

What is bhāvanā?

Cittam bhavetiti bhavana

Bhaveti kusala dhamme asevati vaddeti etayati bhavana

(bhavanati vaddana)

The Pali word '*bhāvanā*' means **development** or **cultivation**. In the scriptures, it denotes the practical methods of mental development or meditation.

Two illnesses

The Buddha says: “O, bhikkhus, there are two kinds of illness. What are those two? **Physical illness** and **mental illness**. There are seem to be people who enjoy freedom from physical illness even for a year or two.....even for a hundred years or more. But, O bhikkhus, rare in this world are those who enjoy freedom from mental illness even for one moment, except those who are free from mental defilements except the Arahants.”

Cutting off Impediments

The impediments mean anything that can obstruct and hinder one's practice. Ten impediments often quoted are:

1. unsuitable dwelling
2. family/supporters
3. gains
4. class of students
5. building work
6. travel
7. kin
8. illness
9. books/study
10. supernormal powers

Suitable Place

The Anguttara Nikaya says that a suitable environment ought to have the following:

1. convenience – coming and going
2. quiet – peace by day and night
3. freedom from dangers
4. well-furnished in requirements
5. presence of a guide

There are different subjects for meditation according to the temperaments of the individuals.

- rāga-carita - Greedy Temperament
- dosa-carita - Hating Temperament
- moha-carita - Deluded Temperament
- saddhā-carita - Faithful Temperament
- buddhi-carita - Intelligent Temperament
- vittakka-carita - Speculative Temperament

(The Path of Purification, (*Visuddhimagga*), Ch. 3, p. 102)

Two kinds of *bhāvanā*

Samatha Bhāvanā - Tranquility Meditation

Vipassanā Bhavānā - Insight Meditation

- "These two qualities have a share in clear knowing. Which two? Tranquillity (samatha) & insight (vipassana).
- "When tranquillity is developed, what purpose does it serve? The mind is developed. And when the mind is developed, what purpose does it serve? Passion is abandoned. (samatho bhikkhave bhavito kathamatthamanu hoti? Cittam bhaviyati. Cittamam bhavitam kathamamanuhoti? Yo rago so pahiyati)
- "When insight is developed, what purpose does it serve? Discernment is developed. And when discernment is developed, what purpose does it serve? Ignorance is abandoned.
- "Defiled by passion, the mind is not released. Defiled by ignorance, discernment does not develop. Thus from the fading of passion is there awareness-release. From the fading of ignorance is there discernment-release."
- Source: *Vijjābhāgiyā sutta*, AN 2.30 (PTS: A.i.61)

Samatha Bhavana (Tranquillity Meditation)

'Samatha' means tranquility, which is the concentrated, unshaken, undefiled and peaceful state of mind. It is called calm because it calms down the five hindrances (*nivaranas*) including passions. (*kama paccanika dhamme sametiti samatho*) When the mind is deeply concentrated on the object of meditation, all the hindrances such as **sensual desire, ill-will, sloth & torpor, restlessness & remorse, and sceptical doubts** are absent from the mind which is absorbed in the object.

Samatha is a state of mind characterized by concentration, one-pointedness and undistractedness. It is a practice of mental concentration leading to tranquility through ridding of mental defilements (desire, ill-will, etc.). It is one of the two branches of mental development (*bhavana*) and it ultimately leads to mind absorptions (*jhana*).

Samatha meditation employs concentration on objects, ideas, images – things that are external to the body, and so is concerned with the universe outside, made for us through name-calling, designation, conceptualization (concepts, *pannatta*).

When the mind is purified from all these hindrances, the meditator feels calm, tranquil, happy and peaceful. The result of *Samatha meditation therefore is some* degree of happiness through the attainment of deep concentration (*samadhi*) *such as Access (Upacara) or Fixed (Appana) Concentration called Jhana, but it does not enable a meditator to* rightly understand the bodily and mental phenomena as they really are.

Objects of Meditation in Samatha Meditation

As consciousness cannot arise without an object, we need suitable objects for mental development. The object of meditation is called *'kammattana'* literally meaning *'working ground'* for the mind. Unlike *Vipassana* where the object is real and possesses the marks of impermanence, suffering and non-self, in *Samatha* the object is a fixed, unchanging concept which induces the mind to be absorbed in it thereby attaining *samadhi* or concentration. The Buddha prescribed forty objects for tranquility meditation. They comprise the following seven classes:

10 Kasinas, namely: Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Blue, Yellow, Red, White, Space, and Light. Kasina means 'whole' or 'complete.' It is so called because it should be observed wholly in meditation.

