

Dhammakaya Open University, California, USA



BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF MEDITATION

MD 101E



Meditation I

**BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF
MEDITATION**

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Chapter 1

Meditation Defined

Units in This Chapter

1.1 Components of the Human Being

- 1.1.1 The Physical Body
- 1.1.2 The Mind

1.2 Characteristics of Mind

- 1.2.1 Nature of the Mind
- 1.2.2 Properties of the Mind

1.3 Meditation Defined

- 1.3.1 Defined in Terms of Its Outcomes
- 1.3.2 Defined in Terms of Practice
- 1.3.3 Defined in Terms of the Body of Enlightenment [*Dhammakaaya*]

1.4 Characteristics of Mind in Meditation

- 1.4.1 At Basic Levels of Meditation
- 1.4.2 At Attainment Levels of Meditation

1.5 Importance of Meditation

- 1.5.1 Meditation as a Part of Life
- 1.5.2 Meditation in Daily Life

Chapter at a Glance

1. Our human being is made up of two main components – the body and the mind. Meditation emphasizes development of the mind component.
2. The mind is of a nature of being easily distracted, hard to keep in one place or otherwise control, tending to wander and distance itself from the body even though the body is where it should reside.
3. The word ‘meditation’ has different meanings depending on whether it is meant as a practice or as the result of practice. At its simplest, meditation is the ability of the mind to stay in a single mood extendedly without wandering – thereby bringing about a sense of peace, ease and purity.
4. The characteristics of the mind at a basic level of meditation are as follows -
- purity, stability and workability. If the degree of meditation is improved until the mind reaches attainment states, it will be even more pure, stable and workable – but also radiant, subtle and smooth.
5. In daily life, every person can use meditation to their benefit for success in all activities. Training mind through meditation facilitates virtue, happiness and success in daily life.

Chapter Objectives

Students will have the knowledge and understanding to be able to:

1. identify human components involved with meditation.
2. identify characteristics of mind.
3. define meditation.
4. distinguish between states of mind at the basic and attainment levels.
5. explain the importance of meditation in daily life.

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Meditation Defined

Contrary to popular Buddhist opinion, meditation is not intended as a practice exclusively for monks and nuns. Meditation is accessible to everyone as a way to train and develop the mind to become more stable, focussed and effective. From a Buddhist point of view, meditation is also a practical way to bring happiness in life for laypeople and as a way for monastics to attain liberation. Meditation is not just for Buddhists however, but can be practised by those of all religions or even those who have no religion. It is importance to practice meditation first-hand because it is not by reading about it or discussing it that practitioners will get results. Furthermore, if one has any doubts which come up as the result of practice, one can further one's understanding by seeking guidance from those more experienced in meditation than oneself. Practice cannot be substituted for by even the most detailed study of meditation theory.

1.1 Components of the Human Being

Our human being is composed of a physical body and a mind:

1.1.1 *The Physical Body:* Our body is the part of ourselves made up of flesh and bones, skin and bodily organs – the part of ourselves visible to the eye. On a deeper level, the body is composed of elements [*dhaatu*]; earth, water, wind and fire. Five parts of our body are composed of very delicate elements called “the external senses”: our eyes, ears, nose, tastebuds and tactile sensors all over the surface of our body. Although meditation practice almost entirely concerns the training of the mind, the practice is also related to our body.



1.1.2 *The Mind:* is a kind of spherical-shaped living element, based inside the physical body for as long as a person is alive. The mind is not identified with the heart because the heart is merely a muscle in body, but is kind of energy, ethereal and invisible to the eye or any type of empirical instrumentation. The mind deals agily with one topic at a time, working even with remote subjects and controlling the movement of the body. The permanent base of the mind is at the center of body. The mind is like an element of consciousness and coordinates with the five external senses:

- 1) controlling them directly;
- 2) controlling the four faculties concerning each of them:¹
 - **Perception:** by receiving the images, sounds, perfumes, tastes and touches, converting them to images.
 - **Memory:** by recording all the converted sensory images, as if like movies on film, for use in the future.
 - **Thought:** by processing memorized data in a precursory way to categorize it as good or bad, liked, hated or neutral.
 - **Knowing:** processing data received from the five senses through to the level of knowledge.

A complete human must have both body and mind. If someone has no body but only mind, we refer to them as a ghost or disembodied spirit or a being belonging to a non-human realm of existence. Someone who has a body but no mind is called a corpse. Therefore having both body and mind is the minimum requirement for being a human being. Humans are different from other forms of life because human beings are able to meditate. Although other beings may have both body and mind, they are unable to meditate.²

1.2 Characteristics of the Mind

1.2.1 Nature of the Mind

The mind is of a nature of being easily distracted, hard to keep in one place or otherwise control. It cannot remain with the same emotion for long, tending to succumb to pleasurable emotions. We can thus categorize the characteristic nature of the mind as follows:³



1. **Distracted:** The mind struggles to fulfil desires and succumb to emotions just as a fish out of water struggles to get back in.
2. **Restless:** The mind does not stay with any emotion for long, but jumps from one to the next just as a monkey jumps from branch to branch.
3. **Hard to keep in one place:** It is as hard to get the mind to stay in one place or to stay still without thinking as it is to get an infant to stay still.
4. **Hard to control:** To prevent the mind from thinking about particular things can be as hard as keeping back cows from grazing a pasture.

¹ Phrabhavanaviriya Khun (Phadej Dattajivo). *Essential Knowledge for Buddhists* (Thai title = *Chao Puth Tong Roo*) (Bangkok: Aksornbandit, 1988), p11.

² Animals can hardly practice meditation because the condition and quality of mind is inferior to that of humans. Buddhism includes animals as one of the realms of existence in the unfortunate (hell) realms (e.g. the major hells, hungry ghosts, monster, and animals). Further details can be found in GL101 on Buddhist Cosmology.

³ DhA.i.283ff.

The most familiar comparisons we hear for the mind are that of a badly behaved infant or a monkey – because the mind does not stay in one place, succumbs easily to the emotions, never stopping like a monkey that swings from one branch to the next.

Phrarajabhavanavisudh explains that the human mind that in general, the human mind is never still, but is stirred up by the events in daily life. Children may not have much on their minds but play, study and entertainment – but when grown to adulthood, there is much more to think about – especially relationships and earning a living – all of which tends to scatter one's attention.

1.2.2 Properties of the Mind

The Tripitaka commentaries describe the mind as having the following characteristics:⁴

1. **Far - travelling** [*duura"ngama.m*]: although the mind resides in the body, it can take one's awareness far away from the body by intention alone with no need for any vehicle to get there. We can be sitting in one place, but our mind can be elsewhere – back home, with unfinished tasks, with friends or family or the things you plan to talk to them about;
2. **Travels alone** [*ekacara.m*]: refers to two characteristics of the mind – that it thinks of one thing at a time and that it can manage unaided:
 - 1 *Thinking of one thing at a time*: As a demonstration of the mind's inability to 'multitask' try simultaneously writing a 'five' with one hand and a four with the other. Although the mind cannot think of more than one thing at once it is fast enough to alternate between tasks with practice because it ticks over faster than the body, any processor in the world and even the speed of light. Sometimes, mind commands can be too fast for the body to follow, for example, when human someone is so terrified that they have conflicting orders from the mind both to stay still and run away or when they are so angry they are speechless.
 - 2 *Managing unaided*: The mind doesn't have a need for companionship like the body. The body has a tendency to loneliness, but mind can get by without companionship because it is self-sufficient. It doesn't have need of support from the minds of others to function correctly.
3. **Non-corporeal** [*asariira.m*]: the mind is an entity separate from our body – with its own shape and form – usually a clear sphere. From ancient time to nowadays, researchers have tried to detect the mind, but because mind is so subtle it cannot be detected with empirical instruments. Some modern thinkers think that mind is only some kind of phenomenon generated by the nervous system and it disappears in the absence of the nervous system or even when we are asleep. In reality, the mind continues working even when the brain is at rest, just as a movie track remains invisible on the celluloid even though the

⁴ Ibid.

movie screen has been packed up. In the same way, both mind and brain exist – the nervous system being equivalent to the ‘screen’ on which the minds is as celluloid.

4. **Has the body as its cave (dwelling place)** [*guhaasaya.m*]: indicating that the mind belongs inside the body, especially at the centre of the body. Some consider the mind to be located in the heart, but this is unlikely, as most people get their mind back unperturbed even after heart surgery. The mind is often tempted outside the body by the influence of the external perception such as images, sounds, aromas, tastes or tactile sensations.

All of the above briefly explain the character of mind that we are training. It is necessary to know the characters of the mind before attempting to train it in meditation – just as a person who wants to trade in precious stones has to learn their characteristics first, otherwise they are unlikely to work at a profit. Thus, even if a meditator may not get immediate results in meditation to learn about the character of mind firsthand is still a big advantage.⁵

1.3 Meditation Defined

Meditation can be explained at different levels of meaning. The meaning of the word ‘meditation’ can depend on whether it is meant as a practice or as the result of practice to bring about a sense of peace, ease and purity. At its simplest, meditation is the ability of the mind to stay in a single mood extendedly without wandering – a sort of happiness which one can bring about oneself – something which is advantageous for all to practice, bringing benefits in life including happiness, non-recklessness [*appamaada*], mindfulness [*sati*], self-possession [*sampajañña*] and wisdom [*pañña*] -- which is not beyond anyone’s power to practice easily.

1.3.1 Defined in Terms of Its Outcomes: Meditation is the settling of the mind to continuous peace and unity exhibiting only purity, radiance, brightness and giving rise simultaneously to encouragement, morale, wisdom and happiness.⁶

1.3.2 Defined in Terms of Practice: Meditation means stability of mind at a single point or a state of mind unwavering from its point of focus or undistractedness of mind.

1.3.3 Defined in Terms of the Body of Enlightenment: Meditation⁷ is a practice to still our mind at the centre of the body, to gently bring the mind back inside our body at ease, to prevent the mind being scattered by

⁵ Phra Dhevisudhikavi (Pichit .Thitava.n.noo) *Kammathan Training*. 4th edition, (Bangkok : Mahamakutrajavitayalai, 2538), p.175.

⁶ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Phra Phadet Dattajeevo) (2003) *The Fruits of True Monkhhood* (Bangkok : Dharmasarn), p.78.

⁷ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1994) *First Sunday of the Month Meditation Teaching* November 6, November 1994, (cassette tape).

various emotions and thoughts -- whether it be thoughts of family, business, work, study, amusement, revellry, or any other thought – to unify the mind on a single object within the body. Phrarajbhavanavisudh also offer quotes the explanation of Phramonkolthepmuni who explained meditation as gently unifying the faculties of perception, memory, thought and cognition at a single point at the centre of the body until our mind comes to a standstill at the centre of the body.

1.4 Characteristics of the Mind in Meditation

A distinction can be made between the characteristics exhibited by the mind at different levels of meditation:

1.4.1 At Basic Levels of Meditation: Amongst the many characteristics exhibited by mind at this level of meditation, the mind becomes stable and steadfast in a single state. At a certain degree of attainment, the mind will develop three clear characteristics⁸:

1. purity
2. stability
3. workability.

The mind well-trained in meditation will gain peace, calm, stability, steadfast in the face of emotion and will have a subtlety and calm making it suitable for attaining higher levels of meditation.

1.4.2 At Attainment [appanna] States of Meditation: The Tripitaka refers the mind develops eight further characteristics:⁹

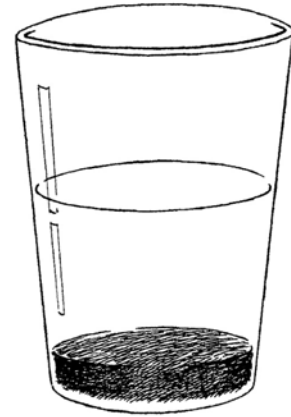
1. *stability*: the mind stays focussed on the chosen object
2. *purity*: freedom from defilements
3. *brightness*: absence of defilements to cloud the mind
4. *unruffled*: not perturbed by ups and downs of circumstances in the outside world
5. *freedom from defilements*: undisturbed by the action of defilements
6. *subtle*: soft rather than unyielding
7. *workable*: easy to work with, especially on tasks for developing wisdom
8. *steadfast*: unmoveable like a foundation pile.

⁸ Variya Chinavanno et al (1990) *Meditation in the Tripitaka* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University), p.55

⁹ *Chavisodhana Sutta*, M.iii.29ff..

Thus, the mind in meditation is identified by the same stability, smoothness and tranquility as a millpond in the absence of wind or ripples.

Meditation allows the mind sufficient clarity and brightness to see things clearly. Even clouded water can become clear if the mud is allowed to settle out or precipitate. Similarly, when the thoughts in the mind settle through meditation, the mind becomes uncluttered, overcoming any former confusion, stress, impatience or anxiety.



These characteristics of the mind in meditation involved with mind can be cultivated not only by sitting with one's eyes closed – but can be cultivated at every waking moment of our lives, whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down. The important principle is to let our mind remain firmly on a single object of meditation.

1.5 Importance of Meditation

1.5.1 Meditation as a Part of Life

Meditation is highly relevant to daily life. Everybody can benefit from meditation, but most people don't realize it. Teachers who find their students don't listen to them could solve the problem by having their students meditate and meditating themselves too – because if the students have short attention spans, they cannot not remember or value anything the teacher teaches. Meditators are better able to concentrate on what they are reading and can thereby understand and retain more.



Sportmen can also benefit from meditation – whether it be for golfing, shooting, weight lifting or combat sports. Competitors whose mind is calmed can perform better. Quality of work can benefit from meditation too, especially intricate tasks such as handicrafts, design, carving and art.

Self-control is also enhanced by meditation, especially when in life we cannot avoid contact with words, places, people and situations we have to put up with – thus meditation is relevant to making life more bearable.

A calm mind is essential for thinking things through clearly, reflection, remembering things, learning, considerate speech and every sort of task because the tranquil mind is fastidious and inspired. In the still waters run deep and the mirror-surface of undisturbed water in the vessel can give us a clear reflection of

our own face. In the same way a mind that is clarified by meditation, clearly reflects our inner images. Anyone who has this sort of clear insight will take better decisions than one whose inner images are vague or whose mind is as scattered as wild water.

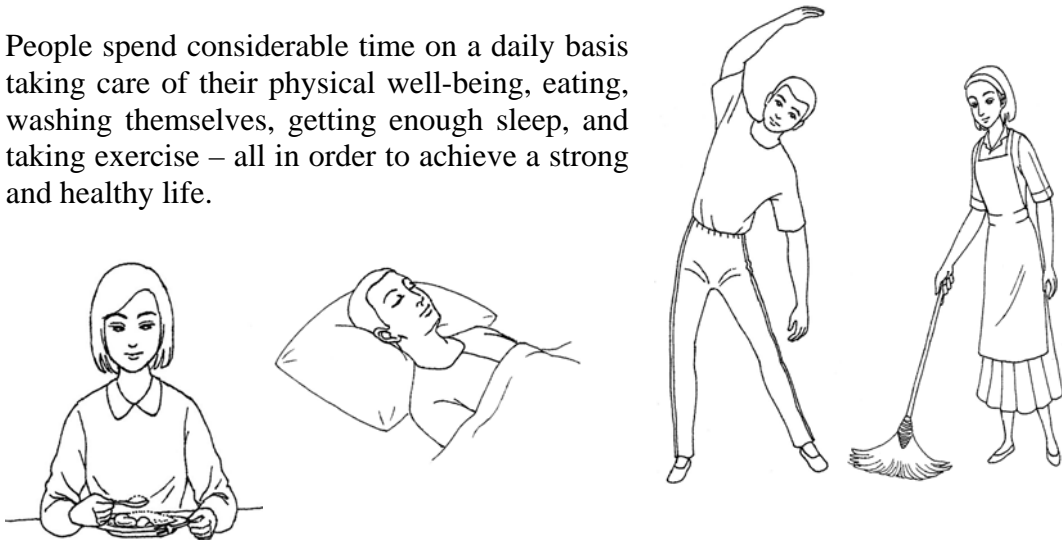
The mind can be compared to a form of energy like light which has its own aura. If there is no focus for the mind, the energy is scattered giving off a dim and undirected aura, however if like a light focussed by a lens, the mind is brought together at a single point, the mind can be much more powerful. Meditation serves to bring the mind together in a single point allowing it to work with greater efficiency.

It is just like a person in a fast-moving car cannot see things clearly – it is only by stopping the car that they can get a clear view. Similarly, if our mind is wandering all the time, jumping all the time from one notion to another, our vision of the world will be vague. However, when the mind comes to a standstill, our vision becomes clear. This is even more the case if the mind's energies can be focussed by meditation in the same way as the rays of the sun can be focussed by a magnifying glass. Such an enhanced mind allows us to think, speak and make impossible things possible. The heightened state of morale achieved allows one to persevere in the face of all obstacles. Therefore, the achievements of those who meditate are often more than those who don't.

Therefore, meditation is of great importance for daily life. We should practice meditation every day and train our mind to be balanced and effective even during our working day. As soon as we can maintain a mind of meditation throughout the day, our mind will reach new heights of capability and effectiveness.

1.5.2 Meditation in Daily Life

People spend considerable time on a daily basis taking care of their physical well-being, eating, washing themselves, getting enough sleep, and taking exercise – all in order to achieve a strong and healthy life.



