

“THE JHANAS IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM” JHANAM — Meditation, Abstraction of the Mind

Trance-Samadhi

—P.G. Yogi

When told that it is unbesetting for one who has renounced the world to spend his life exhorting other men. The Buddha replied:—

Whatever the apparent cause, Sakka, Whereby,
Man come to dwell together none doth fit,
The Wise Man's case, compassion moves his mind,
And if, with mind thus satisfied, he spends
His life instructing other men, yet he,
Thereby is nowise bound as by a Yoke.
Compassion moveth him and sympathy.

Samyutta-Nikaya— 1, 206.

Jana is a religious exercise productive of the highest spiritual advantage, leading after death to rebirth in one of the Brahma heavens, and forming the principal means of entrance into the four paths. The four Jhanas are four stages of mystic meditation, whereby the believer's mind is purged from all earthly emotions, and detached as it were from the body, which remains plunged in a profound trance.

The priest desirous of practising jhana retires to some secluded spot, seats himself cross-legged, and shutting out the world, concentrates his mind upon a single thought. Gradually his soul becomes filled with a supernatural ecstasy and serenity, while his mind still reasons upon and investigates the subject chosen for contemplation,; this is the first Jhana, still fixing his thoughts upon the same subjects, he then frees his mind from reasoning and investigation, while the ecstasy and serenity remain, and this is the second Jhana. Next, his thoughts still fixed as before, he divests himself of ecstasy, and attains the third Jhana, which is a state of tranquil serenity. Lastly, he passes to the fourth Jhana, in which the mind exalted and purified, is indifferent to all emotions, alike of pleasure and of pain. The following is the full text of the four Jhanas:— *Idh' avuso bhikkhu viviec eva kamehe*

vivieca akusialahi dhammehi savi takkam savicaram vivekajam pitisukham pathamajhanam upasampajja viharati: vitakkavieacranam uupasama ajjhantam samapasadanam cetase ekodibhavam avitakkam avicaram samadhijam pitisukham dutiyajjhanam upasampajjam viharati;

They are summarised thus: vitakkavicara pttisukhekaggatasahitam pathama, Pitisukhekaggatasahitam dutiyajjhanam, sukhekaggatasahitam tatiya jghanam, upekhekaggata Sahitam catu tthajjhanam.

Each of the first three Jhanas is subdivided in to three, the inferior, the medial, and the perfect contemplation (Pathamajjhanam Parittam, Pathama jghanam majjhima, Pathama jghanam Panttam dutiyajjhanam parittam, and so on).

These who have exercised Jhana are reborn after death in one of the first eleven Rupa Brahma heavens, the particular heaven being determined by the degree of Jhana attained. These who have only reached the initial contemplations of the first Jhana are reborn the *Brahma parisajja heaven*, the medial contemplations of the same Jhana secures admission to the Brahamapurohita heaven, while the perfect contemplation is an introduction to the Mahabrahma heaven. Thus the three lowest *rupabrahmalokas* are peopled by those who have attain the first Jhanas. The next three are peopled by those who have attained the second Jhana, the next three by these who have attained the third Jhana, and the tenth and eleventh (*Vehapphala* and *Assannasatta*) by these who have attained the fourth Jhana. The remaining five Rupabrahmalokas are peopled by these how have entered the third path— (*Anagamimagga*, see *Bhumi*).

The attainments of the fourth Jhana gives the power of working miracles (Siddhi) (सिद्धी). Five Jhanas are frequently mentioned; they are thus summarised:— *vitakkavicara pitisukhekaggatasahitam pathamajjhanam, vicarapitisukhekaggata sahitam dutiyajjhanam pitisukhekaggatasahitam tatiyajjhanam, sukhekaggatasahitam catutthajjhanam, upekhekaggatasahitam pancamajjhanam.*

It will be seen than they differ in no essential respect from the four Jhanas, but are merely a more gradual attainment of the same mystic state, the original second Jhana being separated into two stages:— *Parihinajhane*, one who has fallen away from Jhana, that is who has been prematurely roused from the sate of mental absorption while practising this rite (Dh 254):— *Jhanabhinna*, supernatural power or Siddhi obtained by the exercise of Jhana (Dh. 116). *Catujjropanea-kajhanani*, the four and the five Jhanas (ALW. 1.80) *Jhanam nibhatteti* to produce or enter upon mystic meditation (Dh. 254, Dh. 67 Alshaster's Wheel of the Law, 192-195, and in Hardg's legends and theories of the Buddhists 178-180, see Arammanam, *Brakmaloko, Kasinam, Samapatti, Kammatthanam.*) (SAMDHI-Agreement, peace, reconciliation; tranquillity, self-concentration”.

“Ab. 155, 858, Dh. 26, 44, 66, Dh. 311, Dh. 375, clam”).

The word Samadhi, best rendered by concentration, is the most important term in the doctrine of meditation in Buddhism. It is one of the original terms used by the Buddha himself; for it occurs in his first Sermon. It is there used in the sense of “Samma Samadhi”,— Right concentration. Samadhi from the root “Sam-a-dha” “to put together”, “to concentrate”, refers to a certain state of mind. In a technical sense it signifies both the state of mind and the method designed to induce that state.

In the dialogue, (Majjhima Nikkaya 301) between the sister Dhammadinna and the devotee Visaka, Samadhi is discussed both as a state of mind and method of mental training. Visaka asked:- “what is Samadhi?” the sister replied:- “Samadhi is cittaassa ekaggata”

Literally one pointedness of mind. “What induces it?” The four applications of mindfulness (Satipatthana), induce it. “What are its requisites”. “What are the culture of it?” “Cultivation and development of these-self-same principles-mindfulness and supreme efforts, are the culture of it”.