10 Loathsome Objects, namely, 10 kinds of human corpses.

10 Recollections, namely: recollection of the Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Sangha*, *Morality*, *Liberality*, *Devas or Deities*, *Peace*, *Death*, 32 Parts of the Body, and Breathing.

Divine Abidings, namely: Loving Kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity.

4 Formless Realms, namely: Realm of Infinite Space, Infinite Consciousness, Nothingness, and Neither Perception nor NonPerception.

1 Perception of the Loathsomeness of Food.

1 Analysis of the Four Elements.

In terms of inducing concentration, the meditation objects are of two kinds; those that induce only **access (*upacara*) concentration** *and* those that induce both access and **fixed (*appana*) concentration or *Jhana***. *Of the forty subjects, ten are capable of inducing access concentration only, namely: the first eight Recollections, Perception of the Loathsomeness of Food and Analysis of the Four Elements. The other thirty can induce fixed concentration or *Jhana*.*

Five Supernormal Powers (abhinna)

- When one gains this perfect one-pointedness of the mind it is possible for one to develop the five.
- Divine eye
- Divine ear
- Reminiscence of past birth
- Thought Reading
- Psychic-power

Eight Trances (Jhana) Attasamapatti

- First Jhana
- Second
- Third
- Fourth
- **Realm of Infinite Space,**
- **Infinite Consciousness,**
- Nothingness, and
- Neither Perception nor NonPerception

Vipassana Bhavana or Insight Meditation

The Pali word '*Vipassana*' is derived from two words: '*Vi*' which means 'in various ways' and 'passana' which means 'seeing'. Thus *Vipassana* means '*seeing in various ways*' and when applied to meditation, it refers to seeing all objects or phenomena as **impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anatta*)**. The principle of *Vipassana* meditation is to observe, any mental or physical process that arises predominantly within the present moment. Thus the concentration is not fixed on a single object but the **momentary concentration (*khanika samadhi*) that arises when** the mind is free from the hindrances. At this stage, the mind is able to note whatever objects that arise predominantly, thereby revealing their **true nature (*yathabhuta*)**.

- *Vipassana*, on the other hand, is the penetrative understanding by direct meditative experience of the three basic characteristics (*ti-lakkhana*) of all phenomena of existence (that is of all living beings) ... namely,
- impermanence (*anicca*);
- unpleasantness (*dukkha*); and
- selflessness (*anatta*). (**aniccadi vasena vividhehi akarehi dhamme passatiti vipassana**)
- *Vipassana* meditation uses the power of concentration (*samadhi*) on sensations within the body and so is concerned with the universe within as it is in their essentiality beyond the realm of concept. It purifies the mind to enable it to gain insight (*panna*) leading to knowledge of the way (*magga*). It is the main branch of mental development (*bhavana*) to attain *Nibbana*.
- *Vipassana* is the application of mind (*nama*) over matter (*rupa*) using the two legs of concentration (*samadhi*) and sensation (*vedana*), whereas *samatha* uses concentration as its main support.
- The first essential equipment of the yogi is a concentrated mind. For only a concentrated mind is a cleansed mind. And only the mind which is cleansed of the five elements (*nivarana*) of sensual lust, ill-will, torpor, agitation and doubt can function properly to realize *vipassana* insight.

Purpose of *Vipassana or Insight Meditation*

The purpose of *Vipassana Meditation* is to attain the *cessation of* suffering through rightly understanding bodily and mental processes and their true nature. For this, we need some degree of concentration. This concentration can be attained through constant and uninterrupted mindfulness of body-mind processes.

- The most remarkable thing on this particular meditation is the one who practices this, it would bring the following benefits to the person.
- Purification of a being from all defilements
- Overcoming of sorrow
- Overcoming of lamentation
- Overcoming of physical suffering or bodily pain
- Overcoming of mental suffering or mental pain
- Attainment of Path and Fruition Knowledge
- Attainment of final goal, *Nibbāna*.

So here, we come to understand the difference between *Samatha and Vipassana meditation*. The purpose of *Samatha meditation* is to attain peace and happiness through deep concentration. So *Samatha meditator has to lay stress on concentration of mind*. For this, he needs only a **single, fixed object to concentrate on**.