What many people overlook however, is that we need to give our mind as much attention on a daily basis to allow ourselves to work, think, take decisions and perform to our full potential.

Meditation is the key to exercising the mind and cultivating a constant state of mind by which one is ready to think, speak and perform to the best of one's ability each day. It is thus essential for us to re-balance our mind by practicing meditation every day. The table below summarizes daily care of the body and mind:

Comparative Table of Daily Maintenance of Body and Mind

| Daily Activities for Body | Daily Activities for Mind |
|--|---|
| Exercise for a strong and active body. | Meditation for clear thought and a sharp mind. |
| Healthy diet for a strong body. | Meditation for a cheerful and powerful mind. |
| Hygiene to keep the body free of perspiration and dead skin. | Meditation for reduction of impurities in the mind. |
| Sleep to rest body from weariness. | Meditation to bring the mind to stillness and liberation. |

Chapter 2

Categorizing Meditation

Units in this Chapter

2.1 Right & Wrong Meditation

- 2.1.1 An Overview
- 2.1.2 Place of Focus of the Mind
- 2.1.3 Effects of Meditation

2.2 Degrees of Meditation

- 2.2.1 Preparatory Concentration [*kha.nika-samaadhi*]
- 2.2.2 Neighborhood Concentration [*upacaara-samaadhi*]
- 2.2.3 Attainment Concentration [*apanaa-samaadhi*]

Chapter at a Glance

1. Right Meditation is meditation that focuses the mind at a place inside the body where happiness, peace and wisdom arise – and where the defilements are reduced – as a means to attain liberation. Wrong Meditation is meditation that focuses the mind outside the body at a place where anxiety increases and the defilements increase.
2. Meditation can be classified into one of three kinds depending on where the mind is focused during meditation: 1) meditation focusing the mind outside the body, 2) meditation focusing the mind inside the body and 3) meditation focusing the mind at the center of the body.
3. The degree of meditation can be categorized into three levels: 1) Preparatory concentration [*kha.nika-samaadhi*]; 2) Neighborhood concentration [*upacaara-samaadhi*], and; 3) Attainment concentration [*appanaa-samaadhi*].

Chapter Objectives

This chapter should give students the knowledge and understanding to be able to:

1. define Right Meditation and Wrong Meditation and explain the difference between them.
2. explain how and where the mind is focused affects the sort of meditation produced.
3. differentiate between the different degrees of meditation.
4. apply their knowledge when interpreting meditation results.



Categorizing Meditation

2.1 Right & Wrong Meditation

2.1.1 An Overview

Most people shy away from suffering and seek after happiness. Unfortunately the happiness that most people find gives only temporary relief from suffering – because it does not reach the roots of suffering or lead to permanent happiness. People overlook the fact that suffering lies inside the mind (rather than outside it) and therefore must be dealt with inside the mind, not in the body or outside body and mind.

Many misunderstand that drinking, taking drugs and roaming from one place of entertainment to another will alleviate their suffering – but in fact, it only manages to distract the mind from suffering temporarily. If we want to deal with suffering on a permanent basis, we cannot avoid meditation – and it is perhaps no surprise that meditation is becoming more popular in the present day, especially in the western world.

Different people, however, meditate for different reason. Some merely want to show off mental powers to win spiritual followers. Others wish to use meditation to cultivate mindfulness and wisdom to deal with suffering at its roots. Thus, it is obvious that the one word ‘meditation’ can refer to different things. Therefore, it is necessary to take note of the most fundamental categorization of meditation – so that when we come to practice meditation, we can choose the correct methodology:

1. Right Meditation

Proper meditation in Buddhism is called ‘Right Meditation’ [*Sammaa Samaadhi*] further elucidated in the scriptures as follows:¹

“What do we mean by Right Meditation? Any monk established in the Dhammavinaya, who is aloof from the sense pleasures and unwholesomeness attaining the first absorption as identified by initial application of mind [*vitakka*], continued application of mind [*vicaara*], joy [*piiti*] and happiness [*sukha*] and one-pointedness [*ekaggata*]. Detached from these qualities, he enters upon the second absorption – his mind becoming brighter in the absence of initial or continued application of mind. Only joy, happiness and

¹ Satipa.t.thaana Sutta M.i.56ff. verse 149

one-pointedness [*ekaggata*] remain, mindful [*sati*] and self-posessed [*sampajañña*]. Detached from these qualities, joy disappeared, and he enters upon the third absorption as praised by the Buddhist saints as being one who has attained equanimity, mindfulness and happiness. Entering upon the fourth absorption where there is neither suffering nor happiness – because he has already transcended elation and sorrow. Equanimity results in the pure mindfulness named Right Meditation – otherwise known as the Noble Truth of the Pathway to the Cessation of Suffering [*dukkha-nirodha-gaaminii-pa.tipadaa-ariyasacca*].”

It can be concluded that Right Meditation is a way to calm the mind and reduce any sensuality or unwholesomeness in the mind. All the way from the first to the fourth absorption, will have the condition of feeling ‘neither-happiness-nor-suffering’ [*adukkhamasukha*], but rather abiding in equanimity [*upekkhaa*] which allows one to perceive things in pure mindfulness.

In other places in the Buddhist Scriptures, Right Meditation is described as:

1. the mind free of mental chatter²
2. a mind made stable and focused in the proper way.³

In the Abhidhamma, Right Meditation is described as:

Right Meditation is the focus of the mind, where the mind is stable and unwavering. The mind’s condition of being unmoving gives rise to peacefulness, the faculty of concentration, the strength of concentration, and focusing the mind in the proper way.⁴

Right Meditation can thus be seen to be of great benefit to the practitioner of meditation. When mental chatter disappears and the mind becomes focused, Wrong Meditation and defilements will be vanquished in accordance with the scriptures which affirm that, “those who cultivate Right Concentration will uproot greed, hatred and delusion.”⁵

Broadly speaking, it can be said that Right Meditation is able to eradicate Wrong Meditation, mental chatter and defilements, and allow the practitioner thereby to attain the highest goal of Nirvana. As stated in the Majjhima Nikaaya Commentaries that when Right Meditation comes into existence, Wrong Meditation and the defilements which are the obstacle to Right Meditation are eradicated – a taste of Nirvana thus being attained – thereafter giving the practitioner full faith in and unflinching practice of the compounded mental phenomena [*sampayutta-dhamma*] – and that is why it is known as Right Meditation.⁶

In conclusion, to succeed in meditation, one must practice Right Meditation – that is to practice for a peaceful mind, eradication of sensuality and

² Muulapariyaaya Sutta M.i.1ff.

³ Dhammadaayaada Sutta, M.i.12ff.

⁴ Dhammasaṅgī p.64

⁵ Brahmañña Sutta S.v.26

⁶ Dhammadaayaada Sutta, M.i.12ff.

unwholesomeness and freedom from mental chatter until the mind becomes focused steadfastly. This practice corresponds to the Buddha's teachings, and will enable the practitioner to attain the goal of Nirvana. The absence of mental chatter means that thoughts or images of the things that bring about the greed, hatred or delusion must no longer pass through the mind. The Buddhist Scriptures define mental distraction as when the attention is displaced outside the body – becoming caught up instead infatuation in five types of sense objects: images, sound, odor, taste and touch – which pollutes the mind with sense-desires⁷.

2. Wrong Meditation

The meaning of Wrong Meditation is the contrary of Right Meditation. It means *wrongly focused mind or a mind focused on an improper object*. The Buddhist Scriptures refer to meditation as being 'wrong' if it focuses on mental objects that are not real.⁸ Unlike Right Meditation, Wrong Meditation leaves the mind open to mental movement and distraction. Normally it arises because the focus of the mind is outside the body (caught up with the five types of sense-objects: images, sound, odor, taste and touch) – getting the mind enamored by sense-objects. Hence, Wrong Meditation is unable to lessen the defilements of greed, hatred and delusion. It cannot be a path to attain the highest goal of Nirvana.

The scriptures explain:

Wrong Meditation is the focus of the mind, where the mind is stable and unwavering. The mind's condition of being unmoving gives rise to peacefulness, the faculty of concentration, the strength of concentration, and focusing the mind in an improper way⁹.

Consequently, to practice meditation properly, one must restrict oneself to Right Meditation by not focusing the mind or allowing the mind to be enamored with the sense objects. On the contrary, one should bring the mind back inside the body to achieve a steadfast mind without distraction, with reflection on the mental phenomena according to their reality for the relinquishing of any greed, hatred and delusion arising in the mind. This will lead to the path of salvation and attainment of the highest Buddhist purpose of Nirvana.

⁷ Vibhaṅga Sutta S.v.276 (Commentary)

⁸ Dhammasaṅgī p62-3 (Commentary)

⁹ Dhammasaṅgī p62-3

2.1.2 Place of Focus of the Mind

In meditation, one can focus the mind outside the body, inside the body or inside the body at its center – and these give us another way of categorizing meditation methods:



- 1. Focusing the mind outside the body:** The first approach is meditation where the mind is focused outside the body on an external object is a kind of meditation favored by hermits and Hindus. This method of meditation can be dangerous because when the mind is outside the body, it is not under the control of the practitioner. Nonetheless, many resort to this sort of practice because of simplicity, given that the usual focus of the mind for those who never train themselves in meditation is also outside of ourselves. Unfortunately, the sort of object of meditation that arises may be illusory. Some such objects of meditation may give rise to elation – some may cause intense feelings of fear. At the hands of an inexperienced teacher, a student may unwittingly allow their mind to focus outside the body regularly, putting them at risk of going ‘off the rails’. In fact, this risk can be avoided altogether merely by bringing the focus back inside the body. Otherwise, the images that come up in meditation will have more illusions than meaningful objects. Nonetheless, an estimated 90% of meditators may use this externalized approach – although ultimately it is not a path to liberation and cannot give rise to an inner refuge. A common side effect is also delusions about the superiority of one’s own ability and this sets one spiritually on a misleading.



- 2. Focusing the mind inside the body:** The second approach to meditation focuses the mind instead, inside the body – usually on one or other part of the body. The feelings are brought to a standstill inside the body, often at the center of the chest. This gives rise to a refreshing feeling that fills both body and mind – and this comes together with increased mindfulness and awareness. Although this method of meditation has many advantages over the first described, it is not widely practiced. Practice often involves first letting go of all worldly concerns before settling the mind peacefully at a point inside the body until a happy inner feeling arises. This sort of meditation gives the practitioner a feeling of not being attached to anything any more – no elation or disappointment regarding any situation met -- because the mind is already radiant, cool and refreshed inside oneself. Incidence of illusory mental objects is minimized, because the practitioner lets go of anything that comes up in their meditation and retaining only the sense of purity, clarity and radiance arising from their meditation. There is a broadened awareness – but this technique doesn't allow one to examine the 'body in the body', 'feeling in the feeling', 'mind in the mind' and 'mental phenomena inside the mental phenomena' advocated by the Mahaa Satipa.tthaana Sutta. Thus, the method falls short of attaining the Triple Gem or liberation in one's meditation.



- 3. Focusing the mind at the center of the body:** The third category of meditation includes techniques where the mind is not only focused inside the body, but specifically at the center of the body or the seventh base of the mind. When the mind is brought to a standstill at this point properly, a bright 'Pa.thama Magga'¹⁰ Sphere will arise. If the mind is allowed to penetrate along the path which lies at the center of this sphere, it is literally fulfilling the Noble Eightfold Path. In this context the word 'path' [*magga*] means the pathway along which the mind moves as it becomes purer. It is a pathway that leads inwards and which frees the mind from all defilements – drawing on the power of the merit generated by observing the Precepts, meditating and growing in wisdom – transforming the mind to make it successively purer, clearer and brighter. Finally, at the end of the path, the practitioner attains the body of enlightenment [*Dhammakaya*] which is free of all defilements. The starting point of the path is at the seventh base of the mind; therefore access to the path can only be gained if the mind is initially focused at this point. Meditational attainment in this way is the keystone to Buddhist methodology for creating happiness in life. Anyone who wishes to go beyond the illusions of focusing the mind outside the body and the mere heightened awareness of focusing the mind elsewhere in the body, needs to focus at the center of the body to work their way inwards along the Eightfold Path towards liberation and enlightenment by this third method described.. As many as

¹⁰ The Pa.thama Magga Sphere is a level of meditational attainment which translated means the 'Sphere of the Initial Path'. In accordance with the Foundations of Mindfulness, it is referred to in Pali language as '*dhammaanupassanasatipa.t.thaana*' and is equivalent to the first absorption [*jhana*] in its elementary form. The sphere arises spontaneously at the center of the body when the mind is firmly settled and brought to a standstill.

forty Buddhist methods of meditation are described in such manuals as *The Path of Purity [Visuddhimagga]*¹¹.

Although each method is different in its approach, they share the common goal of training the mind to come to a standstill at the center of the body in order, ultimately, to attain the body of enlightenment inside. Thus, if we are visualizing any of the ten Visual Objects, we should visualize them at the center of the body. If we are meditating on any of the Ten Reflections, our mind should be focused at the center of the body as we are recollecting. If we are working with the ten signs of loathsomeness or the loathsomeness of food or any of the other remaining techniques, we should maintain our mind at the center of the body as we are doing it, while letting the mind slip gently inwards along the central axis. Sooner or later when the mind becomes sufficiently subtle, we will attain the body of enlightenment inside – because it is already there inside every person, but remains invisible for as long as the mind is not refined – accessible to all who meditate by the proper technique.

2.1.3 Effects of Meditation

In conclusion, it can be said that we can categorize meditation according to the place where the mind is focused. If the mind is focused inside the body during meditation, this conforms with Right Meditation thereby overcoming mental chatter, wandering of the mind and becoming caught up in sensuality. On the contrary, if the mind is focused outside the body during meditation, it is known as Wrong Meditation and only makes the mind more vulnerable to mental chatter, wandering and getting caught up in sensuality.

1. Right Meditation

Right Meditation is a category of meditation which includes all methods which focus inside the body. It is able to lessen the number of defilements of mind and is an efficient way to attain liberation and the wisdom into the reality of life and the world – while protecting one from the tendency to obsession with mental powers and self-aggrandizement. Buddhist meditations are identified exclusively with Right Meditation because such a practice leads the mind to purity, peace, agility and Right View. This is in contrast to non-Buddhist meditations such as those practiced by hermits, where the mind is focused outside the body. Even if sometimes light appears as the result of such Wrong Meditation, False View still lingers on in the mind of the practitioner because such meditation does not lead to the path of liberation¹².

¹¹ Namely, meditation on the Ten Recollections, meditation on the Ten Visual Objects, meditation on the loathsomeness of food, meditation on the elements, the four divine abidings and the four formless absorptions.

¹² Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Phadej Dattajivo). *Essential Knowledge for Thais* (Thai title *Chao Thai Tong Roo*) (Bangkok: Aksornbandit, 6th edn. 1994), p41.

2. Wrong Meditation

Wrong Meditation often focuses on the same mental objects as those of Right Meditation, but because the mind is focused in the wrong place, i.e. outside the body, no wisdom or progress towards liberation results – only increased mental upset. To give some examples, if an assassin stares fixedly down the gunsights at his victim, he becomes no closer to enlightenment by focusing his mind in this way. On the contrary, it may lead to anxiety and paranoia for the rest of his life. Similarly, those playing cards around a gambling table are often so intent on their game that they can't drag themselves away whether it be to visit the washroom or to eat, for three or four hours at a time. Some obsessive gamblers are so focused that they can gamble from morning to night without realizing how exhausted they are. No matter whether it be snooker players focused on the ball at the end of their cues, gunmen focused on their sights, mediums focused to allow spirits to possess them, junkies focused on the visions produced by cannabis, witch doctors intent on their magic spells, or thugs concentrating on pulling off a robbery – the steadfastness of their attention doesn't mean that they are skilled in meditation. The difference is that the mind must be focused inwardly in a way that makes the mind peaceful for it to be called Right Meditation. All the examples given above are those whose mind is focused externally and in unwholesome states of mind – whether it be desire for things not belonging to one, vengeance or delusion about the reality of life and the world. Concentration on such things only adds to one's suffering in life.

2.2 Degrees of Meditation

The degree of stillness attained as a result of one's meditation can be subdivided into three different levels¹³ as follows:

2.2.1 Preparatory Concentration [kha.nika-samaadhi]: is when the mind is able to stay at a standstill only five to ten seconds before reverting to mental chatter. The stillness of mind may last only as long as an elephant flapping its ears. However, if as soon as we realize, we bring the mind back to the object, before long we will be able to progress to the next degree of concentration.

2.2.2 Neighborhood Concentration [upacaara-samaadhi]: is when the mind is able to stay at a standstill for more than five to ten minutes – but is not yet refined enough to reach the level of the absorptions. The mind still experiences no 'magnetic' attraction inwards. The mind is 'almost steadfast'.

2.2.3 Attainment Concentration [appanaa-samaadhi]: is when the mind can remain at a standstill for as long as we desire. It's steadfastness of mind, refined enough allow us to enter upon the absorptions. There is an inner

¹³ Vism.144

‘magnetic’ attraction for the mind to go deeper inside allowing the mind to touch upon successively subtler levels of attainment.

