

Dhammas for Mindfulness

The *Satipatthāna-sutta* ('The Setting-up of Mindfulness') is the most important discourse ever given by the Buddha on mental development ('meditation'). The ways of 'meditation' given in this discourse are not cut off from life, nor do they avoid life. They are all connected with our life, our daily activities, our sorrows and joys, our words and thoughts, our moral and intellectual occupations. There are *four main sections*: (1) our body (*kaya*); (2) our feelings and sensations (*vedana*); (3) the mind (*citta*); and (4) various moral and intellectual subjects (*dhamma*). In all of these, the essential thing is mindfulness or awareness (*sati*), attention or observation (*anupassana*) (Rahula, 68-69).

Included in the fourth section is a form of 'meditation' on ethical, spiritual, and intellectual subjects – *Dhammānupassanā* (mind-objects).

All of our studies, reading, discussions, conversation and deliberations on such subjects are included in this 'meditation'. To read a book, such as *What the Buddha Taught* by Walpola Rahula, and to think deeply about the subjects discussed in it, is a form of meditation. Also, for example, the conversation between Khemaka and the group of monks was a form of meditation which led to the realization of Nirvana.

So, for example, according to this form of meditation, you may study, think, and deliberate on the **Five Hindrances** (*Nivarana*), namely:

1. Lustful desires (*kamacchanda*)
2. Ill-will, hatred, or anger (*vyapada*)
3. Torpor and languor (*thina-middha*)
4. Restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*)
5. Sceptical doubts (*vicikiccha*)

These five are considered as hindrances to any kind of clear understanding, as a matter of fact, to any kind of progress. When one is over-powered by them and when one does not know how to get rid of them, then one cannot understand right and wrong, or good and bad.

One may also 'meditate' on the **Seven Factors of Enlightenment** (*Bojjhanga*). They are:

1. Mindfulness (*sati*), that is, to be aware and mindful in all activities and movements, both physical and mental.

2. Investigation and research into the various problems of doctrine (*dhamma-vicaya*). Included here are all our religious, ethical and philosophical studies, reading, researches, discussions, conversation, even attending lectures relating to such doctrinal subjects.
3. Energy (*viriyā*), to work with determination till the end.
4. Joy (*pīti*), the quality quite contrary to the pessimistic, gloomy or melancholic attitude of mind.
5. Relaxation (*passaddhi*) both of body and mind. One should not be stiff physically or mentally.
6. Concentration (*samādhi*) is the development of mental concentration, of one-pointedness of mind, by various methods prescribed in the texts.
7. Equanimity (*upekkhā*), that is, to be able to face life in all its vicissitudes with calm of mind, tranquillity, without disturbance.

To cultivate these qualities, the most essential thing is a genuine wish, will, or inclination. Many other material and spiritual conditions conducive to the development of each quality are described in the texts.

One may also 'meditate' on such subjects as the **Five Aggregates** investigating the question 'What is a being?' or 'What is it that is called I?', or on the **Four Noble Truths**.

Study and investigation of subjects such as these constitute this fourth form of meditation, which leads to the realization of Ultimate Truth.

Apart from those we have discussed here, there are many other subjects of meditation, traditionally forty in number, among which mention should be made particularly of the **Four Sublime States** (*Brahma-vihāra*): (1) extending unlimited, universal love and good-will (*mettā*) to all living beings without any kind of discrimination, 'just as a mother loves her only child'; (2) compassion (*karuṇā*) for all living beings who are suffering, in trouble and affliction; (3) sympathetic joy (*mudita*) in others' success, welfare and happiness; and (4) equanimity (*upekkhā*) in all vicissitudes of life.

Source: Rahula, Walpola. *What the Buddha Taught*. With a foreword by Paul Demiéville. Revised edition. New York: Grove Press, 1974. (Pages 68, 74-75.)