In this discussion Samadhi, as a mental state, is defined as “Cittassaekaggata”, and this appears to be the first definition of the term of the Suttas. In the Abhidhamma this definition is repeated and elaborated with a number of words that are very similar indeed almost synonymous. “*Dhammsangani* defines “Cittasaaekaggata”, as follows:- Ya cittaassa thini santhiti, avattbiti, avisahano, avikkhepo, avisahatamanasata, “Samatho, Samadhi-indriyam, Samadhibalam, Samma Samadhi”, (Dh. 10) which means “stability, steadiness and steadfastness of mind, absence of scattering and distraction, un-scattered mentality, tranquility, the faculty of and the power of concentration, Right concentration”. (Cf. p. 157). All these terms are united in the one general sense of Samadhi-that is “Cittassa ekaggata”, Buddhaghosa there’s comment thereon says “Cittassa ekaggabhavo cittekkaggata, Samadissa etam nama”. “One pointedness of mind is cittekkaggata and it is the name of Samadhi”. (ASL. 118).

In this *Visuddhimagga* Buddhaghosa gives the same definition, but makes use of one more word. The special word which sheds more light upon the meaning is “Kusala-cittekkaggata, that is the say, one-pointedness of mind is the collected state of moral consciousness. In *Atthaslini* it is said “Kusala-samadhi”. concentration of moral consciousness.

In Buddhist teaching therefore, Samadhi is to be understood as a concentrated state of pure mind, a necessary preliminary to the spiritual progress towards Arhatship, or final deliverance. The outstanding characteristic of this state is the

absence of mental wandering and agitation and it is the dominant mental factor in the process of the elimination of sensory impression of lower mind. The unification of the state of mind that rises with it, is its essential function. Tranquility and knowledge are its manifestation.

In its general characteristic it is described as twofold:— The concentration or collectedness of any kind of pure thoughts, and the concentration which is transmuted into the *Jhānic* or ecstatic state. The former implies collectedness, in the sense of concentration of mental process upon a single idea, which must always be of a moral nature; the later signifies the super-normal state of consciousness, which has passed from the ordinary state to the state of *Jhāna* where there is no discrimination between subject and object, and this is what is actually implied by *Samādhi* in Buddhist meditation.

From the Buddhist psychological point of view *Samādhi* is regarded as the positive and most active factor of the spiritually developed mind, for it must always include the virtues of morality, universal love, compassion, etc. and is associated with the psychological principles of psychic powers and self-enlightenment. *Samādhi* is therefore, opposed to all passive, inactive states of mind, which are considered inimical and capable of proving a hindrance to self-enlightenment. It is only through the power of *Samādhi* that the mind becomes apt. fit and ready to work for higher knowledge and psychic powers; and cultivation of *Samādhi* is therefore, an essential to the attainment of spiritual happiness and full knowledge. *Samādhi* also implies the method, or system, of meditation which leads to a well balanced, tranquil state of mind; and in this connection it is known as “*Samādhi*” or *Samatha-Bhavana* which precedes *Vipassana*, the cultivation of insight.

The explanation given by the sister *Dhammdinna*, quoted above, refers to the method of *Samādhi* as *Bhavana* of the cultivation of mindfulness and supreme efforts, which are respectively the two principles of Right Effort and Right Mindfulness in the eight fold path of which Right *Samādhi*-Concentration is the culmination. When Right Effort, which means well directed mental and physical energy, is cultivated with Right Mindfulness, well established *Samādhi* is the result: For Right Effort supports *Samādhi*, in the exercise of meditation preventing it from sinking into a state of mental passivity. Right Mindfulness fortifies the mind with good qualities, and act as the guiding principle that keeps the mind alert and steady in the *Samādhi* state, not permitting it to lapse into a subconscious condition. These two principles join forces to produce Right Concentration; and their development embraces the whole field of meditation common to both systems, *Samādhi* and *Vipassana*.

But when the term *Samādhi* is used with reference to the method, it must be understood to mean the system of meditation that tends to *Samādhi* in the pre-

liminary stage, that is to say, before the attainment of Vipassana. From what has been said is clear that Samadhi means a state of mind which is to be developed by systematic training of mind. This training inculcates the habit of mental concentration, which results in spiritual progress experienced in and through the human organism, to a point at which self illumination supervenes.

Meditation has a very important place in India life. It is so because *Moksha* is the only ultimate objective of the lives of the Indian people. *Moksha* cannot be attained without meditation. Hence all the Indian philosophies have there distinct meditation systems. In the Buddhist stream mainly there are three meditation systems named as:— “Theravada Naya”, “Paramita Naya”, and “Mantra Naya”. I would seek to explain here in the meditation system according to Sthavira Naya. In this *Naya* lots of comprehensive literature and various Acharya systems are available.

The subject of the aforesaid meditation is very serious, mirate and comprehensive for knowledging its different minute aspects understanding them, and successful subjugation of the Caprice of self after realizing the constraints of its limitations, there is great need of meditation in each and every person’s life. I seriously feel a great need for this.

In my article, I have made an attempt to establish one aspect of “*Sthavira Naya*”. I just hope this article will create a spiritual stir in the minds of those who have faith in this science. The AWAKENED ONE— THE BUDDHA SAID:

“Here, O Monks, a disciple lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of unselfish joy, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole “*With Metta*”, wide world, above, below, around, everywhere and equally, he continues to pervade with a heart of unselfish joy, abundant, grown great, measureless, without hostility or ill-will.”