

How to Practice  
Kammaṭṭhāna  
Meditation

By



The Venerable  
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Translated from the Eighteenth Myanmar Edition by  
Simone M. Tai (Saddhamma Foundation), 2021

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First Edition – July, 2021

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## How to Practice *Kammaṭṭhāna* Meditation

By the Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw

**Question:** Why should one practice *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation?

**Answer:** One should practice it for the sake of liberation from all suffering such as aging and death, etc., by attaining *nibbāna*.

To explain this in detail, beings wish to live happily all the time, without getting old, getting sick and dying, and also without encountering any suffering. However, things do not happen according to their desires. Beings have to get old. They also have to get sick. They also have to encounter many kinds of suffering and experience anxiety and sorrow. They have to cry and lament. They also have to frequently encounter many kinds of physical and mental suffering. Finally, after experiencing fatal suffering of one kind or another that is beyond endurance, they have to die. But death is not yet the end. People who are not free from attachment and clinging in life have to be reborn again in a new existence. In this new existence too, they have to once again encounter suffering such as aging, disease and death, etc., in the same way as before. Thus, beings have to experience suffering that they do not want in every new existence that arises after the old one ends.

If we examine the root cause in this process, suffering such as aging, disease, etc., exist only because of the arising of new existences. If there were no existences, then these sufferings clearly could not exist. Therefore, if one wants to be liberated from all suffering such as aging and death, etc., one must strive to meditate so that new existences will not be able to arise.

In addition, all new existences are able to arise only because there is craving (*taṇhā*) that attaches and clings in the present existence (at the time of death in the old existence, having grasped at an object that was previously clung to, new consciousness arises). If there is no craving, then new existences cannot arise. Therefore, if one does not want new existences to arise, one must practice meditation so as to totally extinguish the craving for existence, *bhavataṇhā*.

This craving also arises only due to two causes: not seeing the faults of the body and mind related to existence, and not seeing or knowing *nibbāna* which is far superior to this existential body and mind. Having seen the faults of the body and mind, if one clearly realizes *nibbāna*, then this craving for existence can no longer arise. For example, it is like a poor man who lives in a destitute area full of danger and does not see the faults of his native dwelling place, and does not know that he will be happy if he goes to live in another pleasant and prosperous place that is free from danger, so he only thinks highly of and clings to his own dwelling place. Only if he sees the faults of his native dwelling place, if he sees the benefits of that other pleasant and prosperous place, will he no longer be attached to his original dwelling, and move to that other place. This point should be known. Therefore, if one wants to become totally free from attachment and craving to existence, it is necessary to see the faults of physical and mental phenomena related to existence, and to realize *nibbāna* for oneself. Also, this realization can only be fulfilled if one can practice *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation.

Thus, if one wants to be liberated from all suffering such as aging, disease and death, etc., by attaining *nibbāna*, one must practice *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation in order to realize *nibbāna* for oneself.

### **Two Types of *Kammaṭṭhāna***

There are two types of *kammaṭṭhāna*:

1. *Samatha kammaṭṭhāna*
2. *Vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna*

Among these, by practicing *samatha kammaṭṭhāna*, one will be able to gain the four material *rūpajhānas* and the four immaterial *arūpajhānas*, which are the eight mundane *jhānas*, or *lokīyajhānas*. By practicing and developing these *jhānas*, one can gain the special supernormal knowledges, *lokīyañāṇa*, also called *abhiññā*, that are listed below. They are:

1. *Iddhividha abhiññā*, creating supernormal powers of various kinds such as the ability to become many, although being one; the ability to

become one, although being many; the ability to fly in the sky; the ability to dive through the earth, etc.

2. *Dibbasota abhiñña*, the supernormal power to hear all sounds, whether far, near, loud or soft
3. *Cetopariya abhiñña*, the supernormal power to know the minds and thoughts of others
4. *Pubbenivāsa abhiñña*, the supernormal power to remember one's previous existences
5. *Dibbacakkhu abhiñña*, the supernormal power to see all physical objects, whether far, near, large or small

They are these five.

However, only by gaining these *jhāna abhiññā*, one cannot yet be liberated from the suffering of aging and death, etc. If one dies without these *jhānas* deteriorating or being destroyed, one can be reborn in the *brahmā* realms corresponding to the level of one's *jhāna* and live a very long life lasting for one world-cycle, two world-cycles, four world-cycles, eight-world cycles, etc., for however long the lifespans are specified in the respective *brahmā* realms. When one's lifespan is up, after passing away in that realm, one is reborn again in the human or *deva* realms. At that time, one will be the same as other humans and *devas*, and will have to experience suffering such as aging and death, etc. If unwholesome *kammic* causes are unfavorable, then one will be reborn in the hell realms, the animal realm, the *peta* (hungry ghost) realm, the *asura* realm, and will have to experience a great deal of suffering. Thus, it should be known that one cannot be liberated from suffering only by practicing *samatha* meditation.

Only if one practices *vipassanā* meditation and attains *nibbāna*, can one be totally liberated from all the suffering of aging and death, etc.

Also, there are two types of *vipassanā* meditation:

1. Practicing *vipassanā* meditation with *samatha* as a basis
2. Practicing only *vipassanā* meditation, without *samatha* as a basis

Among these, the person who practices *vipassanā* meditation with *samatha* as a basis is called “*samathayānika*.” This means “the person who goes towards *nibbāna* with *samatha* as a basis.”

