

Chapter 1: Introduction to Kammatthana

What is Kammatthana?

Kammatthana is a collective term for a category of spiritual practice in Buddhism. The category of Kammatthana comprises Kammatthana itself and the Yogavacara. The Kammatthana (or subject of meditation) refers to the object of contemplation, which are the various mental states (aromas). The Yogavacara is the contemplator, which includes mindfulness (sati), clear comprehension (sampajanna), and effort (viriya). Therefore, training in Kammatthana, from a doctrinal perspective, means using mindfulness and clear comprehension to carefully contemplate incoming mental states to prevent evil from arising. It is the diligent effort to be mindful of wholesome states and to maintain them without letting them decline.

When we hear the word "Kammatthana," we often associate it with Samadhi (meditative concentration) or sitting with our eyes closed and repeating a mantra. This is seen as an action distinct from giving (dana) or observing precepts (sila). However, according to the Pali texts, as interpreted in the Mula-tika, the word "Kammatthana" is defined as:

Kammeva visesadhigamanassa thananti Kammatthana

This translates to: "The work that is a cause for the attainment of special virtues is called 'Kammatthana.'"

The cause for the attainment of these special virtues does not arise merely from sitting with one's eyes closed and chanting. It involves many other components and details. Therefore, our common understanding of Kammatthana remains vague and far from its true meaning.

To purify the mind, it needs something harmless to rely on. This support can be of two types: it can be something outside the body-mind system, or something within the body-mind system. Things outside the body-mind system might be created objects or elements from the environment, such as a kasina disk, a corpse, or even the food we eat every day. Things from within the body-mind system include bodily postures and thoughts, among others. All of these can be used as components for training the mind, which is what is called Kammatthana (Chin Vinaya M.P.P., n.d.: 2).

Practicing Kammatthana is a form of intentional action, but it is solely on the side of wholesome deeds (kusala) because it is not motivated by a desire for sensual pleasures. Therefore, the practice of Kammatthana is not dependent on worldly conditions (lokadhamma) or sensual pleasures. Its fundamental goal is to calm the mind from the hindrances (nivarana), such as craving, ill-will, laziness, restlessness, and doubt. A mind calmed from these hindrances can easily access wisdom. Since Buddhism is a religion of practice (Kiriyaavada) and effort (Viriyavada) (Phra Maha Boonchit Sudproang: 1993), this effort is based on four key beliefs (Saddha 4): belief in actions or deeds (Kammasaddha), belief in the results of deeds (Vipakasaddha), belief in the ownership of one's own deeds (Kammasaktasaddha), and belief in the Buddha's enlightenment (Tathagata Bodhisaddha).

Therefore, "Karma" is a crucial word in Buddhist scriptures used to explain the Buddhist concept of the world and life. It is related to terms like wholesome (kusala), unwholesome (akusala), merit (bun), sin (bap), spiritual destiny (wasana), and perfection (baramee) (Phra Methee Thammaporn, "Karma" in: Kam: The Traces of Thai Thought and Beliefs, 1994: 1).

Actions in general have three characteristics based on the channels through which they are expressed: bodily action (kayakamma), verbal action (vacikamma), and mental action (manokamma). These can be both wholesome and unwholesome. Most are influenced by the five senses and the eight worldly conditions, which motivate either wholesome or unwholesome actions. For example, a person with the intention of taking someone else's property (akusala manokamma) may, driven by greed, act to snatch or take it without permission (akusala kayakamma). The other person's property, which is a concrete object, thus becomes the cause for these actions.

In summary, the practice of Kammatthana is a type of wholesome deed, specifically a mental deed (manokamma). It differs from ordinary deeds because its goal is the cessation of birth and suffering, and a final end to rebirth. Since the mind needs an object to arise and is naturally restless, unable to remain still for contemplation even for a moment, it needs a skillful means (upaya) to reduce this restlessness. This is achieved by finding something harmless for the mind to rely on, which is the origin of the practice called Kammatthana.

On Meditation Practice

These skillful means are separated into two types:

A skillful means for calming the mind: This method relies on repeating certain phrases and intentionally creating a concept or image associated with those words. The concepts, thoughts, or mental images we create are all components of the calmness known as Samatha meditation.

A skillful means for developing wisdom: This method relies on existing awareness, noticing the contact at the six sense doors and the mental phenomena that occur when the body is stimulated. By diligently following this process of perception, distracting thoughts are cut off and cannot intrude. This practice does not allow for the formation of subsequent concepts, images, or thoughts. It is a direct and immediate awareness of the process as it unfolds. This lack of mental distortion is the essence of Vipassana meditation.

