

MEDITATION

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THE MIND

“When I’m in peace the world is in peace. World peace begins with inner peace.”

Human beings consist of body and mind. The mind is a form of energy which controls and sends signals to the brain, enabling us to think, speak and act in either good or bad fashion. The function of the mind is “to see, to remember, to think and to know”. We must not confuse the “mind” with the “brain”. They are two different entities. The brain has a solid physical form of flesh and blood and is located inside the skull. Although not visible to the human eye, the mind also has a form, but an intangible one, much like electricity or magnetic energy.

The mind is the origin of all actions, good or bad. It is the quality of the mind, or the lack thereof, that makes us good or bad. We need to nurture and control the mind so it can’t control us. In its natural state, when the mind is completely still, the mind is pure and perfect, free of any mental contaminants known as defilements. It is in this state that the mind functions at its maximum potential.

But the mind is always restless and never still. It jumps quickly from one thought to another. A mind that is restless is like stirred water sullied by impurities, losing its clear-seeing quality. Mental impurities cloud our mind like dirt clouds water. It is hard to see with a clouded mind. Meditation is a process that stabilizes and purifies the mind, restoring it to its natural state of clarity.

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

The mind can be compared to an ocean, and momentary mental events such as happiness, irritation, fantasies, and boredom can be compared to the waves that rise and fall on the ocean's surface. Just as the waves can subside to reveal the stillness of the ocean's depths, so too is it possible to calm the turbulence of our mind to reveal its natural clarity. The ability to do this lies within the mind itself and the key to the mind is meditation.

Meditation is a means of mental development and cultivation. It is through meditation that our mind is trained, refined, and perfected. Meditation can be practiced by a lay person for the benefit of a happy life, as well as by a monastic for the attainment of liberation. Meditation is universal. It is not only for Buddhists, but for people of all faiths.

At its core, meditation is about touching the spiritual essence, or the seed of enlightenment, that exists within us all. This spiritual essence is not something that we create through meditation; it is already there, deep within, behind all the barriers, patiently waiting for us to recognize it. One does not have to be religious or even interested in religion to find value in it. Becoming more aware of your "self" and realizing your spiritual nature is something that transcends religion. Anyone who has explored meditation knows that it is simply a path that leads to a new, more expansive way of seeing the world around us.

TYPES OF MEDITATION

Buddhist texts, such as the *Visuddhimagga*¹¹, describe forty different methods of practice. All of them have the same goal: to train the mind to be still and to attain Buddhahood. The practice of meditation can be divided into three types based on how the mind is positioned and the locations of its bases: positioning the mind outside the body; positioning the mind somewhere in the body; positioning the mind at the center of the body.

Positioning the mind outside the body - Most people practice with this method because they are accustomed to the habit of looking outward. The downside is that the images seen tend to be illusionary, not real. This is not the right practice if you wish to achieve the highest level of attainment.

Positioning the mind somewhere in the body - This is keeping your consciousness, your feelings or emotions inside your body. This method is practiced by very few people. False images seldom appear and a wide range of knowledge can unfold, but you won't arrive at the path that leads to the ultimate attainment.

Positioning the mind at the center of the body - This is the method of settling your mind at a point in the center of your body. You train your mind to be perfectly still until it reaches the right balance, at which stage you'll experience inner mental phenomena leading to higher knowledge and bliss. This is the direct practice that leads to the path of liberation.

¹¹ **Visuddhimagga:** Path of Purification

CENTER OF THE BODY

Every object in nature has its center of gravity, the point where it keeps its balance. For example, the center of gravity for a cup is at the center point of the cup; the center of gravity for a stick is at the middle point of the stick, etc. If you place a cup or a stick sideways or off the center of gravity, it will fall because it is out of balance. The center of gravity of all material objects is always located at the center location.

The center of the body is the central point of our stream of consciousness, and also the inner source of happiness and wisdom. It is the natural home of the mind. Its location is two finger-widths above the navel in the middle of the abdomen. This is known as the “Seventh Base” of the mind.

The goal of a meditator is to “tune” or adjust the mind through a single point of concentration and to arrive at the point of balance at the center of the body. When the mind reaches its perfect point of balance, it will have a clear-seeing quality that enables it to penetrate into a higher form of knowledge, insight, and wisdom. Think of the mind as the lens of a camera or the dial of a radio receiver. You can adjust the focus of the lens of the camera to capture the clearest picture; you can tune the dial of the radio to find the right wave-length in order to reach a desired station. The same principle applies to the mind—when the “focus” or “wave-length” of the mind is adjusted to the right point, it becomes the most powerful.

SEVENTH BASE OF THE MIND

The Seventh Base, located at the center of the body, two finger-breadths above the navel, is the natural home of the mind and also the gateway to spiritual attainment. When the mind is settled at the Seventh Base, it is in a safe sanctuary sheltered from mental impurities and outside influences which contaminate its purity. This is where the mind becomes most peaceful and pure, functioning at its best. The Seventh Base of the mind is the beginning point of all goodness. It is the path of purity, the gateway to Nirvana. All Buddhas attained enlightenment through the Seventh Base, at the center of the body.

You should acquaint yourself with the center of the body and develop a habit of keeping your mind there at all times.

THE DHAMMAKAYA TRADITION

The Dhammakaya Tradition is a Buddhist meditation method taught by Phramongkolthepmuni in the early 20th century. Dhammakaya meditation encompasses both the *samatha* (tranquility) and *vipassana* (insight) levels. The goal at the samatha level is to overcome the Five Hindrances¹² and reach a state of one-pointedness known as the ‘standstill of the mind’. Although the meditator may start out with as many as forty different paths of practice, once the Hindrances are overcome, all methods converge into a single path of mental progress which leads into meditation at the vipassana level. Dhammakaya meditation embarks on the vipassana level at a higher stage than some other meditation schools.

In the Dhammakaya Tradition the level of attainment is usually explained in terms of equivalent inner transcendental bodies—numbering eighteen—which start with the physical human body and the subtle human body and going in successively deeper layers until reaching the Body of Enlightenment known as the Dhammakaya. The process of purification in the Dhammakaya Tradition corresponds with that described in the Dhammacakkappavattana¹³ Sutta where the arising of brightness is accompanied by the divine eye, the knowing, the wisdom and the Knowledge.

¹² **Five Hindrances** (panca nivarana): negative mental states that impede success with meditation and lead away from enlightenment. They consist of sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, and doubt

¹³ **Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta**: The Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dharma, a Buddhist text considered to be a record of the first teaching given by the Buddha after he attained enlightenment.

In the Dhammakaya Tradition, the Buddha's words "He who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha" are taken literally as seeing one's inner body of enlightenment which is in the form of a Buddha sitting in meditation.

It is believed that the Buddha became enlightened by attaining the Dhammakaya.



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