The person who practices only *vipassanā* meditation, without *samatha* as a basis is called “*suddhaviṇṇāyānika*.” This means “the person who goes towards *nibbāna* only with *vipassanā*.”

If one practices with the method of *samathayānika*, one must first practice *samatha* meditation. There are forty subjects of *samatha kammaṭṭhāna*:

1. Ten *kaṣiṇas* (meditation devices)
2. Ten *asubha* (loathsome objects)
3. Ten *anussati* (recollections)
4. Four *brahmavihāra* (divine abidings)
5. Four *āruppa* (immaterial absorptions)
6. One *āhārepaṭikūlasaññā* (reflection on the loathsomeness of food)
7. One *catudhātuvavatthāna* (analysis of the four elements)

Among these, the ten *kaṣiṇas* are:

1. *Pathavī* (earth) *kaṣiṇa*
2. *Āpo* (water) *kaṣiṇa*
3. *Tejo* (fire) *kaṣiṇa*
4. *Vāyo* (air) *kaṣiṇa*
5. *Nīla* (dark blue) *kaṣiṇa*
6. *Pīta* (yellow) *kaṣiṇa*
7. *Lohita* (red) *kaṣiṇa*
8. *Odāta* (white) *kaṣiṇa*
9. *Āloka* (light) *kaṣiṇa*
10. *Ākāsa* (space) *kaṣiṇa*

The ten *asubha* are:

1. *Uddhumātaka* — a corpse that is swollen
2. *Vinīlaka* — a black and blue corpse
3. *Vipubbaka* — a corpse that is oozing with pus

4. *Vicchiddaka* — a corpse that is cut at the waist
5. *Vikkhāyitaka* — a corpse that has been gnawed by dogs and foxes
6. *Vikkhittaka* — a corpse whose arms, legs, head and body have been scattered elsewhere
7. *Hatavikkhittaka* — a corpse that has been hacked and scattered
8. *Lohitaka* — a corpse that is oozing with blood
9. *Puḷuvaka* — a corpse that is filled with maggots
10. *Aṭṭhika* — a skeleton

The ten *anussati* are:

1. *Buddhānussati* — Repeated reflection on the qualities of the Buddha
2. *Dhammānussati* — Repeated reflection on the qualities of the Dhamma
3. *Saṅghānussati* — Repeated reflection on the qualities of the Saṅgha
4. *Sīlānussati* — Repeated reflection on the qualities of one’s morality
5. *Cāgānussati* — Repeated reflection on the qualities of one’s renunciation and charity
6. *Devatānussati* — Repeated reflection on the qualities of *saddhā* (faith), *sīla* (morality), *suta* (learning), *cāga* (generosity), and *pañña* (wisdom) that one has fulfilled that are the causes for rebirth in the *deva* realms
7. *Upasamānussati* — Repeated reflection on the qualities of *nibbāna*
8. *Maraṇānussati* — Repeated reflection on death
9. *Kāyagatāsati* — Repeated reflection on the thirty-two loathsome parts of the body, such as head hair, body hair, fingernails, toenails, teeth, skin, etc.
10. *Ānāpānassati* — Repeated reflection on the in and out breath

The four *brahmavihāra* are:

1. *Mettā* — Contemplating “May you be happy” towards beings
2. *Karuṇā* — Contemplating “May you be free from suffering” towards beings who are suffering
3. *Muditā* — Contemplating “May you continue to live happily, without losing the happiness you have gained” to beings who are living in abundance and happily

4. *Upekkhā* — Contemplating by looking upon beings with equanimity and with an impartial attitude: “It is according to one’s *kamma* that one has done by oneself.”

The four *ārupparūpa* are:

1. *Ākāsānañcāyatana* — Contemplation on the concept of infinite space
2. *Viññāṇañcāyatana* — Contemplation on the infinity of the first immaterial *jhānic* consciousness, *pathamārūpaviññāṇa*
3. *Ākiñcaññāyatana* — Contemplation on the nothingness (without even a particle remaining) of the first immaterial *jhānic* consciousness
4. *Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana* — Contemplation on the third immaterial *jhānic* consciousness, which is the object of the fourth immaterial *jhānic* consciousness that is neither perception nor non-perception, as “tranquil and subtle.”

*Āhārepaṭikūlasaññā* is: Perception that reflects on the loathsomeness of food that is being eaten or drunk.

*Catudhātuvavatthāna* is: Contemplation separately only on the four great elements in the body: *pathavī* (earth), *āpo* (water), *tejo* (fire), and *vāyo* (air).

### How to Practice *Samatha* In Brief

Among the forty *samatha kammaṭṭhāna*, the person who wants to meditate on the earth *kaṣiṇa* should look at the earth, or a *kaṣiṇa* disk made to look like earth, and repeatedly contemplate: “*Pathavī, pathavī, pathavī*, earth, earth, earth.” After contemplating in this way repeatedly, the *nimitta*, or image of the *kaṣiṇa* will clearly arise. Even though the eyes are closed, one sees it as though the eyes are open. This is called *uggahanimitta*, the acquired image. After gaining this *uggahanimitta*, one should then go to a place where one wants, and should contemplate only on this *kaṣiṇa* object of *uggahanimitta* continuously: “earth, earth, earth,” whether one is sitting, standing, walking, or lying down.