Hence, it can be concluded that meditation practice is a way of training the mind to be peaceful and stable. A stability of mind can be achieved if the mind is focused precisely at the center of the body. Practicing correct method will result in happiness and good inner experience, paving the way to liberation. It should be remembered that Right Meditation aims to achieve a peaceful mind without rather than fueling mental chatter or irritation – increasing our ability for self-control, improving our temper and bringing us ease of mind and body. In addition, meditation by the proper method can help boost our awareness, helping our mind to be unwavering in the face of difficulty and boosting our self-confidence while helping get rid of the delusions which are the source of all defilements.

Chapter 3

Methods of Meditation Practice

Units in this Chapter

3.1 Variety of Meditation Methodology

Examples of Meditation Methodology

3.1.1 Non-Buddhist Meditation Methods

- Yoga
- TM

3.1.2 Buddhist Meditation Methods

- Vajrayana Methods
- Mahaayaana Methods
- Theravaada Methods

3.2 Meditation Practice for Attaining Dhammakaya

3.2.1 Basic Method of Practice

3.2.2 Bases of the Mind for Attaining Dhammakaya

3.2.3 Focusing at the Seventh Base of the Mind

3.3 Effective Meditation Practice

Chapter at a glance

1. Because of differences of culture and tradition, there are many different methods of meditation practice. Despite the differences between them, all methods of meditation practice aim to bring about mindfulness and peace, stable and focused of mind.
2. Methods of meditation practice for attaining the Dhammakaya generally entail imagining a bright mental object [*aaloka kasi.na*] such as a crystal ball or a Buddha image at its home base at the center of the body – otherwise known as the seventh base of the mind.
3. For meditation practice to be effective, it needs regular practice by a correct method – cultivating mindfulness hand-in-hand with ease.

Chapter objectives

Students will gain the knowledge and understanding to:

1. be aware of some of the types of meditation practice existing around the world.
2. learn the method of meditation practice for attaining Dhammakaya.
3. know how to practice meditation effectively.



Methods of Meditation Practice

3.1 Variety of Meditation Methodology

Examples of Meditation Methods

Just as there are many water sources around the world from which creatures can drink, there are many sources of meditation methodology from which we can quench our thirst for peace of mind and inner happiness, to suit the individual differences across diverse cultures and traditions.

Since ancient times meditation masters have passed meditation experience down to their students subject to the limitations of their cultures and beliefs. The different dispositions of people at different periods of history and in different world cultures have left us with a variety of meditation methods in the present day. Although there are many different masters of meditation around the world, reputable ones emphasize relaxation of body and peace of mind as the basis to the methodology for meditation and as a foundation for more advanced meditation practice.¹

3.1.1 Non-Buddhist Meditation Methods

- **Yoga:** This refers to a group of meditation practices that date back to a time before the Lord Buddha. The main aim of yoga is “physical health based on mental health”. Therefore, Yoga practice contains physical exercise where the practitioner concentrates on different points of the body, the breath and the vital breath [*praa.na*] (in order to bring about relaxation) which in turn helps to relax the mind.²



¹ At the advanced level meditation may have different aims – for example in Buddhism, meditation practice is aimed to attain wisdom which will lead towards the ultimate aim of Buddhism which is to attain Nirvana.

² Chaek Thanasiri (1986) *The Qualities of Life and Meditation* (Bangkok: Plan Publishing Ltd.) p.81-2

- **TM:** Transcendental Meditation (TM) was inaugurated in 1957 by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. To practice TM, practitioners silently repeat to themselves a secret, personal “mantra” until they attain relaxation³ This is the way to still their mind. Each person’s mantra is known only to themselves and their teacher.

3.1.2 Buddhist Meditation Methods

In Buddhism, there are three main schools, each with their own methodology for meditation: the Vajrayana denomination (including the Tibetan meditation practices), the Mahayana denomination (including Zen meditation) and meditation in the Theravada denomination (including mindfulness of breathing).

1. **Vajrayana Methods:** This method of meditation practice aims not only to purify the mind but also to attain mental powers.⁴ By focussing one’s thinking on a single thing, in the same way as focused sunlight can be focused by a magnifying glass, supernormal powers can be produced.⁵ Tibetan meditation practitioners have to unify their body, thought and sensations by focusing their mind. One has to follow all the requisite steps of the meditation process unhurriedly, until body, thought and sensation become one.⁶ The meditation practice sequence is as follows:

- i. Rest
- ii. Mindfulness of breathing
- iii. Stilling of the mind
- iv. Repetition of a mantra
- v. Concentration on a visual object



In other words, Tibetan meditation practitioners start with mental and physical relaxation, continue with a slow and deep breathing exercise along with repetition of a mantra. After the practitioners reach mental calmness, then they will concentrate on one single thing. Tibetans often take a bright object such as a crystal ball as their object of meditation, in order to attain mental powers such as supranormal vision.

³ Dennis Denniston (1986) *The Transcendental Meditation TM Book: How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life* (Fairfield Pr.) p.156

⁴ T. Lobsang Rumpa *Tibetan Meditation* (Thai translation by Kriangsak Jaranyayon 1991, Bangkok: Panya) p.9

⁵ Ibid. p.10

⁶ Ibid. p.9

2. Mahaayaana Methods: Zen meditation practice representative of the Mahaayaana methods used in Japan. There are two subdivisions of Zen as follows:

- i. **Rinzai Zen:** The *ko-an* is the key to meditation in this school. Meditation practitioners request personalized meditation practice from a master. The master then provides the first *ko-an*, which is to repeat the mantra “*mu*” until they are able to get an answer. Then the master will then provide a second, third, fourth, fifth *ko-an* and so on, until all the *ko-ans* in the “*Mu-mon-karn*” text have been covered. The practitioners are then recognized as having completed the meditation course and having attained advanced Dhamma level. During their quest for answers from the meditation practice, practitioners sit for meditation with their eyes closed, observing their breath while repeating their mantra. Some schools, such as, Master Kobori Roshi’s “Reu-ko-in” institute gives the instruction to western meditators. This master has applied Zen meditation teaching to western culture. While other Zen meditation masters teach practitioners to repeat the mantra “*mu*”, master Kobori Roshi teaches the westerners to repeat the mantra “one” instead, until the practitioners’ thought and their mantra become unified.
- ii. **Soto Zen:** In this school of Zen, practitioners sit for meditation with their eyes open – with or without a mantra – chanting or observing their breath. Practitioners will be asked to do nothing but to concentrate on their awareness, such as by being aware of the sound of a passing car, aware of the wind touching their body or aware of all their surroundings. The practitioners will sit still with full mindfulness of everything around them. This meditation method is called ‘just sitting’ [只管打座 - *shikantaza*].

In conclusion, Zen meditation practice emphasizes peace of mind by sitting still and focusing one’s thought on a mantra until attaining new knowledge together with illumination, peace and joy.

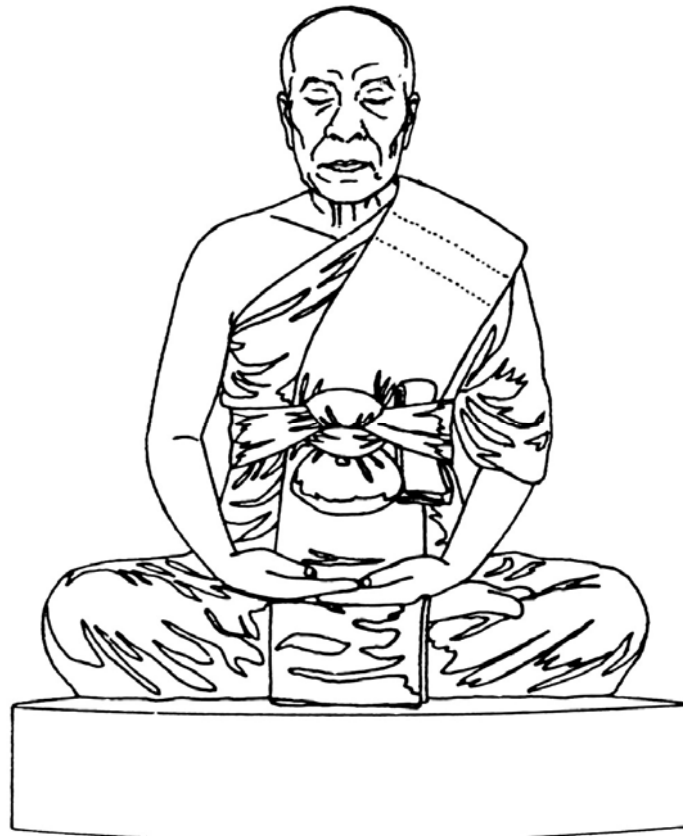
3. Theravaada Methods: There are a wide variety of Theravaada Buddhist meditation practices to be found in Thailand, Myanmar and Srilanka. This chapter deals mainly with those found in Thailand. Those practicing earnestly in any of these techniques will be sure to gain the benefits and be able to extend the time of Buddhism. Meditation methods for attaining Dhammakaya will be described separately in the following section.

- i. **Mindfulness of Breathing [*aanaapaanasati*]:** This technique is very popular amongst those who practice meditation in Theravaada Buddhism. An example of the method is practiced by the forest monks of the northeastern part of Thailand, in a technique popularized by the master Phra Ajahn Mun Bhuridatto. Practitioners repeat the mantra “*Bud-dho*” in time with the rhythm of their in and out breathing. This method is combined with walking meditation – walking back and forth along a track five to ten meters long with downcast eyes affixed about

four paces in front of one. During meditation the mind is focused on the breath as it goes in and out.

- ii **The ‘Rising and Falling’ Method:** The Four Foundations of Mindfulness together with focusing the mind on the surface of one’s abdomen as it rises and falls in time with one’s breath (in Thai it is known as “*yup-nor pong-nor*”). It is a form of meditation practice popular in Myanmar. Phradhamdheerajmahamunee (Phramaha Chodoke ~Naa.nasiddhi) had learned the technique in Myanmar and spread this meditation method in Thailand. He led meditation courses at Wat Mahadhatu Waratch Rangsarit, at Tha Phrajan in Bangkok until this meditation method became very popular and widely practiced. The meditation practice procedure includes walking meditation, where practitioners focus on the movement of their heels as they walk. After completion of walking meditation, practitioners will then sit and meditate by concentrate their mind on the abdominal area while repeating the word “*yup-nor pong-nor*” as they breathe. After completion of sitting meditation, practitioners continue by practicing walking meditation alternating with sitting meditation. The ultimate aim of this practice is to be able to reflect upon the Three Universal Characteristics [saama~n~nalakka.na] – with some differences of detail from one school to another. For the ‘Rising and Falling’ method, if any emotions interrupt the meditation, they become the object of meditation instead – observing these until serenity of mind is attained. In walking meditation, concentration will be on each step taken. The main objective for all such activities is to train the mind to be aware of one’s mental state in the here and now.

- iii. **Meditation Practice for Attaining Dhammakaya:** This method of Buddhism meditation practice was re-discovered by Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro) (or ‘Luang Phaw Wat Paknam’ as he is popularly known) and is designed to allow practitioners to attain the same experience of enlightenment known to the Lord Buddha. Amazingly, the subjective experiences gained by meditating in the way taught by Phramonkolthepmuni correspond with the Dhammas teaching which was found in Buddhist Scriptures – especially the word “*Dhammakaya*”. The method he taught also corresponds with the forty methods of meditation described in the scriptural meditation manual called *The Path of Purity [Visuddhimagga]*. This method is dealt with in further detail in the following section.



Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro)

3.2. Meditation Practice for Attaining Dhammakaya

This method of Buddhism meditation practice for attaining Dhammakaya disappeared from the world five hundred years after the Buddha passed away into Parinivana – but was rediscovered by Phramonkolthepmuni in 1917 at Wat Boatbon, Bangkuevieng, Nonthaburi. He learned from his meditation proficiency experiences that the Triple Gem exists latent within the center of the body of every human being.

In this case the ‘Buddha’ part of the Triple Gem is the Dhammakaya or the body of wisdom, awakening, joyous, which is located inside every human being. There are references to the Dhammakaya in the Buddhist Scriptures [*Tipi.taka*] of all three Buddhist schools – the Theravaada, Mahaayaana, and Vajrayaana. Formerly, the meaning of the word ‘Dhammakaya’ in the Theravaada Scriptures was not fully understood. It was only after the discovery made by Phramonkolthepmuni, that he could explain that it meant a Buddha image-like inner body, of supreme clarity and purity which displays all the thirty-two signs of a Great Man [*mahaapurisalakka.na*] – significantly with a lotus bud shape on the crown of the head.

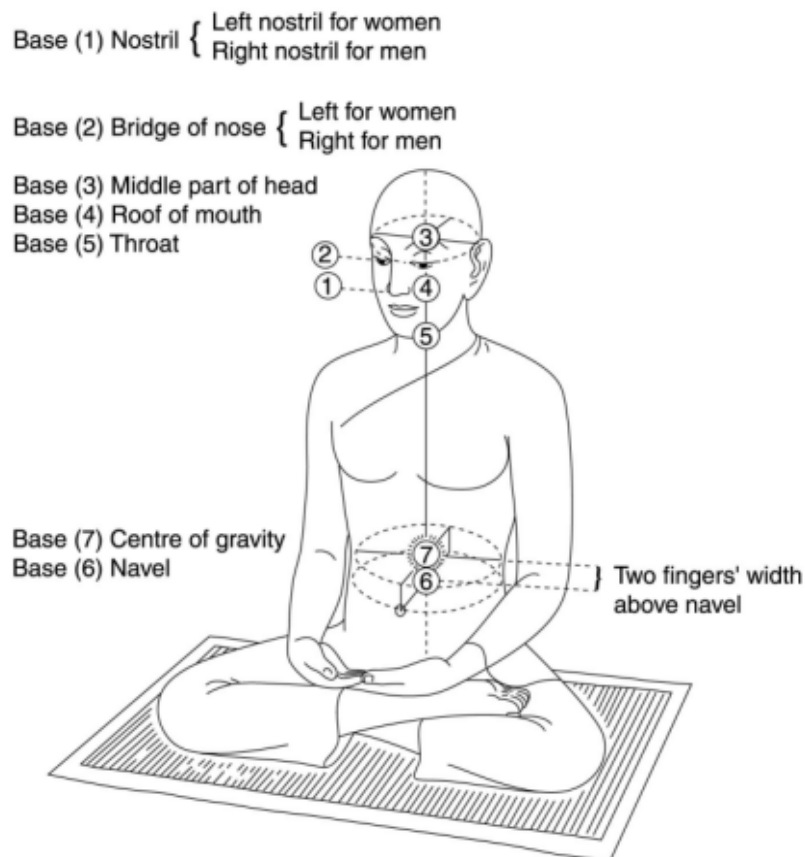
To learn about Dhammakaya inside, one has first to attain Dhammakaya by bringing the mind to a standstill at the very center of the body, at the seventh base of the mind. Only then can the Dhammakaya be appreciated. The seventh base of the mind is the trailhead of the Middle Way inside which in turn leads to Nirvana.

Although the Dhammakaya methodology might sound like a particular method (as opposed to mindfulness of breathing or rising & falling) in fact it is approach to meditation whereby one can adapt many of the methods previously mentioned to bring the mind to a standstill at the seventh base of the mind. They are forty different meditation methods listed in *The Path of Purity* text. Any of these can be adapted by the Dhammakaya approach to train their mind to come to a standstill – whether it be reflecting on corpse, focusing on in-breath repeating “buddh-” & on the outbreath repeating “-dho”, stilling the mind without any thoughts, or recollecting of the purity of one’s Precepts. Any of these methods practiced continuously to the point where the mind is relaxed, will bring the mind to balance, allowing it to drop inwardly to attain the Dhamma sphere inside. By stilling the mind further, meditators will be able to attain the Triple Gem inside. In conclusion, although there are many methods to attain Dhammakaya, all follow the same approach, which is to bring the mind to a standstill with a sense of ease and relaxation, taming the normally wandering mind, turning it inward to a point of balance until finally the Dhammakaya can be attained.

3.2.1 Basic Method of Practice

The steps of basic meditation practice are:

- First, pay respect to the Triple Gem. Undertake the Five or Eight Precepts and remind yourself of all good deeds you have done in the past. This will help to fill the mind with positivity. Then, sit in the half-lotus position, with the right leg folded over the left leg and the right hand resting on the left hand -- the tip of the right index finger touching tip of the left thumb. Sit in a position of poise with the eyes gently closed and the mind focused on the task. Give yourself the feeling that your mind is about to encounter the ultimate sense of relaxation and peace.
- Imagine a bright mental object [*aaloka kasi.na*], such as, a bright and clear, crystal ball – a few millimeters in diameter, bright, clear and flawless with the sparkle of a shining star. This crystal ball is known as an ‘Initial Mental Object’ [*parikamma nimitta*]. Keep your mind gently with the crystal ball as if it were resting securely at the seventh base of the mind while repeating the mantra ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’. Alternately, you can visualize the crystal ball moving slowly down to the seventh base of the mind via the first six bases of the mind.
- When the mental object begins to appear spontaneously at the center of the body, continue to remain relaxed with the object as if it were part of the meditation mood. Never hanker after the meditation object. If the object disappears, imagine a new object to replace the old. If the object appears away from the center of the body, gently encourage the object to return to a standstill at the center of the body instead. Always concentrate at the center of the meditation object you see, as if there is a tiny star shining at the very center of that object. Focusing on that tiny star at the centre of the mental object will bring the mind to a state of balance, then the stage of bright and clear crystal ball will appear at the center where the mind concentrates continuously.



