

Dhammadakya Open University, California, USA



PRINCIPLES OF MEDITATION PRACTICE

MD 102E



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Foreword

This subject, MD 102E Meditation 2: The Principles of Meditation Practice, is designed to shed light on the practical means of meditation. It describes how to adjust both physical body and mental state, as well as how to visualize a mental object, develop mental concentration, and maintain mental stability. It includes pragmatic explanations and recommendations designed to lead students to a profound understanding of meditation. The committee that developed this course painstakingly gathered and organized the course content not only from the Buddhist Scriptures [Tipitaka], but also from lectures given by highly experienced teachers to help students comprehend meditation in both theory and practice. Student will gain knowledge, together with increased confidence in their meditation practice for their benefit and the benefit of those related to them.

Though the committee repeatedly and assiduously prepared and proofed the contents of this subject, inevitably the contents will contain mistakes or imperfections. The committee sincerely welcomes feedback or advice to improve and develop the contents in the next version.

The Committee of the Meditation Subject Group
September 2008

Details of the Subject

1. Description of the Subject

MD 102E Meditation 2: The Principles of Meditation Practice

To study the practical means to attain Dhammakaya and to adjust the physical body and mental condition. To know about mental objects, the formation of mental objects, the maintenance of meditation progress, the use of the mantra, and techniques for developing mental tranquility. To learn about meditation for the benefit of students in their daily meditation practice.

2. Purposes of the Subject

1. To know and understand the practical path to attain Dhammakaya.
2. To comprehend the principles of meditation practice.
3. To apply the principles of meditation in practice consistently.

3. List of Chapters

Chapter 1	The Principles of Practice for Attaining the Dhammakaya
Chapter 2	Adjusting the Physical Body
Chapter 3	Mental Adjustment
Chapter 4	Mental Objects and Visualizing Mental Objects
Chapter 5	Using the Mantra
Chapter 6	Maintaining Concentration
Chapter 7	Correctly Situating the Mind

How to Study This Book

1. Preparation for Self-Study

When studying each chapter of this subject, *Meditation 2: The Principles of Meditation Practice*, students should:

1. Spend one hour studying per day, and finish studying the whole book within 1-2 weeks.
2. At the beginning of each chapter, do the pre-study quiz to evaluate prior knowledge and understanding of the material in the chapter. Complete the assignments found in each chapter, focusing mostly on the specific activities described. At the end of each chapter, students should assess their degree of acquired knowledge and understanding of the contents by doing the post-study quiz.
3. Since practical experience is integral to meditation progress, focus not only on the theoretical aspects of each chapter but also on the practical exercises recommended for use on a daily basis.

2. Self-Assessment Before and After Studying a Chapter

Before starting each chapter, students should do the chapter's pre-study quiz in order to assess their knowledge of that chapter's subject matter. This will help students see the gaps in their understanding so they know on what parts of the chapter to devote particular attention. After completing each chapter, students should do the post-study quiz to see the areas where they have made improvements in their understanding. The post-study quiz can also help students know whether their knowledge is at a level sufficient to warrant starting the next chapter.

3. The Way to Study the Contents of Each Chapter

Prior to starting each chapter, students should read the chapter guidelines first. The guidelines summarize the sections of each chapter and enumerate the corresponding topics in each section. Also, the guidelines provide the key concepts and objectives of each chapter.

Upon finishing a chapter, students should complete the supplementary activities in the workbook before starting the next chapter. The workbook activities help students self-assess their degree of understanding. Since students can apply the material in each chapter to conduct themselves righteously in their daily lives and gain deep fulfillment, students should continually perform all activities by themselves.

4. Doing Activities

Students should note the main ideas in each chapter and do all the supplementary activities because doing the activities is the key to gaining a deeper understanding of meditation. Students should do all activities on their own before checking the answers.

5. Distance Learning via Satellite Broadcast and Electronic Media

With the advent of distance learning via satellite broadcast (commonly called Dhamma Media Channel or DMC) produced by Foundation for the Study of Dhamma for the Environment, students have easy access to clear and detailed teachings which they can readily put into practice. It is highly recommended that students reserve time for studying meditation via DMC and other electronic media provided by the University. Student are welcome to request further details about distance learning via DMC and related media from Dhammakaya Open University, using the address on your application form.

6. Attendance at Dream in Dream Kindergarten

To achieve a deeper understanding of meditation and study hear about meditation from highly experienced practitioners, students should attend the Dhamma program called “Dream in Dream Kindergarten,” a program broadcast on DMC. This program is broadcast from Monday to Saturday at 19.00 – 21.30 (Thailand Time) or at other specified times. Please contact your DOU office for the latest program schedule.

7. Examination

Students’ knowledge of this subject will be assessed using an examination, with both objective (multiple-choice) and subjective (descriptive) methods. Although the method for evaluating progress is a written examination, the way to determine meditation progress is each individual’s responsibility and dependent on each student’s diligence in putting the teachings into practice.

Chapter 1

The Principles of Practice for Attaining the Dhammakaya

Units in This Chapter

- 1.1 The Enlightenment of the Lord Buddha**
- 1.2 The Attainment into Dhamma by Phramonkolthepmuni**
- 1.3 The Middle Way**
- 1.4 Practicing the Middle Way**
- 1.5 Dhammakaya**
- 1.6 The Method of Practice to Attain the Dhammakaya**

Chapter at a Glance

1. For incalculable lifetimes – more than 20 eons – the Lord Buddha continuously pursued perfection. He attained the Dhamma and liberation in his final lifetime through the method of the Middle Way.

2. Phramonkolthepmuni dedicated his life to the pursuit of perfection and meditated until attaining the Dhammakaya. He also discovered that practicing the Middle Way was the method for attaining the Dhammakaya, the same path by which the Lord Buddha attained the Dhamma.

3. The Middle Way is practised by bringing the mind to stillness at the seventh base of the mind, the center of the body.

Chapter Objectives

Students will have the knowledge and understanding as follows:

1. The path by which the Lord Buddha attained the Dhamma.
2. The path by which Phramonkolthepmuni attained the Dhammakaya.
3. The method by which a person can attain the Dhammakaya.



The Principles of Practice for Attaining the Dhammakaya

1.1 The Enlightenment of the Lord Buddha

The Lord Buddha pursued perfection for 20 asankheyya¹ and 100,000 Mahākalpas. He attained the Dhamma as a Buddha when he achieved the ultimate set of perfections in his last life, the Ten Perfections [*pāramī*] which he had steadily and determinedly accumulated over the course of countless eons.

The path to enlightenment during the Lord Buddha's final life started with his birth as the Prince named Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha had the entire array of pleasures and entertainments available to him. He was a Crown Prince in line to the throne. Moreover, he would have become a Universal Monarch with sovereignty over all four cosmic continents and their seven treasures: the wheel treasure, the elephant treasure, the horse treasure, the crystal treasure, the woman treasure, the treasurer's treasure and the minister's treasure. However, he concluded that being a Universal Monarch could not bring true happiness to him and others. Showing great resolution, he renounced the comfort and material pleasures of the royal palace, becoming an ascetic in search of liberation.

While seeking liberation, he met two hermits, Āḷāra and Uddaka. Dwelling and learning meditation practice from both hermits, he attained the fivefold supranormal powers of mind [*abhiññā*]², eight levels of absorption [*samāpatti*]³ and gained the ability to perform certain miracles. While he was able to perform all that he had been taught, he found that this was not the path to liberation. Therefore, he decided to engage in a painstaking process of self-mortification as a way to achieve deliverance, as this was a popular practice in that period. He attempted all methods, finally starving himself for many months, but this did not lead him to the supreme peace he sought. After he had thought profoundly and realized that this was not the path that would relieve him from distress, he gave up this practice. At the moment, he recalled the day at age seven, he sat in a tranquil atmosphere beneath shade of a Black Plum tree and his mind became securely established in the condition of focused awareness. Consequently, he considered the middle way – a path not dependent on extremes and enduring austerities – as the method of practice to attain liberation and enlightenment.

¹ One *asankheyya* is a quantity equal to 10¹⁴⁰ years.

² The fivefold and the sixfold supranormal powers of mind are different. The fivefold supranormal powers of mind are not able to eliminate all defilements completely. See the sixfold supranormal powers of mind in Chapter 6 of Meditation I: Basic Knowledge of Meditation.

³ *Samāpatti* is the attainment of four levels of absorption of the Form Sphere and four levels of absorption of the Formless Sphere.



On the day of His enlightenment, the prince–monk Siddhartha ate nutritious milk-rice cooked by the maiden Sujātā which restored his health and radiance. He received eight sheaves of grass from the brahmin Sotthiya, laid them down beneath a Bodhi tree. He then made a wish founded on the power of merit, forming a glass throne with a height of 18 cubits and seated himself cross–legged under the tree. He made a resolution: **“For however long it takes for me to attain enlightenment⁴ as a fully-enlightened Buddha, even if my body should shrivel and die leaving only skin, sinew and bone, I will not leave this meditation seat, not moving from this position even if my life should come to an end.”** On that Wesak Day⁵ with the full moon, he attained the Dhammakaya, the body of Enlightenment of all Buddhas, during the first watch of the night from of 6:00 to 10:00 pm. During the second watch of the night from 10:00 pm to 2:00 am, he gained the ability to recollect his own previous existences [*pubbenivāsānusatiñāṇa*]. Around midnight, he also acquired the ability to clearly recollect the previous existences of others [*cutūpapātañāṇa*], the capacity to see the rebirth and afterlife of human beings and living creatures, to know how the karma from their actions would determine whether they would end up at a good or evil destination. In the third watch of the night (from 2.00a.m. to 6.00 a.m.), he attained the knowledge of an utter end to all defilements [*āsavakkhayañāṇa*] becoming a fully-enlightened Buddha liberated from all defilements.

⁴ The term ‘Enlightenment’ implies the full and final result of arduous mind-development efforts over a long period of time. His mind became securely established in the condition of focused awareness, being free of defilements, maneuverable and ready to be directed towards knowing, or rather realizing, the highest, all-encompassing truths. It was during these moments that his mind gave rise to the all-seeing eye covering all aspects of the Four Noble Truths by means of the Threefold Insight. He is called the Self-Enlightened One, having attained this supreme condition without anyone having taught Him how to reach it.

⁵ ‘Wesak Day’ is the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Buddha.



The path that the Lord Buddha discovered is known as the Middle Way [*majjhimā-paṭipadā*]. The Middle Way signifies a way of life which steers between the two extremes of self-mortification [*attakilamathānuyoga*] and sensual indulgence⁶ [*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*].

In Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta⁷, the Lord Buddha's first sermon to the five ascetics (Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma and Assaji) about the Middle Way, he revealed the Dhamma of the Noble Eightfold Path [*Ariyamagga*]: 1) Right View, 2) Right Intention, 3) Right Speech, 4) Right Action, 5) Right Livelihood, 6) Right Effort, 7) Right Mindfulness, and 8) Right Concentration. Concerning the Noble Eightfold Path, the Lord Buddha said,

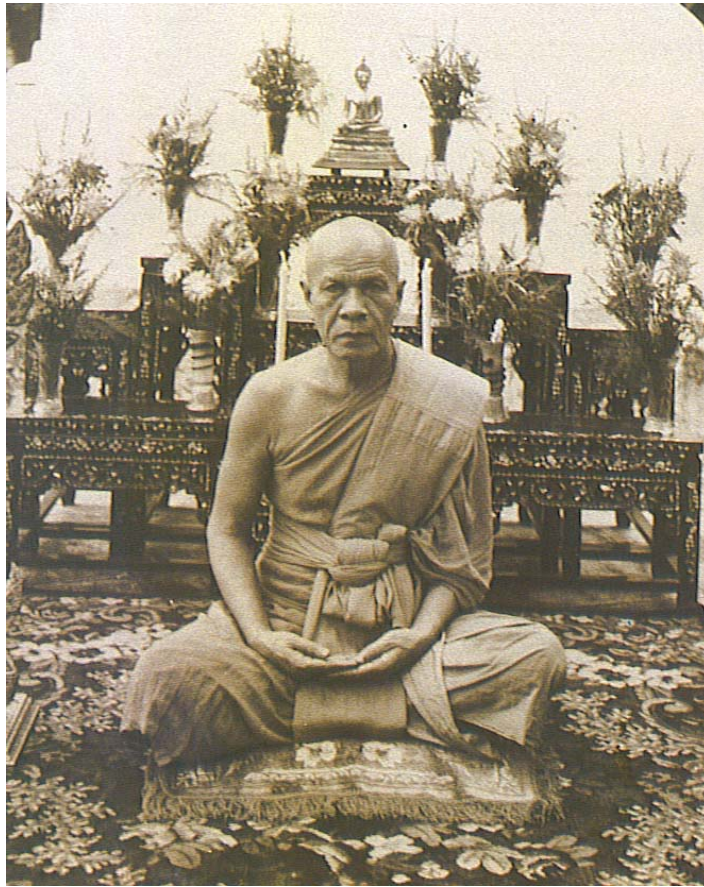
“The Middle Way will avoid both the extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. With great wisdom, I am awakened into Dhamma and have achieved insights and awareness for the purposes of peace, supreme knowledge, and Enlightenment or Nirvana.”⁸

⁶ Dhammakaya Foundation. **The Life & Times of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam**. (Bangkok: Sukumvit Printing Co., Ltd., 1998) 2nd ed., p. 46.

⁷ Vin.i.10ff., S.v.420ff.

⁸ *Op.cit.*

1.2 The Attainment into Dhamma by Phramonkolthepmuni



Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro or Luang Phaw Wat Paknam) was ordained at the age of 22 years. He studied Buddhist scriptures and practiced meditation deeply with various masters. The masters guaranteed that his knowledge equaled theirs but he remained unsatisfied with his understanding of the Dhamma.

In 1917, in the middle of his twelfth year of ordination, on the tenth full-moon day, Luang Phaw determined to meditate with utmost dedication and made the following resolution in accordance with the Lord Buddha's practice: **"If I cannot attain even a small part of the Truth which the Lord Buddha knew, I will sit to death."**⁹ He sat down to meditate, unwavering in his resolution that he would dedicate his life to the aim of insight. Through his practice of the Middle Way, he attained the Dhammakaya and verified the Lord Buddha's statement to Vaseṭṭha: **"Dhammakaya is indeed the name of the Tathāgata"**¹⁰

⁹ Dhammakaya Foundation. **The Life & Times of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam.** (Bangkok: Sukumvit Printing Co., Ltd., 1998) 2nd ed., p. 44

¹⁰ D.iii.84

1.3 The Middle Way

Phramonkolthepmuni dedicated his life the pursuit of Dhamma and re-discovered the Middle Way, the Noble Eightfold Path realized by the prince-monk Siddhartha. Phramonkolthepmuni saw that the Noble Eightfold Path does not mean only general daily conduct, but includes deep mental practice in accordance with the full scope of the Noble Eightfold Path. He explained this in his sermon upon the Dhammacakkappavatana Sutta:

“This is the way to reach the Buddha, to reach the Dhammakaya. There is no other way. One must go through the Pathamamagga, through the centre of the Dhammanupassanasatipatthana Sphere, the Samadhi Sphere, the Panna Sphere, the Vimutti Sphere, the Vimuttinanadassana Sphere.

What is the Sila Sphere? It is Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. These three form the Sila Sphere.

The next three, **Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration** form the **Samadhi Sphere.**

Right View and Right Thought form the **Panna Sphere.**

These are the eight parts of the Ariyamagga”¹¹

It can be seen that the Middle Way expounded by the Lord Buddha was the practice for attaining the Dhammakaya.



¹¹ Phramonkolthepmuni (2006) **Visudhivaca: Translation of Morradok Dhamma of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam** (Bangkok,60th Dhammachai Education Foundation), p.193

1.4 Practicing the Middle Way

To meditate using the Middle Way and move the mind along the Noble Eightfold Path, one must bring the mind to its natural center. Phramonkolthepmuni summarized that the method to achieve the Middle Way depended on allowing the mind to come to a ‘standstill’. He described this in his sermon entitled Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta:

“Stopping the mind at its center is called *majjhimā*. While the mind comes to a standstill, it is the end of good and evil. Evil and good cease. Being at a standstill, the mind can not be classified as sinful or good. There, with the mind at its center, it must be classified as a neutral. The still mind is neutral. That reflects what the Lord Buddha said to Angulimala. Angulimala said, “Stop Monk! Stop Monk!” The Lord Buddha turned his face towards Angulimala and said, “I have already stopped.” Then, he stopped moving. You must bring the mind to a standstill. Stop there, properly achieving *majjhimā-paṭipadā*. When the mind has stopped or come to a standstill, pay attention to the stopped mind. Don’t let it change to be a non-stopped mind. Just let remain stopped. After coming to a standstill, ask yourself whether there is any self-mortification [*attakilamathanuyoga*] remaining? Do we still experience the pleasure of images, sounds, perfumes, tastes and touches? If we don’t, there is no sensual indulgence [*kamasukhallikanuyoga*]. There is no further hardship. There is no further place for these extremes in the mind. When these paths have been overcome, the Lord Buddha used the words, ‘*Tathāgatena abhisambuddha*’, meaning “the Tathāgatha¹² has already gained the knowledge of the practice of the Middle Path.” Right here only (at the center of the body) begins the path to attaining Arahantship.”¹³

Therefore, the key principle of meditation practice taught by Phramonkolthepmuni was: **“Stopping the mind is the key to success.”**

In teaching the Middle Way method of allowing the mind to come to a standstill, Phramonkolthepmuni told people to bring the mind to a stop only at the center of the body, at the seventh base. He explained: **“The center is extremely profound. Nobody knows and understands this. In practice, the Dhamma that is called ‘The Middle Way’ means achievements only occur at the center. What is achieved? The positioning of the mind at the center. Bring the mind to reach the center. Where is the center? Only human beings have the center, the center of human body.”**¹⁴

Consequently, the center of the body is vital for successful practice of the Middle Way. It is the path to attain the Dhammakaya and Nirvana. Thus, for meditation practice, if we are unable to locate the mind at the center of the body, we will not attain the Dhammakaya.