Because meditation is a skillful means arising from the intentional creation of concepts, or the intentional reception of sensations without concepts, the mental objects used are unlike the ordinary mental states we experience in daily life. The mental images and sensations of awareness are results of this intention and are categorized as special mental objects with their own specific principles and methods for each type of meditation. Examples include the 40 created concepts or images in Samatha meditation or the awareness of mind and body from Vipassana meditation, such as the five aggregates and sense bases.

These special mental objects and specific methods are not things that arise by chance or can be performed simply because they are popular. They require an understanding of their causes and principles to achieve the desired results. Therefore, having a skilled meditation teacher, knowing the student's temperament, being in a peaceful location, receiving both instruction and practice, and dedicating time to study and practice are all crucial components for developing meditation.

The Importance of Meditation

Suffering is something no one wants in life. Buddhism categorizes suffering into two types: innate suffering and contingent suffering.

Innate suffering refers to the suffering that comes with life itself: birth, old age, sickness, and death. No one can escape this suffering.

Contingent suffering includes sorrow, lamentation, unfulfilled desires, and separation from loved ones. These are temporary sufferings that arise between birth, old age, and death. While they can be partially alleviated, they cannot be completely eliminated.

Societies of the past faced birth, old age, sickness, and death, and despite modern technological advancements, those technologies still cannot solve the fundamental problem of having to grow old and die.

Buddhism does not teach or compel people to abandon society. It doesn't hinder progress or try to stop technological leaps as many people believe. In reality, whether technology exists or not, the problem of suffering does not decrease or increase. Technology has both benefits and drawbacks, depending on the user.

Religion's purpose is to serve as a warning sign for the dangers humanity faces. This danger exists everywhere, especially in our own thoughts, which humans often don't see or believe are truly dangerous. A narrow perspective can lead people to see only the convenient side of technology and to use modern progress to justify their own ideas, leading them to act on those ideas while ignoring the problems that will follow.

Religion's duty is to reveal the truth about the world and life, and to guide people to live with prudence and wisdom, causing the least amount of trouble. It helps humans understand life and its problems, bringing discipline to the mind and acceptance of reason. This allows people to find a way out of conflict and to live appropriately in a society full of problems.

The Purpose of Kammatthana

Meditation practice is a fundamental activity in Buddhism, serving as a basis for affirming the cycle of reincarnation. While the ultimate goal is to attain special virtues like Magga, Phala, and Nibbana, the earnest process of uprooting defilements, cravings, obsessions, and latent tendencies will not truly begin unless the mind has gone through the stage of accepting its own long history of reincarnation or if it still has doubts about past, present, and future existences.

The danger of existence (bhava) comes from the repetitive cycle of life's mixture of happiness and suffering, which fluctuates according to conditions, not according to one's own desires. Seeing this danger is crucial as it motivates the person to change their way of life from one driven by cravings to a stable path of mindfulness and clear comprehension, following the Noble Eightfold Path.

The fear of this danger is what causes us to change our way of thinking and our desires. This is the starting point of Buddhism. Giving and observing precepts do not help one feel this fear. A person who is ready to practice meditation must first see the danger of the cycle of rebirth (samsara) before they will seek out the practice. However, some practices may lead to great happiness, which does not help one see the danger of samsara. This does not align with Buddhism. The

foundational understanding of the danger of samsara is gained through study first, and only then does one turn to practice (Phra Maha Narongsak Thitayano, Interview).

Proving reincarnation is not merely about calming the mind and seeing heaven and hell or fantasizing about Nibbana as a city of jewels. Accepting the existence of heaven and hell is useful for building faith to do good and avoid evil, for the sake of happiness in this life and the next. However, it cannot change the underlying beliefs and views that lie dormant in one's character. Therefore, the desire for rebirth remains, and one never feels that samsara is a real danger. Facing the constant cycle of birth and death requires profound understanding and spiritual practice. This is where the two methods, Samatha and Vipassana, come in.

The various methods of both Samatha and Vipassana are skillful means to train the observation of the mind as it encounters different mental objects. The goal of this observation is the ability to be mindful of one's thoughts and feelings before acting them out through body or speech. We need to understand the connection between old feelings (the Vipaka Vatta, or karmic-result cycle) that lead to new feelings (the Kilesa Vatta, or defilement cycle), which in turn cause new actions (the Kamma Vatta, or action cycle). We must understand that karma is merely a result of past actions; no one can choose to only receive good results or go back to change past actions. Karma itself is neither good nor bad; it simply results and then ceases. However, the defilements obscure this cessation and create the illusion that things are permanent, either through a continuous stream of thoughts or through the belief in a fixed self. This attachment and delusion is what creates new karma as we try to change the external world to suit our desires.

