

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammâ Sambuddhassa!

AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST MEDITATION¹

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Meditation, or more accurately concentration (*samadhi*), is an essential factor to be developed towards enlightenment (*Nibbana*). The purpose of meditation is to clear the mind of mental defilements (*kilesa*) thereby facilitating wisdom (*panna*). This allows for clear insight into the reality of all things, leading one on to greater peace and happiness. Buddhist meditation is aimed at attacking the three unskillful roots of greed/desire (*lobha*), aversion/anger (*dosa*) and confused/misguided thinking (*moha*) that are inherent in all beings, blinding and preventing them from seeing the true nature of existence.

Meditation can be done anywhere and at anytime, whether walking, standing still, sitting or lying down. For best results however, it helps to be seated in a secluded and quiet place. When meditating concentrate purely and exclusively on the meditation subject and not other things. The untrained mind has a natural tendency to go off on different tangents and when this happens simply bring it back to the topic of the meditation and resume with it. Before starting the meditation, stop all thinking, planning, worrying and other such mental activity so that the mind becomes quiet and peaceful. The standard practice is to close the eyes during meditation, but they can be kept half-open or fully open as well; see what works best for you. A cushion can be used to sit on while utilizing the full or half-lotus position. Morality (*sila*) is a required pre-requisite for effective meditation.²

The meditation on loving-kindness (*metta bhavana*) clears the mind primarily of defilements (*kilesa*) arising from the aversion (*dosa*), encompassing harmful qualities such as anger, hatred, bitterness, resentment, jealousy, irritation, annoyance, etc. The easiest method for doing this meditation is to utter these lines either in one's thoughts or out loud while concentrating fully on the meaning behind them. Loving-kindness should be developed towards oneself first by uttering/wishing "May I be happy and well" a few times (e.g. three times), followed by "May all beings be happy and well" towards all being without exception for as long as one desires. The metta meditation can also be developed 'on the go' in daily life by repeating these thoughts/wishes of kindness towards all beings (including oneself), especially when they cause aversion to arise within oneself.

The awareness of breath meditation (*ana-pana-sati bhavana*) clears the mind primarily of defilements (*kilesa*) arising from the confused/misguided thinking (*moha*) and increases levels of concentration (*samadhi*) as well as wisdom (*panna*). The best way to perform this meditation is to concentrate on and become fully aware of the incoming and outgoing breath as it enters and leaves the body and to maintain this concentration at a stretch for as long as possible. If concentration breaks, simply return to watching the breath and resume concentration. It is important to not try to control or force the breath, but simply allow it to flow in and out on its own accord while observing it. This meditation can be developed as a factor of mindfulness 'on the go' in daily life by becoming aware of the breathing process as it occurs.

The meditation on the foulness of the body (*asubha bhavana*) primarily decreases desire for the flesh (*lust*) and clears such related defilements (*kilesa*) arising from greed/desire (*lobha*). Either the cemetery/corpse contemplation or the contemplation on the foulness of the body can be utilized for this meditation. Mental visualization of bodily foulness can also be used as a technique in this meditation. Once the principle behind this meditation technique is understood (seeing the foulness of the body) any foul aspect of the body can be focussed on for effect. This meditation can also be developed while 'on the go' by reflecting on the unpleasant side of any sensually attractive/pleasant objects (both external to the 'outer' world and 'internal' to the mind) that are encountered in daily life.

Buddhist meditation aims to develop wisdom and insight into reality by attacking the three unskillful roots of greed/desire (*lobha*), aversion/anger (*dosa*) and confused/misguided thinking (*moha*) that are inherent in all beings. Meditation can be done anywhere and at anytime, however a private and secluded place at a time when one is at ease is best. The untrained mind has a natural tendency of getting distracted but should be brought back to the meditation subject whenever this occurs. Morality (*sila*) is an essential pre-requisite for effective meditation. The meditations on loving-kindness (*metta*), awareness of breath (*ana-pana-sati*) and the contemplation on the foulness of the body (*asubha*) primarily clear the mind of defilements arising from aversion/anger (*dosa*), confused/misguided thinking (*moha*) and greed/desire (*lobha*) respectively. These meditation techniques can be developed 'on the go' in daily life for the better results and greater mental purity.

