



A Comparative Study of the Concepts of *Samatha* and *Vipassana* in Theravada Buddhism

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ABSTRACT

People continually seek ways to increase their happiness, inner peace and harmony. According to public opinion happiness is got through wealth, power, and social status. They seek solutions to their problems through their family, jobs, partners, friends, etc. They try to change external condition in their physical, social and political environment this way and that way, because they believe that when the world finally becomes perfect, they become happy and peaceful. But they forget that condition change all the time and unceasingly. Just before the fulfillment of their dreams, things change and the promise of happiness fades away like the morning mist at daybreak. The harder one tries to reach out for happiness, the more it seems so elusive like fluttering butterfly which is enticingly near, but impossible to catch.

The catch is that most people adopt the wrong methods to find peace and harmony. They seek them outside themselves into the external world, instead of looking within themselves. Many are beginning to discover the real source of their happiness and troubles: the mind. And to turn their attention to the inner man, the mind, meditation is the way.

Today meditation appeals to so people from all walks of life and amongst various races and religions. Why? Because the mind works regardless of the race or religion a person belongs to. The task of meditation is to understand the nature of the mind and to use it effectively in daily life. The mind is the key to happiness, and also the key to misery. To understand the mind and use it well is a task that transcends racial, cultural and religious barriers. Meditation can indeed be practiced by anyone regardless of his religious label.

INTRODUCTION:

What is Meditation? Meditation is simply concentrated awareness. If you are interested in practicing meditation, you must learn how to develop your concentration through *Samatha* or *Vipassana* meditation. On the other hand, after learning how to develop your awareness or mindfulness, you can do *Vipassana* or *Insight* meditation.

If you are interested in making use of the *Samatha* meditation in your daily life, then learn to apply concentration in your daily life. If you are interested in making use of this *Vipassana* meditation, then learn to apply awareness to your daily life. Living meditation is simply developing and making use concentrated awareness in the common experiences and events of your daily life.

SAMATHA: Concentration Meditation

Samatha is a method of training the mind for those who like to develop their concentration. *Samatha* meditation is concentrated with producing a one-pointed mind.

One-pointedness is a concentrated state in which all the faculties and mental powers are focused and governed by the willpower and directed towards one point of one object. A one-pointed mind is a concentrated and unified mind. A one-pointed mind is the opposite of a distracted or scattered mind. Ordinarily our mental states are scattered in all directions but if the concentration is fixed on one object, then you begin to know the true nature of that object. The process of concentration gradually modifies the mental states until the whole mental energy converges towards one point.

What is the purpose of developing a one-pointed mind? If you train your mind in this manner, then you bring calmness and tranquillity to the mind and you will be able to gather your attention to one point, so as to stop the mind frittering away and wasting its useful energy. A calm mind is not an end in itself. Calmness of mind is only a necessary condition to develop *Insight*. In other words, a calm mind is necessary if you want to have a deep look into yourself and to have a deep understanding of yourself and the world.

Samatha meditation trains the mind various stages of mental concentration. At very high stages of mental concentration (known as jhana) psychic powers can be developed. However, such high states of concentration are not necessary or practical for most people who have to live in the hectic pace of modern life. For most people, the mind is jumping from past to present to future and from place to place.

Such people waste an enormous amount of mental energy. If you can train your mind to maintain enough concentration to pay attention to each task from moment to moment, this is more than enough! When you are reading, walking, resting, and talking whatever you do in your daily life, act with a mind that is calm and that is paying attention to each and every action. Learn to focus the mind on each task.

VIPASSANA: Insight Meditation

Vipassana is an insight into the nature of things; Vipassana is seeing things as they are. The path that leads to this insight or realization is awareness or mindfulness. The method to develop mindfulness is based on a famous discourse given by the Buddha. In this discourse, the Buddha explained how to develop and cultivate the mind.

The name of this discourse is the Satipatthana Sutta. In this sutta, the Buddha offers four objects of meditation for consideration: body, feelings, thoughts, and mental states. The basis of the Satipatthana practice is to use these objects for the development of concentration, mindfulness, and insight or understanding of yourself and they would surround you.

Satipatthana offers the most simple, direct, and effective method for training the mind to meet daily tasks and problems and to achieve the highest aim; liberation. Satipatthana is safe for all types of characters, and a harmless way to train the mind. You can use the method anywhere at any time, in a busy office or in the quiet of a peaceful night.