The problematic cycle of defilements-actions-results (Kilesa-Kamma-Vipaka) that causes endless reincarnation is hidden right at the juncture of our present thoughts and feelings.

If one understands the purpose and is able to practice meditation as laid out by the Buddha, the resulting religious experience will inspire genuine faith. This is not faith that comes from simply hearing and following others, but a steadfast faith in the present reality. One will know what is of supreme value in Buddhism and what is not, and will find opportunities to repay the Dharma with respect and gratitude.

Buddhists who wish to study Buddhism should study the Tripitaka, Commentaries, and Sub-commentaries with knowledgeable and qualified teachers. Only then will they gain a true understanding and a proper, reasoned basis for practice. If one only enjoys listening to public lectures, sermons, or discussions, they will not gain this profound knowledge. Such activities only bring temporary peace and a little bit of knowledge (Phra Saddhamajotiga 2510: 55).

Samatha Meditation

Samatha and Vipassana are separate terms only for academic purposes, to show the subtle levels of the mind. In practice, they cannot be completely separated because they are interdependent. Or it can be said that while they are separate concepts, they are interconnected in practice.

For Samatha meditation, the "object of meditation" is something for the mind to fixate on or cling to. The things that can be used for this purpose are numerous;

almost anything can be a meditation object. According to the principles taught by the Buddha, there are 40 such objects, known as the 40 Kammatthana topics.

To learn to practice these 40 methods, the practitioner or teacher should first understand their own or their student's temperament. If one is unsure which of the six temperaments is most dominant, one can choose a neutral Kammatthana that suits all temperaments. The relationship between meditation topics and temperaments is very important. Practicing a method that does not suit one's temperament will hinder progress and greatly delay reaching the ultimate goal of Nibbana, leading to continued reincarnation.

The 40 Kammatthana topics are divided into 7 categories:

Kasina Kammatthana: 10 types

Asubha Kammatthana: 10 types

Anussati Kammatthana: 10 types

Brahma Vihara Kammatthana: 4 types

Arupa Kammatthana: 4 types

Ahare Patikula Sanna: 1 type

Catudhatu Vavatthana: 1 type

These 7 categories total exactly 40 topics.

Practitioners—whether seeking mundane jhana or the ultimate fruit of Nibbana—should understand the mind's states, mental objects, or temperaments. This is beneficial for rapidly letting go of defilements, craving, and attachment. When

concentration becomes stable, insight knowledge will become clear, and the fruit of Nibbana will be quickly realized.

1. The 10 Kasina Kammatthana

The word Kasina means "to stare at" and refers to a coarse mental object used to make an impression on the mind. The goal is for the mind to fixate on one of the 10 Kasina topics, achieving a single-pointed focus. This allows the mind to become still and not scatter. These objects are easy for the mind to grasp and can lead to the attainment of all jhanas, up to the fourth jhana. The 10 Kasina topics are the foundation for the higher spiritual attainments (Abhinna Samapatti). They are divided into two groups:

Group 1: Universal Kasinas (6 types)

These six Kasinas are suitable for people of all temperaments and mental dispositions:

Pathavi Kasina: Focus the mind on the earth. Meditate on an image of earth while repeating the mantra: Pathavi Kasinam, Pathavi Kasinam...

Tejo Kasina: Focus the mind on fire. Meditate on an image of fire while repeating the mantra: Tejo Kasinam, Tejo Kasinam...

Vayo Kasina: Focus the mind on the wind. Meditate on an image of the wind while repeating the mantra: Vayo Kasinam, Vayo Kasinam...

Akasa Kasina: Focus the mind on space. Meditate on an image of space while repeating the mantra: Akasa Kasinam, Akasa Kasinam...

Aloka Kasina: Focus the mind on light. Meditate on an image of light while repeating the mantra: Aloka Kasinam, Aloka Kasinam...

Apo Kasina: Focus the mind on water. Meditate on an image of water while repeating the mantra: Apo Kasinam, Apo Kasinam...

Choose one of these Kasinas and practice until you reach the 4th or 5th jhana. Once you achieve this, the other Kasinas will be easy to master.

Group 2: Temperament-Specific Kasinas (4 types)

These four Kasinas are particularly suitable for people with an angry temperament (Dosacarita):

Lohita Kasina: Focus on a red Kasina or a red mental image, such as red flowers, red blood, or a red cloth. Visualize the color red while repeating the mantra: Lohita Kasinam, Lohita Kasinam...

Nila Kasina: Look at something green, like a leaf or grass. Then, close your eyes and focus on the green image while repeating the mantra: Nila Kasinam, Nila Kasinam...

