

**Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation
and
Overview of the Teachings of the Buddha**

Session Seven: The Jhanas
Access Concentration
The Cultivation of Wisdom
The Immaterial Jhanas
Supernormal Powers
The Four Bases of Success
Stages of Enlightenment
Temperamental Types
The 40 Meditation Objects

The Jhanas

Jhanas are states of deep stillness resulting from focusing the mind upon a single object with such a degree of attention that the discursive activity of thought (monkey mind) is slowed down and eventually stopped. The jhanas are Right Concentration on the Noble Eightfold Path. (See session six). The bliss of the jhanas is an alternative to sense pleasures. But the jhanas become “wrong” concentration if we grasp them.

Conditions necessary for the jhanas to arise:

These are:

- a) purifying one’s moral virtue
- b) cutting off the impediments
- c) help from a qualified teacher
- d) a suitable dwelling

a) Purifying one’s moral virtue

Virtue is an irreplaceable support for stillness. Immorality leads to remorse and a nagging sense of guilt. And since the purpose of jhanic concentration is to allow us to attain the insight needed to cut off the roots of suffering, which are greed, hatred and delusion, one needs to be moral to attain this purpose. Moral purification occurs in 2 stages. First one controls the outer expression of the defilements by abstaining from immoral actions of body and speech and by promoting peace within oneself and harmony in relations with others. The defilements are the thousands of mental states and

behaviours that arise from greed, hatred and delusion. The grossest of the immoral actions of body and speech are laid out in the 5 precepts. (See session six).

Secondly, one deals with the inner expression of the defilements which are experienced, in their gross form, as the 5 hindrances. (There are many subtle manifestations of the defilements that we start to recognize once we have dealt with the gross forms). See session six for more on morality and session five for a discussion of the hindrances and their antidotes.

b) Cutting off the impediments

There are 10 identified impediments. You will see from the following list that many of these impediments are unavoidable for those of us who are householders. Monks and nuns have chosen to practice a greater degree of renunciation than householders and so can more completely cut off the impediments. But us householders can use the list as a way to raise our consciousness about impediments to the jhanas and renounce them to whatever degree is right for us at this time in our life.

- 1) Dwelling . Refers to not allowing your mind to become excessively preoccupied with work connected with your home or with belongings stored there or with concern for the comfort and conveniences of your home.
- 2) Family . Even though we have chosen to be in a family, we can look at the choices we make re obligations and perhaps simplify our family life if we wish. For example, inviting our extended family for a meal once a month versus once a week.
- 3) Gains . Refers to becoming preoccupied with acquiring (gaining) things.
- 4) Students . Refers to spending much of your time teaching others, so there is little time for your own meditation practice.
- 5) Building (constructing things). Again, we can simplify our lives by choosing to take on fewer projects. (Translation - desiring less!)
- 6) Travel
- 7) Kin . This refers to caring for ill or aging relatives so there is little time for jhana practice.
- 8) Illness
- 9) Books . Refers to spending excessive time reading about the Dhamma instead of practicing it.
- 10) Supernormal powers . These arise from concentration so aren't an impediment to it. But they **can be** an impediment to insight (wisdom) which is the purpose of concentration.

c) Help from a qualified teacher

Qualified means personal experience of attaining the jhanas and having teaching

abilities. A teacher is called a “kalyanamitta” which means a good or noble friend. The teacher will assign you a meditation object that is appropriate for your temperament, instruct you in your meditation practice and guide you along the path. There are 40 different meditation objects that the Buddha identified. A brief description of these will occur later in these notes. I recommend doing some retreats at a Monastery in order to obtain instruction in the jhanas from the resident monastics.

d) A suitable dwelling

A place that is quiet, secluded, free from inclemencies of weather and harmful insects and animals. In other words, a place where you will not be distracted by environmental factors.

Once the above 4 conditions are in place, one begins to meditate and then the 5 hindrances arise to challenge you.

