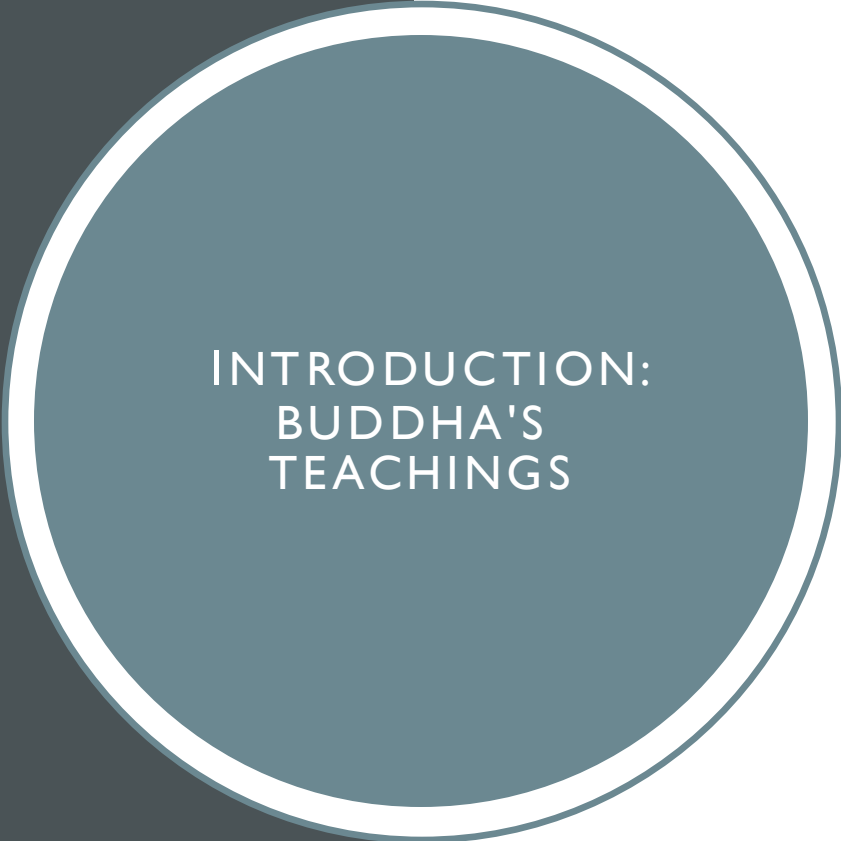


KASINA MEDITATION

Theory, Principles, Method and Effects

Joe Vella



INTRODUCTION: BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

- 4 Noble truths: Suffering (*dukkha*), Cause of Suffering (*samudaya*), Cessation of Suffering (*nirvana*) and the Path to the Cessation (*magga*)
- An ancient Chinese saying states:
'In making things end, and in making things start, there is nothing more glorious than keeping still.'
- Nirvana is the 'stilling of formations' (*sankharanam vupasamo*)
- Stopping (*nirodha*) formations that are conditioned and impersonal, rooted in craving and ignorance
- End of suffering from formations can only be found within ourselves
- Keeping still means stopping accumulation of Karma, perpetually adding to our accumulations in samsara
- Need for mental training into: Morality (*sila*), Concentration (*samadhi*), Wisdom (*prajna*) - 8-fold noble path

PATH OF PURIFICATION (VISUDDHI MAGGA)²

- Building on earlier *Vimuttimagga* treatise
- Ways of guarding the mental image (*nimitta*) in Theravada meditation; Kasinas
- Mindfulness practice enhances morality, strengthens tranquility (*samatha*)
- Through meditation one is less disturbed from reverberations of everyday restlessness
- Sustained attention leads the mind to sustained concentration on a single object (*kammatthana*)
- Calmness, concentration, firmness reducing multiplicity of objects; raises consciousness

- Few desires, be content and at peace
- Exhibit the *right effort* & energy to prevent, eliminate unwholesome mental states whilst generating wholesome mental states
- Right Mindfulness: *'this is the way, O Bhikkus, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbana, namely the four arousing of Mindfulness'*.³

(Satipatthana Sutta)



PURIFICATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

SEVEN FACTORS OF ENLIGHTENMENT (*SATTA BOJJHANGA*)⁴

- Joy (*pīti*), Investigation (*dhamma vicaya*), Energy (*virīya*) to be used when experiencing sloth and torpor to regain mindfulness
- Relaxation (*passaddhi*), Concentration and Equanimity (*upekkha*) to be used when experiencing restlessness and worry to regain mindfulness
- Mindfulness (7th factor) is the balancing factor, helping meditation

STAGES
TO THE GOAL
OF SPIRITUAL
FREEDOM:
THE 4 FORM
JHANAS
(*RUPA JHANA*)