May you master Buddhist meditation and attain the lasting peace of *Nibbana*!

Notes

1. The latest version of this document can be found in **HTML** format here <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=intromed> and in **PDF** format here <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=intromedp>
2. See *Anguttara Nikaya 11.1, Kimattha Sutta, What is the Purpose?* here <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an11/an11.001.than.html>

Meditation Resources

1. A collection of resources on concentration (*samadhi*) can be found here <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index-subject.html#samadhi>
2. Easy to follow instructions on the meditation on loving-kindness (*metta bhavan*) can be found here <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=mettamed>
3. A collection of resources for the awareness of breath meditation (*ana-pana-sati bhvana*) can be found here <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index-subject.html#anapanasati>
4. The contemplation of the body as a skeleton/corpse for the foulness of the body meditation (*asubha bhavana*) can be found here http://what-buddha-said.net/drops/III/The_9_Corpse_Meditations.htm
5. The contemplation of the 32 parts of the body for the foulness of the body meditation (*asubha bhavana*) can be found here http://what-buddha-said.net/drops/III/The_32_Parts.htm
6. A collection of resources for the foulness of the body meditation (*asubha bhavana*) can be found here <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index-subject.html#asubha>

Related Suttas (Discourses)

1. *Anguttara Nikaya 11.1, Kimattha Sutta, What is the Purpose?* see <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an11/an11.001.than.html>
2. *Majjhima Nikaya 118, Anapanasati Sutta, Mindfulness of Breathing* see <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.118.than.html>
3. *Sutta Nipata 1.8, Karaniya Metta Sutta, Good Will* see <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.than.html>
4. *Majjhima Nikaya 119, Kayagata-sati Sutta, Mindfulness Immersed in the Body* see <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.119.than.html>
5. *Khuddakapatha 1-9, Dvattimsakara — The 32 Parts* see <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/khp/khp.1-9.than.html#khp-3>
6. *Itivuttaka 111, The Group of Fours* see <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/iti/iti.4.100-112.than.html#iti-111>

Related Dhamma Articles

1. *Daily Dana* - On giving and generosity, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=dailydana>
2. *Five Precepts* - Developing virtue through the five precepts, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=pansil>
3. *Work Stress* - An analysis of stress in the work-place, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=workstress>
4. *Equanimity* - Dealing with the eight characteristics of life, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=equanimity>
5. *Consequences* - About being responsible for our actions (*kamma*) and their consequences (*vipaka*), see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=conseq>
6. *Buddhist Positive Thinking* - Positive thinking from a Buddhist perspective, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=posthink>

7. *Mental Purity* - Five ways for subduing mental defilements, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=vitakkasantana>
8. *A Buddhist Approach to Mental Health* - A Buddhist perspective and approach to mental health, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=mentalhealth>
9. *A Buddhist Approach to Problem Solving* - Problem solving through the development of wisdom (*panna*), see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=probsolv>
10. *One Hour of Unsatisfactoriness* - The unsatisfactoriness that can be felt within the space of an hour, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=onehour>
11. *Four Noble Truths* - The essence of Buddhism, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=fourtruths>
12. *Noble Eightfold Path* - The path for ending stress and suffering, see <http://www.vihara.org.au/go?to=noblepath>

Online Resources

1. *AccessToInsight.org* here <http://www.accesstoinsight.org>
2. *Mettanet.org* here <http://www.mettanet.org>
3. *What-Buddha-Said.net* here <http://what-buddha-said.net>
4. *What-Buddha-Taught.net* here <http://what-buddha-taught.net>
5. *SuttaReadings.net* here <http://www.suttareadings.net>
6. *Buddhanet.net* here <http://www.buddhanet.net>