In conclusion, the results of Middle Way meditation practice arise from allowing the mind to come to a standstill only at the center of the body. Therefore, the ability to do this constitutes the principle of Middle Way meditation practice.

¹² The *tathāgata* is the Lord Buddha who is fully enlightened.

¹³ Phramonkolthepmuni (2006) **Visudhivaca: Translation of Morradok Dhamma of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam** (Bangkok, 60th Dhammachai Education Foundation), p.180

¹⁴ Phramonkolthepmuni (2006) **Visudhivaca: Translation of Morradok Dhamma of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam** (Bangkok, 60th Dhammachai Education Foundation), p.179

1.5 Dhammakaya



On the sixth full-lunar day, the Lord Buddha attained enlightenment beneath a Bodhi tree. The Lord Buddha meditated by means of the Middle Way and attained the Dhammakaya, the body of enlightenment. All Buddhas throughout the eons have attained the Dhammakaya inside their bodies. Phramonkolthepmuni practiced meditation [*kammaṭṭhāna*]¹⁵ until attaining the Dhammakaya. As a result, Phramonkolthepmuni said: **“In Buddhism, this body is the most important body. Whoever is able to attain this body will be named a Buddha or Anubuddha.”**¹⁶ After attaining the Dhammakaya, Phramonkolthepmuni checked whether the discovery from his practice corresponded with the principles of Buddhist practice or not. Later, he found the evidence of the word ‘Dhammakaya’ appearing in the Buddhist Scriptures. This made him confident that his practice was right. The following sections of the Buddhist Scriptures mention the Dhammakaya:

1. “Vaseththa! *Dhammakāya* is the designation by which the Tathāgata is genuinely known – that is the body of Brahma or ‘become Dhamma’, that is ‘become Brahma.’”¹⁷

¹⁵ *Kammaṭṭhāna* is mode of Buddhist meditation leading to complete tranquility of the mind.

¹⁶ Translated from the Thai language reference **Luang Phaw Wat Paknam (Phramonkolthepmuni)’ s Dhamma Heritage**. (Bangkok: Amarin Printing & Publishing Ltd., 1996) p. 40.

¹⁷ Aggañña Sutta D.iii.84

2. "Lord Buddha, I was a mother to you. Nonetheless, Lord Buddha, you have been a father to me. Lord Buddha gave me the happiness of the Dhamma. **Lord Buddha, I nourished the growth of your physical body. It was you, however who nourished the growth of my delightful body of the Dhamma [Dhammakāya].** I allowed you to drink of my milk which could temporarily suppress the craving. But, it was me who you gave milk, the stream of Dhamma, allowing me to have the utmost peace."¹⁸
3. The majority of people are unable to bring forth the Buddha who teaches the *Dhammakāya* and being the sprout of all gems. Who upon seeing Him would not be inspired to faith?"¹⁹
4. "Those esteemed wise ones who are the paccekabuddhas, have great virtue, are endowed with many *Dhammakāyas*, have a mind that is free, that has crossed the ocean of suffering and is joyous. They are of the nature of great benefit and are as a lion or rhinoceros."²⁰

In addition, the word '*Dhammakāya*' is well-known amongst the academics who study Buddhist scriptures because it appears in scholarly research, modified from Sanskrit Suttas and translated into the Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan languages.²¹ Various scholars have attempted provide a clear definition of the word 'Dhammakaya'. The word 'Dhammakaya' also appears in the commentaries and sub-commentaries on the Tipitaka (*atthakatha*), on stone engravings, in ancient treatises, and in many books written by senior monks.

1.6 The Method of Practice to Attain the Dhammakaya

Phrarajbhavanavisudh summarized Phramonkolthepmuni's teachings about the methods of practice to attain the Dhammakaya into two types as follows:

Type I: Visualize a mental object (only a crystal ball or a Buddha image) with or without a mantra.

Type II: Gently allow the mind to come to a standstill at the center of the body and do not worry whether it is exactly at the seventh base or not. Continuously visualize a mental object. When the mind comes to a standstill, the initial path (*sphere of pathama magga*) will be attained. It is fine if one is only able to keep the mind still with or without a mantra.

¹⁸ Maha Pajapati Gotami Theri Apadāna Ap.ii.532

¹⁹ Atthasandassaka Thera Apadāna Ap.i.168

²⁰ Paccekabuddha Apadāna Ap.i.13

²¹ Translated from the Thai language reference Phrakru Bhavanamongkol (Vivat Katavaddhano), **In the Footsteps of the Dhammakaya**. (Bangkok: S.P.K. Paper and Form, 2003) 2nd Edition ISBN 974-90890-4-9 p. 89.

Type I: Examples of Methods to Attain the Dhammakaya

“Allow the mind to stay still at the center of the body. Visualize a crystal ball pure and clear like a diamond, a faultless cut diamond the same size as our cornea. Imagine the mental object is bright and clear at the seventh base. Then, think of the brightness and clearness of that mental object. Stop the mind at the center of that bright and clear object. Do not think of anything, simply still the mind. Still the mind and gently think of clearness with a sense of continuous ease, similar to when we think of things we get used to, but do not use force to imagine. Just tenderly imagine that there is a diamond in the center of our abdomen. Feel as though we have a diamond, but feel like we haven’t thought of it. Think of a clear and pure mental object with a still mind and do not think of other matters. If you cannot stop thinking of other matters, repeat the mantra ‘*Sammaa-arahang*’ with the sense that the sound of the mantra comes from the spherical point at the center of that pure and clear object like a faultless cut diamond. We repeat the mantra ‘*Sammaa-arahang*’ continuously. The sound comes from the center of the abdomen at the same time that you are contemplating the clear spherical object. Repeat the mantra continually until the mind comes to a standstill.”²²

Type II: Examples of Methods to Attain the Dhammakaya

“Bring the mind back to the body, to the original location of mind which is called the perimeter of the mind. Allow the mind to come to a standstill. When the mind returns back to the perimeter of the mind, a miracle will occur. The residues of the mind will gradually dissipate, making the mind clearer and purer until we can see the pureness. The first instance of pureness is merely a small point of pureness, the same size as a needle tip or a tiny star. Pureness exists while the mind is still and the mind’s sediment is precipitated. Constantly stay with this pureness for a long time and do not stray to other places. Do not be with humans, animals, things, situations, and events from the past and future. Instead, be with the little pureness which is the size of the needle tip or a tiny star in the sky. Still the mind and think of nothing. Then, the pureness will be augmented soon to become same size as the full moon with no clouds. It will be appear as a clear round sphere. If we continuously stay with this pureness, it will enlarge to the size of the midday sun. This pureness improves the quality of the mind. It eradicates the impurities and obstacle to the body and the mind’s happiness. Hence, as soon as the pureness of a clear and pure spherical shape arises, this pureness will bring happiness to the body and the mind that we’ve never felt before. At the beginning, the mind will be empty. The empty mind is a mind with no thought. Being in a place of no thought, the emptiness and transparency will be augmented; the body will be weightless as if it is going to fly, being weightless, transparent and tender like it is merging with the atmosphere. Then, the mind will expand endlessly until feeling like there is no sky. The expansion of the mind brings happiness. Our feelings of lightness and comfort grow a point where we accept that this lightness and comfort are the happiness we desire and we’ve never experienced this before.”²³

The most suitable choice of these two approaches depends on the disposition of each individual meditator. However, two methods are the same path to attain the Dhammakaya.

The success of meditation must depend on various techniques and factors, such as, adjusting one’s posture, adjusting the mind, visualizing the mental object, maintaining the mental object and repeating the mantra etc..

²² Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1997) **Meditation Teaching July 6**

²³ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1997) **Meditation Teaching March 2**

Chapter 2

Adjusting the Physical Body

Units in this Chapter

- 2.1 What Does Adjusting the Physical Body Mean?**
- 2.2 The Importance of Adjusting the Physical Body**
- 2.3 Proper Sitting Posture for Meditation**
- 2.4 Method of Proper Bodily Adjustment**
 - 2.4.1 Basic Steps for Adjusting the Body
 - 2.4.2 Specific Guidelines
- 2.5 Benefits of Adjusting the Body Properly**
- 2.6 Disadvantages of Not Properly Adjusting the Body**

Chapter at a Glance

1. The correct adjustment of the physical body is essential for meditation because a relaxed body best prepares the mind for attaining concentration [*samaadhi*].

2. For meditation, many sitting postures are possible. However, the standard sitting posture is 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. The back should be straight and the entire body should exhibit a position of poise.

3. A person preparing to meditate should gently close their eyes, as they would just before falling asleep. The person should relax all muscles in the body in order to facilitate good blood circulation, and imagine that the whole body is transparent. The person should adjust their posture to remove any discomfort or pain.

4. The adjustment of the physical body is the primary step in meditation, one that practitioners should not overlook. By properly adjusting the body, a person can sit for a long time, achieve mental concentration, and more easily attain Dhamma. Without the appropriate adjustment of the physical body, the good results of our practice will come more slowly.

Chapter Objectives

After reading and studying this chapter, students will:

1. Understand the importance of properly adjusting the physical body.
2. Know the right sitting posture.
3. Learn the proper methods of adjusting the body for meditation.
4. Be prepared to apply their knowledge while practicing meditation daily.



Adjusting the Physical Body

An Overview

A human being consists of two main components: the body and the mind. The mind is a living element, based inside the physical body, which has an important role in controlling human thoughts, spoken words and actions. The mind is expressed through the body. Therefore, there is an intimate relationship between the physical body and the mind. Even though meditation is a mental practice, a healthy physical body will enable the mind to attain concentration more easily, the way a well-tuned race car works in tandem with a skilled driver to win races. Even the most accomplished driver cannot emerge victorious if his car fails to perform or breaks down. Thus, it is necessary for us to learn how to adjust the physical body to prepare for meditation.

2.1 What Does Adjusting the Physical Body Mean?

The adjustment of the physical body refers to the preparations needed to make the physical body into a proper medium for mediation. This is done by adjusting the sitting posture appropriately to achieve concentration [*Samadhi*]. A person adjusts the body and mind until they are united as one and ready to be a foundation for inner Dhamma.

2.2 The Importance of Adjusting the Physical Body

1. Properly preparing the body by adjusting the sitting posture leads a person to feel balanced, relaxed and comfortable, allowing the mind to feel at ease.
2. Good bodily adjustment contributes to fewer aches and less fatigue, enabling a person to sit for a long period. With a properly adjusted body, the person will feel a sense of comfort when the mind comes to the right position. Even after sitting for one hour, it will feel like only a moment has passed, without boredom, pain, distress, or drowsiness.
3. If we overlook and do not understand good methods of bodily adjustment, our meditation will have difficulties. Effectively incorporating these methods into our regular meditation practice will facilitate bringing the mind to a point of stillness, the key to attaining inner serenity and brightness.

2.3 Proper Sitting Posture for Meditation

Sitting Cross-Legged

From the period prior to the Lord Buddha's final physical existence to modern times, the most suitable and favored posture for meditation has been to sit cross-legged. The standard sitting posture is the half-lotus position. This position extends the length of time a person can sit for meditation without experiencing pain or numbness. The upper part of the body should not sway, in order to ease efforts to locate the center of the body, the seventh base of the mind. It is not advisable to sit on one's heels since this quickly causes discomfort. Properly applied, the cross-legged posture aids the digestion process in the stomach and intestines. Whether the right is under or over the left leg (or vice-versa) is not of major importance. If sitting crossed-legged for a long period causes significant pain, it is possible to sit with both legs tucked back to one side.

1) Right Hand Resting on the Left Hand

With the palms facing up, the tip of the right index finger should lightly touch the tip of the left thumb. There are wonderful advantages to placing the hands and fingers in this position:

1.1 The chest is straight, the shoulders are not bent, and the neck does not bend down. Breathing occurs smoothly, without any obstructions. By helping the body to remain straight, a person can sit for a long time without pain.

1.2 The hands act like a natural alarm clock. Practicing meditation without maintaining awareness and attention can cause a person unconsciously to feel sleepy. When this happens, the tips of the fingers will move and touch one another, providing an automatic and rapid return to awareness. This provides an opportunity to conquer the drowsiness.

2) Straighten the Back

Animals, excepting human beings, are known in Pali by the technical term '*tiracchāna*' a word which literally means 'possessing a horizontal body'. They are horizontal because while moving, their bodies and chests are parallel to the earth, not perpendicular like human beings. Even though the monkey's shape closely resembles a human's and sometimes monkeys walk on two feet like humans, they usually prefer to walk on all fours with their chests parallel to ground. Thus, monkeys are categorized as horizontal. Although those animals are very clever, they are not able to practice 'Right Meditation' [*samma samaadhi*] because their horizontal body orientation makes it impossible for them to find the seventh base of the mind.

Some types of animals, such as, those inhabiting the first level of heaven can transfigure themselves into human form and practice meditation as hermits. Nevertheless, their bodies are basically horizontal, making them unable to find the seventh base of the mind. Therefore, they lack the ability to practice Right Meditation. Consequently, in Buddhism, even those animals that can transfigure themselves into human form are not allowed to ordain as monks because their horizontal bodies prevent them from attaining the path and fruits of Nirvana.

Given the opportunity to be born as a human being with a straight body and possessing the ability find the center of the body and the path to Nirvana, a person should not squander this chance to do meditation.

It is important not to create problems during meditation: do not sit or stand in a hump-backed posture and do not lie down as an animal does. It is best to sit in a straight-backed position such that the vertebrae join together nicely. In addition, do not sit leaning against a wall because this interferes with attaining mindfulness.

The benefits from straightening the body are as follows:

1. Facilitates blood circulation and smooth breathing.
2. Extends the duration of the meditation period without experiencing aches and pains.
3. Eases the ability to locate the seventh base of the mind.

3) Maintain Mindfulness

All members of the military, from the lowest to the highest ranks, are important for the armed forces. Yet the most important person is the commander-in-chief. A brilliant and proficient commander ensures victory in battle. In meditation practice, mindfulness is the commander-in-chief, the key to success in conquering the defilements. The most important aim for a person meditating is to be mindful. A person who lacks mindfulness or has serious psychological problems cannot practice meditation successfully.

2.4 Proper Bodily Adjustment

2.4.1 Basic Steps for Adjusting the Body

1. Sit in crossed-legged position at ease, with the right leg folded over the left leg and the right hand resting on the left hand palms facing up – the tip of the right index finger touching tip of the left thumb.
2. Adjust the position of the upper body. Do not lean too much towards the front, the back or laterally. Straighten the body in a poised position but do not over-stretch. It is essential to adjust the body well and gently close the eyes.
3. After closing the eyes, check thoroughly whether any part of the body is tense or taut. Check thoroughly, gradually examining each part.
4. If any part of the body is tense or taut, adjust that part until it is relaxed and blood easily circulates there.
5. Relax the muscles of whole body, beginning with the muscles of the eyes, then the muscles of the head, nape, shoulders, arms, torso, legs and toes.
6. Adjust the sitting posture until the entire body feels comfortable and blood easily circulates throughout the body.

These are important steps to prepare the physical body for meditation. If we make these steps a habit each time we meditate, they will greatly facilitate our ability to concentrate and attain mindfulness while practicing meditation.

2.4.2 Specific Guidelines

1. Methods of Relaxing the Body

Relaxation starts from the head and progresses to the toes, followed by a reverse process of relaxation from the toes to the head. The goal is complete relaxation of the body such that the mind returns to its natural home at the center of the body.

Besides attaining the feeling of complete bodily relaxation, Phrarajbhavanavisudh also recommends that while relaxing the body, the person meditating should imagine that each of his/her organs is clear and transparent. This is to reflect upon the mind's clarity, to make the mind pure and bright.