3.2.2 Bases of the Mind for Attaining Dhammakaaya

Where the mind is focused is very important for meditation practice. We call the place where the mind can be focused a 'base' of the mind. If the mind has nowhere definite to focus, one will not be able to attain peace of mind because the mind will just wander around. One becomes distracted and forgetful if the mind habitually wanders nearby – and if the mind is habitually far removed from the body the distractedness can verge on madness. Just as a farmer must tether a horse to stop its escape or a boatman who must make his anchor his ship – the meditator must focus his mind at a base to stop it wandering. If the mind is focused at one of the bases of mind, mindfulness arises. Thus, having a fixed place to anchor or a point of reference is as important in meditation as it is in the other situations mentioned.

In meditation for attaining Dhammakaya Phramonkolthepmuni referred to seven important bases for the mind:

1. The first base of the mind is located at the nostril – the left nostril for ladies and the right one for gentlemen.
2. The second base of the mind is located at the corner of the eye – on the left side for ladies and on the right side for gentlemen.
3. The third base of the mind is located at the center of the cranium at eye level (if you imagine two thin threads – one thread extending from a point between the eyes horizontally through the back of the skull and a second thread running from the left ear to the right – the third base is located at the intersection of the two threads).
4. The fourth base of the mind is located at the roof of the mouth.

5. The fifth base of the mind is located in the center of the throat, just above the Adam's apple.
6. The sixth base of the mind is located in the center of the abdomen at the level of the navel (if you imagine two thin threads – one thread extending from the navel horizontally through the back and a second thread running from the left side to the right – the sixth base is located at the intersection of the two threads) The sixth base of the mind should only be regarded as a temporary base of mind. One should not rest the mind at this base for too long to avoid habituation, but focus the mind instead at the seventh base of mind where it can come to a standstill.
7. The seventh base of the mind is located at two finger's breaths above the sixth base.

The mind has two categories of bases:

- Temporary bases of mind include bases from number one to six, and;
- Permanent bases which include base number seven which is at the exact center of the body.

All seven bases of mind help facilitate the meditation practice for the beginners. The newcomer starts by resting their mind at each of the temporary bases in turn before proceeding to the seventh base where the mind will be located permanently. Just as flimsy posts might be used to tether a horse temporarily, eventually the horse has to be moved somewhere more secure. When it comes to finding a secure resting place for the mind, only the seventh base is sufficiently robust.

3.2.3 Focusing at the Seventh Base of the Mind

The importance of the seventh base to be the permanent base of mind is scientifically explained by the fact that it is the body's Center of Gravity. For any object, the center of gravity is the point at which it can be most easily balanced. If you can find the center of gravity of an object like a glass or a saucer, it is possible to balance it even on a single finger. However, if you try to balance an object at a point away from its center of gravity, you risk dropping it – or at least might have to use a lot more effort to control it.

The seventh base of mind is the point where it is easiest to control all aspects of body and mind which is why it is a focal point for meditation. It can also be compared to the focal point of a magnifying glass where everything can be seen both undistorted and clear. If the mind is focused at this point, the understandings reached about the nature of life and the world will also be clear and undistorted. Meditation for attainment of Dhammakaya can be said to be a synthesis of several other mainstream techniques, namely:

1. Visualizing a bright crystal ball is one of the ten visual objects of meditation [*kasi.na*] namely the 'bright visual object' [*aaloka kasi.na*].
2. Repeating the mantra '*Sammaa-araha.m*' to oneself as one meditates is one of the ten recollections, namely recollection of the Buddha.

3. Maintaining one's mind at the seventh base of the mind, which also happens to be the point of the deepest breath is also one of the ten recollections, namely Mindfulness of Breathing.

3.3. Effective Meditation Practice

To practice meditation effectively, practitioners have to practice regularly as part of their daily routine. If you wish to start a fire by rubbing two sticks together, you have to keep up the rubbing until you get a flame. If you rub your sticks together only now and then, you'll never get fire. Similarly, the effectiveness of meditation practice depends on continuity and earnest.

One's approach to the meditation practice also affects the results. You have to practice without rushing or using force, in a relaxed manner. The underpinning principle of meditation practice is to develop mindfulness hand in hand with a sense of ease. The combination of mindfulness and ease are what lead to attainment in meditation.

When one starts to attain inner experience in one's meditation, one should not be complacent, but recollect those experiences the whole of the time, so that they become as much a part of your life as breathing. In this way, your meditation experience will allow you to abide in happiness, fulfillment and non-recklessness forever – while your meditation experiences continue to progress without end.

Chapter 4

Those Eligible to Able to Meditation

Units in this Chapter

4.1 Those Able to Train Themselves in Meditation

4.1.1 Personality Amenable to Training in Meditation

4.1.2 Temperament Amenable to Training in Meditation

4.2 Those Unable to Train Themselves in Meditation

4.3 Qualities of the Effective Practitioner of Meditation

Chapter at a Glance

1. Everybody is able to train themselves in meditation irrespective of nationality, religion, language or creed. Even though people have different personalities and dispositions, but all are able to meditate.
2. There are three sorts of people unable to practise meditation: the mad, the deceased and those who didn't get around to trying.
3. Those who habitually keep the Five Precepts will find they are able to meditate successfully.

Chapter Objectives

Students will gain the knowledge and understanding to:

1. identify the personalities amenable to training in meditation.
2. identify the personalities unsuitable for training in meditation.
3. identify qualities of life amenable to meditation training.



Those Eligible to Able to Meditation

From the previous chapters, it can be seen that there are many ways of practicing meditation– each distinguished by its own methodology. However, despite differences of methodology, the goal of the different techniques is the same – to attain a stable mind and inner happiness.

In this lesson, we will talk about the qualities of people which might be amenable or unamenable to a person's training in meditation. For those who have already had the chance to practice by themselves and whose mind has already reached a standstill, attaining inner happiness, it is easy to believe that everyone has an equal chance of succeeding in meditation – however, for those who are newcomers to the meditation, or who have already been practicing for a long time without gaining inner experience, it might not be self-evident that almost all people have an equal chance of success in meditation.

This lesson, therefore, seeks to summarize the personalities of people amenable or unamenable to training in meditation, so that students can reflect which category they belong to, as well as being able to give advice others new to training.

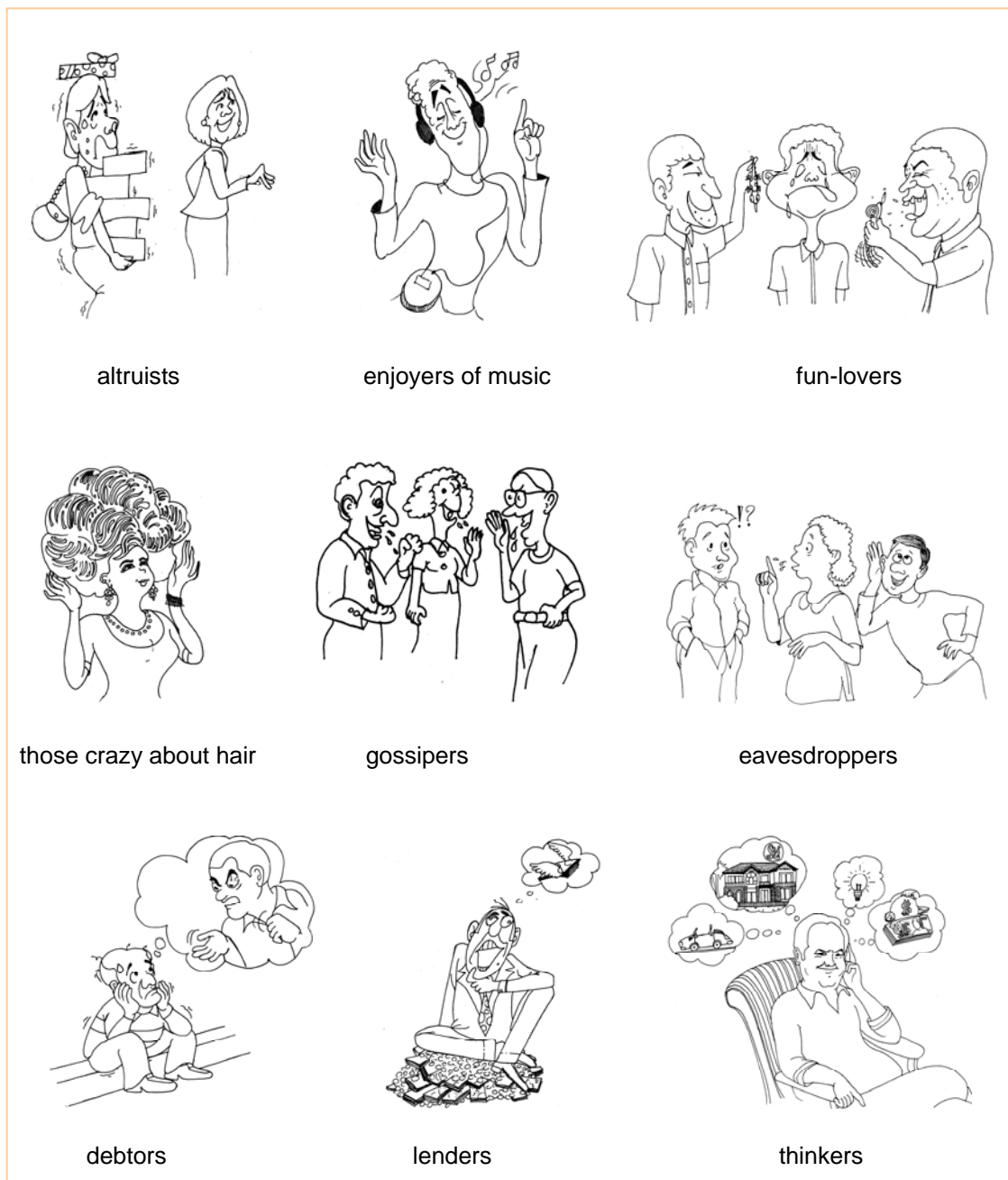
4.1. Those Able to Train Themselves in Meditation

Meditation is a technique leading to inner peace of mind. It has the clear and simple steps that anyone can use to train themselves, regardless of personality, gender, age, educational background or social status. It can be used in everyday life, at any time and in any situation. It does not conflict with peoples' existing faith or contradict traditional beliefs, culture or tradition, because it merely concerns education, affecting nothing but the mind – meaning that anyone keen to study can try it out for themselves.

4.1.1 Personality Amenable to Training in Meditation

Even though people may belong to the same race, religion, creed or family, each has their own unique and individual personality. Nonetheless, no matter where on the scale of personality a person may find themselves, from the meekest to the most aggressive, there is no sort of personality which is an obstacle to a person's ability to train themselves in meditation. This is because, when a person practices meditation in earnest and according to the correct methodology, they will be able to attain inner peace inside, because concentration and the standstill of the mind depends merely on technique rather than the personality or beliefs of the practitioner.

Below are illustrations of the variety of personalities are perfectly able to meditate:





singers



judges



celebrities



the impatient



nihilists



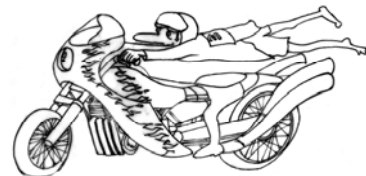
the penniless



perpetual wanderers



the extravagant



speed-freaks



the temperamental



the irritable



shunner of authority



sulkers



the old-fashioned



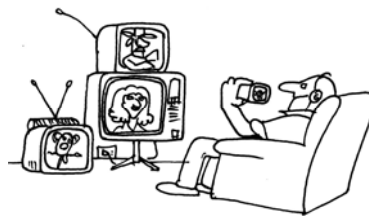
individualists



rebels



hunks



couch-potatoes



the confused



super-heroes



the sophisticated



geniuses

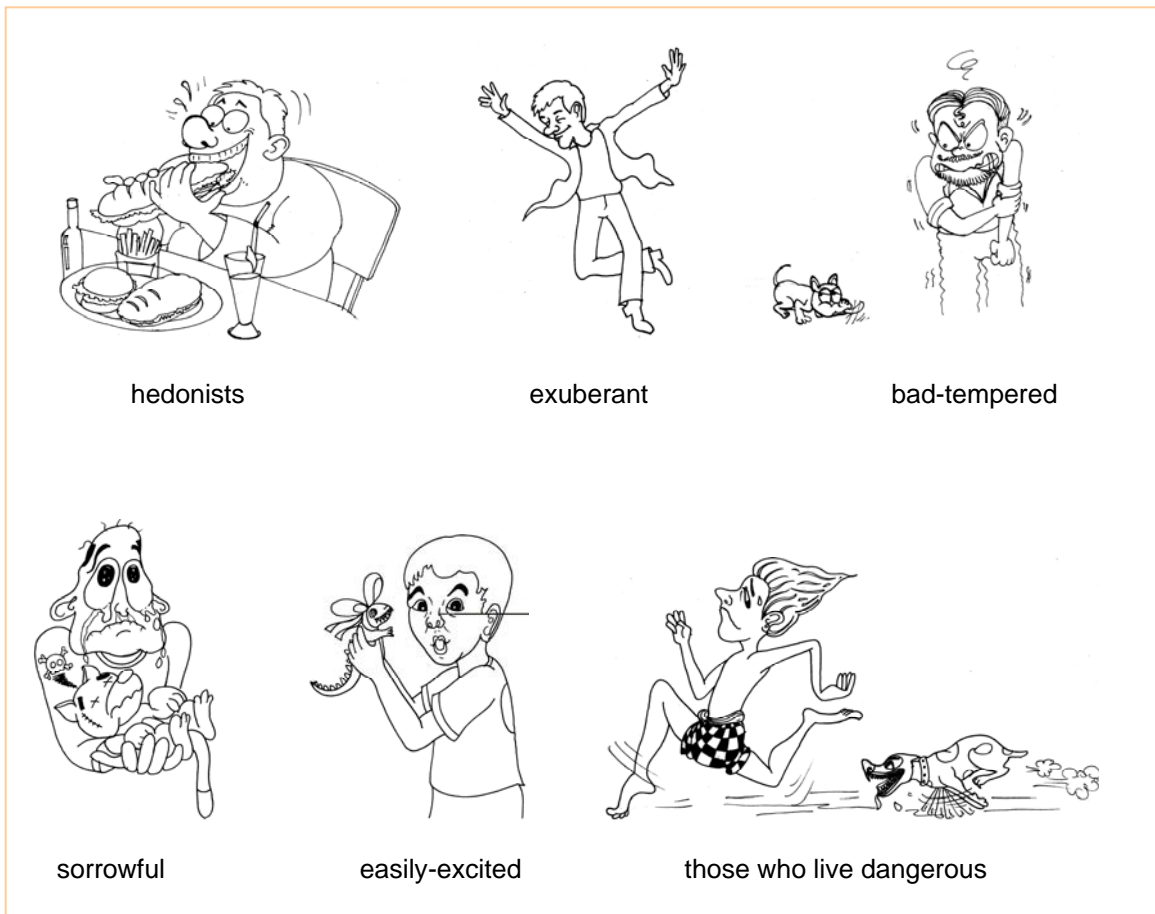


those who can't face reality

4.1.2 Temperament Amenable to Training in Meditation

Meditators are not only distinguished by personality but also temperament (or habitual mood). A person might have a variety of different emotions depending on the situation in which they find themselves. Sometimes they may feel sad and cry. At other times they may laugh and feel elated. Even in a single day, a person may have ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ in their moods. It is the tendency of the mind to change according to the emotions it comes into contact with – thus it is no surprise that people have differing temperaments. Nonetheless, there is no sort of temperament which is an obstacle to a person’s ability to train themselves in meditation. This is because, when a person practices meditation in earnest and according to the correct methodology, their mood will change to become one of inner peace inside. Through meditation, the variety of temperaments found when one has never meditated before will be reduced down to a stable and unified temperament of peace.

Below are illustrations of the variety of temperaments who can practice meditation:





nebulous



awkward



guilty



blissful



weird



lively



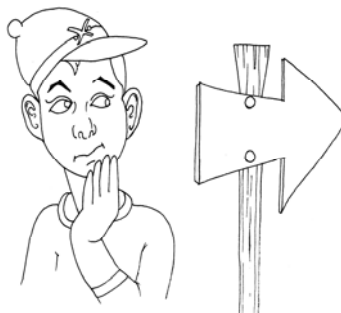
crazy



terrified



confident



lacking confidence

4.2 Those Unable to Train Themselves in Meditation

From the above, it would seem that any able-bodied person could practice meditation irrespective of personality or temperament. Nonetheless, there remain a few exceptions to the rule – there are three kinds of people unable to practice:¹

1. *The insane*: are unable to meditate because they have no control of their own awareness – they lack mindfulness [*sati*] and self-possession [*sampaja~n~na*] and are unable to understand the technique properly. As for the mentally retarded (e.g. those suffering from Down's syndrome), most are unable to meditate because of an intelligence deficiency, but there are a minority who have met with success in the practice of meditation.
2. *The dead*: body and mind need to be in the same place to allow meditation to take place. For a dead person, the mind has already vacated the body – and in isolation, an inanimate corpse no longer has the chance of meditating.
3. *Those who didn't get around to it*: some people never got around to meditating because they don't even know what meditation is. Some know meditation but underestimate its benefits. Some know meditation and its benefits, but cannot find the time to practice it. This third category is luckier than the preceding two because at least the shortcoming can be remedied – simply by giving meditation due attention, making the time, seeing the value and overcoming one's laziness.