- **Access concentration:** proceeds each of the jhanas, mind still subject to occasional distraction, use one of the 40 *samatha* meditation subjects, undisturbed by hindrances or vicissitudes
- Some *samatha* subjects lead only to lower jhanas, some to all four, some only to access concentration
- **Absorption concentration:** very focused and stable concentration



5 JHANA MEDITATION FACTORS AND PRACTICE: RIGHT CONCENTRATION⁵

1. Applied thought: focusing back to Kasina or breathing
 2. Sustained thought
 3. Joy, rapture, interest
 4. Happiness
 5. One pointedness (diminished awareness of surroundings)
- Removes defilements, sense impressions, reach perfect equanimity
 - Abiding in 1st Jhana for 15-30 minutes with Kasina, refocusing the mind, light becomes bigger, expanding to the world and universe. One can stay in this state for hours
 - Coming out, attending to heart and background mind, review jhana factors



MATERIAL AND IMMATERIAL JHANAS

- **1st Jhana:** separation from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states, sustained attention to meditation object (*vitarka-vicara*) experiencing joy (*piti*), bodily pleasure (*sukha*) such as goose bumps, sustained concentration
- **2nd Jhana:** with stilling of vitarka- vicara, no clinging to pleasant feeling of 1st Jhana, unified thoughts/mind, joy, happiness, tranquility, knowing awareness
- **3rd Jhana:** *piti* fades away, affective detachment/equanimity (*upekkha*), tranquil, mindful and fully knowing
- **4th Jhana:** neither painful nor pleasurable state, *pure* complete equanimity, mindfulness: The Right Concentration
- **The 4 immaterial (*Arupa*) Jhanas:** infinite space, infinite consciousness, infinite nothingness, neither perception nor non perception

THREE COUNTERMEASURES¹

- Use in succession
- Give no more mental emphasis to the respective disturbance than 'actually' required by circumstance

Notice it clearly but lightly, then try to return to the meditation, use dismissal

Repeat application of bare attention. A reiterated 'NO', a determined refusal to be deflected from one's course, hold your ground

Turn full attention to disturbance, make it the object of knowledge, transform from disturbance to meditation into an object of meditation



OVERCOMING HINDERANCES AND IMPEDIMENTS

- Sensory desire through the 5 senses
 - Ill-will feelings
 - Sloth and torpor
 - Restlessness and worry
 - Doubt, lack of conviction in one's abilities
-
- Impediments: dwelling, family, gain, class, building, travel, kin, afflictions, books, supernormal powers
-
- Balanced faculties: right effort, right confidence, right concentration and wisdom lead to mindfulness

TRAINING IN MEDITATION: STAGE IN PURIFICATION

- 40 meditation subjects in path of purification
- Includes 10 *Kasinas* (totalities) and 4 Immaterial states
- Each Kasina can lead to the 4th Jhana
- Earth, Water, Fire, Wind, Light, Space, colours (White, Blue, Red and Yellow *Kasinas*)
- Focus on object (learning sign) becomes counterpart sign, a strong light; access concentration
- Observe heart and mind, *Bhavanga* mind stream, experience joy and happiness, one pointedness concentration⁶
- Enter and stay in 1st Jhana, stay for hours, review the jhana factors upon exit
- Part of the 7 stages of purification⁷



VISUDDHI MAGGA AND KASINA MEDITATION

- Great Treatise on Buddhist practice and Theravada Abhidhamma
- Written by *Buddhaghosa* in 5th CE, Sri Lanka
- Introduces *Kasina* meditation
- Making of Kasina disc, example, a red disc
- Choose most effective, size and color
- Disc placed so one can comfortably sit in front of it at some 4 feet
- Observe characteristic of disc, repeating 'red', 'red', to help focus
- Relaxed gaze into disc until a sign (*nimitta*) image arises from it
- **Learning Sign (*uggahanimitta*)** arises and held in mind; guard, cultivate this bright, pure, clear characterless image (counterpart), suppressing hindrances and defilements
- Total focus, gentle consistent concentration, fully absorbed

PERSONAL
EXPERIENCE:
RED DISC *KASINA*

- Aid to meditative concentration
- Repeated practice, focus
- White light emanating from disc, like the rays of the sun
- Light spreads, sense of wonder and joy, calmness, stillness, absorption into experience
- Yearning for experience
- Hindrances fall away
- Review of jhana factors

BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

1. Blissful abiding here and now; enjoyment stability that desire cannot give
2. Insight development, wisdom, penetrating the reality of the world
3. Direct knowledge and supernatural powers (*iddhi*), (such as to sink into solid ground)
4. Rebirth into the Brahma world if maintaining jhana factors at death
5. Attainment of cessation of perceptions and feelings

Western values of enhanced concentration, emotional awareness, kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and mental calmness.