Phrarajbhavanavisudh teaches the methods for relaxing the body as follows:

“Start by relaxing the muscles around the face and head. We begin at the chin, both cheeks, and upper and lower lips, and imagine all are pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. Relax the muscles around the nose, eyelids, and forehead, imagining they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. Relax the muscles around both ears and the skin of the head up until the hair-ends and imagine they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. Relax the muscles around the back of the head and the nape of the neck and imagine they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond.

Relax the muscles around shoulders, arms, and the palms of the hands up to the fingertips and imagine they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. Relax the muscles around the torso, chest, abdomen, back and both lateral sides and imagine they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. Relax the muscles of the hips, legs, calves, shins, and feet up to the tips of the toes and imagine they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond.

Then, restart by relaxing in reverse from the tips of the toes, the soles of the feet, calves, shins, knees and thighs up to the hips and imagine they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. Relax the muscles around the abdomen, chest, lateral parts, and back, imagining they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. Relax the muscles around the fingertips, palms of the hands, and arms up to the shoulders and imagine they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. Relax the muscles around the neck, temples, and the top of the head up to the hair-ends and imagine they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. Slowly perform these actions and imagine.

Relax the muscles around the ears, forehead, eyelids, nose, both cheeks, and upper and lower lips down to the chin, imagining they are all pure and clear like crystal or a clear diamond. All our external organs are clear. They are pieces of clear crystal, pieces of clear diamond, and we are relaxed internally.

Suppose we were to remove the body's internal organs: the brains, liver, kidneys, intestines, stomach and so on, leaving only emptiness and hollowness resembling a hollow crystal tube with no impurities. Then, relax internally and imagine the body is clear. Both the inside and outside are all clear and pure like a clear crystal tube, a clear diamond cylinder".¹

2. Methods for Closing the Eyes

Closing the eyes serves to block out outside images which can make our minds wander. This resembles closing the eye's screen, known as the iris. The methods used to close the eyes are as follows:

- 1) Gently close the eyes as though one is about to fall asleep; close the eyelids tenderly.
- 2) Do not squeeze the eyes closed. Do not pressure the eye sockets. Close the eyes only half-way or almost fully close them, doing so loosely and comfortably.
- 3) The right way to close the eyelids is to allow the eyelashes to touch gently closed. Not knowing how to close the eyelids and placing too much pressure on them will result in a headache and a lack of any good results from meditation practice.
- 4) Forget that the eyes even exist. By letting the eyes close under these circumstances, it becomes possible to gain inner vision.

Some practitioners do not understand how to close the eyes. They press their eyes tightly, attempting to seek the mental object, as though they have magnets stuck to each eyebrow. Closing the eyes tightly results in befuddlement, head tension, eye-aches, and neck tension. Another consequence is that the more practitioners meditate, the more their faces appear older. Such practitioners become increasingly exhausted until they lose the desire to meditate, all an outcome of their incorrect practice.

Additionally, some practitioners incorrectly try focusing their vision at the center of the body in order to see the mental object there distinctly. Phrarajbhavanavisudh has the following recommendations:

"Start by adjusting the eyes which must both be in the same position. Do not press the eyes and try to focus on the center of the body. Attempting to focus this way is not right. The more we press the eyes, the more we feel tension. The more we try to gaze, the more the eyebrows will be knit. Then, we will get weary and not benefit from meditation practice because our mind is coarse.

¹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1999) **First Sunday of the Month Meditation Teaching** May 2, 1999, (cassette tape)

In reality, we do not have to use any effort. It is just like we are walking. While we are looking straight, we can know whether the people who are close to us are women or men. Though we have looked, it appears as though we have not looked. We do look, but with consciousness, with deep consciousness. Although the eyes are still at the same position looking straight ahead, we look as if out of the corner of our eye at people, signposts, and vehicles. We know there are a lady, a boy, a child, an adult, and an elder person near us. Take a glance like that.

Therefore, do not squeeze the eyes closed. If we listen attentively, not wander or forget to listen, these words will have greater significance. The eyes remain in the same position, with the same line of vision used when looking straight ahead, but we close them. This also creates a feeling of refinement, lightness and purity. It looks like we have not looked, but not having looked seems like looking. It appears as though there is a tiny star or very clear diamond which seems so extraordinarily precious that we are not brave enough to touch it. It is so precious and we are unable to touch it. Hence, we look as if out of the corner of our eye".²

Although closing the eyes is a trivial concern, do not take this matter for granted because some practitioners have become stuck on this point for ten years, twenty years. They feel like their practice has achieved nothing. Therefore, we should always observe and have this gradually precede our practice at all times.

3. Methods of Adjusting Sitting Posture

1) Sit with a straight back in a position of poise, as a mountain rests upon the earth. Though winds may buffet us from all directions, our posture does not shift. The correct sitting posture is one without movement but one with a feeling of relaxation throughout the body that extends the duration of our meditation.

2) Adjust the sitting posture to experience a sense of ease and a feeling that this posture is suitable for meditation. A comfortable sitting posture enables us to sit for long periods without becoming bored, fatigued, distressed, or drowsy.

3) We must believe that we are sitting for physical and mental relaxation, not to achieve a beautiful meditative posture. We must relax the body to feel a sense of comfort since we have exerted the body for a long period. The exact sitting posture must be suitable for each individual. Strongly desiring – and putting forth too much effort to achieve – a beautiful posture will produce tension and unsatisfactory results from meditation.

4) When feeling tired or numb, make slight adjustments; for example, by lifting up our left and right knees a little from the ground to help blood circulation, by changing to a cross-legged position, or by flexing both legs backwards with one on top of the other. It is important not to let the body grow too fatigued or numb before making such adjustments because by waiting too long, the mind will move out of the center of the body and locate itself at the

² Phrarajbhavanavisudh (2002) **Meditation Teaching** October 9

tired part of body. Before making adjustments, one should feel that the mind is at the center of the body.

While meditating, we should feel comfortable, refined, and mentally focused. Any slight bodily adjustment can interrupt the mind from its condition of stillness and make the mind coarse. Make an effort to continue sitting, just as Phramonkolthepmuni did when he determined to meditate with the utmost dedication on the tenth full moon day of 1917 until attaining the inner Dhamma.

5) Any person who feels uncomfortable sitting in a standard posture may choose another comfortable posture that ensures good blood circulation. Some possible alternative postures include sitting cross-legged, sitting on a seat or a pad to prevent backache, sitting up against a wall, or sitting on a chair. The main point is to sit in a comfortable posture and ensure the blood system circulates efficiently. However, we do not sit so comfortably that we fall asleep. Sitting with the legs stretched out or half-sitting and half-lying down will cause us to finally lie down or create great difficulties when we attempt to sit properly for meditation.

2.5 Benefits of Adjusting the Body Properly

1. A properly adjusted body will experience stability, not pain and fatigue. We will be able to meditate for as long as we wish without feeling that we are forcing ourselves or exerting a substantial effort to sit correctly. We will only feel a sense of ease.
2. By making a careful effort to understand all the methods of bodily adjustment, meditation practice will achieve the desired results. At the beginning, if one starts on the right track and uses these correct methods for further practice, the good results of meditation will come quickly and safely.

2.6 Disadvantages of not Properly Adjusting the Body

1. Adjusting the body improperly and sitting too intently will cause muscle tension. This will delay the achievement of good results from our meditation practice and waste time. We may become more patient but we will not attain the inner Dhamma.
2. Bodily adjustment is vital. For those who treat this as unimportant, it could develop into the central concern. In particular, we must know how to close the eyes and how to adjust the physical body to sit comfortably and facilitate good blood circulation. The inability to perform bodily adjustment properly will delay the attainment of the Dhammakaya.

Chapter 3

Mental Adjustment

Units in this Chapter

3.1 Mental Adjustment Defined

3.2 The Importance of Mental Adjustment

3.3 Categorizing Mental Adjustment

- 1) Mental Adjustment in Daily Life
- 2) Mental Adjustment during Meditation

3.4 Methods of Mental Adjustment

- 3.4.1 Methods of Mental Adjustment in Daily Life
- 3.4.2 Methods of Mental Adjustment during Meditation

3.5 Mental Adjustment as Taught by the Master Nun Chand Khonnokyoong

Chapter at a Glance

1. Mental adjustment readies the mind to attain concentration, enabling the mind to be refreshed, joyful, free from defilements, pure, bright and clear.

2. There are two methods of mental adjustment: 1) in daily life and 2) during meditation practice.

3. The practice of mental adjustment in daily life is to observe the world and view the world with an understanding of the true nature of existence. Look at all human beings with compassion as our worldly companions. Release the mind from attachment to the worldly requirements. Think, speak, and act with mental refinement to make the mind more subtle. Allow the mind to visualize and consider only good things.

4. A person can use various techniques of mental adjustment during meditation. Some of these techniques include making the mind still and empty, thinking of nothing, or thinking of something in the natural environment. This chapter contains some examples of mental adjustment taught by Master Nun Chand Khonnokyoong who achieved excellent meditation results.

Chapter Objectives

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

1. Recognize the importance of mental adjustment.
2. Comprehend the methods of mental adjustment.
3. Apply their knowledge during meditation and in daily life.



Mental Adjustment

The mind is the most important part of our existence. It is said that the mind is the boss and the body is a subordinate because the mind controls the thoughts, speech, and actions of each person. Meditation is a mental practice and therefore difficult because the mind is 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. To still the mind, it is necessary to learn how to practice or adjust our mind to gradually come to a standstill. Like stopping a rapidly moving car; we must slowly touch the brake to reduce its speed little by little until the car no longer moves. To obtain the best results from meditation, we should study how to adjust the mind properly.

3.1 Mental Adjustment Defined

Mental adjustment means changing the state of mind to prepare the mind properly for the concentration required during meditation. Mental adjustment helps to make the mind joyful, free from attachments and defilements, pure, bright and clear. A well-adjusted mind is at ease, unburdened with worldly thoughts, spacious, transparent, and light.

3.2 The Importance of Mental Adjustment

Many factors in our daily life – relationships with other people, concerns about animals, the objects around us, our jobs – bring our minds out of focus, out of awareness. These factors leave the mind in a condition unsuitable for meditation. The mind becomes restless, distracted, occupied by diverse emotions, and absorbed in worries to which the mind grows attached. Meditation practice does not achieve good results and we are unable to attain concentration. Therefore, to achieve a satisfactory result from meditation, it is essential to adjust the mind so it is relaxed and at ease. The sense of ease will develop the mind to a greater degree of refinement.

3.3 Categorizing Mental Adjustment

Mental adjustment for meditation can be divided into two categories as follows:

1) Mental Adjustment in Daily Life

This refers to adjusting our thoughts, speech, and actions in daily life so our minds are in an appropriate state for meditation. The adjustment makes us observe the situations around us which can affect our state of mind. It enables us to consider and address the challenges posed by these situations in order to keep the mind stable and prevent bad mental experiences from arising.

2) Mental Adjustment during Meditation

To adjust the mind so that it is ready to attain the inner Dhamma while meditating.

3.4 Methods of Mental Adjustment

There are two categories of mental adjustment. Each category has own methods as follows:

3.4.1 Methods of Mental Adjustment in Daily Life

Each day, we must constantly deal with concerns regarding humans, animals and inanimate objects. Our emotions continually sway in response to these concerns. Sometimes we feel happy or delighted, but sometimes we grow moody, angry, tense, or sad. All such feelings have an impact on meditation, especially while we are meditating. Thus, adjusting the mind in daily life will assist us to keep the temperament and the condition of mind more conducive to meditation. The methods of mental adjustment in daily life are as follows:

1) Consider the World in accordance with Truth

Viewing the world from the perspective of an impartial observer will help us to see the world's truth, the true nature of existence. Our outlook will be neither pessimistic nor optimistic. We will see things in accordance with the truth of this world, the truth comprised of **the Eight Worldly Vicissitudes**:

- 1) Acquisition of gain.
- 2) Loss of gain.
- 3) Acquisition of prestige.
- 4) Loss of prestige.
- 5) Acquisition of praise.
- 6) Acquisition of blame.
- 7) Acquisition of happiness.
- 8) Acquisition of suffering.

The Eight Worldly Vicissitudes always occur in our lives. When they happen to us, we must not react and instead allow the mind to be neutral and still, the way in which an elderly person who possesses great wisdom and maturity considers the world.

There was a story about such a wise elder who lived in a village. One day his horse disappeared and villagers visited him to express their sympathy, saying "We are sorry that your horse disappeared." Showing no emotion, the wise elder responded "There might be a good thing inside a bad thing." One week later, that horse returned with a female horse and the villagers visited him again and to express their gratification: "You lost your horse and now it has returned with a female one. Congratulations!" The elder looked expressionless and said, "There might be a bad thing inside a good thing." Three days later, his son brought the new horse to practice riding. While riding, the son fell from the horse and broke his leg. The elder said, "There might be a good thing inside a bad thing." Many months later, there was an official announcement calling for men in the village to be drafted into the army because of a war at the border. All the men in the village were conscripted except the elder's son who had a broken leg did not have to go into battle.

This story demonstrates the truth about the world – that our world possesses the good things and bad things, gains and losses – and the value of viewing the world like the wise elder.

2) Consider All Human Beings to be World-Fellows

Look at each human being as a friend who shares the same experiences as all human beings: suffering, birth, old age, illness, and death. Look at everyone – a husband, wife, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, son, daughter, colleague, etc. – as world-fellows who have such experiences. Show compassion and give loving-kindness to all of our family and friends who are close to us and we will receive mental happiness in return. Our minds will feel delight and be less susceptible to becoming moody or irascible. Wherever we are – sitting, lying down, standing or walking – we will feel as though friends surround us and this will produce a sense of ease while meditating. The mind will not be stuck to various attachments.

3) Think of the World as Empty

Think of the world as being empty. Nothing is essential. Avoid becoming attached to worldly objects. Since we need to earn a livelihood, we must do it to the utmost of our ability. However, bear in mind that the purpose of earning a livelihood is to provide the four requisites for comfort: provisions, clothing, shelter, and remedies to support physical need. We should not grow attached to these worldly requisites, suffering because of worries and tensions that arise from our efforts to earn a living. The circumstances of humans, animals, and objects surrounding us constantly change. We cannot control our children, spouses, friends and other possessions so that they fit our exact desires. Even our own bodies are beyond our full control and will grow ill and age with the passage of time. Hence, it does not help our state of mind to grow attached to these things or take anything too seriously.

4) Think, Speak and Do Refined Issues

We encounter many people and situations every day. This leaves us with many stories to think and talk about, and all the things which we have spoken about and done will be embodied in our minds. If we think, speak and do what makes our mind coarse, the condition of mind will then be coarse. The thoughts and actions which coarsen the mind involve situations which all of us always encounter: household worries, family problems, difficult children, money woes, murder, rivalry, adultery, embezzlement, etc. Listening to or talking about those topics brings about anxiety which adversely affects our mental state, meaning the mind will not be still and calm while meditating. Thus, we must think, speak, and act to refine our minds, making an effort to focus on thinking positively, speaking well of others, performing good deeds, cultivating merit, and meditating. These will make the mind become refined and improve the results of our meditation.

5) Choose to Think and Look at Only the Good Things

We must deal with people, situations, and good and bad moods in our daily lives; and what we experience will remain in our minds. Although our minds have the power to retain a large number of such memories, we should choose to keep only good ones in mind, remaining optimistic and smart enough to maintain a bright and clear mood. Normally, our mind can consider only one story or one mood at a time. Therefore, we should choose to keep only good thoughts in mind which will make our mind grow accustomed to images of virtue and decency. The parable of the fighting fish shows this well:

A man raised fighting fish to earn a living. His fighting fish were widely known for their beautiful colors. Anytime, he sent them for a contest, he won the prize. Someone observed that his fish displayed not only the beautiful colors of blue, green, purple, and red, but also less common colors such as light lavender, pink, and gold.

People frequently asked him where he got these kinds of fish or how he bred such beautiful fighting fish. He said that he had not brought the fish from anywhere, but that he had a simple method for developing the breed. He asked an artist to draw pictures of fighting fish and paint the colors as he wanted them to be. Then, he placed the drawings near female fighting fish for them to see. These female fighting fish looked at the pretty fighting fish drawings everyday.

When these female fighting fish gave birth, one portion of the babies amazingly had beautiful colors as he wanted. Though he did not possess any knowledge of breeding techniques, he successfully developed a new fish breed by systematically influencing the minds of his fish.

This parable demonstrates that if the mind perceives good things; it will result in good powers or creative powers that generate good results. For example, the female fighting fish were familiar with colorful pictures which had been recorded in their minds. Ultimately, the mind controlled the physical body by enabling the body to reproduce in accordance with a mental image. Our minds are similar. What happens to us is a result of the accumulated images in our minds. Thus, we should choose to keep only good situations, people and emotions in our minds to support our meditation.