4.3 Qualities of the Effective Practitioners of Meditation

Even though people who possess the different characteristics mentioned above will be able to practice meditation, in order to practice meditation effectively, the persons who receive the meditation practice must be 'in form' physically and mentally – that is, they must be eager to learn, physically healthy (rather than succumbing easily to fatigue) and willing to accept their mentor's advice unconditionally.

Keeping strictly to the Five or Eight Precepts [*siila*] is another factor that will free the meditator's mind from anxiety, paving the way to stillness of mind, in accordance with the saying:

Just as a tree is able to grow because sustained by the soil,
The mind is able to prosper in the Dhamma because sustained by the Precepts.

Therefore, to practice meditation effectively, one should maintain an ethical lifestyle by keeping the Precepts to the best of one's ability. The Five Precepts comprise:

1. To refrain from killing
2. To refrain from stealing

¹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh, Dhamma Sermon 7-8 February 2003

3. To refrain from sexual misconduct
4. To refrain from telling lies
5. To refrain from taking intoxicants

A person can also keep the Eight Precepts that will make an additional contribution to the meditation practice by changing the Third Precepts to ‘refrain from unchastity’ and adding the following three precepts:

6. To refrain from eating from midday until the next morning
7. To refrain from dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, attending entertainment, wearing perfume, cosmetics or flower-garlands
8. To refrain from sitting or sleeping on a high or large luxurious sofa or bed

Furthermore, when training, the meditator should attempt to minimize or let go of anxieties and concerns as far as possible – this facilitating our ability to bring our mind to a standstill.

Therefore, in full certainty about the characteristics of someone fully able to practice meditation, the student should now be fully equipped with the knowledge enabling them to allay the doubts of friends and relatives considering meditation.

Chapter 5

Benefits of Meditation and Daily Life

Units in this Chapter

5.1 Meditation and the Householder

- 5.1.1 Benefits of Meditation for the Householder
- 5.1.2 Benefits of Meditation for the Family Life

5.2 Benefits of Meditation for Health

- 5.2.1 The Nature of Illness
- 5.2.2 The Effects of Meditation on Health

Chapter at a Glance

1. Meditation is important to the lives of everyone, not least the life of the householder, family life and life in society – contributing to peace in the world.
2. Those who practice meditation earnestly in their everyday lives are all sure to witness progress in their practice.

Chapter Objectives

Students will gain the knowledge and understanding to:

1. identify the benefits of meditation towards one's everyday life.
2. identify examples of those who have been successful in integrating meditation into their everyday lives.
3. enthusiastically further their own meditation experiences.
4. identify the beneficial effects of meditation on health and recovery from illness.
5. identify examples of those who have successfully applied meditation to recover from illness.
6. identify the benefits of meditation towards mental health.





Benefits of Meditation and Daily Life

5.1 Meditation and the Householder

Contrary to certain stereotypes, meditation is not merely for monks, nuns and ascetics. Because meditation is a state being conscious, inwardly peaceful which gives a sense of comfort and ease in life – it is relevant and amenable to practice by people of all walks of life, in every place at every time.

Meditation also allows one to put Buddhist teachings into practice sequentially placing emotions at peace and at ease, by doing the simplest of things – which is to bring the focus of our attention back inside our own body. This can be accomplished merely by placing your attention softly at the center of the body, breathing in deeply two or three times to ascertain the turning point of the deepest breath, you will find that this same point is also the focus of mindfulness and self-possession for the mind – if you train your mind in this way continuously, before long your mind will build up a sense of meditation which stays with you the whole of the time.

Meditation is, in fact, an essential part of life, especially the household life, because meditation upgrades the potential of the mind, our ability to concentrate, morale, sense of conscience and high-mindedness.

5.1.1. Benefits of Meditation for the Householder

Meditation has the following benefits for the householder:

1. In the face of negative external circumstances, it brings a genuine sense of freedom and choice instead of feeling stress or a victim of one's circumstances. One will be able to remain relaxed and at ease in all situations, without even having to close one's eyes. One's working efficiency is boosted along with one's tenacity in stressful situations.
2. One becomes better able to make the distinction between 'needs' and 'wants' concerning one's own and others' possessions.
3. One has a cooler head in dealing with problems, better able to control one's temper, and in case of upset, more quickly able to recover one's cool.
4. One becomes a better teacher to oneself, particularly to snap out of grudges and feelings of resentment, reducing one's tendency to envy. If one's meditation practice becomes continuous, one's character will be slowly transformed from aggression to tenderness and compassion.
5. One becomes a better listener and discerning what is useful or useless in what they are saying, applying the useful part – while being able to accept criticism and improve on one's shortcomings.

6. One becomes quick-witted and on the ball in decision-making and work, gaining a constructive and practical outlook on life.
7. One learns more easily to see matters of the cycle of birth and death according to their reality. One becomes non-reckless, with a thorough understanding of karmic causality which inspires one to dedicate oneself to virtue and good deeds.
8. When one has an accurate understanding of where one's duties lie, one gains a sense of responsibility, not showing reluctance or squabbling over work – especially when it comes to performing good deeds.
9. The person practicing meditation is apt to have a stronger health than his peers in similar environments, because he is not subject to stress and is better able to maintain positivity of mind.
10. Regularly practiced meditation will lead the practitioner to develop good nature, refreshedness and liveliness. They will tend to age slower than others and will be loved by others.

Thus, meditation is especially important for all those leading the family life – for everyone who lives under the same roof as others.

5.1.2. Benefits of Meditation for the Family Life

Meditation has the following benefits for the family life:

1. reduction of 'generation gap' and other sources of conflict within the family
 2. increased level of understanding for one's fellow family members
 3. reduced impatience and the ability to await the appropriate time to bring up things of mutual interest
 4. better ability to love and be loved – especially through the sharing of loving-kindness and compassion in the family
 5. improved atmosphere within the family.
- **The majority of social problems originate from family problems.** If a person is lucky enough to have a warm family background where they have been surrounded by examples of loving-kindness, virtue and morality, they will not be the sort of person to contribute to social problems.
 - This is why meditation is not only useful to individuals, but also to society at large. If people in families meditate, this will indirectly facilitate loving-kindness and virtue in the world at large, helping society to become a more peaceful place.
 - Meditation is, therefore, something that anyone wishing peace and prosperity for their family cannot afford to overlook – because *meditation is at the root of all true prosperity*.

5.2 Benefits of Meditation for Health

5.2.1 The Nature of Illness

Any other form of success in life is useless unless supported by good health. However, in modern society, it is easy to forget the simple things that make life good. Modern phenomena like the ‘rat-race’ can lead us to misplace our efforts in search of happiness, to the detriment of our own health. Although our life expectancy might look longer, many new diseases have become widespread which have such complicated symptoms that effective treatment is problematic – whether it be cancer, AIDS or stress-induced mental conditions – meaning unending medical research in search of happiness. However, much of the research concerning mental components of disease have only rediscovered many principles of healing that Buddhism has already been using for thousands of years, especially the practice of meditation by which it is easy for people to practice self-healing.

Buddhism analyses the human makeup of people belonging to all races, creeds and religions, into five psycho-physical constituents known as the Five Aggregates [*khandas*]:

1. **corporeality** [*ruupakhandas*] i.e., the part of ourselves that is our physical body, behaviour, as well as physical objects external to ourselves;
2. **feelings** [*vedanaakhandas*] i.e., the part of ourselves that determines emotions of happiness, suffering or ‘neither-happiness-nor-suffering, in relation to perceptions coming via the six senses – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind;
3. **perception** [*sa~n~naakhandas*] i.e., the part of ourselves that determines the qualities of perceptions such as their shapes, colours, smells, flavours, touch and Dhamma emotion;
4. **mental formations** [*sa"nkhaara-khandas*] i.e., the part of ourselves which conditions the mind to be wholesome, unwholesome or neutral;
5. **consciousness** [*vi~n~naa.nakhandas*] i.e., the part of ourselves which gives us knowledge about sense stimuli etc..

In brief, the human being comprises two main parts, body (which is corporeality) and mind (which comprises feeling, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness); therefore good health means good health of both body and mind. However, ‘disease’ can happen both in body and mind:¹

“The Buddha said that man has diseases, there are two types of diseases – physical disease and mental disease. The Buddha said that it is humanly possible not to suffer from physical diseases for seven days, seven weeks, seven months or seven years, but it is impossible

¹ Phraratchaworamuni (Prayoon Dhammajitto) (1996) *Mental Health* (Bangkok : Mahachulalongkorn Ratchavithayalai University), p6

that a person can escape diseases of the mind called mental concomitants even for a single moment, unless they are an Arahant who has no further defilements”.

Thus, we can see that the mind is more vulnerable to disease than the body. This is ironic because in Buddhism, the mind holds a more important place than the body, because it is the mind that is in control even of our physical or verbal actions as described in the first verses of the Dhammapada: ²

“Mind is the forerunner of all (evil states) — mind is chief; Mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with an unscrupulous mind, because of that, suffering follows one, even as the (cart-) wheel follows the hoof of the draught-oxen.”

If one maintains good health of mind by meditation, it will also contribute to one's physical well-being. Therefore, happy living is derived not only from physical health, but also clarity and purity of mind. If one's mind has determination and morale, one's body will be strong too. If one's body is un-diseased but one's mind is run down, that person will soon succumb to disease. Thus, complete health needs a balance of health which extends to both body and mind.

Thus, the current medical view is that the mind has a psychosomatic effect on our physical condition:³

“The control of the mind over the body can be seen clearly whenever one's mind is run down – it brings immediate dysfunction to one's body organs, for example, anxiety brings cardiovascular diseases or gastric/intestinal ulcers or high blood pressure, causing brain haemorrhages or blood clots, insomnia, neurosis, indigestion, constipation, fatigue and reduced sexual appetite”.

Because the mind functions to perceive, remember, think and know as well as controlling the physical organs via the nervous system, it can be compared to the software of a computer. The brain and nervous system can be compared to the computer hardware. A computer cannot operate without software. It is therefore no surprise to find that the state of our mind can affect the health of our body – a fact confirmed by medical studies:⁴

“When one's mind is stressed, there is an immediate effect on one's physical condition – namely, circulation, raised blood lactic acid and sodium levels, and decreased potassium levels. The change of blood chemistry causes organic imbalance. Metabolism is raised increasing oxygen combustion, faster breathing fatigue, heartbeat irregularity, and clammy palms”.

² Dhp v.1

³ Thanasiri (1976), *Meditation and Quality of Life* 2nd edition (Bangkok: Plan Publishing Ltd.) p.110

⁴ Chatr-kaew (1998) Samadhi as a cure for Chronic Disease in *Kalyanamitra Magazine* (Pathum Thani: Dhammakaya Foundation) p.51

The physical imbalance caused by stress is also recognized by modern medicine:⁵

“The muscles overwork leading to fatigue, muscle aches and excessive excretion of adrenaline by the pituitary making the patient more susceptible to diabetes; the stomach secretes excessive levels of pepsin increasing susceptibility to ulcers of the stomach,, intestine and colon; diarrhoea, and/or constipation may be caused. Imbalance of the nervous system causes insomnia, headaches, and heart tremors which may increase the seriousness of other systems because the body has insufficient rest. The opportunity to suffer from cancer in any one organ will happen because as stress accumulates in the mind, over the years toxic substances will be deposited in the body.

In addition, physical disease affects a patient’s mind. Life-threatening illness affects both the mind and the behavior of the patient. If a patient knows or suspects they have cancer, they will also display symptoms of shock, anxiety, and denial – rather than acceptance of the disease. A distinction can be made between the symptomology of the illness and the symptomology of the mental response to the illness.

When a cancer patient is found to have cancer, usually such a patient will start by feeling frightened and refusing to accept they have the disease; they may accuse the physician of being mistaken or may demand a re-test. Later, when the re-test confirms the original results, the patient will start to show the symptomology of mental response to the illness: anxiety, confusion and anger. The symptoms may manifest themselves in an aggressive manner of speech and behavior. After a certain period, the patient starts to calm down, but they will still have mental dissonance that had they had a more detailed examination, they would have been spared the disease. As the acceptance sets in, the symptoms of depression become manifest with signs like insomnia, loss of appetite and absent-mindedness. During this period, relatives should pay attention to the patient, especially their mental condition, to prevent the situation worsening to the point of psychosis. Normally, psychiatrists give medical help to a patient who has recently learned of chronic illness, until the patient can accept their illness and start the treatment proper. In medical terms, the treatment of the mental symptoms is crucial – and in this respect, meditation can do much to aid the mental symptoms of such diseases – helping to put the patient at ease and accept the physical treatment gracefully.⁶

5.2.2 The Effects of Meditation on Health

Meditation practice helps a person to have good health of both body and mind simultaneously. Even though technology might have advance in the treatment of diseases like cancer with sophisticated surgical techniques and radiation therapy; however, in countries such as Thailand, there is an increasing interest in alternative and holistic treatments of chronic diseases by methods, such

⁵ Ukhranant (1996) Care for your mind when you’re ill in *Kalyanamitra Magazine* (Pathum Thani: Dhammakaya Foundation) (October issue)

⁶ ibid p.62

as, macrobiotics. Such holistic techniques emphasize living one's life closer to nature, eating correctly and practicing meditation:⁷

“The macrobiotic way of life means not only eating natural things, but also changing the way of life to have correct health, for example by practising meditation and reducing sources of stress in daily life.”

Macrobiotics use the Buddha's teaching that the rust born of steel can eventually weaken the steel. Accordingly, if the mental rust is kept in check by meditation, one's mind will have only positive things, the body will grow stronger and health will be better. However, if the mind is overrun by negative thoughts, like the rust in steel, eventually damage will come to oneself:⁸

“Unwholesome thought brings damage to oneself, especially to cancer patients. If unwholesome thought is left to take root, it will be like rust which will soon bring damage to oneself – because such negative thoughts are a cause of cancer, and the macrobiotic guideline deems that cancer occurs from causes in both the mind and the body. If mind cannot be changed, the body cannot be changed

Although medical science has had some success in curing cancer, it has had less success in curing AIDS. Meditation, however, has proved useful in the treatment of AIDS patients:⁹

“Meditation is also promoted in Thailand as a treatment for patients with AIDS. Beginning in 1989, a team of psychologists, social workers, and nurses utilized meditation techniques as part of a hospital training program to help care workers who treat HIV and drug dependent patients.”

Although the AIDS patients could not be cured, meditation brought certain benefits to the care workers, allowing them to do their job better, which included higher altruism and empathy among trainees; less verbal abuse toward clients, and a greater personal sense of tranquillity, happiness, and patience.

In the West, meditation has been shown to contribute to good health. Meditation was shown to produce outstanding results in cancer treatment as meditation allows patients to relax and to have inspiration to persevere in life and have the clarity to plan their lives. Depression, despair and anti-social nature – which are psychological conditions common in the West – were helped by the practice of meditation. In addition, meditation reduces the incidence of heart disease and reduces blood pressure. Those formerly unable to conceive were helped by

⁷ Intharakamhaeng (1998) *Jivacit: Living with an understanding of nature* 10th edn. (Bangkok: Clinic Baan lae Suan) p.37

⁸ *ibid* p.127

⁹ Swearer (1995), *the Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*, State University of New York Press, p.144.

meditation to have their own children.¹⁰ Meditation has also been shown to reduce depression in Thai teenagers.¹¹

Besides helping one's physical and mental health, the practice of Buddhist meditation leads one out of suffering, ultimately towards complete liberation. The mind becomes purer and more filled with positivity while succumbing less easily to negative states of mind. It becomes easier to express compassion to others – all of which are considered aspects of a quality mind.¹²

“Buddhist meditation is not only a means to cure the mind of ailments caused by incorrect views, self-indulgence, hatred and anger of all forms but it also devised as a mean to induce positive and wholesome mental states particularly the four divine abidings [brahmaa-vihaara] ... continual cultivation of which is a vital Buddhist way of making the mind healthy.”

There are many methods of meditation available in the present day, but often the benefits gained from practice depend less on the method than on the earnest of the meditator.¹³

“Each Buddhist precept and each meditation method is aimed at controlling the senses, impulses and instincts and while reducing stress and the unwholesomeness of thought that is the root of mental disease.”

In brief, physical diseases are best treated by medicine or scientific processes but treatment of mental symptoms is better treated by work on the mind, for example, by meditation where the patient should help themselves rather than resorting to medication. The human mind can be rebalanced by one's own efforts and such balance actually has a beneficial effect on convalescence from physical disease. A patient can be treated more efficiently if a distinction can be made between the physical and mental components of their symptomology. Appropriate treatment should be given for both components. A patient depressed about their physical condition never makes a quick recovery – on the contrary, a patient who doesn't let their physical condition get them down psychologically is more likely to remain calm and collected in a way that previous disease diminishes and new diseases never take hold.

The benefits of meditation can, thus, be summarized as facilitating better mental health and development of personality. Meditation will help strengthen one's mind, to make one's mind secure and calm, prudent, polite, gentle, fresh, enthusiastic, cheerful, graceful, merciful and compassionate, understanding the world according to its reality – all of which are the qualities of a mind in good mental health.