The task is to develop awareness or mindfulness (sati). Awareness is a very simple, very common and very familiar state of the mind. In its elementary stage, awareness is paying bare attention to an object. This means you simply observe an object without judging it or thinking about it. Awareness is simply observing or giving close attention without making any judgment or thinking.

The seven benefits of mindfulness meditation

These are some of the practical benefits that come from doing meditation. These benefits are not for sale in any shop or department store. Money cannot buy them. They are yours for the practice of meditation. At the beginning this kind of mindfulness is really one mindful mind watching other minds (which are all within one's own mental continuity of course). One thereby develops the ability to look into the mind and to see where it has gone to.

The seven benefits of mindfulness meditation as taught by the Buddha are recorded in the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, that is, the Discourse on the Four Foundations of the Mindfulness. In the introductory passage of the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, the Buddha explains to us the seven kinds of benefits mediator can gain through his own experience of Dhamma.

The first benefit is the purification of a being. When a person practices mindfulness, develops mindfulness or cultivates mindfulness, he can purify his being from all kilesa. Kilesa means Pali word; it is translated 'defilements' by Buddhist scholars.

This Kilesa consists of mainly 10 kinds: lobha, dosa, moha, ditthi, mana, vicikiccha, thina-middha, uddacca-kukkucca, ahirika, anottappa.

Lobha means not only greed but also desire, lust, craving, attachment and love (love is also lobha). So lobha covers all the sense of love, desire, lust, greed, craving and attachment. When one of these mental states arises in us, our mind gets defiled. So these are known as defilements.

Dosa is hatred, anger, ill will or aversion. Moha is ignorance. Mana is conceit. Ditthi is wrong view or false view. Vicikiccha is doubt. Thina-middha is sloth and torpor. Sleepiness also comes under sloth and torpor. Sleepiness or sloth and torpor are good friends of defilements and also listeners of Dhamma. When you go to the Meditation Center, you can see the sleepy person, taking meditation and listening to the Dhamma.

Uddacca-kukkucca means restlessness and remorse. The next one is ahirika. It means shamelessness, one who is not shameful of doing evil things in speaking (evil speech), thinking (evil thought) and action (evil actions).

Another one is Anottappa. It means fearlessness, which means, one is not afraid of doing evil things, speaking evil speech. This fearlessness is one of the defilements. These are the ten kinds of defilements, which must be abandoned or removed from our minds by means of Vipassana meditation (mindfulness meditation).

The Buddha says: - 'one who practices mindfulness meditation can be purified of all defilements.' That means, he can attain Arahantship and be purified from all kinds of defilements. This is the first benefit.

The second benefit of mindfulness meditation is overcoming sorrow and worry. You will not be worried about failure, or be worried over the death of your relatives, or about the loss of your work. You will not be sorry about anything if you practice this mindfulness meditation. Although you have not yet attained any Path and Fruition (maggā and phala), you can overcome sorrow and worry to some extent, because when these mental states arise, you will be mindful of them as they are. When your mindfulness becomes powerful, that worry or sorrow will stop and disappear. When you have completely developed mindfulness, you will attain Arahantship. After that attainment, you will not have to worry or be sorry can be overcome by mindfulness meditation.

The third benefit is overcoming lamentation. Although your parents or children or relatives die, you will not have any lamentation for them because you will have realized that bodily and mental processes constitute the so-called 'child' or the so-called 'parent'. In this way, lamentation can be overcome by mindfulness meditation. As for the third benefit, the commentary to Mahasatipatthana mentions a story as proof that one can overcome sorrow, worry and lamentation by means of mindfulness meditation.

The fourth benefit is the cessation of physical suffering. The fifth benefit is the cessation of mental suffering or mental dukkha. Physical dukkha such as pain, stiffness, itchiness, numbness and so on can be overcome by this mindfulness meditation in meditation retreats as well as outside meditation retreats. When you have some experience in this meditation practice, you can overcome your physical dukkha as well as mental dukkha (physical and mental suffering) to large extent.

But if you have enough effort and time for mindfulness meditation, you can uproot and eradicate both physical and mental suffering. Then you can say goodbye to them because, by then, you will have attained Arahatsip. But if you have not yet attained at least the first Path of Sainthood, Sotapatti Magga and Phala, or some higher stages of insight, you cannot, to a large extent, overcome your physical dukkha and mental dukkha.