3.4.2 Methods of Mental Adjustment during Meditation

Aside from the mental adjustments we can make in our daily lives to focus our mind and prepare it for meditation, there are additional approaches to adjust the mind while meditating. The sense of ease associated with meditation can be divided into two forms:

Primary Ease means a sense of ease which comes from feeling that we have passed through a time of difficulty, overcome challenges and cleared away our tension. The mind moves towards stillness, without happiness or suffering. It is as though we have walked through blazing sunlight to sit under a tree's shade, though do not feel at ease right away. This primary ease is the basis of the true sense of ease. If we are able to maintain regular and continuous mental stillness to the point where we experience neither suffering nor happiness we will have reached the main turning point in our meditation. What follows is a sense of emptiness, clarity, lightness, and true ease.

True Ease results from keeping a sense of primary ease continuously, from maintaining a sense of stillness and impartiality while remaining constantly mindful. We will eventually achieve true ease. The mind begins to expand, to be more subtle and spacious. The body seems to become transparent, merging into its natural surroundings like a light, translucent material; in the same way soap or shampoo bubbles behave when we play by blowing them. True ease is a spacious, transparent and light mind.

There are **several methods of mental adjustment** that practitioners can choose:

1. Allow the Mind to Come to a Standstill, with Emptiness and Impartiality

Discharge all duties. This is the shortcut and the fastest way to adjust the mind. The following are the examples of paths for mental adjustment:

Example A

“A mind that is ready to attain Dhamma must be free, empty and discharged of all duties such as studies business, family or anything else in this world. Abandon them for a while, act as if we are existing alone in this world and release all attachments and worries. Also, allow the mind to experience a feeling of joyousness, refreshment, freedom from defilements, pureness, clearness and brightness”.¹

Example B

“Allow our mind to feel like we’re alone in this world. No duties. No worries. Feel as if we have passed beyond all these things and now we stay alone. No duties or worries at all. Only the body and mind exist so we will use them for meditation to still the mind and attain the Dhammakaya inside. We possess only two things: body and mind, only two things. Forget the entire surrounding environment close to us. Forget all things and bring the mind to a standstill at the seventh base of the body”.

Even though allowing the mind to become still is the best method, most people are unfamiliar with not thinking about anything. Thus, we must resort to methods that ease the mind without completely stopping the thought process. Some of these methods are as follows:

2. Think of Nature, for instance, a mountain, waterfall or sea that makes you feel free, relaxed, and empty so you have a desire to sit for meditation.

“Think as if we’ve never had any thoughts before – never encountered those situations before – as though we exist alone in the world. Allow yourself to feel like this for one or two minutes. Feel that we can happily stay alone in this world and forget our surrounding environment. It does not matter whether the weather is warm. Don’t pay attention to it. Imagine we are on the top of very high mountain where the weather is pure, the wind blows nice and cool. We think that we are sitting on the top a very high mountain instead of thinking about warm weather. Our seat is not soft so imagine we are sitting on a comfortable carpet. To think like this is to clear the mind of all worries. Our mind will be determined directly at the middle way for attaining the Triple Gem inside the body”.²

¹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1986) **Meditation Teaching** May 22

² Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1987) **Meditation Teaching** June 7

3. Spread Loving-Kindness

To spread loving-kindness leads our minds to expand and grow joyous. It is also appropriate for moody and negative persons who always maintain feelings of dissatisfaction about the people, animals, and things surrounding them, feelings that occupy their minds when they practice meditation. Here are some ways to spread loving-kindness:

Example A

“Make the mind wholesome, pure, bright and clear. Spread love and good wishes to all living beings, both those still alive and those who have passed away. Spread good wishes to those beloved to us: greatly beloved, somewhat beloved, little beloved, people we feel apathetic towards but do not hate. Even to those who we used to be annoyed with, we have to spread our good sentiments to the people who used to make us feel unhappy or hurt. Have yourself think that you will forget these people and the memories of what they did to you. Moreover, wish that these people will happy and succeed in all aspects of their lives: their lives are pleasant, their families are in good spirits, their efforts lead to success, and anything they pursue goes well. Further, we must spread loving-kindness to ourselves. The greatest love is to love ourselves. How do we love ourselves? We do not harm ourselves by contemplating what makes our mind worried, sad, uncomfortable, and discouraged so that we lack the energy to perform good deeds. Such thoughts must end.”³

Example B

“Spread loving-kindness replete with good wishes to all living creatures. Spread loving-kindness with gentle thoughts, with a sense of ease. Wish for the countless numbers of living creatures to be from suffering, sadness and disease. Wish that they will only have healthy bodies and joyful minds, to feel happy when sitting, lying down, standing, walking, sleeping, awakening, all day, all night, and at all times. Wish that anyone who suffers is relieved of suffering and those feeling happy experience greater delight. Maintain a comfortable mental state. Spread loving-kindness and good wishes to all. Imagine that our flow of loving-kindness and good wishes is a light shining out from inside our body and mind as if our body and mind are the center of all living and non-living creatures. Spread the shining light. At the beginning, there may be a feeling of having a light emanating from the center of our body. Then, distribute it widely. Those who are able to do this will know it is a very bright light which we clearly see with our mind. It is a refined and tender light. It is the energy of purity, like the light of a full moon yet which shines as brightly as the midday sun. This light shines brilliantly like the midday sun, but coolly like moonlight, bringing refreshment and joyousness to all living and non-living creatures. Distribute the light widely and allow the mind to come to a standstill, to be spacious and empty. This will prepare the mind appropriately of receiving the Triple Gem. Spread out like this for one or two minutes.”⁴

³ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1997) **Meditation Teaching** May 9

⁴ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1993) **Meditation Teaching** May 2

4. Consider the Truth of All Things under the Law of the Three Characteristics. This will help our minds to be free from all attachments.

Example A

“Consider the truth of all creatures taught by the Lord Buddha that all living and non-living creatures – human beings, animals, objects, trees, mountains, houses, buildings, the earth, sun, moon, stars, people, fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers – arise, propagate and decay. They always change, are impermanent [*aniccata*] and cannot be the same. They are suffering [*dukkhata*] and soullessness [*anattata*] because they are not stable, but always change. If they are real selves, they must be permanent and unchangeable. Or if they change, they would get better. The more they change, the more they would improve. Just like being a very old diamond makes it stronger. Just like Dhamma: the more happiness, the clearer and brighter the Dhamma is. However, all creatures are not like that. They change and decay all the time.

Think like this for one or two minutes before starting to meditate. Consider that all those things – even the bodies we live in and use for meditation – have the same condition of arising, propagation, decay, inconstancy, suffering and no self [*anatta*] since the time we lived inside our mother’s uterus and then were born. Our bodies change continuously even now and will not stop changing up until being placed on the funeral pyre. We contemplate this for one or two minutes before starting our meditation to bring the mind to a standstill, to help the mind be free from worries and released from its attachment to all things because we have considered the truth. A mental process like this will bring about a free mind which is suitable for mediation and the rapid attainment of the Dhamma.”⁵

Example B

“Before we start to meditate for attaining Dhammakaya, we must allow our mind to become free from worries about humans, animals and things by considering that the pure wisdom taught by the Lord Buddha is the truth. It is true that normally all living beings and non-living things constantly change, suffer, and are the origin of suffering because their inconstancy is not a real self and essence. What can be seen are only temporary receptacles. All humans, animals, things, foods and utensils, living or non living, spiritual or non-spiritual, exist temporarily but change constantly in an uncontrollable manner. We cannot get what we desire. Do not look too far to see this. Look at our bodies starting from the hair on our heads. We cannot maintain our hair’s beauty like when we were young. We do not want our hair to alter, to change color; we do not want to lose our hair and want it to be as beautiful as during our youth. However, it does not listen to us, always changes and finally falls out just like our teeth. Similarly, the eyes at first look bright and beautiful and can see anything clearly, but after that they change to grow unclear, make our vision blurred, and cease to be beautiful. Our complexion is at first firm, but later it turns flaccid and wrinkled. We realize the truth that they are under the law of Three Characteristics. Their state is uncertain, they suffer, and they lack a self [*anatta*].

⁵ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1993) **Meditation Teaching** May 22

Therefore, they are just temporary receptacles. We should fully understand that they are not meaningful or genuine.

Thus, we know that they are just receptacles and under the Three Characteristics. Our belongings, such as clothing, pens, eye-glasses and all such things constantly change and eventually decay. Originally, clothes are produced from materials originating in the soil and plants. They are manufactured by garment factories, pass through department stores, and then come to us. When our clothes have been used for a long time, they become worn and used as rags for wiping our feet and other such tasks. Eventually, they are thrown away in a garbage bin and return to the soil. All decompose and decay.

Pens, eye-glasses, property, money, gold, buildings, cars; all things must return to the point of decay. They come, stay and go. They arise, perpetuate and perish. When we understand this, our mind will be light, relaxed, and worry-free. We have shirts, but they do not belong to us. We have bodies, but they do not belong to us. We have homes, but they do not belong to us. Hence, it is impossible to control the things we desire. Thinking we can exercise such control causes suffering.

When we understand that all creatures are impermanent, suffer, and lack self, our minds will be at ease and we will feel no worries. The Lord Buddha taught this to allow us to see the opposite side of our existences. When we live in an environment of impermanence, suffering, and non-self with no essence, we should aim to search for the essential thing which is permanent, happy and true-self [*atta*], everlasting and free from all defilements, our real life and true self.”⁶

⁶ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (2000) **Meditation Teaching** January 23

5. Recollect What Puts the Mind at Ease

According to the Lord Buddha's teachings, there are ten methods called the ten recollections or constant mindfulness [*Anussati*]:

- 1) Recollection of the Lord Buddha [*Buddhanussati*]
- 2) Recollection of the Dhamma [*Dhammanussati*]
- 3) Recollection of the Sangha [*Sanghanussati*]
- 4) Recollection of morality [*Silanussati*]
- 5) Recollection of giving [*Caganussati*]
- 6) Recollection of the deities [*Devatanussati*]
- 7) Mindfulness of death [*Maranassati*]
- 8) Mindfulness occupied with the body [*Kayagata-sati*]
- 9) Mindfulness on breathing [*Anapanasati*]
- 10) Recollection of peace [*Upasamanussati*]

This lesson will mention some examples frequently use during meditation for attaining Dhammakaya.

1) Recollection of the Buddha [*Buddhanussati*]: contemplation on the virtues of the Lord Buddha.

“Train and adjust the mind daily, anytime we meditate. So, now we'll use one or two minutes - adjust the body and mind well so they feel comfortable and free from worry. Breathe comfortably and create our own atmosphere appropriate for meditation by imagining that all of us are congregating in front of the Lord Buddha and meditating in front of him.”⁷

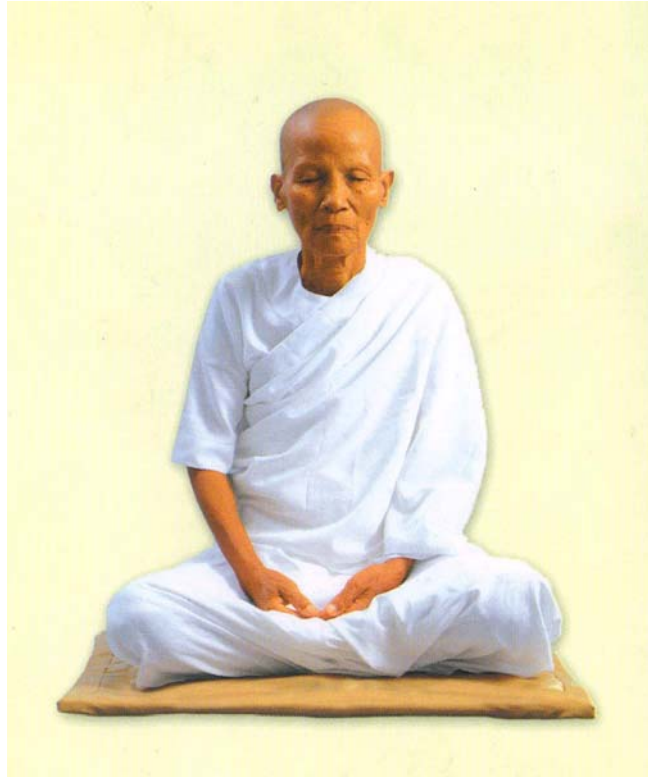
2) Recollection of Giving [*Caganussati*]: contemplation on one's own giving with purity, meaning our acts of merit.

“We must recollect what puts the mind at ease. For example, we celebrated Magha Puja Day nine or ten days ago. Regarding such past events, if we are good merit-makers, we will choose to nurture what makes our minds joyous. We will continuously recollect the images that made us happy since the morning of Magha Puja Day - practicing meditation in the morning, offering robes in the afternoon, and casting the image of Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro; Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen), the discoverer of Vijja Dhammakaya, in the evening. At night, we lit the candles to pay homage to the Lord Buddha and the 1,250 disciples of the Lord Buddha or the Arahants. Recollect only what made our minds feel joyous.”⁸

⁷ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1988) **First Sunday of the Month Meditation Teaching** October 4

⁸ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1993) **First Sunday of the Month Meditation Teaching** December 5

3.5 Mental Adjustment as Taught by Master Nun Chand Khonnokyoong



Master Nun Chand Khonnokyoong (normally called Khun Yay Ajahn) was a practitioner who attained the mastery of meditation. Khun Yay Ajahn trained her mind until she was able to attain concentration in any posture, regardless of time, location, or other circumstances. She achieved excellent results from her meditation and has been a model for practitioners. Khun Yay Ajahn recommended adjusting the mind as follows:

1. While sitting for meditation, forget all matters other than Dhamma. Cease thinking of other subjects for a while. The objective is to directly meditate for attaining Dhamma, not for anything else.
2. The mind must be adjusted during the meditation period and when not engaged in meditation as well. Try to recollect Dhamma in any posture you assume: sitting, lying down, standing, and walking. Visualize Dhamma frequently at anytime. Once you start meditating, the meditation experience will progress quickly.
3. Dhamma is cool and calm. To attain Dhamma requires a cool and calm mind. Do not control or use force. Calm your mind. Allow it to feel at ease and in a good mood. Do not meditate while angry, irate, or feeling curious. Sit with a calm and cool mind.

Chapter 4

Mental Objects and Visualizing Mental Objects

Units in this Chapter

- 4.1 What are Mental Objects?**
- 4.2 Categorizing Mental Objects**
- 4.3 Mental Objects that Should Not Be Visualized**
- 4.4 Recommended Mental Objects**
- 4.5 Methods for Visualizing a Mental Object**
- 4.6 Reasons for Being Unable to Visualize a Mental Object**

Chapter at a Glance

1. A mental object or the object of meditation is unit or thing on which a person meditating focuses mentally which helps with the attainment of Dhammakaya. Objects of meditation can be subdivided into three types:

- 1) Preparatory Image [*Parikamma-nimitta*].
- 2) Mental Image [*Uggaha-nimitta*].
- 3) Conceptualized Image [*Patibhaga-nimitta*].

2. Objects of meditation which cause lust, anger and delusion should not be visualized.

3. It is best to visualize a mental object gently, comfortably, and consistently. For a person meditating to who is unable to visualize a proper mental object, it is possible to correct the shortcomings of their methods.

Chapter Objectives

This chapter gives students the knowledge and understanding to be able to:

1. Comprehend mental objects correctly.
2. Categorize the types and techniques for visualizing an object of meditation.
3. Apply their knowledge to correctly check the arising mental image of meditation.



Mental Objects

An Overview

While practicing meditation, many meditators encounter mental restlessness. Sometimes, thoughts of persons, animals and things we met or deal with appear as pictures in our minds. Sometimes, these come to us as the sound of persons, animals, and things we have experienced. New practitioners find it difficult to make the mind to come to a standstill and remain serene. Phramonkolthepmuni recommended using a mental object in practicing meditation for attaining Dhammakaya and assisting the mind to reach serenity and concentration more easily. Therefore, it is important to study about mental objects and visualizing a mental object to improve our meditation.

4.1 What are Mental Objects?

A mental object is what we focus on mentally when meditating. Like using a mantra while meditating, focusing on a mental object helps the mind stop wandering and remain inside our bodies. The object of meditation leads the mind away from a fixation on daily worries and moves us closer to our goal of attaining the sphere of pathama magga or the initial path.

4.2 Categorizing Mental Objects

Mental objects can be categorized into three types:

1. **Preliminary Image** [*Parikamma-nimitta*] is the beginning or preliminary mental image. It is anything appropriate that can be imagined for meditation; for example, the sphere of meditational device [*kasina*]¹ for gazing, mindfulness on breathing [*anapanasati*], recollection of the Buddha's virtue [*Buddhaguna*], etc.
2. **Visualized Image** [*Uggaha-nimitta*] is a sign of learning and mental refinement. It is a movement from imagining a preliminary image to seeing the image in the mind as a tangible entity. For example, a person who imagines the sphere of meditational device becomes able to see it, even with closed eyes. The mental image takes on the character of a picture.
3. **Conceptualized Image** [*Patibhaga-nimitta*] is a counterpart to the visualized image. Though it seems like a visualized image [*uggaha-nimitta*], it resides deeper inside the mind. A person can mentally enlarge or reduce its size as desired. The appearance of the conceptualized image can alter from having coloration to being clear.