While contemplating in this way, the mind can also wander off elsewhere. One may also think about objects that one likes. This is called the hindrance of sense desire, *kāmacchanda nīvaraṇa*. One may also think with dejection and anger. This is called the hindrance of ill will, *byāpāda nīvaraṇa*. While meditating, the mind may become slack, and also become dull and lazy. This is called the hindrance of sloth and torpor, *thinamiddha nīvaraṇa*. The mind may not stay calm, and also scatter. After thinking about the wrong things that one has done or spoken in the past, one may also become worried. This is called the hindrance of restlessness and remorse, *uddhacca kukkuccha nīvaraṇa*. While meditating, one may also think and ponder about the practice: “Is it correct? Is it beneficial or not? Can I gain special Dhamma or not?” This is called the hindrance of skeptical doubt, *vicikicchā nīvaraṇa*. When these hindrances arise, one should cut them off, and not continue to think about these objects. One should concentrate only on the main *kaṣiṇa* object and continuously contemplate “earth, earth, earth.” If the *kaṣiṇa* object really disappears, one should go to where the original *kaṣiṇa* disk was located, look at it with one’s eyes, and once again contemplate it so that it appears as before. If the *uggahanimitta* arises once again, one should continuously contemplate it according to the previous method, staying where one wants to.

After repeatedly contemplating in this way, the *kaṣiṇa* disk will not be the same as the original, and appears extremely pure and clear in color. This is called the counter sign, *paṭibhāganimitta*. At this time, the mind is also free from hindrances such as sense desire, etc. It concentrates calmly and continuously only on this *paṭibhāganimitta*. This state of tranquility is called access concentration, *upacāra samādhi*.

For the person who repeatedly contemplates the *paṭibhāganimitta* with access concentration, his mind becomes absorbed solely in this *paṭibhāganimitta* as though entering into it. This is called absorption concentration, *appanā samādhi*.

There are four distinctions in absorption concentration: first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, and fourth *jhāna*. Among these, in the first *jhāna*, there are five *jhānic* factors:

1. Applied thought towards the object (*vitakka*)

2. Sustained thought on the object (*vicāra*)
3. Delight in and satisfaction with the object (*pīti*)
4. Happiness of mind (*sukha*)
5. Concentration and establishment on only a single object (*ekaggatā*)

The person who attains the first *jhāna*, after seeing the faults of *vitakka* and *vicāra* that are included in this *jhāna*, meditates so as to be free from them, and thus attains the second *jhāna*. In this *jhāna*, three *jhānic* factors of *pīti*, *sukha*, and *ekaggatā* are obvious.

Next, after seeing the fault of *pīti*, by meditating so as to be free from it, one gains the third *jhāna*. In this *jhāna*, two *jhānic* factors of *sukha* and *ekaggatā* are evident.

Next, after seeing the fault of *sukha*, by meditating so as to be free from it, one gains the fourth *jhāna*. In this *jhāna*, only two *jhānic* factors of *upekkhā*, equanimity of mind that is neither glad nor dejected, and *ekaggatā* are clear.

This is how one practices with the earth *kaṣiṇa* and how the four *jhāna samādhi* arise. One should also know the remaining nine *kaṣiṇas* with the same method.

The person who wants to practice *asubha kammaṭṭhāna* should look at a swollen corpse with his eyes and repeatedly contemplate: “bloated corpse, bloated corpse, bloated corpse,” etc. Although the method is the same as meditating on the earth *kaṣiṇa*, it is noteworthy that one can only gain the first *jhāna* with *asubha kammaṭṭhāna*. Only this is notable.

Among the ten *anussati*, one can only gain the first *jhāna* with *kāyagatāsati kammaṭṭhāna* as well. From *Buddhānussati* until *maraṇānussati*, the eight *anussati*, and also *āhārepaṭikūlasaññā* and *catudhātuvavatthāna*, with these ten *kammaṭṭhāna*, one can only attain access concentration, *upacāra samādhi*.

With *mettā*, *karuṇā*, and *muditā*, one can only attain the three lower *jhānas*. If the person who has attained the third *jhāna* develops *upekkhā*, he can gain the fourth *jhāna*.

If the person who has attained all four *jhānas* with the *kaṣiṇas* practices the four immaterial *kammaṭṭhāna* in order, he can gain the immaterial *arūpa jhānas*.

### **How to Practice *Ānāpāna* In Brief**

The person who wants to practice *ānāpāna*, after sitting in a quiet place with the legs crossed or sitting in another posture that can be maintained for a long time and keeping the upper body straight, should first put the mind firmly on the nostrils. One may clearly experience the air of the inhalation and exhalation that continuously comes in and goes out, that strikes the tip of the nose or the upper lip. One must only watch the place where the air strikes, and observe continuously every time one breathes in and out as: “in, out, in, out.” One also should not follow the air as it goes into the abdomen. One also should not follow the air as it exits from the nostrils and goes outside. One must observe watching only the place where there is clear contact at the tip of the nostrils and the upper lip.

While observing in this way, mental hindrances that go off elsewhere may also arise. If these hindrances arise, one should not continue to pay attention to them, but firmly focus the mind only on the in and out breaths, and continuously observe “in, out, in, out.”