OTHER BENEFITS

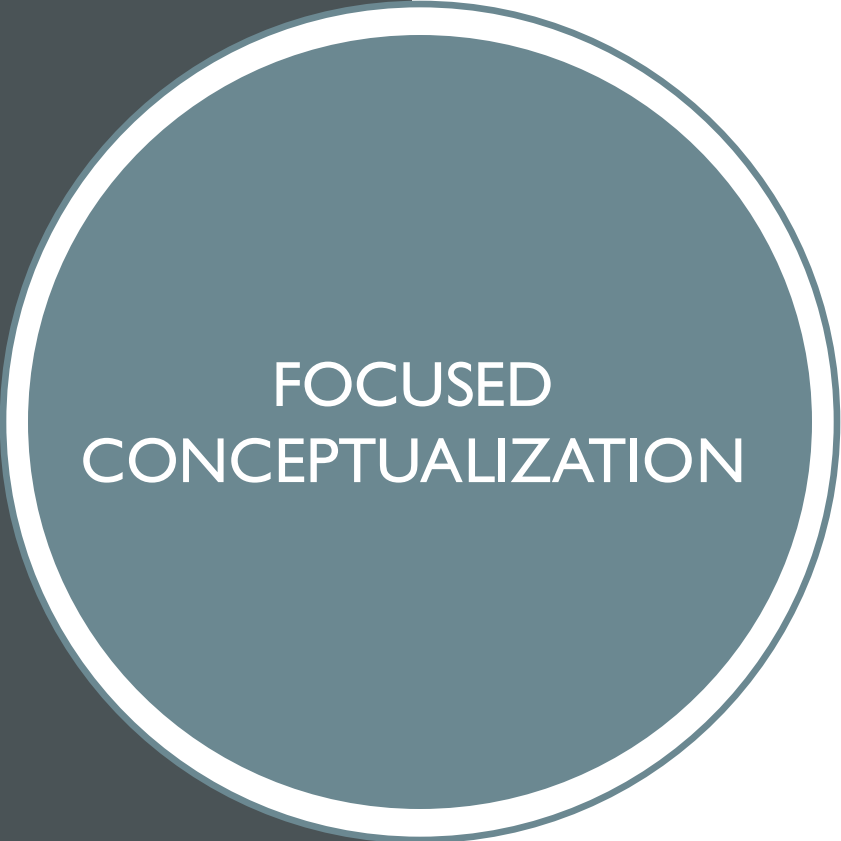
- Reduces stress and inflammation
- Reduces anxiety and disability
- Promotion of a more positive life outlook, reduction in depressed mood
- Better self-awareness and how to better relate to others
- Helps with goal visualisation; a more determined mind set
- Improved endurance and attention span
- Help performance of memory tasks, increases memory
- Helps generate kindness towards all sentient beings and yourself
- Discipline that helps fight addictions
- Improvement in sleep, pain control, endurance, blood pressure regulation

CONCEPTUAL NATURE
OF REALITY
'ALL ENTITIES ARE
WITHOUT SVABHAVA'-
NAGARJUNA

- Difference between reality and the knowledge of reality⁸
- The nature of entities is dependent on the mind's activity of conceptual construction
- Entities in their true nature are empty of *svabhava*, they have a conceptually constructed existence
- Knowledge of something for someone, an experienced knowledge of reality is dependent for its existence upon the reality which is known; reality is not dependent for its existence upon knowledge of it
- Meditative knowledge of reality is an experience, adding emotional properties

'THE MEANING [OF APARAPRATYAYA] IS THAT [TATTVA] IS NOT TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY MEANS OF TEACHING OF ANOTHER. IT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY ONESELF ALONE' (CANDRAKIRTI)

- Teaching of emptiness without experience will not allow one to see emptiness; knowledge will be merely conceptual, not experiential
- The correct vision of emptiness, a face-to-face encounter with reality can only take place through meditative experience
- Acquaintance of emptiness in meditation is a step towards knowledge by acquaintance of entities as empty, in one's life as a whole
- Entities are perceived without *svabhava*; one no longer becomes attached to them, one does not covet these entities
- This facilitates total freedom from attachment, eradicating suffering



FOCUSED CONCEPTUALIZATION

- The meditative experience of emptiness and emptiness itself are both calm; the mind is no longer caught up in conceptual diffusion
- Meditative experience focuses on the single common characteristic possessed by all entities, the lack of *svabhava*
- Entities have other characteristics, but meditative experience only focuses on their lack of *svabhava*
- The true nature of entities is their existence without *svabhava*
- Nagarjuna advocates the middle path, not nihilism

THANK YOU

~ KATANNUTA~

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