¹ A meditational device [*kasina*] is a method used to induce concentration by gazing at any of the ten objects, viz., earth, water, fire, air, blue, yellow, red, white, space, or light.

Explaining of Mental Images in Practice

“The preliminary image [*parikamma-nimitta*] is what we visualize, such as thinking of a crystal ball. We visualize a clear and pure sphere. If we think of the image of the Lord Buddha as the preliminary image, shape of the Buddha image we see will be blurred. However, if we consistently observe the image of the Lord Buddha with a sense of ease and repeat the mantra ‘*sammaa-araha.m*’ while thinking of this preliminary image, eventually the preliminary image will become clearer and move to the level of a visualized image [*uggaha-nimitta*].

A visualized image [*uggaha-nimitta*] is a mental image we bring from outside to inside ourselves. What does a crystal ball external to us look like? The crystal ball brought inside to the level of a visualized image or [*uggaha-nimitta*] will resemble the external one – it can be seen clearly and completely as though our open eyes perceive it. This level of seeing clearly as though our eyes are open is called a visualized image [*uggaha-nimitta*].

When the mind is completely still, the body seems to be tied to the ground and does not move. The mind does not wander to other matters but remains with the mental object – rooted firmly to the crystal ball or Buddha image. At this degree of concentration, when thinking of the mental object as a crystal ball, the crystal ball will be clear, bright, shining with light, radiant, weightless and soft like soap bubbles. If thinking of the Lord Buddha, the Buddha image will be very bright and clear, clearer than diamond and nearly as bright as the midday sun or even brighter. At this level, the mental image will be enlarged. Then, by think of reducing the size of the mental object, the mental object will decrease in size. Think of enlarging the mental object, and the mental object will grow bigger. This is called the conceptualized image.”²

“For the preliminary image, the feeling is like force oneself to visualize. Having achieved the visualized image, a person will begin to gain a fondness for it. A pleasurable and enjoyable feeling occurs after attaining the conceptualized image – the mind is united with one-pointedness, does not wander and doesn’t have any other thoughts. There is only a bright and clear mental image and suddenly life arises.”³

4.3 Mental Objects that Should Not Be Visualized

Mental objects which should not be visualized are those which make our minds feel agitated and move away from the seventh base. These are transient mental objects, not real ones. The objects of meditation which should not be visualized are categorized into three types as follows:

1. **Sensual Image:** Thinking of a sensual image leads the mind to become sexually aroused; for example, somebody thinks of his girlfriend or pornography.
2. **Vengeful Image:** Thinking of a vengeful image leads the mind to become angry or indignant; for example, contemplating an adversary or something we greatly dislike.
3. **Oppressed Image:** Thinking of an oppressed image leads to self-persecution and inflicting harm on others; for example, thinking of war, fighting and killing, etc.

² Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1988) **Meditation Teaching** February 21

³ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1988) **Meditation Teaching** June 20

4.4 Recommended Mental Objects

In practice, Phrarajbhavanavisudh recommends that we think of whatever makes our minds calm. He advises us to think of a mental object, for example the moon, the sun, a clear drop of water on the tip of a blade of grass, a clear drop of water on lotus leaf, soap bubbles, or an object favored by the person meditating that stills the mind such as a watermelon, an orange, an alms-bowl, a durian, a Chinese sweetmeat, etc.

The popular object of meditation recommended by Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro) is the light Kasina, the Alokasina. The two main mental objects that have been used for meditation are the crystal ball and the crystal Buddha Image.

There reasons for recommending these mental objects are as follows:⁴

1. Constantly focusing on a crystal ball at the center of the body enables the mind to become situated easily at the center of the body.
2. Using these two mental objects contributes to a more positive mental state – or at least a neutral mind – and helps lead to a wholesome mind.
3. The crystal ball is clear, clean and pure, similar to the state of one-pointedness of mind, a mental state characteristic of inside the Dhamma sphere. The crystal ball will lead our mind to be clean and pure, and bring success to our meditation practice. Also, it is a short-cut that can help decrease the amount of time that passes before our mental image (preliminary image) changes. If we have meditated for a while and the mind is still, our mental image will transform to become clear as a crystal. The use of an appropriate mental image shortens the time required for this transformation.
4. The crystal Buddha image is similar to the state of inner Dhamma. The mind gradually becomes refined until attaining Dhammakaya. Visualizing a crystal Buddha image can aid in bringing the mind to a standstill and attaining Dhammakaya.

If we are unable to visualize a clear Buddha image, Phrarajbhavanavisudh recommends visualizing a Buddha image produced from another material, such as, metal, brick or stone. He suggests visualizing the Buddha image as though we are looking at it from the top to the bottom, from the head to the face to the eyes, then the arms, lap and legs.

The Master Teachers imparted the following wisdom about the methods for visualizing the mental object:

- 1. Figure or shape:** Use a figure or shape of a mental object that brings our minds to feel at ease and serene. The Master Teachers suggest using a Buddha image or a crystal ball.
- 2. Color:** Choose an appropriate color for the mental object, such as red, yellow or green. The Master Teachers suggest having the mental object be clear and transparent.

⁴ Dhammakaya Foundation, **Meditator's Handbook**, Bangkok: SuKhumvit Printing Co., Ltd., Thailand, p. 69

3. Size: The mental object can be small or large depending on a person's preference. We may think of the mental object as covering our body or as small as a star in the sky.

4. Location: The mental object can be visualized in front of or behind us, above or below us, near to or far from us. The Master Teachers suggest situating the mental object at the seventh base of the body, two fingers' width above the navel.

We can see that few limitations apply when visualizing the mental object and the exact visualization depends on each person's preferences. What is important is to visualize the mental object constantly.

4.5 Methods for Visualizing a Mental Object

In accordance with Phrarajbhavanavisudh's teachings, the methods to visualize mental objects are as follows:

1. Visualize a mental object as **“a clear crystal ball”** the size of the cornea - completely clear, flawless, translucent white, soothing to the eyes and the mind like the sparkle of a shining star. The clear crystal ball is called an 'Initial Mental Object' or Preliminary Image [*Parikamma-nimitta*]. Keep your mind gently with the crystal ball, as if the crystal ball is resting securely at the seventh base of the mind, while repeating the mantra '*Sammaa-ara.ha.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, letting it move comfortably and serenely, while repeating the mantra.

Visualization differs from thought because visualization involves a gentle start, a sense of ease and joy, and no need to hurry or force. Conversely, thought is a more intense process.

When the mental object begins to appear involuntarily at the center of the body, continue to remain relaxed, being with the object as if it were part of the meditation mood. Never desire the meditation object. If the object disappears, visualize a new object to replace the one that disappeared. If the object appears away from the center of the body, gently allow the object to return to a standstill at the center of the body instead. Always concentrate at the center of the meditation object we see, as if there is a tiny star shining at the very center of that object. Focusing on that tiny star at the center of the mental object will bring the mind into a state of balance. After this a bright and clear crystal ball will appear at the center where the mind concentrates continuously.

2. Speaking about the technique used to visualize a mental object, Phrarajbhavanavisudh said, **“Seeing arises from visualizing. If we are able to visualize, we will possibly be able to see. What we already see, we can bring to visualize.”**⁵

3. Imagine a crystal ball just like an image of a rose, a lotus or the house where we live. Imagine with a sense of ease, with no formality or conscious choice of style. Imagine that we see, and then we will be able to see because mind is an element of success. Be confident. Only confidence creates further confidence.

⁵ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1993) *Meditation Teaching* March 19

4. If the mind is not ready to imagine a crystal ball, don't imagine one. Allow the mind to feel neutral and let time pass with a calm mind. Rest the mind in a comfortable place. To allow the mind to feel neutral will not delay or waste time since a neutral mind is one step away from a subtle mind.
5. Naturally imagine a picturesque scene: trees, mountains, waterfalls, waves lapping onto a beach, sun, stars and dew on the tips of blades of grass. Imagine things with which we are familiar. The one which is the most familiar can be visualized easily. The one which is less familiar can hardly be visualized. It is normal that if we frequently see a thing; we are able to visualize it with little difficulty. Something we seldom see is difficult to visualize. In any event, naturally visualize with a sense of relaxation and ease.
6. Constantly recollect a crystal ball and do not give up. Gently recollect. Gently visualize. Gently imagine making our mind be familiar with the center of the body. If we feel that the center of the body is too small, imagine it is large. Imagine enlarging a small Buddha image to make it a big one. If we can imagine the sphere becoming clear, large, expandable or small, this shows that our mind is beginning to be subtle. Maintain this condition for as long as possible. Preserve this mental image with the eyes open or closed. Sustain this mental image constantly until the mind comes to a complete standstill. Now, leave the body, as if there is no body. We and the mental object are united in one-pointedness. It is very clear.
7. Constantly imagine some thing beloved to us or some person we once knew; for example, a cherished ring. A ring is set with a pure and clear diamond. We possess this ring and enjoy visualizing it. We feel glad, joyful and cheerful to imagine this, like a young man feels thinking of a young lady or a young lady feels thinking of a young man. Sustain this degree of imagination all day and night. Visualizing a mental object must be joyful without the feeling of being forced to repeat the mantra or visualize the mental object.
8. If a mental image is in front of us and we feel comfortable, we can initially rest our mind on that mental image. However, we already know our aim is to bring our mind to the seventh base.
9. Seeing a refined object is a gradual process. The object grows distinct little by little from the middle, transforming from completely dark to cloudy. The scene is unclear and then changes like at the crack of dawn, and next becomes like opening the eyelids such that we and the thing we see are united in one-pointedness. The mind comes to a complete standstill.
10. The way to sustain a mental image is to see it with neutrality. Even if it disappears, do not react.

4.6 Reasons for Being Unable to Visual a Mental Object

Many people who meditate cannot visualize a mental object due to the following reasons:

1. Unfamiliar with visualizing the mental object; for example, not being familiar with visualizing the image of the Lord Buddha image or a crystal ball.
2. Do not understand the words “visualizing with a sense of ease and relaxation” which causes the person to apply too much pressure when closing the eyes.
3. Mood is coarse because thoughts remain in mind.

Therefore, if a person meditating is unable to visualize a mental object, they can overcome these difficulties in accordance with the following methods:

1. If a person lacks familiarity with visualizing the Buddha image or crystal ball, allow the mind to come to a standstill, with comfort and neutrality.
2. If a person is pressing the eyes while visualizing, stop visualizing and adjust by not using the eyes to visualize or allow the mind to be neutral instead.
3. If the mood is coarse, allow the mind to be neutral and do not visualize the mental object yet. A person can shift to performing other activities which make the mind more subtle, such as, sweeping, cleaning house wares, etc.

Chapter 5

Using the Mantra

Units in this Chapter

- 5.1 Repeating the Mantra Defined**
- 5.2 The Importance of Repeating the Mantra**
- 5.3 Mantra Used for Meditation**
- 5.4 The Reasons for Using the Words '*Sammaa-ara.ha.m*'**
- 5.5 Methods for Repeating the Mantra**
- 5.6 Benefits of Repeating the Mantra**

Chapter at a glance

1. To repeat the mantra is to recollect in words a subtle sound arising from inside the mind. This helps the mind not to wander and become still at the center of body.
2. Phramonkolthepmuni selected the mantra '*Sammaa-araha.m*' because this wording represents the Lord Buddha who is holy and free from defilements.
3. Repeat the mantra as though it is a sound arising from the center of body. The soft resonance of the mantra resembles the sound of prayer from inside the mind. Recite the mantra constantly until mind comes to a standstill.

Chapter objectives

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

1. Use and comprehend the mantra.
2. Understand the reason for using the mantra '*Sammaa-araha.m*'.
3. Apply their knowledge to use the mantra correctly while practicing meditation.



Using the Mantra

In general, while practicing meditation, we frequently find that our mind is restless and occupied by various matters. Sometimes, thoughts appear as images of human beings, animals and places. From time to time, thoughts arise in the form of sounds. When such thoughts appear as images, the previous chapter recommended visualizing a mental object to calm the mind. When such thoughts arise as sounds, Phramonkolthepmuni recommended repeating the mantra to aid the mind in coming to a standstill more easily. Hence, we should learn how to repeat the mantra for meditation practice.

5.1 Repeating the Mantra Defined

“**Mantra Repeating** defines mental development or the Dhamma and should frequently be developed in our innate character.”¹

Repeating a mantra – ‘Parikamma Bhavana’ in Pali – is to recollect in words a subtle sound arising from inside the mind.

In Pali, repeating a mantra signifies that the wise should first develop Dhamma and continue this development until achieving progress in the understanding and application of Dhamma. Repeating a mantra brings practitioners the benefits of a healthy body and joyful mind, in this life and future lives until being liberated from the cycle of existence.

5.2 The Importance of Repeating the Mantra

Usually, repeating a mantra is performed while visualizing the mental object. These actions help prevent the mind from wandering because they enable the mind to firmly and constantly establish itself at the seventh base of the body. Additionally, repeating a mantra assists the mind to stay within body and achieve one-pointedness.

The mantra is a helper, comparable to a boat or raft for carrying passengers across a river. By crossing the river of images and sounds arising in our minds, we move towards mental serenity and make progress in the path to liberation from the cycle of existence.

5.3 Mantra Used for Meditation

¹ Upasika Tawin (Boonsong), **Who are we?**, Bangkok: Bangkok Publishing, 1987, p.223

There are various mantras for use during meditation, such as: *Buddh–dho*, *Dhamm–mho*, *Sang–gho*, *Sammaa-araha.m*, *Yup-nor pong–nor*, etc. Each word has the same aim: to be an instrument assisting the mind to come to a standstill. How to choose a mantra depends on which mantra brings about a serene and still mind when heard by a practitioner. Any word which is chosen to be used should have positive associations and should not lead to passion, hatred or delusion. For example, a person can use the Lord Buddha as a mantra, or other words that nurture mindfulness, such as, *Yup-nor pong-nor*. Phramonkolthepmuni chose to use the mantra ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’.

5.4 The Reasons for Using the Words ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’

‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ is a sacred phrase for virtuous persons which have existed for thousands of years.

Phramonkolthepmuni taught the repetition of the mantra ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’. This mantra is a verse of the Lord Buddha’s virtue [*Buddhaguna*]. It is also the recollection of the Lord Buddha [*Buddhanussati*], the initial Dhamma which Phramonkolthepmuni was especially interested in practicing and teaching his followers. Each time a person practices meditation, he/she must recall the Lord Buddha for purposes of attaining the appropriate mood since recollection of the Lord Buddha [*Buddhanussati*] is Dhamma that awakens, brightens, strengthens, and gives courage to the mind preceding meditation practice.

Normally, if mind has nothing on which to focus, it will wander and be agitated. Therefore, it is important to concentrate on the virtue of the Lord Buddha [*Buddhaguna*]. Upon having achieved a focus on the the virtue of the Lord Buddha [*Buddhaguna*], the mind will be in a good state whether a person is asleep or awake. The power of the Lord Buddha will certainly take care of a mindful person who always recollects the Lord Buddha in accordance with Buddhist proverbs that mean the Disciples of the Lord Buddha who possess mindfulness of the Lord Buddha at all times will maintain their concentration and awareness, even when these Disciples are about to fall asleep or are in the process of awakening.

For this reason, the recollection of the Lord Buddha [*Buddhanussati*] is a virtuous practice which leads practitioners to have happy minds. Phramonkolthepmuni paid close attention to *Buddhanussati* and always reminded Buddhists not to be vacuous persons but to have the Lord Buddha’s virtue [*Buddhaguna*] in mind. Even though such persons may not achieve a high level of the Noble Fruits of Dhamma, they will have a fortunate state of existence after death according to the Buddhist proverbs that mean that any person who affirmed the Lord Buddha as his/her refuge will not go to unfortunate realms. After such a person leaves his/her body, he/she will be properous within the celestial assembly.

The Meaning of the Words ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’

1. ‘Sammaa-ara.ha.m’ is a universal mantra can be used by anybody in the world without contradicting any belief or religion.

- ‘Sammaa’ means righteousness, and virtue, such as, right view, right thought and right speech, and righteous and virtuous things.
- ‘Ara.ha.m’ means being far away from the defilements: greed, anger, delusion, sorrow, anxiety, regret, and yearning.
- ‘Sammaa-ara.ha.m’ means doing righteous and virtuous things and being far away from evil thoughts and actions: greed, anger and delusion.

2. The mantra ‘Sammaa-ara.ha.m’ is a combination of two words in Pali: ‘Sammaa’ and ‘Ara.ha.m’.

- **The word ‘Sammaa’ is highly respectful and means right, virtue and righteousness.** From the nine virtues of the Lord Buddha [*Buddhaguna*], this word was combined with the word ‘Sambuddho’ to make the word ‘Sammambuddho’ which means a fully self-enlightened person.