¹⁰ Herbert Benson (1976) *The Relaxation Response* (New York: Harper Torch)

¹¹ Kasanatikul, Suttipan & Worakul (1986) *J. Psychiat Ass Thailand* 1986; 31: 177-190

¹² Pinit Ratanakul & Kyaw Than (1996), *Health, Healing and Religion*, the Centre of Human Resources Development, Mahidol University, Thailand. pp.42-3

¹³ Ibid.

Thus, achieving true happiness in life, doesn't just depend on success in one's career or family, but also in maintaining physical and mental health. Buddhist meditation gives the sort of value to life you don't have to buy, relevant to those of all creeds, nationalities and religions – a happiness that can be attained without great difficulty in a way you can prove for yourself.

Chapter 6

Benefits of Meditation in Buddhism

Units in this Chapter

6.1 Benefits of Meditation according to the Buddhist Scriptures

6.1.1 Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

6.1.2 Samaadhi Sutta

6.2 Benefits of Meditation according to Living Masters

Chapter at a Glance

1. Ever since the Lord Buddha become fully self-enlightened by breaking free of all defilements, attaining true happiness as the result of true meditation, the Buddha has described the benefits of meditation – notably five benefits of meditation mentioned in his first teaching, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.
2. Four main benefits of meditation described in Buddhist Scriptures are: the attainment of happiness, the attainment of seeing and knowing [*~naa.nadassana*], the attainment of mindfulness, and the eradication of all defilements – the last benefit being the most important one.
3. Four further benefits of meditation indicated by living masters are: outstanding abilities at work, attainment of mental powers, attainment of the heaven realms at death and ultimately the attainment of deep meditation [*nirodha-samaapatti*].

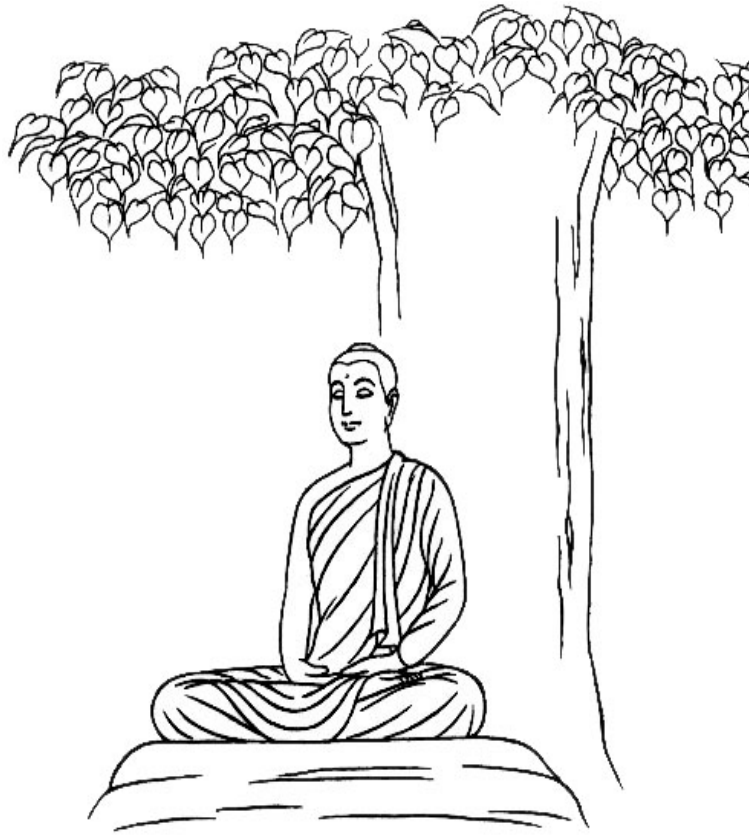
Chapter Objectives

As a result of studying this chapter, students should gain the knowledge and understanding to be able to:

1. identify the benefits of meditation in Buddhism.
2. appreciate the importance of meditation practice.



Benefits of Meditation in Buddhism



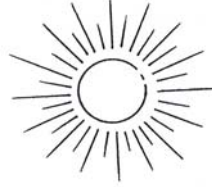
Prince Siddhartha renounced the world in search of an end to suffering. After six years of searching he concluded that the only way to reach salvation was to practice meditation. Thereafter, he made a vow to stake his own life in meditation and practiced meditation vigorously. Finally, he attained full self-enlightenment as the Lord Buddha – having eradicated all defilements and attained true happiness. Just as meditation was important to the Lord Buddha, it is also essential practice for everybody who wishes to uproot their defilements and attain true happiness. Anyone wishing for these things in life needs to practice meditation in earnest.

6.1 Benefits of Meditation according to the Buddhist Scriptures

6.1.1 Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

In the Buddha's first teaching,¹ he pointed out five benefits of meditation practice:

1. To attain the means of seeing according to reality [*cakkhu.m*]
2. To attain the means of knowing according to reality [*~naa.na.m*]
3. To attain wisdom [*pa~n~naa*]
4. To attain knowledge [*vijjaa*] especially the Threefold Knowledge:
 - 4.1 The recollection of previous existences [*pubbenivasanussati~naa.na*];
 - 4.2 Knowledge of the arising and passing away of living beings [*cutuupapata~naa.na*];
 - 4.3 Knowledge that brings one to an end of defilements [*aasavakkhaya~naa.na*]
5. To attain inner light [*aaloko*]



In conclusion, it can be said that the Buddha taught that anyone who meditates regularly will attain seeing and knowing according to reality, wisdom, knowledge and inner brightness – which will allow the practitioner ultimately to uproot their defilements. Meditation is no less necessary for a person than the air we breathe – because without meditation we miss out on happiness and meaning in life.

6.1.2 Samaadhi Sutta

The Lord Buddha pointed out a further four benefits of meditations:²

1. Attainment of Immediate Happiness: the different sorts of happiness can be distinguished as follows:³

- **Mundane Happiness:** Meditation helps bring happiness. Ironically, many people spend all their waking time worrying about things external to themselves – whether it be their kids, their partner or their work. It is hard work to carry so many worries around with one, the whole of the time. For some people it is not enough to carry around worries about work and family – they add to these with worries about their belongings, their home, their country, and eventually the whole world. Carrying around such a lot of

¹ Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta Vin.i.12; UdA.324, 371; Mtu.iii.333

² Samaadhi Sutta A.ii.44

³ Phrabhavanaviriya (1994) *Kon Thai Tong Roo* 6th edn. (Bangkok: Aksornsamai) pp.42-7

worries eventually brings them stress problems. However, if they learn to relax their mind through meditation, their mind can stop worrying unnecessarily. Once the mind is no longer a victim of worry, both body and mind can relax more. Therefore, even without mentioning the subtle happiness to be gained from meditation, a person already gains significant basic happiness, merely by breaking free of obsessive worry.

- **True Happiness:** Happiness is a fundamental for every life. According to the Buddhist proverb:

Sukhakaamaani bhuutaani
All beings long for happiness.

Most beings think they can find happiness from sensory stimuli – however, the real happiness is of a different quality – a happiness that stays with one whether one is sleeping, waking, sitting, lying down, standing or walking along – irrespective of time or place. This kind of happiness is the sort which beings are really longing for. Meditation is the way people can attain such happiness, in a way that it will stay with one the whole of the time. This is because when one's mind is internalized and united with the center of the body, one will come across the inner sphere of Dhamma which is the origin of the happiness which all human beings are longing for. This source of happiness inside is different from the mundane happiness described above. At the moment one's mind comes to standstill, one will immediately realize that the feeling one thought was happiness before was actually no more than distraction from one's suffering. Such mundane happiness tends to be only fleeting, comparatively insignificant, cannot be maintained and still has an admixture of suffering. The true happiness, by contrast, comes from the inside -- illuminating one's mind from the inside at all times providing happiness together with wisdom – not reliant on external circumstances but merely on the stillness of the mind. It is a sort of happiness one will not get bored with easily and on the contrary, will increase to happiness that becomes more and more profound. Once one reaches the Dhamma sphere inside, one will immediately appreciate that inner wisdom is unlimited, full of wisdom and happiness, which is revealed by the illuminated mind. To attain happiness, safety and satisfaction in life, it becomes obvious that one does not have to search anywhere else but merely allowing their mind to glide down through the stream of brightness at the centre of the body.

If alternatively one is to describe the two types of happiness attained from meditation practice as a function of time, you can describe happiness as follows:

- **Happiness in the Present:** this is the happiness of attaining the absorptions [*jhaana*] or the happiness from attaining Dhammakaya during meditation. It starts to occur immediately the mind withdraws from confusion and stress in daily life. It becomes more intense when one's mind starts to come to

standstill and will become more pronounced all the way up to the supreme happiness of Nirvana well known in the Buddhist proverb:⁴

Nibbaana.m parama.m sukha.m
Nirvana is the Supreme Happiness.

Such happiness, attained by stilling one's mind is a part of meditation practice all the way from the beginning until the stage of attaining complete enlightenment. It is far superior to the so-called happiness which might come from the distractions of eating, drinking, speaking and thinking, from sights, tastes, perfumes and music. Such 'so-called happiness' is just temporary distraction from suffering and is only a tiny fraction of the happiness of a still mind in accordance with the Buddhist proverb:⁵

N' atthi santipara.m sukha.m
There is no higher happiness than a still mind.

- **Future Happiness:** When meditators pass away, they will tend to go to heaven. If a meditator eradicates all defilements completely, they will enter upon the ultimate happiness of Nirvana.

2. Attainment of Seeing and Knowing [*~naa.nadassana*]: With proper meditation practice, one will be able to attained seeing and knowing to understand the varied conditions of the world and to understand oneself in reality. Because of some physical limitations of human's eyes, we are extremely limited to see the world and to see ourselves, e.g. some animals, such as dogs and cats, are able to see in the dark or at night clearer than human beings are, and in the daytime we are able to see only the object in the optimal range of distance, e.g. we are not able to see our own eye brows, which is too close, similar to the things which are too far, such as stars, or the things which are too small, e.g. germs, or too large, such as the sky and the world, which we are not able to see all at a time with our eyes. Since the human wisdom and seeing are relative, the more we see things, the more wisdom we could gain. Therefore, there is someone who tries to create seeing tools to increase visual efficiency, such as, microscope and telescope. Even though human beings have tried hard to increase their visual efficiency through such inventions, they still could not be able to see their own mind, they could not be able to sentient the subtle issues, which are the issues about heaven, hell and Nirvana. On the contrary, for the ones with serene mind, they will attain a tool, which is called "seeing and knowing". Through such tool, they will be able to see and to know at the same time. This kind of tool is the only tool which will be utilized by human beings to see their own mind, and to clarify all the issues about the world and lives in reality. Such magnificent tool will be gained only through mind still meditation. For more explanation, with well-trained meditation practice, one will gain insight knowledge, like moving an object away from the dark to the bright sunny area, or compare to the unseen rock in dirty water in the container which then be visible after the impurities have been precipitated, the water then be

⁴ Dh.57

⁵ Ibid.

so clear that even a needle in such water is easily seen. The same as the way which the mind which is overwhelmed with greed, hatred, and delusion will be purified and be able to recollect things in the past, or to be able to foresee the incidents in the future, or be able to see all defilements precipitated in the mind for very long period of time and be eradicated finally. Differ from the limited vision of non-meditators, the vision of the well-trained meditators are omni dimensional and insight. We could compare the power of vision of non-meditators to the power of a traveling light projecting to the sky, which is very limited. The vision of the meditators who attain seeing and knowing are beyond human being's vision, which can be proved by practicing meditation in Buddhism.

3. Attainment of Mindfulness [sati] and Self-Possession [sampaja~n~na]: Mindfulness can be attained through meditation practice. Mindfulness is to recollect of one's deeds, good or bad, right or wrong, which will remind one to think, to say, and to do in the right thing, so that one will not be careless and will be able to think over things intellectually.⁶ The nature of the mind is to keep on thinking about things all the time. Such thought without conscious control will be wandered along with many variety of emotion, and become useless. On the contrary, the mind with conscious control will bring us not to be careless, not allow the mind to wander, and not allow the emotion to go along with all distractions. Meditation practice is to stabilize one's conscious, not to be distracted. Ones who practice meditation regularly will be able to control their conscious, will not be distracted. Their mind will be at the center of their body, so that they will not do things without conscious. We could find that meditators are likely to be easy to understand during communication. Their minds are always concentrated on what they are doing. Meditation practice is to train the conscious directly to stabilize the mind and to be aware of all body movements, which will provide a lot of benefits as follows:

1. Controls the state of mind to make sure our mind remains in the state we require — keeping only the sorts of things we want to think and cutting out the things we don't want to think.
2. Allows the body and mind to be independent. Sometimes when we feel ill or in bad shape, our body feels heavy and sluggish. This also happens when our business is not going so well, or there are problems in the family. It is as if the world is weighing heavy on our shoulders. However, if we have good mindfulness, even though the things around us may be challenging, they are unable to weigh us down it will not 'get through' to your state of mind.
3. Allows our thoughts to en-large outwards without limits. You will see things as they really are. You will be able to spread loving kindness without limits because you have no limiting anxieties.
4. Allows us to consider things with wisdom and follow them up with clarity. Thus, mindfulness augments wisdom because it will allow you to get to the root of every matter.
5. Will purify and make independent all actions of body, speech and mind.

⁶ Dhammakaya Foundation (2006) *Manual of Peace* p.247

4. To be Able to Eradicate All Defilements: The defilements inside our mind are the great harm which brings all sufferings to us. The sufferings from our actions result from the influence of defilements on the mind. All such suffering can be eliminated through practice of meditation. Through meditation practice, one can change one's personality from bad-tempered to cool and compassionate, or from someone with learning difficulties into a good student. This can be achieved because meditation is able to reduce levels of delusion in our mind directly. This is the benefit of meditation practice in eradicating mental defilements. Through high level meditation attainment, it is possible to eradicate even the subtlest mental defilements completely.

6.2 Benefits of Meditation according to Living Masters

The many benefits of meditation mentioned above are added to by the following benefits of meditation mentioned in literature handed down to us by several living meditation masters of the modern day.

1. *Outstanding Skills in the Workplace: the exceptional talents are brought with them to the workplace by those who meditate.*⁷

- **Ability to Work without Boredom or Fatigue:** Attainment in meditation allows us to feel 'alive' and refreshed. People who meditate regularly will feel a certain buoyancy of body and mind which allows them satisfaction – whatever task they are doing. Every task feels like a favorite task – because those who have joy in their mind experience joy whatever they do, and therefore do not become bored. On the contrary, for those who lack concentration, every job attempted seems like a nightmare.
- **Working Precision with High Benefits and Low Losses:** because meditators are calm, even confronted by problems in the workplace, they will remain calm. They will handle emergency situations without panic. Inside and outside of critical situations, the mindfulness they have built up through meditation will allow them to work precisely and systematically. They will get more done for less. This will be better than working distractedly where the results will lack thoroughness and need to be redone or completed by others – all of which incur costs to an employer.



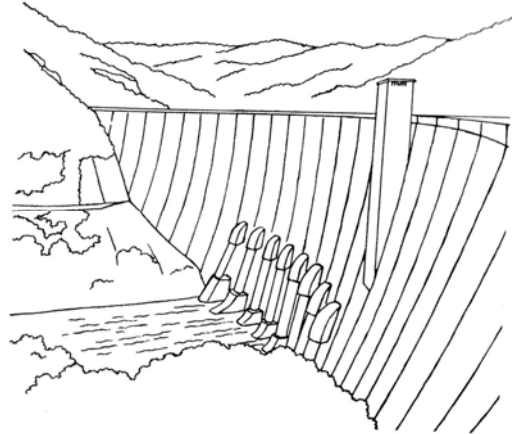
- **Accurate Prediction:** Just as an architect needs to visualize buildings accurately before building them, before starting any task a person needs to have a clear picture of what they are trying to achieve. When the result of a piece of work can be visualized very clearly in one's mind it helps that task to be fulfilled easily. Conversely, for someone who is lacking in mindfulness, the picture in the mind is unclear – and the results of their work will not be as good as expected.

⁷ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (1994) *ibid.* pp.42-7

Anyone with all these three qualities will be an outstanding addition to the workplace – and all as the result of regular meditation practice to bring peace and happiness to the mind. Regular meditation transforms a person's character for the better – a bad tempered person will become more cheerful, the miserly will become more generous, worriers will become decisive. The most important thing meditation eradicates is bias which unveils the willingness for a person to put their best into their work. The things they think say and do will be more productive.

2. *The Attainment of Mental Powers:*

The power of the mind can be compared to water held back behind a dam – it has the potential to produce other forms of energy. It can also be compared to light focused by a lens which gains the potential to burn anything at the focal point of the lens. It is therefore no wonder that when the mind becomes focused or channeled, it is able to produce mental powers. Even in the scripture there are descriptions of the mental powers that can be expected – such as the ability to fly in the air – by those who train their minds in meditation.⁸ In some places they are described as the sixfold supranormal knowledge [*abhi~n~naa*] – although the first five are sometimes found in other religions too, the sixth item does not appear elsewhere. For some people these powers come as a spin-off of mental purity.⁹ The Buddha mentioned the sixfold supranormal knowledge in many parts of the Buddhist Scripture. The Buddha summarized the sixfold supranormal powers of mind will manifest as follows:¹⁰



1. **Magical Powers** [*iddhividhaa*]: the ability to perform certain miracles to do with changing the nature of objects -- such as floating in the air, transmuting the body, enlarging or shrinking oneself or making oneself invisible, transforming oneself from one person to look simultaneously like many persons, to make many people look like one person, walking through walls or mountains as easily as passing through empty space, hiding in or popping up from the ground as if it were water, walking on the water as if it were solid ground, flying through the air like a bird, being able to touch the sun and moon with one's own hands or being able to visit the Brahma realms even in one's physical body.
2. **Supranormal Audition** [*dibbasota*]: being able to hear sounds not audible to others, beyond the capability of the human ear such as celestial sounds both near and far away.
3. **Reading the Minds of Others** [*cetopariya~naa.na*]: knowing the state of mind of other people (or beings) – whether their mind is under the influence of

⁸ Saama~n~naphala Sutta D.i.47ff verses 131 – 134, 326 – 328

⁹ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (2003) *The Fruits of True Monkhhood* (Bangkok: Dhammasarn) p.90

¹⁰ Mahaavacchagotta Sutta M.i.489ff.

greed, hatred, delusion, depression or not, whether the mind is independent, or whether it is under the control of another, whether it is concentrated or distracted, whether it has attained liberation or not.