Attainment of jhanas comes about through a two sided process of development. On one side is elimination of the states obstructive to it. On the other side is acquisition of the states composing the jhana. These two sides are known as the factors of abandonment and the factors of possession.

1st Jhana

The factors of abandonment are the 5 hindrances which are: sensual desire, ill will, restlessness and worry, sloth and torpor and doubt. The factors of possession are applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness and one pointedness of mind. To explain these terms, I will use the example of breath as your meditation object.

Applied thought - brings your mind to your breath. Applied thought will bring your mind back to your breath each time it wanders.

Sustained thought - anchors your mind to your breath. It holds it there, preventing it from wandering.

Note: Applied and sustained thought have different meanings early on in meditation versus when we are approaching jhana. Early on, they can be thinking...."Oh, I'm no longer with the breath, let's get back to it". Or, "Oh, I've been steadily with the breath for some time". But, as you approach jhana, there is no longer any thinking. Applied thought is a wordless returning of attention to the breath and sustained thought is a wordless holding of the attention on the breath (or whatever your meditation object is). In jhana, there is no thinking.

Rapture - the Pali term is piti. This arises when the 5 hindrances are abandoned. When piti is present, the body and mind feel refreshed. And piti creates an interest in your breath. There are five categories of rapture: minor, momentary, showering, uplifting (levitation) and pervading. Pervading rapture is the most conducive to the deepening of concentration.

Happiness - known as sukha. It is a spiritual happiness. Sensual happiness is from pleasurable forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles and thoughts. Spiritual happiness

arises from seclusion from sense pleasures and the hindrances. Sukha always accompanies piti but piti doesn't always accompany sukha. Piti is the delight in the attaining of the desired object. Sukha is the enjoyment of what is acquired. When you are in a desert, dying of thirst and see a pool of water, what you experience is piti. Once you have drunk your fill, what you now experience is sukha.

One pointedness - the mind is wholeheartedly conscious of only the breath. There is no distraction. This concentration is caused by happiness.

Each factor of possession acts as an antidote to one of the hindrances:

<u>This jhanic factor:</u>	<u>is an antidote to this hindrance:</u>
applied thought	sloth and torpor
sustained thought	doubt
rapture	ill will
happiness	restlessness and worry
one pointedness	sensual desire

These 5 jhanic factors are not the only mental factors present in the first jhana. There are about 60 factors present. But the above 5 are mentioned because when they are present together and exercising their function of inhibiting the hindrances and of bringing the mind into absorption (focus) on the meditation object, jhana arises.

Once you have attained the first jhana, don't make the 2nd jhana your goal until you have brought the 1st jhana to perfection. This means being able to enter or leave the jhana at will and being able to determine how long you will stay in the jhana.

Access Concentration

Access concentration arises as a precursor to the 1st jhana, once the hindrances are completely suppressed. Access concentration has the same mental factors as the 1st jhana but the factors aren't strong enough yet to qualify as 1st jhana. This means that the jhanic factors are not strong enough to maintain the mind continuously in concentration. In 1st jhana, the factors are strong enough to do this.

2nd Jhana

The factors of abandonment are applied and sustained thought. To abandon these, call to mind your theoretical knowledge that the 2nd jhana is free of these thoughts and thus more tranquil. Then focus on your meditation object with the intention of overcoming applied and sustained thought.

There is noble silence in the 2nd jhana, profound inward silence of the mind. This experience gives you faith in the practice and this results in tranquility.

The wholehearted one pointedness of 2nd jhana is stronger and more stable than that of 1st jhana. The rapture and happiness of the 1st jhana are born of seclusion from the sense pleasures and the hindrances whereas in the 2nd jhana, they are born of stillness. These 3 remaining jhanic factors are more subtle, peaceful and exquisite in the 2nd jhana

than in the 1st jhana.

As with the 1st jhana, practice the 2nd jhana to perfection before attempting to attain the 3rd jhana.