Using this method, if one continuously observes watching the place where the in and out breaths strike:

1. One also clearly knows the in and out breaths (inhalation and exhalation) that are long.
2. One also clearly knows the in and out breaths that are short.
3. One also clearly knows the beginning of the in and out breaths where they strike at the tip of the nostrils and the upper lip, from the tiniest beginning, as well as the ending of the in and out breaths, until the tiniest ending. One should also know the beginning, the middle and the ending, the entire in and out breaths.

4. One also clearly knows that the in and out breaths that are usually rough gradually become subtle. As the breaths become more subtle, one also feels as though the in and out breaths have totally disappeared.

At this time, because one no longer experiences the in and out breaths, one tends to search for the in and out breaths. One may also think: “What has happened?” One may also stop observing.

One should not stop observing. One should put the mind firmly only on the tip of the nostrils and the upper lip as usual, and continue to observe. If one observes in this way, even the subtle in and out breaths will become clear. If one observes the in and out breaths that become obvious without a break, one will experience that the in and out breaths will arise in an extraordinary way. In the *Visuddhimagga*, the special way in which they arise is explained below.

For some people, the in and out breaths arise like shining stars, or a string of rubies, or a string of pearls. For some they appear like a bamboo stalk that is rough to the touch, or a wooden door bolt. For some they appear like a necklace, a flower wreath, a puff of smoke. To some they appear like a spread-out cobweb, or a stratus cloud, or the wheel of a train, or the full moon or the disk of the sun. The *Visuddhimagga* explains that since people are not the same as one another, the way the images arise is also diverse because of differences in perception.

The object that arises in this special way is called *paṭibhāganimitta*, the counter image. Starting from the time this *paṭibhāganimitta* arises, *bhāvanā samādhi* is also called *upacāra samādhi*, access concentration. If one continues to practice with this *upacāra samādhi*, before long one will be able to attain the four *appanā jhānas* mentioned before.

This is the method in brief of how the person who wants to practice via *samathayānika* should first practice *samatha*.

End of How to Practice *Samatha* In Brief

## How to Practice *Vipassanā* In Brief

The person who wants to practice *vipassanā* must have theoretical knowledge, whether heard or studied, in brief or in detail that in the body and mind process of beings only physical and mental phenomena exist, that these physical and mental phenomena also arise due to their respective causes, and that because they are continuously arising and passing away, there are only phenomena that are impermanent, suffering and non-self.

The person who has this theoretical knowledge should first enter into the *samatha jhāna* that one has attained (and caused to arise in oneself) according to the method explained, and begin by observing only that *jhāna*. Afterwards, one must continuously observe the seeing, hearing, knowing, etc., that clearly arise at the six sense doors according to their arising. Because of observing in this way many times, if the body and mind become tired, one should once again enter into the *jhāna* that one has mastered. After making a separate determination to remain there for a period of fifteen minutes, thirty minutes, etc., when emerging from that *jhāna*, after first observing only that *jhāna*, one should continue observing all the phenomena that arise at the six sense doors according to the previous method. If the body and mind become tired again, one should enter into *jhāna* again, and when emerging from that *jhāna*, one must continue to observe as before. When *vipassanā samādhi* becomes strong, one will not feel any physical or mental fatigue, and be able to observe continuously day and night. With each and every observation, one will come to know clearly and automatically that physical and mental phenomena are arising in a pair, and one will clearly know that cause and effect are also arising interrelatedly. With each and every noting, because one experiences the object that arises and the observing mind only disappearing, one comes to understand that they are also impermanent. One comes to understand that they are also suffering, without any enjoyment or reliance. One comes to understand that they are also impersonal phenomena that are arising and disappearing according to their nature (they are not a self, a being, or a soul).

When the knowledge of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*) is mature enough, one will clearly experience *nibbāna* with the arising of *magga* and *phala* knowledges.

This is the summary of how to practice to reach *nibbāna* via the path of *samathayānika*.

### **How to Practice With the Method of *Suddhaviṣṣanāyānika***

Now I will explain how to practice with the method of *suddhaviṣṣanāyānika*.

According to what was explained previously, if the person who has heard or studied about physical and mental phenomena and the nature of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*, wants to practice only *vipassanā* without establishing *samatha*, should sit with legs crossed in a quiet place, or in another posture where one can sit for a long time, and continuously observe the physical and mental phenomena of the five aggregates of clinging (*upādānakkhandhā*) that clearly arise in the body each and every time they occur.

The five aggregates of clinging are the phenomena that are clearly experienced at the six sense doors at the moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking.

Among these, at the moment of seeing, one can clearly experience the visible object and the material eye base. These are only physical aggregates. They are not enjoyable or pleasant. They are also not a self, a being, or “I.” However, people who do not observe with every seeing do not know that these phenomena disappear immediately, and are also impermanent. They also do not know that: “What continuously disappears after continuously arising is only suffering.” They also do not know that: “There is no self, no being. These are only impersonal phenomena that are arising and disappearing according to their natures.” Therefore, people enjoy and take delight in the visible object and the eyes and cling to them. They also think that these phenomena are a self, a being, an “I,” and cling to them. Thus, because they are perceived as pleasant and clung to, this visible object and the eyes are called physical aggregates of clinging, *rūpa upādānakkhandhā*.