In addition, the word ‘Sammaa’ appears in the Noble Eightfold Path [*Atthangika-magga*]. The word ‘Sammaa’ precedes each part of the Eightfold Path, for example, *Sammaditthi* (Right View) and *Sammāsankappa* (Right Thought) etc. This makes the Eightfold Path righteous and virtuous: Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech and Right Action, etc.

- **The word ‘ara.ha.m’ is in first chapter of the virtues of Buddha [*Buddhaguna*], stating that the Lord Buddha was an arahant. Thus, the phrase ‘Sammaa-ara.ha.m’ means the Lord Buddha is a righteous arahant.**

‘Ara.ha.m’ also means to be far away from all evil things – far away from all defilements, such as, darkness, suffering, wickedness, evil things, etc. – and possessing only purity. Comparing this word to a diamond, it is as though the diamond is a clear, faultlessly cut stone, sparkling, colorful and very beautiful.

The word ‘ara.ha.m’ also represents Dhammakaya, that which is pure and liberated from all defilements. Dhammakaya is body of wisdom and attaining Dhammakaya means a person clearly sees and understands the world. The attainment of seeing and knowing [*Nandassana*] arises due to owning the Eye of Truth [*Dhammacakkhu*] which sees brightly, knowingly, and with clear understanding. **Dhammakaya means an awakened one, one not in a dream world, awakened to the world of truth, knowing the entire truth and seeing things as they really are.**

Overall, it can be seen that ‘Sammaa-ara.ha.m’ is a phrase selected as the most appropriate mantra for meditation.

5.5 Methods for Repeating the Mantra

1) Repeat the Mantra at the Center of the Body

Allow the sound to emerge from the abdomen, at the center of the body. Then, think of a clear sphere and visualize this clear sphere. The sound of the mantra should come from the center of the clear sphere, located at the center of the body. The initial path to Nirvana [*Nibbana*] is a clear, bright sphere that is clearer and purer than a flawless diamond. When the mind becomes still – subtle, transparent and weightless as if there is no crystal substance – a sphere of Dhamma will appear. If we repeat the mantra righteously and the mind becomes still, we will see the sphere of Dhamma like this.

2) Repeat the Mantra Similar to the Refined Sound

Phrarajbhavanavisudh suggested repeating the mantra within the mind – ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ – by letting the mantra sound emerge from the center of the body as a refined sound, like a resonance or vibration within our mind. Repeat the mantra like this constantly until we feel that we no longer wish to repeat the mantra, but would like to rest the mind in complete stillness. Just still the mind inside the mental object, the crystal ball or the Buddha image. If we have this feeling, we do not need to continue using the mantra, and instead can visualize a clear crystal ball. The mind should be at the very center of this crystal ball. If we cannot visualize a crystal ball or Buddha image, just repeat the mantra.²

Notice: Do not use force to repeat the mantra. Only allow a refined sound to come out of the clear sphere. The mantra should resemble the sound of praying within mind for a verse with which we are very familiar; or the sound of music we favor resonating unintentionally within the mind.

3) Repeat the Mantra Continuously

Repeat the mantra with respect continuously to recollect the Triple Gem. Sit and bring the mind to a standstill, letting the mind grow clear and pure. This method for making a clear and pure mind is suitable for preparing to receive major merit in the future. Observe whether the sound comes out of the center of the body or not, where the center is the location of a clear and pure mental object similar to a faultless cut diamond, the same size as our cornea. Repeat the mantra ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ continuously with a sense of ease, even ten, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, or millions of times.³

4) Mantra Repeating Is Similar to Biking⁴

Repeating the mantra is similar to biking. At first, we ride and fall down, then lift up our bicycle to ride again. We ride and fall down again, scraping our knees. We lift up the bicycle to try again. We do this continuously and eventually we learn how to bike well. In the beginning, repeating the mantra may not fully achieve the desired results. Yet we should repeat the mantra continuously, even if our mind is wandering, feeling sleepy, fatigued, or dark.

5) The End of Mantra

Repeat the mantra until mind comes to a standstill and there is no longer a desire to continue using the mantra because we would like to rest the mind. Or repeat the mantra

² Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1997) **Meditation Teaching** September 7

³ Ibid.

⁴ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1995) **Meditation Teaching** December 3

until the word '*Sammaa-araha.m*' is united with the clear crystal ball inside the body as one-pointedness.

When the mantra is united as one-pointedness with the crystal ball, the mantra or the sound of mantra will disappear, almost as though we have forgotten the mantra. In reality, we do not forget the mantra. Its disappearance results from the unity of the mantra and the clear sphere of Dhamma. Instead of the mantra, a very clear and bright sphere arises.

It is right to repeat the mantra and to attain this experience. However, a person repeating the mantra continuously may have thoughts arise, may sometimes see the sphere, may sometimes see the sphere disappear, etc. In any case, we must continue repeating the mantra.

5.6 Benefits of Repeating the Mantra

Repeating the mantra to make the mind attain concentration generates tremendous benefits. An event happened involving Phrarajbhavanavisudh's uncle. The uncle told Phrarajbhavanavisudh that he had a serious stomach ache and did not know what was causing it. After having an x-ray, the doctor found some gallstones which required surgery. He was admitted to a hospital to wait for surgery. Since he was old, he stayed there for 2-3 days before the scheduled surgery time. All day, he did not do anything. He did not consider whether the disease would be cured or not. He did not worry about how it might be cured. He did not think of his sons/daughters and grandsons/granddaughter because thinking of them would not help anything, but would cause suffering. Meditating is better while laying down to wait for surgery.

He repeated the mantra '*Sammaa-araha.m*' and thought of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen and his nephew Phrarajbhavanavisudh. Due to his familiarity with his nephew, he could think of him easily. He had never seen Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen, only his picture. However, he respected Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen very much. Next, he repeated the mantra '*Sammaa-araha.m*' continuously and did not think of anything, but thought only to repeat the mantra because he knew that he required surgery. So he thought of nothing, but only repeated the mantra '*Sammaa-araha.m*' constantly with a sense of ease and relaxation.

He went to toilet and while he was excreting, he heard a noise that sounded like something fell into the toilet. He did not know what had fallen and could not grab it. After that, his stomach ache disappeared, though he did not understand why. He said to himself, "I feel no stomach pain". While waiting for a surgery in bed, he said "Doctor, may I say something?" The doctor thought he would like to tell something to his sons/daughters and grandsons/granddaughter. The doctor said, "Yes". Uncle said, "I feel like I have already recovered. The gallstones were excreted out when I went to the toilet, but I could not grab them. So, there is no evidence to show you, doctor. Doctor! I think that I am already well. Please x-ray me again before surgery."

The doctor brought him to get an x-ray and felt that the patient was amusing. After an x-ray, the doctor found that the gallstones had disappeared. The doctor asked, "Uncle! What kind of magic verse did you use to make them vanish? How is this possible? It's different way. The gallstones were inside the gall-bladder. The excreta were from the bowel. It was

different path. How could they go out? Uncle! What kind of magic verse did you use or how you did this?” Uncle said, “I did nothing. While I was laying in bed waiting for surgery, I merely repeated the mantra ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’, thought of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen and Phrarajbhavanavisudh who is my nephew. I saw something like a dream, but it was not a dream, that Luang Phaw Wat Paknam stood in front of my bed, touched my head and said, “Get well.” I felt cheerful and thought that the doctor could take them out during the surgery. I only repeated the mantra ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’. This was all. I can’t explain why it’s a different way. I don’t understand how it’s possible from the gall-bladder to the bowel. Anyway, I have recovered and thank you doctor for your preparations.”

“I would like to ask you one thing, doctor. Please don’t tell anybody how I did this using ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ because they will think that I have the power to perform miracles. If somebody speaks like this, I will feel unhappy. Now, I have gotten well as a result of this method.” The uncle narrated his story with tears of delight. Whenever he recalled the story, he felt joyful and amazed about the mantra ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ and the perfection of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen. In addition, he thought if people were confident and had faith in goodness, unexpected windfalls would occur in the same way as happened to him.

The word ‘*Sammaa-araha.m*’ is a significant word associated with tremendous benefits. Thus, it is recommended that all those practicing meditation repeat the mantra just like the uncle did.

Chapter 6

Maintaining Concentration

Units in this Chapter

Suitable and Unsuitable Things for Meditation

6.1 Suitable and Unsuitable Abodes

6.2 Suitable and Unsuitable Places to Visit [*Gogara & Agocara*]

6.3 Suitable and Unsuitable Speech

6.4 Suitable and Unsuitable Persons

6.5 Suitable and Unsuitable Diet

6.6 Comfortable and Uncomfortable Climates

6.7 Comfortable and Uncomfortable Postures

The Three Types of Bees

Chapter at a Glance

1. Each person should endeavor to maintain their concentration all day. A person's surroundings, daily activities, acquaintances, diet, and demeanor all have an impact on one's concentration throughout the day.

2. Seven factors that influence the degree of concentration are:

- 1) Abode or residence; bed and bedding.
- 2) Places visited. [*gocara*]
- 3) Speech. [*bhassa*]
- 4) Persons with whom we interact. [*puggala*]
- 5) Diet. [*bhojana*]
- 6) Climate. [*utu*]
- 7) Posture. [*iriyapatha*]

Chapter Objectives

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

1. Maintain good concentration.
2. Use their good concentration while meditating to sustain the visualization of a mental object.



Maintaining Concentration

Maintaining a good level of concentration continuously is important to improve the results of meditation. Better concentration makes our minds become increasingly subtle and prepared for attaining the Dhamma.

Our daily activities – our interactions with others, our diet, etc. -- are strongly associated with our ability to maintain our concentration throughout the day. Whatever we think, speak and do affects our concentration. This chapter will recommend ways to maintain a good level of concentration during our daily lives.

Suitable and Unsuitable Things for Meditation

Students should learn what is suitable [*sappaya*] and unsuitable [*asappaya*] for meditation, the factors which assist us in maintaining our concentration. What will assist us in maintaining a good level of concentration is explained in the **Visuddhimagga Scripture**, a method for helping us to have the mental object transform from a preliminary sign to a counterpart sign [*patibhaganimitta*]. The Scripture can be divided into seven topics as follows:

1. Abode or residence; bed and bedding.
2. Places visited. [*gocara*]
3. Speech. [*bhassa*]
4. Persons with whom we interact. [*puggala*]
5. Diet. [*bhojana*]
6. Climate. [*utu*]
7. Posture while sitting, lying down, standing, or walking. [*iriyapatha*]

6.1 Suitable and Unsuitable Abodes

Some residences cause practitioners of meditation to experience difficulties. The mental object fails to arise. A mental object which has arisen quickly disappears. Mindfulness does not occur and a restless and unstable mind remains agitated. **A place that contributes to such difficulties is ‘asappaya’, unsuitable for practitioners.**

Some residences enhance the experiences of those who practice meditation. They are able to visualize the mental object. A mental object which has arisen does not disappear and grows stable. Mindfulness occurs and a restless and unstable mind becomes serene and steady. **A place that contributes to such good experiences is ‘sappaya’, suitable for practitioners.** The abode, therefore, has an impact on the subtlety of the mind.

The characteristics of a suitable abode are as follows:

1. Cleanliness of the Meditation Place

A clean location will enhance mental clarity and brightness. Meditators should choose a clean place to meditate, or clean the place they choose to meditate, because this will help make our minds clean both internally and externally.

The Master Nun Chand Khonnokyoong possessed the virtue of cleanliness. Her abode and all of her belongings were spotless. This habit of cleanliness made it easier for her mind come to a standstill.

2. Orderliness of the Meditation Place

We should choose an orderly location to meditate or arrange the place we choose to meditate in an orderly manner. A place in a state of disorder will not enhance mental clarity and brightness.

6.2 Suitable Places to Visit [*Gocara*] and Unsuitable Places to Visit [*Agocara*]

Gocara defines any person or place that a person should visit. Some areas produce or strengthen our inner defilement, causing our minds to wander and lack concentration. Such a mental state harms meditation and leads to a clouded mind. Such places should not be visited.

There are six types of places where those practicing meditation should not go because these locations cause the disappearance of Dhamma and lead to the road to ruin:

1. Nightlife Places

Having a penchant for nightlife means going out and enjoying the temptations available at night-time entertainment venues. Nightlife venues are present in both urban and rural areas: bars, pubs, massage parlors, discotheques, after-hours clubs, etc. They promote the consumption of intoxicants and arouse lust and sexual desire.

2. Show Places

This refers to places where a person can watch a show or performance. The Lord Buddha did not explicitly prohibit watching such performances. A person can sometimes view such entertainment for relaxation without causing harm. However, the Lord Buddha taught about the danger of becoming wrapped up in these forms of entertainment because the mind easily grows engrossed in such shows or performances and becomes clouded. A clouded mind is closed to the Noble Path and can lead a person to the unfortunate realms. Therefore, a person should exercise great caution and restraint regarding venues with the following forms of entertainment: dancing, singing, playing of various musical instruments, solo singing with accompanying music, the production of melodies, and drums/percussion. A person who watches such forms of entertainment risks having a preoccupied mind which is prone to wander and become clouded. Such a person will not progress in Dhamma and the attainment of Dhamma will be more difficult.

3. Places with Gambling

Gambling has no benefits and only creates problems. A person addicted to gambling has a deeply clouded mind because a gambler's mind attains a high level of wrong concentration. Every gambler aims to win, to further his/her personal interests. Nobody expects to lose. This means that gamblers intend to ruin others. In the end, the ruin unavoidably turns back to the gambler. Anyone who engages in gambling will not only be unable to attain the right concentration, but also will go to a deep unfortunate realm.

4. Places with Alcoholic Beverages

Places that serve, sell, or otherwise provide alcoholic beverages only contribute to producing people with clouded minds and an inability to attain good concentration.

5. Fools' Places

It is said that the mind of any person who is close to fools will easily absorb wickedness rather than goodness. Hence, anyone who keeps fools as friends will usually be more prone to act inappropriately, leading him/her away from the Noble path and the fruits of Nirvana.

For example, a son of a wealthy man possessed 160 Kodi.¹ He was persuaded by friends who were the fools to become involved with alcoholic beverages. Later, he became a beggar, far away from the Noble path and the fruits of Nirvana. The Lord Buddha said that if he had engaged in the celibate life [*brahmacariya*] starting at a young age, he would have been an Arahant. If he had not ordained at a young age, but had ordained when he began to grow old, he would have been a non-returner [*Anagami*]. At the end of his life, if he had ordained before using up his wealth, he would have been a Once-Returner [*Sakadagami*]. Ultimately, he strayed from the Noble path due to his associating with fools.

6. Lazy Persons' Places

Working and earning a living is everyone's duty since every life depends on the four requisites for comfort: provisions, clothing, shelter and remedies. The objective of earning a living is to receive money for use in the acquisition of the four requisites, assisting relatives and friends, and donations to accumulate merit for future lives.

People who fail to earn a living, leave their work undone, and spend their time engaged in useless pursuits lack substance in both thoughts and goodness.

Some people are so lazy that they attempt to avoid earning a living even if they are poor. They try to survive by taking advantage of others, destroying their communities and the environment for their benefit. Such indolence fails because inner defilements consume their minds, making it difficult for them to see Dhamma inside themselves.

¹ Kodi is equal to 10 million.

Suitable and Unsuitable Places to Visit [*Gocara and Agocara*] for Buddhist Monks [*Bhikkhu*]

Gocara refers places which are appropriate for Buddhist monks to reside or visit; and people with whom it is appropriate for Buddhist monks to associate. Buddhist monks only should enter suitable places and have relations with suitable persons, particularly when these facilitate the study of Dhamma or the celibate life of monastic practice [*brahmacariya*].

Gocara can be divided into three categories as follows:

1. *Gocara* that should reside around us refers to Kalayanamitta² who only engage in the 10 subjects of proper conversation.³
2. *Gocara* to which we should adhere refers to the propriety of Buddhist monks. It includes walking politely with the eye-sight down, not turning the face from side to side, not looking at people or objects without controlling one's sense, and others.
3. *Gocara* of which we should be mindful refers to how we should occupy our mental energies, the following four foundations of mindfulness [*Satipatthana 4*]:

1) Contemplation of Body [*Kayanupassana Satipatthana*] means mindfulness on seeing the inner bodies or any other bodies that intersect in the physical body, starting from the astral body or dream body to any level of Dhamma body.

2) Contemplation of Feelings [*Vedananupassana*] means mindfulness on seeing inner feelings: the feelings of happiness/not suffering or unhappiness/suffering of various inner bodies that intersect in the physical body.

3) Contemplation of Mind [*Cittanupassana*] means mindfulness on seeing the inner mind: the spheres of mind of various bodies that intersect in the physical body.

4) Contemplation of Dhamma [*Dhammanupassana Satipatthana*] means mindfulness on seeing the inner Dhamma: the spheres of Dhamma of the various bodies, starting from physical human body up to Dhammakaya.