3rd Jhana

To attain 3rd jhana, cultivate an attitude of indifference to rapture which is the factor of abandonment for this jhana. Intensify your attention to happiness and one pointedness. The "agitation" of rapture can wear thin after awhile, making it easy to let it go for the peaceful happiness of suka. Renew concentration on your meditation object with the intention of attaining the 3rd jhana. The factors of possession in this jhana are happiness and one pointedness as well as equanimity, mindfulness and clear comprehension.

Equanimity is an attitude of reflective impartiality towards sense objects, beings or other formations. It can be associated with either a pleasant or neutral feeling (vedana - see session three).

Mindfulness means the remembrance of an object; in this case, your meditation object.

Clear comprehension or discernment (see session one), has the same nature as wisdom and its characteristics are illumination and understanding. Mindfulness and discernment are needed to hold the mind on happiness so you don't return to rapture.

Perfect the 3rd jhana before attempting the 4th.

4th Jhana

Focus on your meditation object with the intention of abandoning happiness. When the 4th jhana arises, equanimous feeling replaces happiness. Equanimous feeling is neither painful nor pleasant. It is a neutral mental attitude of sublime impartiality, free from attachment and aversion. Mindfulness is purified by this equanimity. One pointedness and equanimity remain as factors of possession.

After attaining the 4th jhana and practicing it to perfection, one can proceed in one of three directions:

1. The cultivation of wisdom
2. Attaining the 4 immaterial jhanas
3. Developing the supernormal powers

The Cultivation of Wisdom

This is the third part of the Noble Eightfold Path, the path that leads to the end of suffering. (The 8 steps of the Path are divided into 3 parts). The first part of the path is the development of morality and the second part is the development of stillness, jhana states being the ultimate in stillness.

The cause of suffering is the defilements and their roots are greed, hatred and delusion. The stillness that develops in the jhanas suppresses the defilements but doesn't eliminate them. It is wisdom that results in the permanent elimination of the roots of greed, hatred

and delusion. The practice of wisdom is cultivating insight into the three characteristics of all things: impermanence, inherent unsatisfactoriness and selflessness. (See session three - The Second Noble Truth). Insight cannot be practiced while in a jhana because it requires investigation and observation which are impossible when immersed in one pointedness. But after emerging from a jhana the mind is cleared temporarily of the hindrances and the stillness and clarity that result are conducive to developing insight.

Attaining wisdom via the jhanas is called, The Way of the Gradual Training . It has 4 steps:

- 1) Moral discipline.
- 2) Restraint of the senses - no grasping or aversion.
- 3) Development of mindfulness and discernment in all activities.
- 4) Cultivation of contentment with the minimum necessities.

The Way of the Gradual Training then continues by going into solitude and developing the jhanas. Then one emerges from the jhanas and continues with mindfulness.

Mindfulness uses the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The first three Foundations of Mindfulness have been discussed in sessions 1, 2, 3, and 4. The Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness is mindfulness of Dhamma categories. Buddhist scholars believe that the Sutta on the Fourth Foundations of Mindfulness was "padded" with other teachings of the Buddha. Ajahn Sona believes the essential Dhamma categories of which to be mindful are the 5 hindrances and the 7 factors of Awakening.

These 2 Dhamma categories fit with the 4 Efforts. We make effort to prevent the arising of the hindrances or, if they have arisen, we make effort to let them go. And we make effort to cause the arising of the factors of Awakening or if they have arisen, we make effort to develop them and ensure their continuation.

By observing the arising and dissipation of each hindrance you gain insight into impermanence. By experiencing the restless nature and disturbing effects of the hindrance, you gain insight into suffering. And by seeing the hindrances as an impersonal event, you gain insight into selflessness (they aren't some core part of you).

Development of the Noble Eightfold Path allows us to gain direct knowledge of the 5 hindrances, fully understand them and then cut them off at their roots and abandon them.

The Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness will be fully described next session.