On the other hand, a *Vipassana meditator has to lay stress on the **right understanding of body-mind processes and their true nature***. So, whatever bodily or mental process that arises must be observed as it is. Thus we have a **variety of objects of meditation**. In fact, any physical and mental process can be the object of meditation. The purpose and results of *Samatha and Vipassana meditation are* different. So the methods are also different.

Role of Mindfulness in *Vipassana Meditation*

Vipassana meditation is also known as Mindfulness meditation because this type of meditation was taught by the Buddha in the Satipatthana Sutta or the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The Pali word 'Sati' means 'mindfulness or awareness of what is happening in

*one's body & mind at the moment' while 'patthana' means 'setting firmly or closely'. So Satipatthana means firm, close, steadfast establishment of **mindfulness on the present phenomenon which** one is observing; not events that have passed away nor events that have not arisen.*

As Sati or mindfulness plays the key role in Vipassana meditation, it is important to clearly understand what Sati is, in terms of its characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipatthana*)

In the *Satipatthana Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya*, the Buddha described the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which is Right Mindfulness as follows: "*Here bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating the **body as a body, ardent, fully aware and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating **feelings as feelings, ardent, fully aware and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating **mind as mind, ardent, fully aware and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating **mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world*********".

According to the commentary, '*bhikkhu*' is a term for a *person* who practises the *Dhamma* to be liberated from the *cycle of birth and death*.

The contemplation must be accompanied by three factors:

ardent or **strong effort, clear comprehension and mindfulness**. The contemplation must be free from covetousness and grief, which stands for **sensual desire and ill-will, the principal** hindrances that must be overcome for the practice to succeed.

- Altogether there are **21 sections or subjects taught by the Buddha:**

Contemplation of the Body is classified into 14 sections:

- 1) Mindfulness of Breathing (*Anapanasati*)
- 2) The Four Postures: Standing, Walking, Sitting, and Lying Down
- 3) Clear Comprehension of Daily Activities
- 4) Repulsiveness of the 32 Parts of the Body
- 5) The Four Material Elements
- 6) – 14) Nine Cemetery Contemplations
- 15) **Contemplation of Feelings is classified as one section.**
- 16) **Contemplation of Consciousness is classified as one section**

**Contemplation of *Dhammas*,
*Mind Objects consists of 5 sections:***

- 17) Five Hindrances
- 18) Five Aggregates
- 19) Six Internal and Six External Sense Bases
- 20) Seven Factors of Enlightenment
- 21) Four Noble Truths

Daily Activities

Mindfulness of daily activities is the **very life of a meditator**. The faculty of mindfulness becomes powerful by constant and uninterrupted **awareness of every mental and physical activity** throughout the day's practice, while failure to note daily activities creates wide gaps of non-mindfulness. The **duty of a *Vipassana*** meditator is to be mindful the moment he wakes up and throughout the day. He should try to be mindful when changing his clothes, brushing his teeth, washing the face, urinating, defecating, drinking water, opening and closing doors, stretching the hands, eating, drinking, bathing, washing clothes, etc. In fact, the mindfulness of daily activities is **crucial to the success of *Satipatthana Vipassana*** meditation because the yogi will always be **mindful of body and mind throughout the period he is awake, which is what *Satipatthana Vipassana* meditation is all about.**

Benefits of *Vipassana Meditation*

In *Anguttara iv, 391*, the Buddha spoke on the fruits of different meritorious deeds, with each yielding greater fruit than the previous one starting from *dana*, to taking refuge, to keeping precepts, to the practice of loving kindness and finally to the **practice of insight yielding the greatest fruit**. In *Dhammapada 113*, the Buddha said that a single day's life of one who comprehends how all things rise and pass away is better than living a hundred years without such comprehension, namely the insight into the **quick arising and passing away** of bodily and mental processes, called *udayavyaya nana*.

According to the Buddha, there are seven benefits to be derived from practising *Satipatthana Vipassana Meditation*, namely:

- i) **Purification of a being from all defilements (sattanam visuddhiya)**
- ii) **Overcoming of sorrow (sokapariddavanam samatikkamaya)**
- iii) **Overcoming of lamentation**
- iv) **Overcoming of physical suffering or bodily pain (dukkhadomanssa atthamgamaya)**
- v) **Overcoming of mental suffering or mental pain**
- vi) **Attainment of Path and Fruition Knowledge (nayassa adhigamaya)**
- vii) **Attainment of *ibbana (nibbanaya)***

In the Discourse on the **Foundations of Mindfulness** (*Satipatthana Sutta*) in *Majjhima Nikaya* No. 10, the Buddha assured that: “If anyone were to develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for 7 years, one or two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.”