4. *The Ability to Recollect One's Own Previous Existences*

[pubbenivasanussati~naa.na]: whether it be one lifetime ago, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred, a thousand or a hundred thousand lifetimes ago or even from many eons [kappa] ago.¹¹ We will be able to recall our name, lineage and caste in previous lifetimes, our standard of living and lifespan – and the same details of subsequent lifetimes too and how we arrived in this present lifetime from lifetimes in our past.

5. *The Ability to Recollect the Previous Existences of Others*

[cutuupapaata~naa.na]: by means of our divine eye [dibbacakkhu] we will be able to see how other beings are reborn in subtle or coarse states, their standard of living and so forth. One will also be able to see how the afterlife destination of human and animals is determined by the retribution of the karma they have done – beings who have had unwholesome conduct of body, speech and mind end up in the unfortunate realms, whereas beings who have had wholesome conduct of body, speech and mind will go to fortunate realms after death.

6. *The Knowledge of an Utter End to All Defilements* [aasavakkhaya~naa.na]:
This is the ultimate benefit which we are aiming for in our meditation.

3. *Having a Fortunate Afterlife Destination:*

Buddhism describes thirty-one realms of existence which can be divided into fortunate and unfortunate realms. Fortunate realms include the heaven realms and the human realm. The unfortunate realms include the hell realms. According to the Buddhist proverb:¹²

Citte sa"nkili.t.the dugati paa.tika"nkhaa

If the mind is clouded, we have the unfortunate realms as our afterlife destination
But:

Citte asa"nkili.t.the sugati paa.tika"nkhaa

If the mind is radiant, we have the fortunate realms as our afterlife destination.

Those who meditate generally have a clear mind. When their mind is clear, they inevitably have the fortunate realms as their afterlife destination. On the other hand, those who lack meditation generally succumb to a clouded mind and have the unfortunate realms as their afterlife destination.

Buddhism recognizes that the human realm still belongs to the plane of sense-pleasure [kaamabhava]. This is why humans and animals alike are preoccupied with sensuality, becoming easily ensnared in the mundane pleasures of family life

¹¹ Here an eon [kappa] refers to the extremely long timespan from the beginning to the end of the world.

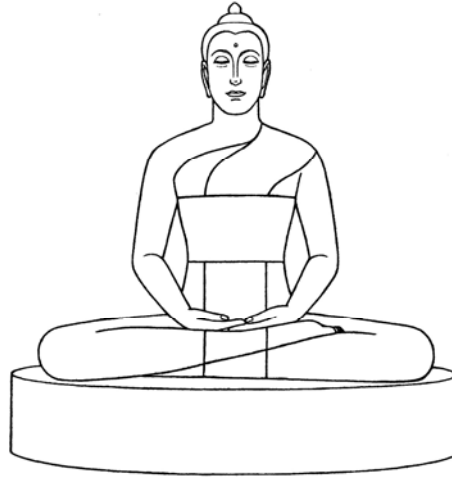
¹² Vatthuupama Sutta M.i.36

and consumerism. Humans and animals are still pleased to untrue happiness because they misunderstand that it is the happiness they should obtain.

Nonetheless, if those leading the family life manage their time so that they can earn their living and still have enough time to meditate, they can gain temporary release for their mind from the clutches of the sensual world. Throughout their life, they can cultivate relaxation and radiance in their lives and when they pass away, they can shed the attachments of the world easily, choosing which realm they want as their afterlife destination.

Ultimately, whatever walk of life we are in, we are aiming to break free so that we may attain “This superb sphere of existence is Nirvana which is the sphere of existence beyond others – where there is no more cycle of existence, no birth or dying – but which is the final resting place for all those who are enlightened, awakened and joyous – those who have become liberated completely of all mental defilements.”¹³

4. *The Ability to Attain the Stages of Cessation*¹⁴:



To attain stages of cessation is to attain Nirvana as a permanent state of mind [*sa-upaadisesa-nibbaana*] which is situated inside human physical body. Those who attain this stage of meditation will be able to meditate in the sitting posture for seven days and seven nights without any need to eat, but sustained by the joy of meditation. To be able to attain this stage of meditation, we first have to attain a standstill of the mind.

Such deep meditation where one can attain the stages of cessation is really concerns the stages of Buddhist sainthood from that of stream-enterer [*sotaapana*] to that of the arahant. The arahant is able to attain the stages of cessation, because their mind is completely liberated from defilements. When there is no further

¹³ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1994) Buddhist Sermon, November 6th.

¹⁴ Phrabhavanaviriyakhun ibid.

greed, hatred or delusion in the mind, it will be bright and pure the whole of the time – able to attain the stages of cessation. The immense brightness of the mind at this stage allows one to attain, seeing and knowing by which one can break free of the defilements sequentially to attain true happiness inside.¹⁵

In conclusion, we can appreciate that meditation is beneficial on many different levels. Proper meditation practice has no harmful side-effects, but brings only happiness.

¹⁵ Phrarajbhavanavisudh ibid.

Chapter 7

Meditation Homework for Daily Life

Units in this Chapter

1. Making the effort to see the virtues in yourself and others. Congratulating others on their virtues and giving them the opportunity to congratulate you on yours.
2. Keeping daily notes of your meditation experience in a diary.
3. Before going to sleep, recollecting the good deeds you have done throughout the day.
4. Centering your mind before falling asleep.
5. Upon waking, immediately reconnecting your attention with the centre of the body.
6. Before getting up, taking a minute to re-unite your mind with mental object at the center of your body and recollecting that you are lucky still to be alive, reminding yourself that one day in the future you must die for sure, spreading loving-kindness to all living beings in the world.
7. Throughout the day creating the feeling that you are united with the mental object at the center of the body: creating the feeling that we are inside the mental object, the mental object is inside us, we are united with the mental object and the mental object is united with us.
8. Taking one minute of every hour to still our mind and think of the mental object or stilling the mind at the center of the body.
9. Recollecting the mental object at the centre of the body while conducting other activities throughout the day.
10. Making a world a nicer place to live in, by smiling and speaking in an endearing way.

Chapter at a Glance

1. The “ten items of homework” are a skilful means recommended by Phrarajbhavanavisudh as a method to integrate meditation practice in daily life and as a way to help tame the mind in preparation meditation.
2. Mental development can be secured by practicing meditation regularly according to the proper technique. Practicing the ten items of homework further this development allowing us to see progress more quickly.
3. Having other members our family rejoice in our merit means that when we have done something virtuous that fills our mind with happiness and joy, we should share this positivity with our family in word and deed. Keeping a diary of our meditation means writing down our inner experience each day – notes about how our meditation is going, how subtle or bright our mind is and whether there anything different from the day before. Before falling asleep each day, we should recollect all the good deeds we have done throughout the day, so that we can sleep easy with happiness in our heart. We should make sure our mind is at the center of the body before we fall asleep. When we wake up again, we should immediately reconnect our attention with the center of the body. Having woken up, the first thing we should do in the morning is to take a minute to reunite the mind with the mental object at the center of our body, and recollect that we are lucky to be alive, spreading loving-kindness for all living beings – reminding ourselves that we have to die someday. Throughout the day we should try to maintain the feeling that you are united with the mental object at the center of the body: creating the feeling that we are inside the mental object, the mental object is inside us, we are united with the mental object and the mental object is united with us. We should try to recollect the mental object at the centre of the body while conducting other activities throughout the day – whether it be washing our face, taking a bath, get dressed, eating, washing up, sweeping the floor, taking exercise, driving, or working. We should try to make the world a nicer place to live in, by smiling and speaking in an endearing way.
4. Anyone who realizes the importance of the “ten items of homework”, and practices accordingly will be able to see progress in meditation for themselves.
5. Each item of homework is easily practiced and relevant to meditators of every gender, ages, race, creed and religious persuasion.
6. Just as proof of the benefit of meditation is in the practice, progress in one’s meditation will be witness to one’s earnest in practicing the ten items of homework.

Chapter Objectives

This unit should give students the knowledge and understanding to able to:

1. explain the principle of integrating meditation in one's daily life by applying the ten items of homework;
2. define each of the ten items of homework;
3. explain the importance of the ten items of homework;
4. explain how each item of homework can be practiced;
5. practice meditation better than before.



Meditation Homework for Daily Life

Integrating Meditation in Daily Life

The “10 Homework” is technique to the inner happiness, to the fruitful of meditation, to be beloved person. The ten items of homework are a practical way to integrate meditation in one’s daily life – helping to supplement the progress in mental development gained by doing meditation on a daily basis while helping to add value to our daily lives – especially since the tranquility one has inside tends to lead us towards increased wisdom, satisfaction and prosperity in life. Achieving all ten items of homework on a daily basis a shortcut to tranquility throughout the day, gradually bringing with it all the other benefits mentioned in a way that will be easily apparent to the practitioner certainly because sediment from non-beauty in life will be gradually diminish. A detailed description of the ten items of homework – how they are practiced and their benefits – is shown below:



1. Make the effort to see the virtues in yourself and others. Congratulate others on their virtues and give them the opportunity to congratulate you on yours:

Sharing merit with those at home means looking for ways of applying our cheerfulness, love and compassion of mind to enhance the positive mood of others at home, by cheering them up with appreciation for the good deeds we have had the good luck to accomplish throughout the day. The ability to bring one’s good deeds out in the open, with the confidence to have other people congratulate you on them, helps

reinforce one's commitment to good deeds in a way that boosts one's quality of mind with refreshedness which helps one cope cheerfully and compassionately with all the situations of life.

Benefits to practitioner

1. The merit (positive energy from having done good deeds) will continue to nourish body, speech, and mind all the way home.
2. The merit already accrued will be multiplied further through the joy one takes in the merit one has done and looking forward to sharing our experiences with others at home.
3. If we are able to maintain our subtlety of mind, with our attention at the center of our body all the way back home, our inner experience will progress and our merit will increase not to mention forging a positive mood for our family at home.
4. If we succeed in this item of homework the chain of merit created will be continuous. The meritorious awareness we forge in those around us will eventually come back to consolidate us further.

Benefits to others

1. Our loved ones and family who haven't had the same opportunities to go out and do meritorious deeds because of their duties still have the opportunity to accrue merit by the method of 'rejoicing in the merit of others [*anumodaana*].
2. When our loved ones are able to pick up on the positivity of others in our family who have had the chance to do more meritorious deeds than themselves will enable them to go back to their respective duties cheerfully, inspiring them with the qualities of satisfaction and appreciation.
3. The mood of cheerfulness, smiles and endearing speech that arises naturally in the home as a result of practicing this item of homework helps to minimize fault-finding directed at ourselves, our spiritual teachers or Buddhism in general.
4. Reduces the any tendency for our loved ones to succumb to unwholesome behaviors.
5. Facilitates a constant flow of merit for everyone at home, fostering an atmosphere of improvement at home attracting good events happen in the family all because of the simple act of having family members appreciate the merit we have done on our arrival home.

Details of practice

Whenever the teaching monk gives the blessing at the conclusion of our meritorious deed, we should make the wish that the merit accrued be potent in bringing fulfillment and success to both ourselves and those back home.

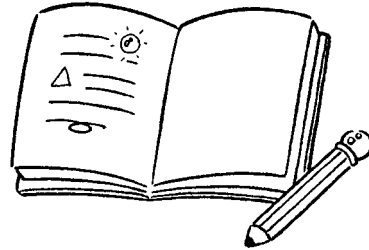
At the time you have others rejoice in your merit, make sure your own mind is softly located at the center of your body with whatever level of inner experience you have attained for yourself.

Avoid getting drawn into arguments, speculative debates or any issues to perturb the mind before or during the time you have others rejoice in your merit.

Restrict yourself to only useful and positive words and don't forget to smile!

2. Keep daily notes of your meditation experience in a diary:

Taking notes of our inner experience or keeping a meditation diary will allow our practice to improve without end. Keeping such notes helps us to reflect back over the inner experiences we have achieved in our meditation – the more we reflect in such a way, the more merit will arise for us. Re-reading our notes helps us to achieve consistency in our Dhamma practice and allow our understanding of it to become more profound. This will allow us to adjust the balance of our meditation more accurately, understand and overcome obstacles in meditation more easily. We will gain the know-how of the sort of mood that allows us to progress in our practice and the sort of hindrances that cause us to lose our subtlety of mind.



Benefits to practitioner

1. Progress will be made in our meditation practice every day.
2. We will become more adept in balancing ourselves and our mood in relation to the meditation.
3. Fosters an understanding of adjusting our approach to meditation and helps us to reflect more accurately upon ourselves.
4. Every entry in our diary helps us to review our meditation practice. As meditation is a meritorious deed, recollection of this merit causes the merit to be multiplied further – enhancing the radiance, clarity and wisdom of mind we bring to the meditation.

Benefits to others

1. The improvements we make to ourselves and our working and daily lives as a result of self-reflection will have advantages that extend to those around us too.
2. Helps us to be more open and responsive to the criticism and suggestions of those around us.
3. We will be more thorough in our dealings with the world, reducing the causes of potential conflict with those around us.

Details of practice

Keep your meditation diary in a place where it is easily seen, on a table we use regularly, with a pen near at hand. We should take a wash or a shower to put ourselves in the right mood and relax before making an entry. On returning home it would be selfish just to go about our own business paying no attention to anyone else in our

family. Thus, it would be better to sit down with one's diary only when we have made sure everything and everyone else is in order – in that way we will be able to reflect more clearly when we think back over our meditation – our becoming automatically more radiant.

3. Before going to sleep, recollect the good deeds you have done throughout the day:



Every night before going to sleep or before going to bed one should recall all the good deeds one has done throughout the past day, week, month or year. One should begin with the good deed that made the biggest impression on our mind, picking up on the joy of the feeling produced – and that joy will automatically attract the merit of other good deeds into a continuous train of thought which is accompanied by pride, joy and refreshedness. Recalling one's good deeds before sleep is important because on remembering the major meritorious deeds we have done, the feeling arising will help to make us aware also of the smaller meritorious deeds we may have done but forgotten. Within only a few minutes our mind, specifically the center of the body will take its place at the center of all merit we have done in the past. When the merit gathers in this way, radiance will arise at the center of the body. If you have the opportunity at this occasion, you can watch a video or look at pictures of a particular meritorious occasion you can remember or alternatively simply imagine yourself back in time and mood to that occasion – this will help you broaden your recall and remember further details of the meritorious deeds you did. This item of homework benefits both ourselves and others in the following ways:

Benefits to practitioner

1. The stream of merit created by practicing this item of homework helps eliminate worry and anxiety from the mind – so that the mind is calm and free of tension before sleep.
2. Fills us with confidence as to the worth of our life each day, while inspiring us to further our merit to even greater heights on subsequent days. If these thoughts were the last thing on our mind before we died – supposing we were to fall asleep and never wake up again – such thoughts would ensure our rebirth in a fortunate realm.
3. Protects us from nightmares.
4. Ensures our personal safety and protection wherever we may sleep.

Benefits to others

1. Absence of restlessness on our part allows others sleeping nearby to sleep in peace.
2. Absence of talking in one's sleep, nightmares etc. allows others to sleep soundly too.

Details of practice

Before lying down to go to sleep, sit up in bed. Drink a glass of warm water while recalling your good deeds continuously until lying down to go to sleep. Alternatively, for those who bow at their pillow before sleep, listen to a recording of 'sorapanya'¹ chanting in praise of the Triple Gem – the sound will help us to focus our mind on all the meritorious deeds we have done throughout the day. Start by recollecting the meritorious deeds that have made the biggest impression on you or which bring you the most joy in retrospect – perhaps deeds like having led a Kathina ceremony, having offered robes, having enshrined Buddha images or donated temple buildings like pavilions or pagodas in your favorite temple. The effect of recollecting one's merit can be multiplied further if one makes a resolve on the basis of one's good deeds while calling upon the Perfections [*paaramitaa*] of one's root teachers' Perfection to consolidate our own merit by imagining our root teacher at the center of our body or feel that we are at their center.

4. Center your mind before falling asleep:

This means making sure that we bring our mind to the center of the body before we fall asleep so that our mind is immersed in the light and joy there, after having reflected on all the good deeds we have done.



¹ Sorapanya chanting is chanting following a traditional musical melody (rather than the plain overtone chanting used for morning & evening chanting).