The Immaterial Jhanas

These jhanas contain the same factors of possession as the 4th jhana. It is the object of meditation that differs. The names of these 4 jhanas are:

- a) base of boundless space
- b) base of boundless consciousness
- c) base of nothingness

d) base of neither perception nor non-perception (it has this name because it lacks gross perception but retains a subtle perception.)

Developing The Supernormal Powers

These powers are not considered supernatural as they can be explained by the law of cause and effect. To attain them, one must develop full mastery of the immaterial jhanas. And one must develop the four bases of success : zeal, consciousness, energy and inquiry. These are known as the iddhi-pada. Zeal means the desire to act, and in this situation it refers to the desire to concentrate and to strive for the attainment of the supernormal powers. Energy, inquiry and purity of consciousness contribute to the development of concentration.

Two examples of supernormal powers are Caroline Myss' ability to "know" what is medically wrong with an individual and the report of Jesus walking on water. A complete list of supernormal powers is in "The Path of Serenity and Insight".

Supernormal powers can arise from a concentration practice developed in this lifetime or they can arise in this lifetime due to a concentration practice in previous lifetimes. The latter seems to be the case for Caroline Myss.

In the Buddhist culture the exhibiting of supernormal powers to gain adherents or win offerings or popularity has been prohibited. The only reason to use the powers is when it helps eliminate defilements in peoples' minds ie. using them to guide others in their spiritual development. And a teacher with these powers does not need to reveal them in order to guide a student. Their psychic abilities just help them discern how best to guide the student.

Sadly, psychic powers can arise in those who do not have moral purity. Devadatta, a cousin of the Buddha and a monk, had psychic powers. He wished to take over the leadership of the Sangha from the Buddha. He was greedy for power. He made 4 attempts to kill the Buddha. He failed, but on one attempt the Buddha was wounded.

Liberation from suffering - Enlightenment/Awakening

Liberation occurs in 4 steps. These steps can occur immediately, one after the other. Or they can occur as far as lifetimes apart. The moment of attainment of each step is called a "path moment" and this attainment is immediately followed by its "fruit". The fruit is the bliss and peace that result from the path's completion. The path and fruit moments occur at the level of one of the jhanas. The path moment lasts one moment and the fruit lasts 2-3 moments.

There are 10 fetters (that tie you down to the world of suffering) that arise out of the three unwholesome roots of greed, hatred and delusion. The 1st path moment eradicates, cuts off at the root, the first 3 fetters. These are:

1. The fetter of false view of self (ie. belief in a permanent self or soul).

2. The fetter of doubt (because you have now experienced for yourself the truth of the Dhamma - the teachings).
3. The fetter of clinging to rites and rituals. (You know that these aren't the path to the end of suffering).

In addition to the eradication of these 3 fetters, there is a weakening of the fetter of greed for sense pleasures and the fetter of ill will. Due to this weakness, you will not engage in any actions that would lead to rebirth in the lower realms. As a result, you are assured of reaching full Awakening within a maximum of 7 lifetimes, if you don't reach it in this lifetime. You have entered the stream of Awakening. You have passed beyond the level of a wordling and become a Noble One. You are called a "stream enterer". As a stream enterer, you are released from the 5 kinds of fear and hostility that come from:

1. taking life
2. stealing
3. sexual misconduct
4. false speech
5. taking intoxicants

The second path moment does not result in the eradication of any fetters, but sensual desire and ill will are further weakened to such a degree that they no longer occur strongly or frequently but remain only as weak residues. At this stage you are called a "once returner" because if you don't achieve liberation in this lifetime, you are assured of doing so after one more rebirth.

The third path moment results in the eradication of sensual desire and ill will. You are now called a "non-returner" for if you don't attain full liberation in this lifetime, you will not return to the sensuous realm (human realm). You will enter one of the higher realms and achieve liberation from there.

The fourth path moment results in the eradication of the final 5 fetters which are:

1. desire for existence in the fine material realm
2. desire for existence in the immaterial realm
3. conceit
4. restlessness
5. ignorance

You have now reached full liberation and are called an arahant. The difference between a Buddha and an arahant is that a Buddha achieves liberation without the benefit of a teacher and an arahant achieves liberation with the help of the teachings of a Buddha.