In addition, the consciousness that sees the visible object (*cakkhuviññāṇa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*sañña*), the effort to see

(*sankhāra*)—the group of mental phenomena are also obvious (at the moment of seeing). These are also just mental aggregates. They are also not enjoyable or pleasant. They are also not a self, a being, or “I.” However, people who do not observe these phenomena each and every time they arise, because of not knowing that they are impermanent, suffering and non-self, instead think that they are pleasant and enjoyable and cling to them. People think: “I see, I feel, I perceive, I am looking with attention,” believing that there is also a self, a being, and “I” and cling to it. Because they are perceived as pleasant and clung to, these mental phenomena are also called “*viññāṇa upādānakkhandhā*,” mental aggregates of clinging.

This is how the five physical and mental aggregates of clinging are obvious at the moment of seeing a visible object with the eyes. In the same way, the way in which the five physical and mental aggregates of clinging are obvious at the moment of hearing a sound with the ears, smelling an odor with the nose, tasting a flavor with the tongue, experiencing a contact with the body, thinking and knowing a mental object with the mind should also be known. In particular, mental objects are related to both body and mind. Only this is unique.

Although physical and mental phenomena are arising clearly at all of the six sense doors, the person who is just beginning to practice meditation should observe all arising physical and mental phenomena according to their arising. It is similar to beginning one’s studies with an easy subject when learning something.

### ***Suddhavipassanā In Brief***

Therefore, one should begin by observing physical phenomena, which is the more obvious to observe, between physical and mental phenomena. Also among physical phenomena, the four great elements (*bhūtarūpa*) that can be experienced via touch are more obvious than the derived materiality (*upādārūpa*) that can be seen, heard, smelled, and tasted. Therefore, one should begin by observing the physical phenomena that can be experienced via contact in the body.

Therefore, in order to observe physical touching sensations that are especially obvious, when sitting, one should focus one's attention on the whole body and continuously note and observe "sitting, sitting." While observing this, one may also clearly experience the touching sensation at one spot under the buttocks or the legs. At this time, one should combine the touching sensation and the observation of "sitting, touching, sitting, touching." One should continuously observe these in turn, first by observing the sitting body, and then by observing the touching spot.

If one thinks that it is difficult to observe with the method of "sitting, touching," one can also focus on the place where the in and out breaths strike the nostril and observe "touching, touching." Or, one can also observe the physical touching sensations such as stiffness and movement in the abdomen as it rises and falls.

This method of observation is—first, focus the attention on the abdomen. One may experience the rising and swelling up as well as the falling and shrinking of the abdomen, in addition to the touching sensations of stiffness and movement of the abdomen that arise continuously. If this is not yet clear just by focusing on it mentally, touch the abdomen with one's hand. Do not hold the breath, or breathe faster, or breathe heavily. One must breathe naturally in the way that one does so normally. Note and observe "rising" when the abdomen swells and rises up. One should continuously know the rising up of the abdomen, movement by movement, from the beginning until the end. Also note and observe "falling" when the abdomen shrinks and falls. One should continuously know the falling of the abdomen movement by movement. With every rising and every falling, one should continuously observe "rising, falling, rising, falling, rising, falling."

**A special note**—one should not recite the labels of "rising, falling," etc., orally. One should observe while making only a mental label. The label is also not the main thing. The main thing is to know the touching sensations of stiffness and movement, etc., that really arise inside the body. However, if one only observes mentally without labelling, then mistakes tend to arise such as: the mind and the object will not stick together, one will not know the object and the mind separately, and one's energy will become slack, etc. Therefore, we give the instruction to observe while making silent mental labels.



While noting (i.e., making a mental label) and observing “rising, falling, rising, falling,” the mind may also wander off to other objects. One should observe these mental states as they arise.

The method of observation is—if one notices that the mind has wandered elsewhere, note and observe it as “wandering.” If one notices that one is planning, observe it as “planning.” If one notices that one is thinking, observe it as “thinking.” If one wants something, observe it as “wanting.” If one is enjoying, observe it as “enjoying.” If one feels angry, observe it as “angry.” If one feels dejected, observe it as “dejected.” If one feels lazy, observe it as “lazy.” If one feels happy, observe it as “happy.” In this way, one should observe these mental states again and again until they disappear. When these mental states disappear, one should return to continuously observing one’s primary object as “rising, falling, rising, falling.”

If unbearable feelings such as stiffness, heat, aching and pain, etc., arise in the body, one must focus on these unpleasant feelings and observe them as “stiff, stiff; hot, hot; pain, pain,” etc.,. When these unpleasant feelings disappear, one must continue to observe only the rising and falling. However, when the stiffness and heat, etc., are intense and become quite unbearable, one can move the arms, legs and change the posture of the body. At this time, however, one should focus on the bodily actions involved in moving and changing postures and observe them continuously according to their arising, such as “bending, bending; stretching, stretching; moving, moving; changing, changing; lifting, lifting; placing, placing.” When these actions are complete, one should return to continuously observing only the rising and falling.

If one happens to look at something, one must observe it as “looking, seeing, looking, seeing.” If one sees something without intentionally looking, one must observe it as “seeing, seeing.” If one happens to hear something, one must observe it as “listening, hearing, listening, hearing.” If one hears something unintentionally, one must observe it as “hearing, hearing.” If one happens to think, one must observe it as “thinking, thinking.” Afterwards, one should return to continuously observing the rising and falling.

