency is required in this stage of meditation.

Q Do you recommend counting or noting?

A Many teachers do. I prefer remaining with the touch of the in or out breath and being aware of the breath passing in and out as in this way you have already started on insight meditation. You are using Breathing Awareness for tranquility and one pointedness. But you are also using the breath body (air element) and as such you have started insight meditation (*kayanupassana*). You just do not as yet have the stability and calmness of mind to start investigating the body. However, if noting is required it is acceptable.

Q When should you move from Tranquility to investigative insight?

A When your body is light like a cloud and your breath subtle and almost non-existent.

Q Do you recommend remaining with Breathing Awareness until one realizes mental absorptions (*jhana*)?

A If one has time for long hours of daily meditation and our consistent, yes. However, most of us lead a very busy life and have a daily practice of about an hour. For lay people with a busy life I recommend moving to Insight when your body is light like a cloud and your breath subtle and almost non-existent.

Q In which discourse did the Buddha teach Insight Meditation?

A The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Sathara Satipattana Sutta*).

Q What is the purpose of Insight Meditation?

A The purpose is freedom from suffering by eliminating the subdued five defilements, the remaining seven latent defilements (*Anusaya Dhamma*) and seeing things as they are (right view)

Q What are the remaining latent defilements?

A They are; sensual lust, aversion, wrong view, doubt, conceit, ignorance, and attachment to continued existence.

Q What are the four types of Insight Meditation and what are they used for?

A There are four opposing views that results from the false view of the body, feelings, consciousness and Dhammas. They are that the body is desirable (*suba*),

that feeling are joyful (*suka*), that consciousness is permanent (*nicca*) and that perception and volitional formations are self (*atta*).

Kayanupassana is to see body as undesirable (*asuba*). *Vedananupassana* is to see feelings as sorrowful (*dukkha*). *Chittanupassana* is to see consciousness as impermanent. And *Dhammanupassana* is to see perception and volitional formations as not self.

Q There are so many meditation centres. How does one know if the meditation practice I am following will really lead to freedom from suffering?

A Being lost in thought is not meditation. Neither is relaxing to soft music in candle light. You must be in a program that incorporates the Four Noble Truths and Dependent Origination. It must be on a strong foundation of virtue and right view. By right view I mean a good knowledge and understanding of the operation of cause and effect including kamma and its results and no false views or belief in a God and salvation through faith and prayers. Freedom from suffering is achieved through purification of the mind. As such:

The method is mindfulness. Practice should include, Awareness of Breath (or one of the other Tranquility meditation taught by the Buddha) and Insight Meditation as per the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipattana Sutta*) and the four protective meditations as required.

The expression or spiritual manifestation is compassion and loving kindness. Over time one should see that lust, greed, anger, hatred, delusion and not knowing (*loba, dosa, moha*) present in the mind has waned giving rise to compassion, loving kindness, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

The essence is right view or seeing things as they are. We see mind and body or name and form as it is sometimes referred to, (*nama rupa*) as desirable, joyful, impermanent and not self. It should be seen as undesirable, sorrowful, impermanent and not self.