Agocara means people with whom Buddhist monks should not get involved or places Buddhist monks should not visit.

Agocara can be divided into six types as follows:

1. Prostitutes or places with prostitution.
2. Widows.
3. Spinsters.
4. Buddhist female monks. [*Bhikkhuni*]
5. Eneuchs.
6. Liquor shops.

² **Kalayanamitta** is a good friend or virtuous friend.

³ Khathavatthu Sutta, in the Anguttara Nikaya 10. **The 10 topics of proper conversation** are: modesty, contentment, seclusion, non-entanglement, arousing persistence, virtue, concentration, discernment, release, and the knowledge and vision of release.

In the modern world, *agocara* are associated with many locations such as theaters, entertainment venues, shopping malls, etc. Buddhist monks should not enter such locations because the *agocara* cause mental distraction. When visualizing the mental object, a monk can easily see the wrong objects as a result of memorizing things that do not lead to wholesomeness. Also, a Bhikkhu who visits an unsuitable place or associates with unsuitable people will experience adverse consequences.

However, if Bhikkhus are invited to *agocara* to perform a wholesome duty (e.g., giving a talk about Dhamma), Bhikkhus can perform their duties as monks. They must not go there to conduct other activities unless because Bhikkhus might be understood as having the wrong Discipline of Dhamma [*Dhamma Vinaya*] and be targets of criticism or unkind sentiments.

6.3 Suitable and Unsuitable Speech

Unsuitable speech is divided into two parts as follows:

1. Tiracchana-katha (“low talk” or “beastly talk”) consists of subjects for discussion which obstruct the path to Nirvana. These include:

- 1) Kings and royalty.
- 2) Thieves.
- 3) Ministers of State.
- 4) Military and police.
- 5) Calamities.
- 6) War strategy.
- 7) Food.
- 8) Liquid refreshments.
- 9) Clothing.
- 10) Furniture.
- 11) Flowers.
- 12) Fragrances.
- 13) Relatives.
- 14) Vehicles.
- 15) Villages.
- 16) Communities.
- 17) Cities.
- 18) Rural areas.
- 19) Women.
- 20) Men.
- 21) Courage.
- 22) Street talk.
- 23) Neighborhood gossip.
- 24) Deceased persons.
- 25) Other stories not included in items 1-24 and items 26-32.
- 26) Creation of the world or world geography.
- 27) The ocean. Why the ocean is called Sakorn? Because King Sakorn built the ocean.
- 28) Prosperity and deterioration: this act causes deterioration and this act causes prosperity.
- 29) Forests.
- 30) Mountains.
- 31) Rivers.
- 32) Islands.

Though some of the thirty two Tiracchana-katha have an impact on a person's daily life, the impact on meditation practice is particularly adverse. They also impede the study of the Scripture [*Pariyatti*] – preventing a person from gaining the full benefit from such efforts. This second type of impact is called Tiracchana-katha of Pariyatti.

Of the 32 Tiracchana-katha, before discussing the goodness of a king, anyone of good practice, or a very powerful person or very wealthy man, it is important that that all of them are deceased. If making a comparison to explain Dhamma, such discussions do not cause any harm and only create advantage. However, for the practitioner, if speaking about these matters is not our duty, it is not necessary to talk about them.

2. Vigahigkatha are words that bring about quarrels; for example, you are exploiting me, I am better than you, etc. Such quarrels produce anger in the minds of those arguing and can continue indefinitely.

Vigahigkatha cause only harm and have no value for the study of the Scriptures [*Pariyatti*], meditation, or our daily lives. While living, they will ruin one's goodness and prosperity, as well as abolish a group's unity. After death, those caught up in Vigahigkatha must go to the unfortunate realms.

Consequently, a person who wishes to be wise should refrain from Vigahigkatha.

Words that Should Be Spoken [*Kathavatthu*]

Proper conduct by a person wishing to achieve and maintain concentration is to refrain from words that cloud the mind. A person should speak only useful words for the mind, words that support the inner Dhamma, such as the sphere of Dhamma or Buddha image. In Buddhism, there are ten subjects appropriate for speech: the ten Kathavatthu which are forms of suitable speech [*bhassasappaya*]. Discussing these subjects will not obstruct the path to and fruits of Nirvana:

- 1) Lacking a desire for the five sensual pleasures: vision, taste, odor, sound and touch as perceived through the eyes, tongue, nose, ears, and body.
- 2) Satisfaction from the financial or other benefits resulting righteous actions.
- 3) Physical and mental tranquility; traveling to and meditating in a quiet place, such as, a cave, forest, meditation retreat, etc.
- 4) Topics that do not concern sensual feelings, sex and physical pleasure.
- 5) Diligence in performing good deeds and pursuing perfection.
- 6) Expressing admiration for ourselves or others about keeping the precepts.
- 7) Concentration; meditation practice and its results.
- 8) Wisdom, including Dhamma taught by monks.

9) Liberation from existence [*vimutti*]; to encourage meditation practice by discussing the meditation results of persons who attain inner Dhamma.

10) The knowledge and vision of deliverance. [*vimuttinanadassana*]

Although the ten Kathavatthu do not impede the path to Nirvana, the practitioner should not talk too much about these subjects. It is best to speak about them in moderation in order to maintain concentration and conceptualized image [*patibhaganimitta*].

6.4 Suitable and Unsuitable Persons

There are two types of unsuitable persons with whom a practitioner of meditation should not speak:

- 1) Persons who always like to nourish, care for, and decorate their bodies. Their aim is not to be respectful but to create sexual desire in others.
- 2) Persons who always raise and discuss topics under the Tiracchana-katha.

Since these two types of persons will make a practitioner's mind troubled and agitated, it is best to avoid speaking with such persons when possible.

There are two types of suitable persons with whom a practitioner of meditation can speak without generating problems:

- 1) Persons who never raise and discuss topics under the Tiracchana-katha.
- 2) Persons who keep the precepts, have concentration, and possess wisdom.

Speaking with these sorts of people will make a practitioner's mind relaxed, peaceful and bright. Such persons are *sappaya*⁴, worth associating with.

6.5 Suitable and Unsuitable Diet

The amount and the quality of the food a person eats both have an influence on meditation. To begin with, the quantity of the food; if you eat too much you will get sleepy easily; if you do not have enough food your health will be poor and you will feel continuously tired and weak. The quality of the food has an effect too; substances like alcohol and non-medical drugs are addictive, disturbing the awareness and destroying the ability to meditate.

Spicy food may sometimes disturb a person by irritating the digestive system, making you feel unwell and unfit for meditation. However, unless there is a well-established health concern (e.g., a person is a diabetic), vegetarianism or any other restriction of particular types of food will not have any direct benefit for the practitioner.

One should have a balanced diet which contains every type of nutrient known to nature. In this way you will maintain a healthy body and a healthy life in order to attain the full potential of meditation.

⁴ **Sappaya** means beneficial or advantageous conditions; suitable or agreeable things; things favorable to mental development.

6.6 Comfortable and Uncomfortable Climates

The climate – air temperature, humidity, and air circulation – can impact our meditation. Some practitioners may feel uncomfortable and irritated in hot weather, resulting in mental agitation that interferes with the maintenance of concentration. Other practitioners may feel restless and depressed in a cold climate, bringing about the same difficulties with maintaining concentration. It is important to know what climate contributes most to a bright, peaceful, and stable mind; in other words, what temperature, humidity, and degree of air circulation is ‘*sappaya*’ or ‘*asappaya*’ for each person meditating.

6.7 Comfortable and Uncomfortable Postures

There are four basic postures: sitting, lying down, standing and walking. When some practitioners lie down, they feel sleepy and do not receive good meditation results. If they practice using other postures, they feel physically and mentally comfortable, receiving good meditation results without any hindrances [*nivarana*] arising. Some practitioners feel uncomfortable while performing walking meditation but feel comfortable when they meditate while seated. These experiences determine what postures are ‘*sappaya*’ for practitioners.

When practicing meditation, we must constantly maintain the posture we select. If we are in our chosen posture and feel it is ‘*sappaya*’ for meditation, remain in that posture for a longer time periods and lessen the time devoted to other postures.

For the majority of people, **the most ‘*sappaya*’ posture for meditation is sitting** because they can sit for a long time with stability, mindfulness and good concentration. When we have been sitting crossed-legged for a period of time and feel stiff, we can change to a comfortable [*sappaya*] posture using a polite sideways position in which both legs are flexed backwards one on top of the other.

Practitioners who keep a mental image [*nimitta*] by refraining from the seven *asappaya* and associating with seven *sappaya* can attain “the sphere of *pathama magga*” or “the first absorption [*pathama-jhana*]”. Those persons who cannot attain the first absorption should fully perform the ten ‘*Appana-Kosalla*’.

Appana-Kosalla 10

There are ten methods in the *Appana-Kosalla* as follows:

1. Clean the body, clothes and all possessions. Then, organize these items well to make us feel happy to see them.

2. Conduct five of spiritual faculties [*Indriya*]. Perform actions with faith [*saddha*], wisdom [*panna*], effort [*viriyā*], concentration [*samadhi*]; and particularly mindfulness [*sati*]. These are the fundamental aspects of Dhamma a person must perform since they make people wholesome in Dhamma protect the mind from falling into hindrances. The *Indriya* must be in balance with one another. For example, faith should not outweigh the other *Indriya* since each one has its function: concentration has a duty to help the mind avoid wandering, wisdom is in charge of knowing and seeing, etc. The functions complement each other and should remain in equilibrium to ensure good results from meditation.

3. Comprehend the mental object:
 - 1) Understand how to make the mental object arise.
 - 2) Understand how to maintain a mental object that has arisen so it does not disappear.

4. Take care of the mind. If the mind feels sad, discouraged and lazy, we must handle it gently by practicing three forms of Dhamma as follows:
 - 1) Investigation of the truth [*dhammavicaya*]: think of the Dhamma teachings of Phrarañbhavanavisudh. Contemplate Dhamma to teach oneself to produce will power.

 - 2) Create concentration [*samadhi*]: perform meditation continuously until the mind becomes clear, bright and joyous.

 - 3) Create joy [*piti*]: think of merit done to create happiness.

5. Direct the mind when necessary. If the mind wanders from faith, effort or wisdom, we must direct it by practicing the following three forms of Dhamma:
 - 1) Tranquility [*passaddhi*]: close the eyes and make the mind tranquil free from greed, anger and delusion.

 - 2) Concentration [*samadhi*]: make the mind mindful and stable.

 - 3) Equanimity [*upekkha*]: show neutrality and impartiality from emotions and worries.

6. When we feel uninterested in meditating, we should cultivate confidence and faith in meditation to make the mind joyful. Think compassionately about a sorrowful situation or contemplate the virtues of the Triple Gem.

7. When the mind of a person meditating does not become discouraged, disinterested, or bored, handle the mind with care so that it remains still. Do not consciously attempt to control the mind or make it feel happy.

8. Refrain from associating with a person whose mind is not still, who behaves unreliably, who is moody, who lacks the stability needed to work well, and who has a penchant for visiting entertainment establishments.
9. Associate with people who have stable behavior, who are not desultory, and who have clear, bright minds.
10. Move the mind towards attaining absorption and concentration by attempting constantly to visualize and see a mental object.

Besides practicing ten of Appana-Kosalla, be careful to avoid the **eleven mental defilements** [*upakkilesa*] as follows:

1. Doubt. [*vicikiccha*]
2. Heedlessness. [*amanasikara*]
3. Discouragement and fatigue. [*thina-middha*]
4. Fear.
5. Elation or excitement due to feeling elated.
6. Coarse, agitated mind.
7. Over-exertion.
8. Under-exertion.
9. Desire.
10. Restlessness.
11. Attempting to look at the mental object or mental image excessively.

The Three Types of Bees

In practice, we should make moderate effort to keep the mental object. Do not exert too much effort because this will cause the mind to wander. Do not make too little effort because this will generate laziness. Consider the following description of three types of bees:

First Type of Bees: Not intelligent. They know flowers blossom in various places and quickly fly to them. Their rush makes them fly beyond the blossoms. When they realize that they have flown too far, they return back and discover that other bees have removed all the pollen and left nothing for them.

Second Type of Bees: Not intelligent. They fly slowly. When they reach the blossoms, other bees have already taken all the pollen and left none remaining for them, just like the first type of bees.

Third Type of Bees: Intelligent. They fly neither too slowly nor too quickly and can get pollen as desired.

Persons who over-exert are similar to the first type of bees.

Persons who under-exert are similar to the second type of bees.

Persons who constantly make moderate efforts are similar to the third type of bees. They are able to attain *Appana-Samadhi*, the sphere of pathama magga or the first absorption [*pathama-jhana*].

Chapter 7

Correctly Situating the Mind

Units in this Chapter

7.1 Correctly Situating the Mind Defined

7.2 The Importance of Correctly Situating the Mind

7.3 Bases of the Mind

7.4 Methods for Situating the Mind at the Center of the Body

7.4.1 Situating the Mind When It is Not Still

7.4.2 Situating the Mind When It is Still

7.5 Techniques to Adjust and Internally Situate the Mind

7.6 Methods of Daily Practice for Situating the Mind

7.7 Disadvantages of Not Knowing How to Situate the Mind

Chapter at a Glance

1. Correctly situating the mind facilitates concentration and attaining Dhammakaya. If we situate the mind incorrectly, we will not attain the Dhammakaya.

2. The seventh base of the body is the permanent base where we should situate the mind. If the mind is not still, use the technique for perceiving the path of the mind to bring the mind gently to the center of the body. Rest your mind moderately, not forcefully or too casually. Let the mind come to rest lightly, like a bird feather floating down to alight on the surface of a calm pool of water. When the mind comes to a standstill, allow the mind to remain at the center, continuously inside.

3. For our daily lives, we should practice keeping the mind situated at the center of the body from the time we awaken to the time we fall asleep. If we grow accustomed to practicing this way, we will grow more adept at correctly situating the mind. If we do not know how to situate our minds and fail to practice the methods for situating the mind, our meditation will make little progress we will experience delays in attaining concentration.

Chapter Objectives

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

1. Realize the importance of correctly situating the mind correctly.
2. Comprehend the bases of the mind and the right technique for situating the mind.
3. Apply their knowledge while meditating and in their daily lives.

Correctly Situating the Mind

Our minds resemble a monkey jumping from branch to branch: always restless. We are learning how to train a monkey to be still gradually. It is essential to have a pole for catching the monkey to stop its struggle. With a stable pole, the monkey will not run away any more. With an unstable pole, the monkey will probably run continuously. We should learn about the pole – analogous to learning how to situate the mind correctly and the methods for enabling us to keep the mind there.

7.1 Correctly Situating the Mind Defined

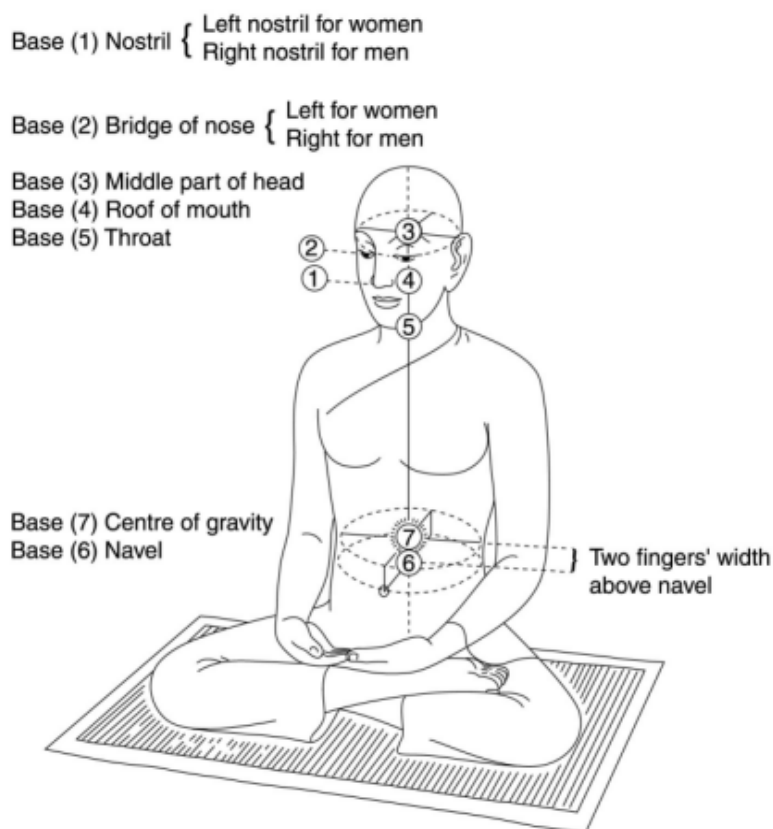
Situating the mind correctly means bringing the mind to the seventh base of mind, located at the center of the body. This enables the mind to attain concentration at the center of the body, the middle way which will lead us to enter the inner path until attaining Dhammakaya.