Benefits to practitioner

1. Getting to sleep quickly, sleeping soundly and deeply with no anxieties to cause restlessness, talking on one's sleep or nightmares.
2. Dreamless sleep without waking up in the middle of the night – which will allow us to rest both body and mind to the full.
3. Even while we sleep the stream of our merit will continue to nourish us – so that the merit will protect us as we sleep, wherever we may take our rest. Although the time we are asleep is full of risks, the merit in our mind makes up for our unconsciousness.
4. As a meditator, our inner experience will not backslide even when we are asleep.
5. Strong health, not waking up in the middle of the night, or even if one does wake up, one can get back to sleep quickly.

Benefits to others

1. Allows others sleeping nearby to sleep in peace.
2. Allowing others to wake up in a good mood and maintain a good mood all day long.
3. Allowing others greater efficiency at work – refreshed from having had a full night's rest – using both body and mind to their full potential.

Details of practice

Having recollected all the merits of the day, one should touch one's mind softly at the centre of the body, at the point from where the joy emanates. Centering the mind in this way will create the subtlety of mind and the right mood to envelop the whole of oneself in a feeling of weightlessness, ease, relaxation and light. Make the resolution or gentle intention to fall asleep at the center of this gentle and joyous light. At the same time we should avoid watching perturbing movies, shows or entertainment immediately before going to bed, excepting media concerned with merit-making because otherwise our mind will get caught up in the negativity of the media content, interrupting the continuity of the flow of merit in our mind before bed.

5. Upon waking, immediately reconnect your attention with the center of the body:



On waking our mind should still be immersed in the brightness at the center of our body – finding us in a good mood from the moment we wake with consciousness as to all the good deeds one has done in the past – the new day holding the possibility to improve further upon one’s track record of good deeds from the past.

Benefits to practitioner

This item of homework will train us to be mindful, waking in mindfulness – greeting the new day without reluctance, drowsiness or dizziness. The first thing on one’s mind when one wakes should be thoughts of good deeds. If good things are at the top of one’s mind, it will help to attract similar things into our life. Therefore, waking with our mind focused on merit our new day is guaranteed to fill with meritorious deeds; the bad things temporarily forgotten because our focus is on merit instead. Whenever merit predominates in the mind, unwholesome intentions have to take a back seat. This ensures that each new day promises to hold more good deeds than the previous.

Benefits to others

1. Creates a positive and pleasant atmosphere for those close to us at home.
2. Sets a positive mood for the home.
3. Boosts morale mutually between family members – especially for those who are feeling down – because often the morale of the family reflects our own. If a family is in good cheer from the moment they get up, often they will be cheerful the whole day.

Details of practice

Usually, if one has practiced all the first four items of homework (or even two or three of them) before going to bed, this alone will enable us to wake up with our mind already centered – unless we have woken up moody in the middle of the night and have not recentered our mind before going back to sleep. To practice this item of homework properly, the moment we wake up, we should recall the joy and brightness of merit we were thinking about before we fell asleep. We should re-align our mind with that feeling. (If for some reason we had not centered our mind before falling asleep, we should be quick to do so when we wake up, instead), allowing the soft, and refreshing light at our center gently to permeate the whole of our body and mind until we feel cleansed and pure.

6. Before getting up, taking a minute to re-unite your mind with the mental object at the center of your body and recollecting that you are lucky still to be alive, reminding yourself that one day in the future you must die for sure, spreading loving-kindness to all living beings in the world:



The first thing to do immediately after waking up in the morning is to spend one minute thinking of one's mental object at the center of the body. During that minute we should remember that we are lucky still to be alive and remind ourselves that one day in the future we must die for sure, spreading loving – kindness to all living beings in the world. Having woken up with our mind at the centre of the body, we should wish the best on ourselves for the whole of the day. No gift is more precious for us than a bright clear mental object (whether it be a crystal ball or a crystal Buddha image) – which is the symbol of prosperity and security – a symbol of our true aim in life and a symbol of the way to strive towards the ultimate aim in life.

The symbol of the Buddha Image in Buddhism is derived from the form of an inner body nested inside every human body which can be attained by bringing the mind to a standstill at the seventh base of the mind. This inner body is the same as the body of enlightenment attained by the Lord Buddha and all the enlightened ones. For 'worldlings' like ourselves to attain the condition of enlightenment, we must first attain this inner body. The Buddha is more than just a statue shaped like a Buddha. Many Buddha images we see today have more to do with the imagination of the sculptor than they have towards the real likeness of what we mean by 'Buddha'. The original Buddha Image or Buddha Body arises on the strength of our inner experience (Dhamma) and embodies our inner experience at a level which represents the highest level of purity where it is possible to become a Buddha or an *arahant*². Hence, the Buddha body can also be called the body of enlightenment which in the Pali language is referred to as the "Dhamma Body" or "*Dhammakaaya*" of the Lord Buddha.

The Buddha Image or the Dhamma Body is (usually) not meant to represent the physical body of the Lord Buddha, but rather the inner bodies nested inside the physical body of Prince Siddhartha while he attained the *Dhammakaaya*, and used *Dhammakaaya* to examine higher teachings to attain the path and fruit of the *arahant*

² One who has attained Buddhist sainthood at a level where there are no remaining defilements left in the mind and for who there is no more rebirth.

Dhamma body – something which is beyond the reach of mundane comprehension or conventional methods of study.

The “*Dhammakaya*” was rediscovered by the meditation master Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro), the late abbot of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen. Through his compassion, this monk devoted the rest of his life to teaching and furthering the depth of knowledge of this meditation technique. It is this technique which has known as “Dhammakaya meditation” (i.e. meditation for attaining the Dhammakaya).

He devoted his time to research the insights of Dhammakaya meditation and refined the technique to make it more systematic, through experimenting with the ways the meditation could best be applied for the common good. During an exceptionally long ministry of over half-a-century, Phramonkolthepmuni was unflagging in teaching all-comers the way to attain to Dhammakaya and the correct characteristics of the thirty-two signs of the Great Man [*mahaa-purisalakkha.na*] of the Dhamma body – allowing future generations accurately to sculpt or draw the Dhamma body to be used as an object of meditation.

In the present day, Phrarajbhavanavisudh³, teaches Buddhist meditators to use such a Buddha Image or image of the Dhamma Body as their object of meditation when conducting the ten items of homework – and the suggestions in this course unit follows his current recommendations in this respect.

Thus through the power of recollecting the Buddha image (or our other chosen object of meditation) in the centre of the body, loving-kindness will naturally spread forth to all other beings sharing the plight of birth, old-age, sickness and death with us in the cycle of existence. Furthermore, this practice expresses gratitude to the Buddha for having discovered, cared for and taught the Middle Way which has continued to channel merit through our veins even while we were asleep.

Furthermore, the *Dhammakaya* serves to remind us that for as long as we have not become an *arahant* ourselves, we must continue to transmigrate in the cycle of existence. We have no idea when death will come to us, therefore we must not be reckless and should be committed to doing good deeds today in the day ahead to prepare ourselves for the dangers that certainly lie ahead of us in the course of living and dying.

Recollection of the body of enlightenment is our guarantee that the Buddha will offer protection throughout the day, bringing only good things into our lives. Thus, the day ahead will be lived out in safety – the good things in our mind causing all undesirable things in life to keep their distance from us.

Benefits to practitioner

1. Training ourselves in mindfulness, boosting our morale and increasing our capacity for loving-kindness.
2. Being endearing to others people and angels alike – and being blessed with a good complexion.

³ the abbot of Phra Dhammakaya Temple, the president of the Dhammakaya Foundation

3. Training ourselves in generosity.
4. Avoiding recklessness – one's thoughts never straying far from the Buddha and his qualities – because he is always present at the center of one's body.
5. Having clear purpose in life every day.
6. Continuous progress in meditation.

Benefits to others

1. No harm coming to family or society by our hand
2. Our family will gain a good role model of someone whose loving kindness always fosters peace in the household.
3. Society will become filled with the sort of charitable people who assist and forgive others – bringing security and peace to our midst.

Details of practice

After waking up mindfully with your mind at the centre of the body, bow at your pillow out of gratitude for surviving another day. You could visualize a Buddha Image at the center of your body or alternatively close your eyes and sit quietly for two minutes focusing and resting the mind gently at the centre of the body while imagining a Buddha Image at the seventh base of the mind. Think of the Buddha Image gently without worrying about how clear the image is. Simply being able to imagine something at all is a good first step. Make the practice regular, on a daily basis – and in this way, the Buddha Image will gradually become clearer. Having mastered this much, when meditating give yourself the feeling that the Buddha Image is bright. Start by making the left side brighter – then the right side. Make the front of the Buddha image bright – then the back part. Make the upper part bright – then the lower part. Imagine that a halo of light is spreading out from the Buddha to touch the minds of all other beings, with the wish that they all be well and happy. Keep your mind calm as you perform this practice. Resolve to do everything to the best of your ability throughout the day ahead because we have no idea how much longer life will last. Thus we make the wish that all living beings have a share in the merit we have cultivated, whether it be:

- The merit of practicing the ten items of homework.
- The merit of thinking of the Buddha Image continuously.
- The merit from various meritorious deeds throughout the day
- The merit of training ourselves in meditation.

Lastly, we make the wish that accomplishing this sixth item of homework will bring us cheer throughout the day that one be able to cultivate merit and pursue the Perfections to the utmost, while enjoying strong health and long life.

7. Throughout the day creating the feeling that you are united with the mental object at the center of the body – creating the feeling that we are inside the mental object, the mental object is inside us, we are united with the mental object and the mental object is united with us:



If for the whole day our mind is united with the skilful state of mind represented by our mental object, the quality of the mind will be upgraded the whole of time. Our life will be secure, our health will be good. Our mind will be nourished by the positivity at the center of the body all the time. Being inside the mental object means that our body is protected by the positivity of merit flowing from our good deeds in the past, through the centre of our body. This brings a bright, secure and healthy life because the Nirvana is of a nature beyond birth, old-age, sickness and death. Immersing our mind constantly in the merit coming from Nirvana, our life will be refreshed, inspired and healthy with a lifespan longer than usual. Being constantly centered gives us the mindfulness to avoid succumbing to the temptation of behaving badly. The feeling that we are united with the mental object at the center of our body will protect us from danger and make sure we do nothing to harm ourselves or others. The purity of the mental object at the center of our body will all good things of similar purity into our lives bringing us safety, dignity, prosperity and abundance.

Benefits to practitioner

1. Enjoying security and abundance in life as a result of all the merit we have been inspired to accrue.
2. Inspiration of mind and the mindfulness to be a teacher to oneself at all times.
3. Meditation which progresses with every second that passes.
4. Full integration of spiritual practice into daily life.
5. Not a breath passes by without our furtherment of virtue.
6. Being trusted by others.
7. Safety and security wherever one goes.

Benefits to others

1. Peace and harmony in family and society.
2. Prosperity, praise and progress of all in the community.
3. Those in the midst of those advanced in their Dhamma practice will find they benefit indirectly from that person's high level of merit.

Details of practice

Imagine that the dome of the sky above is a huge Dhamma sphere which envelops us as if the centre of our own mind is aligned with the centre of this huge sphere of Dhamma. Every time we look up at the sky, we should remind ourselves that we are within that Dhamma sphere – and this will help ensure that our mind is centered the whole of the time. As for imagining that the mental object is inside ourselves, we should simultaneously imagine that a tiny mental object, the size of the tip of our little finger is located at the centre of our body as if we have swallowed it down inside our stomach. Once there, we should imagine it frequently. Habitual practice will result in the mental object enlarging until it becomes the same size as our own body – at which point we will feel as if we are one and the same as the mental object. Mastering this feeling by regular practice, our mind will never drift away from the meditation and the merit will flow in an unbroken stream at our center.

- 8. *Take one minute of every hour to still your mind and think of the mental object (crystal ball or Buddha Image) or still the mind at the center of the body:***



Throughout our waking hours of the day except the sleeping time, we must train ourselves to be intimately connected with the inner experience at the center of our body. Item seven of the homework (described above) helps improve on the general quality of our awareness by setting boundaries and cultivating mindfulness. This eighth item of homework; however, builds on these skills refining our meditation in a more focused and specific way. It helps to make sure that the merit flowing at the center of our body nourish our mind us for at least a minute of every hour. At least once each hour we have the opportunity to align ourselves with the stuff of Nirvana. Doing this item of homework will not only result in a constant flow of merit but also will increase the merit flowing through us hourly. Every activity in our lives causes us

to use up merit we have stored up for ourselves in the past, therefore thinking back to the center of our body once every hour, helps in no small way to replenish some the merit we have lost. If the hour that passed by was already full of good deeds this practice will help to consolidate and multiply the merit accrued even further.

Benefits to practitioner

1. Our mind will become better able to stay at a standstill at the center of the body with the results of our meditation improving accordingly.
2. When we sit down for a formal meditation, our mind will come to a standstill more easily, facilitating the entry of the mind upon the central axis or 'Middle Way'.

Benefits to others

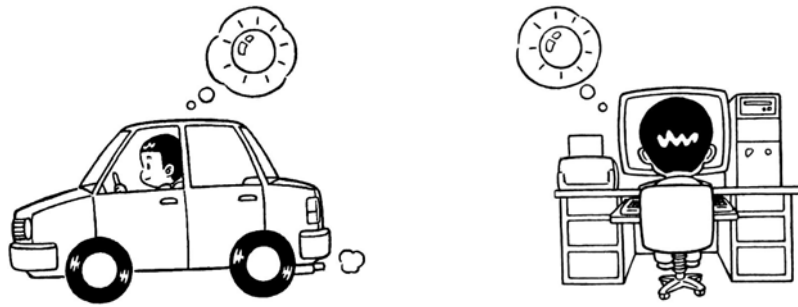
1. Society in the midst of a person practicing this item of homework will be secure and peaceful.
2. Those coming in regular contact with the practitioner will find their lives becoming more peaceful, tender and fulfilling as an indirect result of that person's practice.

Details of practice

Besides having the intention to practice this item of homework once every hour, it helps to set one's wristwatch to beep once an hour or to set one's mobile phone to vibrate or light up – as a reminder. As soon as you notice the signal, think of the mental object at the center of the body and bring your mind to a standstill at the center of it. If one practices in this way regularly, before long the mental object will start to arise in the mind automatically – and our mind will come to an immediate standstill. Once one becomes more adept in the practice, merely turning our attention inwards will cause the mental object to enlarge to the size of the horizons. When this happens, a new mental object, brighter and clearer than the last, will arise at the center, allowing the mind to come to a standstill on a deeper level.

9. Recollect the mental object (crystal ball or Buddha Image) at the center of the body while conducting other activities throughout the day:





This means being observant of the inner experience at the center of the body no matter where we are, what we are doing or when we are doing it. We might imagine a crystal ball at the center, or a Buddha Image – or alternate between the two. The purpose of the practice is simply to train the mind to concentrate at the seventh base of the mind to enhance the focus and continuity of our meditation. Doing this item of homework helps avoid entangling our mind in unwanted issues and may reduce the severity of retribution of negative karmic deeds we may have done. The practice also facilitates the continuous flow of merit in the mind helping our inner experience to become brighter and clearer as time goes on.

Benefits to practitioner

1. Decreased unwholesomeness and increased wholesomeness in our lives.
2. Ensures the mind is always bright and clear and that our life is secure.
3. Protection from calamity. Reduction or cessation of suffering in life because the mind is always connected with the most positive of inner experiences at the centre of the body.

Benefits to others

1. Reduced interpersonal conflict.
2. More productivity at work in the absence of daydreaming.
3. Peace and security in life as a result of continuous immersion of the mind in the stream of merit flowing there.

Details of practice

Think back to the mental object at the center of the body as frequently as possible no matter where you are or what you are doing. Consider what would happen if one were to die in the state of mind one is in at that moment, and this will give us a sense of urgency to make sure our state of mind is always the most focused and refined possible. Besides making sure we are always prepared, even in the face of death, such a practice also facilitates group harmony.

10. Make a world a nicer place to live in by smiling and speaking in an endearing way:

This means making the effort to preserve a positive and constructive mood for ourselves and those around us. Thailand has become known as the ‘land of smiles’. However, even in Thailand, not to mention other countries of the world, with so much economic and social change, smiles are becoming harder to find and much of the compassion has been lost from the things people say to one another. As a result, we have to try to go against the tide by smiling and using only endearing speech – even if we are the initiators of this trend. When we smile and speak endearing words, others will feel good and return the smiles and pleasant speech to us. This causes makes the world a nicer place to live in and is certainly more conducive to mental development.



Benefits to ourselves

1. Facilitates the qualities of peace and gentleness of mind.
2. Trains us to be compassionate.
3. Causes us to center our mind in the meritorious aspects of life.
4. Helps preserve the level of inner experience one has already attained.
5. Shows strength of character on our part.
6. Minimizes interpersonal conflict.

Benefits to others

1. Minimizes conflict amongst group, organization, society or family members.
2. Sets a trend of gentleness and compassion in society.
3. Facilitates harmony.

Details of practice

Start by conjuring up merit in your mind as detailed in items 7-9 of the homework. Remind yourself that nobody wants to see a grumpy person or listen to sarcastic, slanderous, devious or vulgar speech. Realize that having a neutral or sulky expression reduces the benefits we get from the meritorious deeds we have done – and that unwholesome speech betrays a lack of quality in our mental state. Whenever you have a smile on your face or speak in an endearing way – you will be the first person to receive the benefits.