

Vipassana Meditation

For instruction on how to meditate, [please click here](#).

Translated from the Thai teachings of Ajaan Tong Sirimangalo

What are the objectives of Buddhism?

The Lord Buddha's teaching has five objectives:

1. For the purification of all beings;
2. For passing beyond sorrow and lamentation;
3. For release from bodily and mental pain;
4. For seeing the truth of life; what real, true life is;
5. For the end of all suffering.

The method of practice that will lead to these five objectives is called Insight Meditation (*Vipassana Kammatthana*), in line with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipatthana*).

What is Vipassana?

Vipassana means “to see clearly”. *Vi* means “clearly”; *passana* means “to see”. To see clearly in regards to what? To see clearly in regards to our own body and mind, and the whole world around us. To see that, both inside ourselves and in the whole world around us,

- a) things are uncertain, unstable, changing (*anicca*);
- b) things are stressful, unsatisfying (*dukkha*);
- c) things are not under our control (*anatta*).

What are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness?

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are:

Body: Noting the body while prostrating, walking, and sitting.

Feelings: Noting pain as “pain”, happiness as “happy” and calm as “calm”.

Mind: Noting thoughts about past or future – both good and bad – as “thinking”.

Dhammas: Noting hindrances as:

- a. “liking”
- b. “disliking”
- c. “drowsiness”
- d. “distraction”
- e. “doubt”.

Why Should We Be Mindful?

“The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are a device that stops evil, stops bad deeds, stops defilement. ‘*sati nivaranaṃ settham*’ – Mindfulness is an exceptional preventer (of evil states). During the time when we are mindful, evil won’t enter in to reach our hearts. We will have pure hearts always.

“It is like dark and shining light. Mindfulness is a shining light; all defilements, all evil states, are like darkness. When the bright light shines, the darkness disappears. For this reason, one should be mindful at all times – our mind will shine, clean and peaceful all of the time.”

Ajaan Tong Sirimangalo

Fundamentals of Practice

When practicing Vipassana in line with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, there are some important basics of practice, as follows:

1. One must practice in regards to the present reality.

Whether it be the noting of “rising, falling”, or “right goes thus, left goes thus”, one must note in the present reality. The mind noting “rising” and the belly that rises must go together; neither one should come before or after the other. At the moment of noting “right”, one must lift the right foot up right away. At the moment of noting “goes”, one must shift the foot, stepping out right away. At the moment of noting “thus”, one must similarly lower the foot to the floor at once.

2. One must practice continuously.

When one has finished mindful prostration, one must go on to walk, then go on to sit according to the set time; the three should be performed together in a connected sequence. During rest periods, one must go about noting in regards to the minor postures as well; for instance, washing one’s face, showering, eating food, urinating or defecating, extending one’s arm, flexing one’s arm, etc. Even when lying, one must note “lying, lying”, then note “rising, falling”, until one falls asleep. Mindful prostration is to establish mindfulness to stay with the hand. Walking meditation is to establish mindfulness to stay with the foot. Sitting meditation is to establish mindfulness to stay at the front of the belly, and follow the various points.

3. The practice must include three qualitative factors:

atapi – energetically putting one’s heart into really and truly being mindful;

satima – having mindfulness, remembering and knowing at the moment when bodily (rupa) and mental (nama) phenomena arise;

sampajano – maintaining mindfulness, following the noting, maintaining the knowing of rupa and nama at every moment, just like a person rocking a crib whose line of sight must stay with the line of the rocking crib at every moment.

4. One must adjust the faculties / powers (*indriya* / *bala*), keeping them balanced.

Faith (*saddha*) must be balanced with wisdom (*pañña*). Effort (*viriyā*) must be balanced with concentration (*samadhi*). Mindfulness (*sati*) is the faculty that guards and controls – the more mindfulness one has, the better. But if faith is high but wisdom low, greed (*lobha*) will come to take over. If wisdom is high but faith low, doubt (*vicikiccha*) will come to take over. If effort is high but concentration low, distraction (*uddhacca*) will come to take over. If concentration is high but effort low, drowsiness (*thina-middha*) will come to take over. Whether the practice will bring fruit slowly or quickly lies in this adjusting of the faculties / powers.

The Present Reality (*paccuppanadhamma*)

Why is it necessary to put such great emphasis on the present reality? This is because, in meditation practice, if one doesn’t note according to the present reality, one’s practice will not bring fruit, since one’s moment to moment concentration (*khanika samadhi*) won’t be able to

collect together. If, however, one notes according to the present reality, the moments of concentration will then be able to collect together and the faculties and powers will have a greater, more mature strength. Noting according to the present reality is thus an important factor, as it causes moments of concentration to collect together as one.

Once one practices on to reach the fourteenth stage of knowledge (*maggā-ñāna*), the faculties and powers, which have become strong, mature through the collected moments of concentration, will perform the task of abandoning the defilements automatically, such that there is, from then on, no need to go about troubling oneself in any way; it is enough that one has practiced correctly according to the fundamentals that have been expounded herein.

Noting is the heart of the practice of Vipassana. It is the function of mindfulness to continue to note, continue to stay aware at all times; this is what allows one to let go of all existential phenomena. Repeated and continuous noting will strengthen and mature one's concentration and, just like stopping up a leaking hole, will prevent evil from flowing in to reach the heart, as it will bring one to see only the arising and ceasing of rupa and nama at all times. At the time when one is noting and aware, this is when life has real worth.