Also when getting up from sitting, when standing, when lying down, etc., every time one makes a bodily movement, one should observe the process

thoroughly. When walking, every time one takes a step, one should pay attention so as to clearly know these movements from the beginning until the end, observing them thoroughly as “walking, walking,” or “stepping, stepping,” or “lifting, moving, placing.”

To summarize, one must observe so as to know all bodily movements such as bending, stretching, etc., whenever they arise. One must also observe so as to know all the feelings that arise in the body and mind every time they arise. One must also observe so as to know all wandering thoughts as they arise. When there is nothing special arising, and one is sitting still or lying down, one must continuously observe any touching sensation in the body. Here we instruct the meditator to observe only the rising and falling of the abdomen, which are especially clear and easy to explain, as a primary object. However, if one wants, one can also observe sitting and touching as a primary object, which was explained previously, or also the touching sensation of the in and out breath.

When one can easily note whatever object that arises, then there is no longer the need to anchor the mind on the primary object. One can observe all the objects that arise accordingly as they occur, such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, knowing, touching, thinking.

In this way, if the meditator (yogī) observes continuously, when concentration and knowledge become strong, one can personally experience and know many units of consciousness arising and passing away even within a second. However, beginner yogis are not yet able to know so quickly. We can understand this case by comparing the slow reading speed of a person who is just beginning to learn how to read to the fast reading speed of a person who is well versed in letters. A person who is just beginning to meditate also should continuously strive so as to be able to observe no less than one noting per second.

End of How to Practice *Vipassanā* In Brief

## **How *Vipassanā Samādhi*, Insight Knowledges, and *Magga Phala* Knowledges Arise**

According to what was discussed just now, although one is practicing so as to continuously observe no less than one noting per second, for a beginner there may be so many bodily actions and mental activities that one forgets and does not observe them. According to what was shown in the section on *samatha*, there also may be many wandering minds with mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) that go off elsewhere. Especially in the practice of *samatha*, it is not necessary to observe the mind that forgets and the minds that wander off elsewhere. It is necessary only to return to observing the usual object of *samatha* meditation.

In *vipassanā* meditation, however, one must observe and know these minds that forget and the minds that wander off elsewhere. After observing them, one must return to observing the usual objects of rising and falling, etc. This is one instance where there is a difference in the practice between *samatha* and *vipassanā* regarding the removal of mental hindrances.

In *samatha bhāvanā*, one must continuously observe only the object of *samatha*, so that the mind becomes established only on a single object. There is no need to observe the physical and mental phenomena that are not the object of *samatha*. Therefore, even though mental hindrances such as planning and thinking sometimes arise, it is not necessary to observe them. It is necessary only to remove them.

In *vipassanā bhāvanā*, because one must observe whatever physical and mental objects that arise at the six sense doors, if the minds that forget to observe and that wander off thinking about something else, as well as mental hindrances such as wanting and liking, etc., arise, one must also observe these mental states. If one does not observe them, one will also cling to these minds as permanent, happiness, and self. Thus, when these mental hindrances arise, one's work is not yet complete if one merely puts them aside without paying attention to them (*asatiāmanasikāra*) as with *samatha* meditation. Furthermore, only if one observes so as to know correctly with *sabhāvalakkhaṇā* (individual characteristics) and *sāmaññalakkhaṇā* (common characteristics), can clinging

be removed, and can one complete the work of *vipassanā*. This is an additional point of explanation.

Thus, after one has observed many times, the mind that wanders off will no longer arise as much, and one's mind will become calm. Even if the mind goes off elsewhere, one will be able to know it immediately, and will be able to cut it off immediately. Sometimes, one will find that one can even observe the very beginning of a thought that is about to go off elsewhere, and also can observe at a stretch without breaking one's continuity, without the mind going off in thoughts at all. At this time, the concentration that sticks onto the object with every noting and stays on it is called *vipassanākhanika samādhi*, *vipassanā* momentary concentration. Because one is free from mental hindrances such as sense desire (*kāmacchanda*), etc., it is also equivalent to *upacāra samādhi* in *samatha* practice. Because the mind is not mixed with mental hindrances that scatter and go off, and only the noting and observing *bhāvanā* consciousness is continuously pure, from the succeeding to the preceding consciousness, this is also called *cittavisuddhi*, mental purification.

At this time, with every noting, one knows all the physical phenomena of the rising and falling, etc., that are observed and the knowing mind, as well as other physical phenomena separately and distinctly, without mixing them up. One also knows all the mental phenomena such as the observing mind, thinking mind, seeing, etc., and physical phenomena, as well as other mental phenomena separately and distinctly without mixing them up. Even at the moment of each and every noting, one knows physical phenomena and the knowing mind separately and distinctly. This knowing of mental and physical phenomena separately is called *nāmarūpa paricchedañāna*.

Furthermore, after knowing repeatedly, one understands that in this body, only the physical phenomena of rising, falling, and movement, etc., (which cannot know objects) and the mental phenomena of the observing mind, seeing, etc., (which can know objects), only these two things exist. One comes to understand and confirm that there is no person or being, aside from physical and mental phenomena. Coming to understand in this way while observing is called *ditthivisuddhi*, purity of view.