Temperamental Types

There are 6 principal types of temperament. They are:

- 1) greedy
- 2) hating
- 3) deluded - one who experiences sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, uncertainty and stuckness
- 4) faithful - one who is generous, honest, sincere, trusts when appropriate, has a desire to see noble ones and hear the Dhamma and who experiences gladness
- 5) intelligent - one who is receptive, possesses good friends, eats moderately, is mindful and wisely directs their efforts.
- 6) speculative - one who engages frequently in talkativeness and sociability, feels bored with profitable endeavours, fails to finish undertakings and experiences mental scatteredness.

The teacher determines the student's character either by psychic powers, observation or questioning. Then the teacher suggests a meditation object that will be helpful.

The 40 Meditation Objects

What follows is little more than a naming of the 40 objects. For a full description of how to use them in a meditation practice, consult the Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification) in the reference section of the library or visit a monastery and speak to a monastic.

The 40 meditation objects are classified into 7 categories:

1. 10 kasinas
 2. 10 kinds of foulness
 3. 10 recollections
 4. 4 divine abidings
 5. 4 immaterial states
 6. 1 perception
 7. 1 defining
1. The kasinas are earth, water, fire, wind, blue, yellow, red, white, light and limited space. As a meditation object, the kasina can be a naturally occurring form of the element (eg. the wind) or a coloured disk (eg. a blue disk).
 2. Foulness . This refers to the 10 stages of decomposition of a corpse: bloated, livid, festering, cut-up, gnawed, scattered, hacked and scattered, bleeding, worm-infested and skeleton. This is also known as the cemetery meditations.
 3. The recollections are of the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, morality, generosity, deities, mindfulness of the inevitability of death, mindfulness of the body (the 32

parts), mindfulness of the breath and the recollection of peace.

4. The divine abidings are also known as the Brahma-viharas and are loving friendliness (metta), compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.
5. The immaterial states are the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness and the base of neither perception nor non-perception. These lead to the immaterial jhanas.
6. The perception of the repulsiveness of food.
7. Defining is the analysis of the physical body into the 4 elements of solidity, fluidity, heat and oscillation (or earth, water, fire and air).

Ten of these meditation objects can only lead one to access concentration. This is because they are occupied with a diversity of qualities and involve an active application of discursive thought. Discursive thought is not present in the jhanas. These 10 objects are:

- 8 of the recollections (all except mindfulness of body and breath)
- 1 perception
- 1 defining

The 10 kinds of foulness and mindfulness of the body only lead to the 1st jhana because they require applied thought which is absent in the 2nd and higher jhanas.

The divine abidings of metta, compassion and sympathetic joy can lead to the first 3 jhanas but not the 4th because they arise in association with sukha, a pleasant feeling, which is replaced by equanimity, a neutral feeling in the 4th jhana.

The 10 kasinas and mindfulness of breathing lead to all 4 jhanas. The 4 immaterials lead to their respective jhanas which have the same factors as the 4th jhana.

Matching temperament with mediation object

Greedy temperament - 10 kinds of foulness

- mindfulness of the body

Hating temperament - 4 divine abidings

- the 4 colour kasinas

Deluded and Speculative temperaments - mindfulness of breathing

Faithful temperament - the first 6 recollections

Intelligent temperament - mindfulness of the inevitability of death

- recollection of peace
- defining of the 4 elements
- perception of repulsiveness in food

The remaining 6 kasinas and the immaterial states are suitable for all temperaments

but kasinas should be small for the speculative temperament and large for the deluded temperament.

Despite defining specific meditation objects for specific temperaments, be aware that any meditation object can suppress any defilement (associated with the different temperaments) and different meditation objects can be useful for the same individual.

For example, use foulness to abandon lust, metta to abandon hatred and breath mindfulness to cut off discursive thoughts.