“let alone 7 years, if anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for 6 years...for 5 years...for 4 years...for 3 years...for 2 years...for 1 year, one or two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.”

“Let alone 1 year, if anyone were to develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for 7 months...6 months...5 months...4 months...3 months...2 months...1 month...half a month. One or two fruits could be expected for him: final knowledge or if there is a trace of clinging left, or non-return.”

Ten Fetters

- Self-illusion
- Doubts
- Indulgence in rites & Ceremonies
- Sense desire
- Ill-will
- Lust after life in Realms of Forms
- Formless Realms
- Conceit
- Restlessness
- Ignorance

Five Hindrance

- Lustful desire
- Ill-will, hatred or anger
- Torpor & Languor
- Restlessness & worry
- Skeptical doubts

Seven Factors of Enlightenment

- Mindfulness
- Investigation
- Energy
- Joy
- Relaxation
- Concentration
- Equanimity

Importance of Mindfulness Meditation

“Whosoever neglects the practice of mindfulness in the fourfold way, he misses the Path. Whosoever practises mindfulness in the fourfold way has found the Path.”

(Rhys Davids)

Loving-Kindness Meditation

Meditation on Loving-kindness is very beneficial as it is conducive to mental peace and happiness.

Loving-kindness

Compassion

Sympathetic-joy

Equanimity

- To me it seems that if we want peace in human society, we cannot ignore individuals. If there is no peace in the mind of the individual, I do not understand how there can be real peace in the world. If I have an agitated mind, always full of anger, hatred, ill will and animosity, how can I give peace to the world? I cannot because I have no peace myself. Enlightened persons have therefore said: "First find peace within oneself" One has to examine whether there is really peace oneself."
- Goenka, S. N. 2003. at United Nations, Vipassana Research Institute, Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri, 1st edition, pp. 7-8

One feels so sorry when one looks at what is happening in the world. Man has become the enemy of man. There is personal enmity: People are being killed only because they belong to a particular sect or community, a particular ethnic group or country. Such is the level of cruelty that a person kills other human beings even if they are innocent, even if they are helpless women and children. Modern technology makes this tragic violence terrifying devastating -perhaps worse than ever before in human history. Therefore, more than ever before a basic change is needed today to protect humanity from these inhuman heinous crimes arising out of negative emotions.

The world is afflicted with the malady of hatred, anxiety and fear. It needs a remedy from an extraordinary physician, a great physician of peace and happiness. His teaching of peace and harmony is as relevant today as it was twenty six centuries back, when he set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma, the Wheel of Peace. Indeed it is much more relevant today.

The word passana means "seeing" the ordinary sort of vision that we have with open eyes. Vipassana means a special kind of vision: observation of the reality within oneself. This is achieved by taking as the object of attention one's own physical sensations. The technique is the systemic and dispassionate observation of sensations within oneself. This observation unfolds the entire reality of mind and body.

Hart, William., 1998. The Art of Living Vipassana Meditation: Vipassana Research Institute, Igatpuri, p. 91

Vipassana is one of the India's most ancient meditation techniques. It is a practical method which purifies the mind, eventually leading to the eradication of all suffering.

Society is made up of individual human beings. To reform it each member of society had to be reformed. Hence, the individual is the key. Human beings have a unique capacity to observe the reality within to develop true wisdom, true insight, the saints and sages of India and of other countries discovered a way to purify the mind. Every individual must practice this path of purification. If the individual cannot come out of misery?

Vipassana should not be used merely for curing physical disease, otherwise it will lose its value. Everybody is sick at the mental level-the impurities from the mind should be removed and Vipassana is for that purpose.

Sati is recollecting, calling back to mind, remembering bearing in mind. Sati is not merely memory, but a lucid retention of both the past and present. It is compared to an inward mentor, or advisor, discriminating between good and bad, and promoting choice. Not floating on the surface like empty pumpkins or pots, on water.

To me it seems that if we want peace in human society, we cannot ignore individuals. If there is no peace in the mind of the individual, I do not understand how there can be real peace in the world. If I have an agitated mind, always full of anger, hatred, ill will and animosity, how can I give peace to the world? I cannot because I have no peace myself. Enlightened persons have therefore said: First find peace within oneself. One has to examine whether there is really peace oneself.

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