Afterwards, if one continues to practice, with each and every noting, one also comes to understand that physical and mental phenomena are arising related to cause and effect. One personally experiences and understands that because of the desire to bend, the desire to stretch and the desire to move, the physical phenomena of bending, stretching, and moving arise; due to the elements of heat and cold, the physical phenomena of heat and cold change and arise; and due to the cause of nutrition, new materialities arise.

Furthermore, one comes to understand by personal experience that because the eye and visible object, ear and sound, etc., exist, seeing, hearing, etc., arise; because the observed objects of rising and falling, etc., exist, the observing consciousness arises; and because there is attention, the mind reaches the objects.

In addition, one comes to understand in this way: that because of ignorance which thinks “it is good, it is happiness” and craving which desires pleasure and happiness, one plans and acts; by clinging to these actions, new consciousness arises; that death is also simply the final disappearance of consciousness like the ones that are being observed, and that the arising of new existence is also simply the arising of new consciousness along with the materiality on which it depends, etc.

Understanding the causal dhammas as well in this way is called *paccayapariggahañāna*.

When one comes to understand that only cause and effect are arising interrelatedly in this way, one also comes to understand that: “Previously too there were only physical and mental phenomena that are cause and effect. In the future too there will only be physical and mental phenomena that are cause and effect. Coming to understand in this way is called *kaṅkhāvitaraṇavisuddhi*.

Before one knows that only physical and mental phenomena that are cause and effect exist, one thinks that this physical and mental phenomena are a self and “I,” and wrong views such as “Did I exist in the past as well? Do I exist only in the present? After dying, will I continue to exist in the future as well?” can arise. Now, these kinds of doubts can no longer arise. It can be said that one is liberated from these kinds of doubts.

If one continues to practice, because one sees that with every observation, physical and mental phenomena only disappear after arising, one comes to reflect that they are also impermanent. This is *anicca sammasanañāṇa*.

Because one sees only that the arising and disappearing are continuously oppressing, one also comes to reflect that there is nothing enjoyable, nothing reliable, and that there is only frightful suffering. This is *dukkha sammasanañāṇa*.

Because one sees that things do not happen according to one's wishes, but are arising and disappearing according to their nature, one also comes to reflect that: "There is no self or I who is in control. There is only impersonal phenomena." This is *anatta sammasanañāṇa*.

Having reflected in this way, when one is satisfied, one no longer reflects but only observes. At this time, with every observation, one also knows clearly and distinctly the beginning of the observed object. One also knows clearly and distinctly the sudden disappearance of the object. These special dhammas may also arise: lights, enjoyment and rapture, mental tranquility, faith in the Buddha and the Dhamma, keen desire to meditate, happiness, extremely clear and swift knowing, the ability to observe mindfully without missing the observed objects, the ability to observe without exerting special effort, delight in meditation, etc. Therefore, the yogi tends to be joyful and excited, unable to refrain from speaking about his or her experiences. One thinks that one has gained the special Dhamma. This is immature *udayabbayañāṇa*, and not true path knowledge.

One must believe and determine, whether according to book knowledge, or whether according to the teachers' explanations, that these lights, etc., are not yet the "special Dhamma," and that: "Only continuously observing whatever objects that arise is the correct path of *vipassanā* to gain the special Dhamma." Determining in this way is called *maggāmaggañāṇa dassanavisuddhi*.

After determining in this way, if one continues to observe, the lights and rapture, etc., will gradually decrease. The noting and observation is also clearer. Within one bending and stretching of the arm or leg, within one stepping of the foot, before the arm or foot has reached one place from another, one clearly and

distinctly knows many separate movements arising and passing away part by part. This is mature *udayabbayañāṇa* that is free from *upakkilesas*.

When this knowledge has become mature, the knowing becomes more swift. Therefore, one experiences only the ending and disappearance more clearly than the beginning of the object. The observed objects come to an end, as though they have already disappeared. One no longer sees the form or shape of the arms, legs, head, and body, etc., and one only experiences everything disappearing in a blur with each and every observation. One sees the observing mind and also its object disappearing together successively. Seeing the object and the knowing mind disappearing in a pair with every observation in this way is called *bhaṅgañāṇa*.

Because one sees that the known object and the knowing mind only disappear together with every observation, one comes to think that: “It is frightful.” This is *bhayañāṇa*.

One also comes to see the faults of phenomena as: “It is not good.” This is *ādīnavañāṇa*.

One also comes to think: “There is nothing enjoyable. It is boring and tiresome.” This is *nibbidāñāṇa*.

The knowledge that longs to be liberated from the suffering of the body and mind process also arises: “It would be good if this body and mind that are arising and passing away did not exist.” This is *muciñtukamyatāñāṇa*.

At this time, because one once again observes after making special effort to be liberated, one clearly sees the nature of impermanence, suffering and non-self. In particular, one experiences the nature of suffering extremely clearly. This is *paṭisaṅkhāñāṇa*.

When this *paṭisaṅkhāñāṇa* is mature, one’s observation occurs automatically without making any special effort, like clockwork. One does not follow the nature of good or bad objects, and only observes them with equanimity. It is extremely delicate and subtle. The knowing proceeds with its own momentum, for an hour, two hours, and even three hours. Although the

duration is this long, there is no stiffness or tiredness. Neither following good or bad objects, nor without making any special effort, and only knowing the true nature of objects for a long time in this way is called *saṅkhārupekkhāñāṇa*.