During meditation, you can overcome pain, stiffness, numbness, itchiness and all kinds of unpleasant physical cessation by observing them very attentively and closely. You need not be afraid of pain, stiffness, numbness because these are your friends who can help you to attain the cessation of suffering. You observe the pain energetically, precisely and closely. The pain may become more severe but you strive to know a more and more clearly until you come to realize the unpleasantness of this painful cessation. When you have realized this, you do not identify this painful cessation with yourself because you know it as separates from yourself. You do not refer to the cessation as 'I' or 'mine' or 'me' or a 'person' or a 'being'. In this way, you can eradicate the wrong view of soul, self, person, and being, as 'I' or a 'you'.

When the root of all kinds of defilements, i.e., sakkaya-ditthi or atta-ditthi (wrong view or false view of a soul or self) has been destroyed you are sure to attain the first Path, Sotapatti Magga. Then, it will be easy for you to proceed with your practice so that you can attain the three higher stages of the Path and Fruition. And this is why I say, unpleasant physical cessation such as pain, stiffness, numbness is your 'God friends' who help you to attain the cessation of suffering. In other words, this numbness or any physical cessation is the key to the door of Nibbana.

So, when you feel pain, you are lucky. Why are you lucky when you have pain? Pain is the most valuable object of meditation because it attracts your 'noting mind' to stay with it for a very long time. In this way, your 'noting mind' can concentrate on it deeply and be absorbed in it. When the mind is completely absorbed in the painful cessation, you are no longer aware of your bodily form or yourself.

What you are realizing is just pain, or painful cessation, or the harmless intensity of the painful cessation. When you realize pain in that way, it means you realize the sabhava-lakkhana of the pain. That means, you are realizing the individual characteristics of the painful cessation (dukkha-vedana). When you proceed with the practice you will be able to realize the common characteristics of the impermanence, suffering and no-soul nature of mental and physical phenomena that will lead you to the cessation of all kinds of sufferings. So you are lucky if you have the pain.

The sixth benefit is the attainment of enlightenment, Magga and Phala (the Path and Fruition). When you have enough effort and time to devote to your mindfulness meditation, you will attain the first Path, Sotapatti Magga. This is the sixth benefit of mindfulness meditation.

The seventh benefit is that you are sure to attain Nibbana, deliverance, and emancipation through your mindfulness meditation. I will repeat: there are seven kinds of benefits in brief, which the Vipassana meditators can gain through his personal experience of Dhamma by means of mindfulness meditation: -

1. Purification from all kinds of defilements.
2. Overcoming sorrow and worry.
3. Overcoming lamentation.
4. Cessation of all kinds of physical suffering (physical dukkha).
5. Cessation of all kinds of mental suffering (mental dukkha).
6. Attainment of enlightenment (Path and Fruition).
7. Attainment of Nibbana.

CONCLUSION

If you are a busy person, meditation can help you to get rid of tension and to find some relaxation. If you are a worried person, meditation can help you to calm you and help you to find either permanent or temporary peace. If you are a person who has endless problems, meditation can help you to develop courage and strength to face and overcome problems. If you are an ignorant person, this meditation will give you a chance to cultivate some knowledge that will be useful and beneficial both to you and to your friends and family. If you really practice this meditation, your emotion will have no chance to make you a fool any more. If you are a wise person, this meditation will take you to supreme enlightenment. Then you will see things as they are, and not as they appear to be. If you are a weak-minded person, this meditation can strengthen your mind to develop your will power in order to overcome your weakness.

In writing this artical, I would like to show my wishes, accordance with canonical texts.

Aniccavata sankhara, uppavayadhammino.

Uppajjitva nirujjanti, tesamvupasamosukho.

All conditioned things are impermanent. It is the arising and perishing. After arising, it perishes. The cessation of arising and perishing (the cessation of suffering) is the bliss (*Nibbana*).

May the light of Dhamma spread through out of the world!

May the darkness of ignorance be dispelled!

May more and more come out of their misery!

May all beings be peaceful, be happy, be liberated from any sufferings!

In the dhammapada of khuddaka nikaya sates as follow;

Arogya parama labha, santuthiparamam dhanam.

Vissasapama nati, Nibbanamparamam sukkham.

Health is the highest gain. Contentment is the greatest wealth. The trusty is the best kinsman. Nibbana is the highest bliss. According to the above the statement, as a result of writing this dissertation:

May I be realization of Nibbana in this very life!

May I be able to achieve the highest gain, prior to Nibbana!

May I be able to get the greatest wealth, prior to Nibbana!

May I be able to complete the best kinsman, prior to Nibbana!

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