7.2 The Importance of Correctly Situating the Mind

We learned that meditation methods categorized according to the location where we situate the mind can be subdivided into three methods:

- 1) Situating the mind outside the body.
- 2) Situating the mind inside the body.
- 3) Situating the mind inside the body at the center of the body.

There are many methods of practicing meditation throughout the world. The text of the *Visuddhimagga* (The Path to Purity) describes forty methods. Each method can be practiced to attain Dhammakaya. A person who cannot attain Dhammakaya is not correctly situating the mind by letting the mind go outside the body or a location other than the seventh base. Attaining Dhammakaya requires the mind to be located at the center of the body.



7.3 Bases of the Mind

According to Phramonkolthepmuni, the seven bases of the mind are as follows:

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** (where tears emerge) – the left eye for ladies and the right eye for gentlemen.
3. **The third base of the mind** is located at the middle part of the head. Imagine two thin threads: one thread extends through **the center of the cranium at eye level** from a point between the eyes horizontally through the back of the skull; the second thread runs from the left ear to the right ear. The third base is located at the intersection of these 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**. Imagine two thin threads: one thread extends from the navel horizontally through the back; the second thread runs from the left side to the right. The sixth base is located at the intersection of these two threads. The sixth base of the mind should only be regarded as a temporary base for the mind. A person should not rest the mind at this base for too long to avoid habituation. Instead, a person should situate the mind at the seventh base where it can come to a standstill.
7. **The seventh base of the mind** is located **two finger widths above the sixth base**.

The seventh base of the mind is where the mind should be situated during mediation to attain Dhammakaya. The seventh base exists in every person.

7.4 Methods for Situating the Mind at the Center of the Body

The methods for situating the mind tranquilly and neutrally at the seventh base are as follows:

7.4.1 Situating the Mind When It Is Not Still

1) Survey the Path of the Mind

Sometimes it is difficult for those with little meditation experience to situate the mind at the center of the body because they do not know the location of the seventh base. In addition, the many factors required to meditate successfully may mean a person is unable to situate the mind in a still, neutral state at the seventh base; or a person is unable to maintain the mind at the seventh base for any substantial period of time. One way to address these hindrances is to situate the mind at another base, let the mind become still at that base, then eventually situate the mind at the seventh base. The following teaching describes this process:

“Let’s start surveying all seven bases, by beginning with the first base and observing at which base our mind encounters a sense of ease. Suppose we begin with the first base - the nostril. Don’t think about the left nostril for a woman or the right nostril for a man. Just stay still and observe whether we feel comfortable or not. If it’s not comfortable, very slightly open the eyes upward and let them close again to see the second base. Don’t close the eyes tightly.

Observe the second base and notice whether the mind experiences a sense of ease or not. If anyone feels at ease at a base, just locate the mind there. If we feel at ease, we stay there and are still. We can repeat the mantra ‘Sammaa-araha.m’ or not repeat the mantra. If we don’t feel at ease at the second base, gradually roll the eyes upwards like we are looking at the top surface of the forehead. Try to reach the third base since the since that base is at the center of the cranium at eye level. If it is not at that level, it’s at the center in the upper part of head. Just stay there. Suppose we can reach only that base. So, stay there with a still and neutral mind. If we feel comfortable, stay there continuously. It will move down later because our ultimate purpose is to bring our mind to be situated at the seventh base. However, we start at the first and second bases, at the level we can reach. If we achieve only the second and a half, but cannot reach the third, just locate at the second and a half with a neutral mind.

If we feel transparent, move to the third base at the center of the cranium. Then, stay there and be still. If anyone prefers the fourth base and feels comfortable there, just move down to the fourth base - the roof of the mouth. Just stay there and be still with a clear mind and repeat the mantra ‘Sammaa-araha.m’ to oneself or not.

Further, gradually move to the fifth base in the center of the throat, just above the Adam’s apple. This begins to be difficult but never mind, just let the mind go through the center of the abdomen like swallowing it into the center of the abdomen at the sixth base because the sixth and seventh bases are close to each other. The seventh base is two finger widths above the sixth base. If we are able to reach the sixth base, the seventh base will probably be achievable. They are close to each other. We just observe that it’s the seventh base and remain still. Yes, it is. It’s here. Be still and neutral here”.¹

¹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (2002) **Meditation Teaching** June 24

2) Gently Situate the Mind at the Seventh Base, the Center of the Body

Phrarajbhavanavisudh said,

“We may think it’s difficult or easy to locate the mind at the center of the body. Just know how to situate the mind and do not abandon the main principle of practice. To feel a sense of ease, gently situate the mind with a constant sense of comfort and relaxation”.²

Situating the mind to be still and neutral is maintaining serenity. Phrarajbhavanavisudh teaches that we should not fear our inability to do this. It is acceptable if the mind does not become peaceful. If we cannot reach the seventh base, just let the mind come to a standstill.

To situate the mind at the seventh base, we should grow overly concerned about locating the center of the body. Do not worry about whether the center of the body is at certain point. Just consider that there is a comfortable point, especially when that point is at the center of the body. It is only possible to situate the mind at the seventh base when the mind is already still. If the mind is not still, it is helpful to suppose that the seventh base is at the center of the abdomen.

It may be that the mind comes to a standstill at a comfortable point other than the center of the body. If having the mind at this point produces a sense of satisfaction, just stay there and do not feel the need to find the center of the body. Let the world be the center because at that moment, it will be adrift as though it is floating in space. Do not focus on the passage of time, even if you believe a long period of time has passed and you are wondering why there is nothing to see. Such thoughts will disrupt the mind’s stillness. Just constantly and dispassionately observe what is occurring and eventually the destination will materialize. The mind will then move to the desired point automatically. If we wonder why we cannot see anything and ask ourselves when something will appear, our mental state will regress and the mind will grow coarser.

Another technique to situate the mind at the center of the body involves imagining that:

“We are in the seventh base at the center of the body which has expanded to the size of a room, grown to the size of the Wat Phra Dhammakaya Assembly Hall, or covers the sky. Feel a sense of ease. How do we achieve a sense of ease? Just allow that ease to come naturally. No matter where we start, we must end up at the seventh base in the end”.³

² Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1993) **Meditation Teaching** Mar 17

³ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (2002) **Meditation Teaching** September 16

3) Techniques to Situate the Mind Correctly

1. When situating the mind, do so tenderly and comfortably, as though we are delicately placing a needle on the surface of a serene pool of water. Or as if a bird feather slowly floats down, touches the surface of a pool of water, and does not sink.⁴ Or as if the mind gently alights on a bed of soft cotton.

2. Loosen the mind as if we are wearing loose clothes. Allow the mind to be supple, at ease. Upon achieving a sense of ease, the person meditating may experience one or more sensations; for example, seeing a bright light, enlargement of the physical body, disappearance of the physical body, the sense of falling down from a high level, a floating body, a rocking body, and/or a weightless body. Whatever sensations arise, do not move, do not react, and dispassionately observe what happens.

3. The feeling of having a still mind resembles the sensation we experience when we are about to fall asleep or are just waking up. The difference is that while sleeping there is no mindfulness; but when the mind is still there is a sense of mental refinement, mindfulness, weightlessness and comfort. A still mind thinks of nothing and is free of emotion. Therefore, before going to sleep and while waking up, maintain awareness and keep let the mind be still, neutral and comfortable. We will find the mind changes from simply going to sleep to becoming awakened within, internally fresh, joyful, expandable and comfortable. We experience the joy of this contented sensation, even we haven't seen anything.⁵

4. Touch the center of the body very tenderly, entering inside and continuing to enter the inside of the center while maintaining mental stillness. When we situate the mind at the right position, the mind will automatically expand like we have thrown a pebble into the water. A pebble makes spherical ripples on the water's surface. These spherical ripples spread out to the edges.⁶

⁴ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1997) **Meditation Teaching** July 6

⁵ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (2002) **Meditation Teaching** June 5

⁶ Phrarajbhavanavisudh (1987) **Meditation Teaching** March 11

4) Further Considerations for Correctly Situating the Mind

There are three considerations to take into account when situating the mind:

1. Situating the mind too gently.
2. Situating the mind too forcefully.
3. Situating the mind moderately, gently, and easily with happiness.

1. Situating the mind too gently will produce a loss of mindfulness, and absent-minded thinking of other things. It lets various matters interfere with attaining concentration and allows the mind to wander. A person who attempts to situate the mind too gently does not know where to locate the mind so the mind lacks a location onto which it can cling. Such a person will feel drowsy after sitting for a while. Try to adjust the posture slightly and take a deep breath; or repeat a mantra in quick succession until the drowsiness disappears; or visualize a bright mental object. If we still feel drowsy, open the eyes. Then close the eyes to continue meditating. If we still feel sleepy, we should stand up to walk, wash our face, and return to continue our meditation.

2. Situating the mind too forcefully means we are paying too much attention. Attention results in staring and staring causes our bodies to experience tension. Use the body as a gauge. Our body is a good teacher. If it is too tense, we will get a headache, feel dizzy, have pain in our eye sockets, and tense our whole body (particularly the nape of the neck and the shoulders). Some practitioners see the mental object, but they feel they are not experiencing anything new or special. This means we have situated the mind too forcefully or carelessly pressed the mind.

3. If we situate the mind moderately, it will not be too rigid or too limp. There will be no physical tension and lack of mindfulness. The mind will be light and comfortable. Happiness will arise each time we meditate, even if we see nothing. We must adjust the mind moderately each time we meditate. Although we may have excellent results from our past meditation, we still need to adjust the mind each time. Mental adjustment produces a sense of weightlessness and ease which are essential for meditation.

Moderately situating the mind by using the right method will make us feel that time passes quickly, a sign that we have applied the method properly. We will enjoy meditating and feel relaxed throughout our meditation. The mind will be refined and transparent because it accumulates refinement and transparency every time we meditate. Although the mind will wander sometimes, the meditation experience is good because we learn how to situate the mind correctly. This results in our minds being at ease, soft and light; and prevents the mind from wandering or falling asleep.

Moreover, having correctly situated the mind, when we visualize the mental object, the mental image will be more refined, more transparent, lighter, thinner, expandable and moveable. If the mental image arises and expands, we have properly situated the mind. Maintaining this feeling continuously will make our mind increasingly clear and pure.

7.4.2 Situating the Mind When It Is Still

When our mind comes to a standstill at the right position, the body and mind will be light, and we will feel that our body is like a tube or a round cavity. If we situate the mind correctly, a clear sphere will appear at the center of the stillness, small in size like a tiny star in the sky, medium-sized like a full moon, and large-sized like the midday sun arising at the seventh base. The sphere is pure and clear, like a faultless cut diamond of spherical shape.

Once we attain this clear sphere, mentally touch the center tenderly. If a tube or sphere arises in the mind; gently touch the center of the tube or the sphere. If a Buddha image arises in the mind; gently touch the center of the Buddha Image. If there is a bright point at the center of the Buddha image, touch this bright point. Touch gently with a sense of ease. Remain still and stable, touching without force or passion. Constantly continue to touch with a sense of ease.

7.5 Techniques to Adjust and Internally Situate the Mind

Phrarajbhavanavisudh taught how to adjust and situate the mind until it is refined and tender, such that the mind attains concentration:

1. To adjust the mind to be still, we must not urge ourselves, pay too much attention to our efforts, want the experience to happen quickly or slowly or willfully desire the mind to become clear and bright. We can primarily notice that a still mind is empty, transparent, light, and comfortable, free from all concerns about worldly matters: humans, animals, and things. We feel that we possess stable mindfulness.

In addition, with a sense of relaxation and ease, the body and mind will be relaxed which will lead to stillness and neutrality. We gently remain at that point where we feel empty, transparent, still and neutral. Maintain this feeling constantly and tenderly, without the desire to see or not see anything. No desire arises. We feel content with our mental state and continuously observe what is arising. Do this with a still mind.

2. We can notice that when the mind is still, continuously still and neutral, brightness arises in the mind. The mind grows bright and clear. Then, brightness arises inside the mind and it is as though our body is luminous. At first, the brightness is like that at the crack of dawn, soft as if we are inside a white cloud, gradually growing increasingly luminous. Even if there is no concrete image to see and only whiteness is visible, maintain that view constantly. Initially the brightness is like this. It will automatically develop later.

3. Whatever experience arises, continuously keep still and neutral. If the brightness arises, just be still. When the mind is profoundly at the right location, a clear point like a star arises in the midst of the luminous sphere. Sometimes, a clear and bright sphere expands from the center of that luminous sphere. The clearness and brightness arise occur naturally.

4. When we continuously observe the clear sphere, we will see the middle way as a clear point like a star in the sky. The tiny clear point arises in the midst of the sphere of Dhamma. We should observe this point at all times. At first, we see it as though we are viewing it from the outside. Sometimes, it is like we are looking at it from above. Sometimes, it is like looking at it from close range and downward.

5. Just observe neutrally - this is the right method for situating the mind inside the center. Observe neutrally; then the bright and clear point in the center will progressively expand as a new sphere. Subsequently, a Buddha image spreads out from the center of that sphere. We will see a clear spot which expands from the center continually. We will see the inside deeply and continuously. By keeping still and neutral, our mood will adjust automatically. The human mind is strange. Just allow the mind to be still and it will automatically adjust, becoming balanced and in a perfect mood without any need to make purposeful changes. It happens naturally. Consequently, we will experience a graceful, smooth and tender mood and feel inner happiness passing through that place - soft and joyful. If the mind gravitates to inside the center, just let it go inside the center and observe neutrally. The experience will occur automatically.

6. Just be still and dispassionate and observe. Experiences will occur on their own. We will not use any force to make an image appear. This process is natural and we will discover the happiness. The development occurs progressively. The clearness and brightness will increase. The happiness will increase. A clear vision will arise, greater than before. Let these things pass. Sometimes, it is as if our body comes off and goes inside.

7. Do this comfortably without any hurry. Have the feeling that we can wait for 10, 20, 100 or 1,000 years. We wait, are still, and forget the time. Be a person that time is unable to control, and have only the feeling of stillness and neutrality for an extended period. Handle this feeling gently. The sphere of Dhamma will arise and expand outside, the Buddha image will arise and expand outside, or what is inside will arise and expand. Our mind will go inside and be clearer and brighter automatically.

7.6 Methods of Daily Practice for Situating the Mind

To get accustomed to situating the mind for daily meditation practice, we must train ourselves to still the mind at the seventh base at the very center of the body. The seventh base is the ultimate location for the mind. Whether closing or opening the eyes, sitting, lying down, standing, walking, eating, drinking, speaking, thinking, stretching or bending the arms, urinating, defecating, or whatever action we perform, just do it comfortably, continuously, and with mindfulness. Always observe whether we are really comfortable or not. Always adjust the body, speech and thinking until the mind is in a suitable condition. A mind in a suitable condition will be at the right position.

Before going to sleep and when waking up are both times we should practice situating the mind at the center of the body. At both these times, our mental condition resembles a still mind. Before going to sleep, always allow the mind to gently touch the center of the body, doing so continuously until falling asleep. While waking up, think first of the seventh base, familiarizing yourself with the center of the body and knowing how to situate the mind.

There are “**ten homework items**” which will help us learn to situate the mind at the seventh base, excellent training for the mind. All 10 homework items were noted in Meditation 1 as follows:

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.
2. Keep daily notes of your meditation experience in a dairy.
3. Before going to sleep, recollect the good deeds you have done throughout the day.
4. Center your mind before falling asleep.
5. Upon waking up, immediately reconnect your attention with the center of the body.
6. Before getting up, taking a minute to re-unite your mind with the mental object at the center of your body and recollect 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 foster the feeling that you are united with the mental object at the center of the body – nurturing 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. 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.
9. Recollect the mental object (crystal ball or Buddha image) at the center of the body while conducting other activities throughout the day.
10. Make the world a nicer place to live in by smiling and speaking in an endearing way.

7.7 Disadvantages of Not Knowing How to Situate the Mind

Situating the mind is very important. A person does not know how to situate the mind will gain will make limited progress in their meditation, even after practicing for ten years. Some persons find nothing all their lives. They do not see the brightness because the attainment of Dhamma may be difficult or easy depending on where we situate the mind and whether we know how to situate the mind correctly. Since the center of the body is within our body, knowing how to situate the mind is an art. We have to know how act like a female cook who is a culinary artisan and knows how to prepare delicious food. It is the same with the mind; we should adjust the center of the body to accept the mind by allowing the mind to stay close to the center of the body. Then, the center of the body will become accustomed to and accept our mind.

If we do not train to situate the mind at the center of the body all the time, the mind will focus slowly when we meditate. We have to clear out old thoughts and concerns, thus wasting time. Therefore, we must always observe ourselves and not let sadness interfere with the mind. Let the mind be clear and calm. Notice how to attain the point of ease, vacancy, transparency and weightless. Always notice our deficiencies. Why is the mind not still? If we find out why, we must improve. When we are able to do this, we will get the best meditation results.