While the knowing is occurring automatically with its own momentum, especially keen and swift knowledges arise. These knowledges rush into *magga* (which is called *vuṭṭhāna*) with force. They are called *vuṭṭhānagāminī vipassanāñāṇa*.

At this time, these special knowledges also arise clearly seeing the physical and mental phenomena that are arising as impermanent, or suffering, or non-self. Among these, the final knowledge is *anulomañāṇa* which includes three *jāvanas*, called *parikāṃupacā anuloma*. It is an insight knowledge that arises in harmony with the preceding *vipassanāñāṇa* and the succeeding *maggañāṇa*.

Beginning with the previously matured *udayabbhayañāṇa*, up to this *anulomañāṇa*, all the nine insight knowledges together are called *paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi*.

The following insight knowledge reaches towards the object of *nibbāna* which cuts off the suffering of the body and mind process. This *gotrabhuñāṇa*. It is the knowledge that cuts off the lineage of a worldling, *puthujjana*, and enters into the lineage of a noble one, *ariya*.

Afterwards, one personally experiences *nibbāna*. *Sotāpatti magga* and *phala* knowledge arise. Among these, *magga* knowledge is called *ñāṇadassanavisuddhi*.

The moment *magga* and *phala* arise is not even a second long. Afterwards, one reflects again on the special *magga*, *phala* and *nibbāna* that one has experienced. This is *paccavekkhaṇāñāṇa*.

The person who has fully experienced the insight knowledges in this order until *paccavekkhaṇāñāṇa* is one who has become a *sotāpanna*.



*Sotāpannas* are free from the three fetters of:

1. *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* — thinking that the aggregates of physical and mental phenomena are a self.
2. *Vicikicchā* — doubts related to the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha and training.
3. *Sīlabbataparāmāsa* — wrong views and belief that other practices besides the practice of the Noble Path that can lead to *nibbāna* are good practices.

In addition, *sotāpannas* also cannot break the five precepts, they naturally keep them unbroken and pure.

Therefore, *sotāpannas* are totally freed from rebirth in the four lower realms. They are reborn in the *deva* and human realms for seven existences at the most, and in the seventh existence become *arahants* and enter into *nibbāna*.

If a *sotāpanna* practices *vipassanā* intending to enter into the *phala* dhamma that he or she has attained, when entering into that *phala*, he or she can stay in *phalasangāhī* for five minutes, ten minutes, half an hour, one hour, etc. If one has gained mastery, one can also quickly enter into it. One can also stay in this *phalasangāhī* for a long time, even for the entire day, or the entire night.

By intending to realize the *magga* and *phala* that one has not yet attained, by observing the five aggregates of clinging using the same method, after the *vipassanāñāṇas* such as *udayabbayañāṇa*, etc., have arisen in order, when one's faculties have also become mature, one experiences *nibbāna* with *sakadāgāmi magga* and *phala* knowledge, and becomes a *sakadāgāmi*. *Sakadāgāmis* are free from coarse sense desire (*kāmarāga*) and ill will (*byāpāda*). Therefore, after being reborn in the human and *deva* realms for two existences at the most, *sakadāgāmis* become *arahants* and enter into *nibbāna*.

If a *sakadāgāmi* also wants to enter into *phala*, after practicing *vipassanā*, he or she can attain the *phala* that he or she has already gained. If one practices *vipassanā* intending to reach a higher path and fruition, after the *vipassanāñāṇas* have arisen in order in the same way, one realizes *nibbāna* with

*anāgami magga* and *phala* and becomes an *anāgami*. *Anāgamis* are totally free from sense desire and ill will. Therefore, *anāgamis* are no longer reborn in the sense spheres. They are only reborn in the *rūpa* and *arūpa brahmā* realms, and become *arahants* and enter into *nibbāna* only in these realms.

If an *anāgami* also wants to enter in to *phala*, after practicing *vipassanā*, he or she can attain the *phala* that he or she has already gained. If one practices *vipassanā* intending to reach a higher path and fruition, after the *vipassanāñāṇas* have arisen in order in the same way, one realizes *nibbāna* with *arahatta magga* and *phala* and becomes an *arahant*.

*Arahants* are free from all mental defilements and the remaining five fetters of *rūparāga*, *arūparāga*, *māna*, *uddhacca*, and *avijjā*. Therefore, there is no more rebirth in a new existence for an *arahant*. In the current existence, when life is finished, the *arahant* enters into *parinibbāna*.

Starting from the time of entering into *parinibbāna*, because there is no more new existence, one is totally liberated from all suffering such as aging, disease and death, etc. It is with this benefit of being liberated that the beginning of this booklet poses the question: “Why should one practice *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation?” and answers it thus: “One should practice it for the sake of liberation from all suffering such as aging and death, etc., by attaining *nibbāna*.”

May the people who want to be liberated from all suffering such as aging and death, etc., be able to practice meditation according to the instructions given in this book, and swiftly attain *nibbāna* that extinguishes all suffering.

End of *How Vipassanā Samādhi, Insight Knowledges, and Magga Phala Knowledges Arise*