Pita Kasina: Focus the mind on anything yellow while repeating the mantra: Pita Kasinam, Pita Kasinam...

Odata Kasina: Look at anything white you prefer. Then, close your eyes and focus on the white image while repeating the mantra: Odata Kasinam, Odata Kasinam...

When the mind becomes one-pointed with the Kasina, without distraction, and you lose awareness of your breathing, the Kasina image becomes clear. This state is said to be the 4th jhana. When you reach the 5th jhana, the mind becomes equanimous and rests peacefully with the Kasina image it is focused on.

2. The 10 Asubha Kammatthana

Asubha Kammatthana was recommended by the Lord Buddha for individuals who are preoccupied with beauty or have a lustful temperament (Ragacarita). The purpose of this practice is to destroy the defilement of being attached to the illusion that our bodies, homes, and the world are beautiful. If a practitioner contemplates Asubha meditation until their mind becomes one-pointed (Ekaggatarama) and achieves the 4th jhana, it can become a supporting condition for easily reaching the state of a Non-returner (Anagami) and rapidly attaining the final stage of enlightenment (Arahantship).

Asubha Kammatthana involves contemplating a human or animal corpse in ten different stages, typically within ten days of death:

Kammatthana 11 to 20 are as follows:

Uddhumataka Asubha (Day 1 after death): The corpse becomes stiff and cold, lacking the fire and wind elements.

Vinilaka Asubha (Day 2 after death): The corpse begins to swell and turns a greenish color.

Vipubbaka Asubha (Day 3 after death): The corpse swells further and develops a foul, pus-filled odor.

Vicchiddaka Asubha (Day 4 after death): The corpse's skin and flesh begin to rupture. The tongue protrudes, and blood and pus flow from the body as the flesh separates.

Vikkhayita Asubha (Day 5 after death): The corpse's limbs are scattered and separated, and the putrid smell intensifies.

Vikkitaka Asubha (Day 6 after death): The decaying corpse is scattered into pieces and smells foul.

Hatavikkhitaka Asubha (Day 7 after death): Maggots, worms, and ants crawl and eat the corpse.

Lohita Asubha (Day 8 after death): Little of the corpse remains, but the smell is intense. It is a messy mixture of blood, pus, and rotting flesh.

Puluvaka Asubha (Day 9 after death): The remaining pieces of the corpse are scattered and emit an unbearable odor.

Atthika Asubha (Day 10 after death): Only teeth and bones remain, such as limbs and a skull. The foul smell is still strong. The face is gone, eaten away by worms and insects, which swarm around the stench.

Practicing Asubha meditation doesn't mean going to a hospital or a cemetery to stare at corpses. Instead, you use your memory of a corpse and reflect on it, realizing that your own body, though still breathing and speaking, is no different from that corpse. Our bodies are constantly decaying, requiring us to shower, wash our faces, and brush our teeth daily to remove the stench. We must shampoo our hair almost every day to keep our heads from smelling.

Let your mind constantly know that our bodies and everyone else's are impure and foul-smelling. Humans and animals are no different; they smell the same and share the same fate of birth, old age, sickness, and death. Constantly thinking in this way is what is meant by the mind maintaining the jhana state in Asubha

meditation. If you or someone else is sick, you seek medical treatment to alleviate the suffering, but you must always keep in mind that we are all just talking, walking corpses. There is no need for such deep attachment. When the mind releases attachment to our own bodies and others', it becomes light and comfortable, free from anxiety. The death of anyone becomes an ordinary event because we are all just walking, talking corpses. When the mind leaves the body, it's called a dead corpse.

The 10 Anussati Kammatthana

Anussati means to constantly recollect or reflect. These 10 Anussati topics are suitable for practitioners with a faithful temperament (Saddhacarita). They are:

Buddhanussati: Recollection of the Buddha

Dhammanussati: Recollection of the Dhamma

Sanghanussati: Recollection of the Sangha

Silanussati: Recollection of precepts

Caganussati: Recollection of generosity

Devatanussati: Recollection of devas (celestial beings)

For those with a thoughtful temperament (Buddhacarita), who need to prove things for themselves before believing, the following two topics are recommended:

Marananussati: Recollection of death

Upasamanussati: Recollection of the peaceful happiness of Nibbana

For those with a tendency to worry and overthink everything, there is a suitable meditation topic:

Anapanasati (mindfulness of breathing): The mind follows and is aware of the breath as it enters and leaves. Instead of worrying about problems all over the world, the mind follows its own breath, which leads to wholesome mental states, and brings about peace and comfort, both physically and mentally.

For those who are attracted to beauty, in addition to the ten Kasina and ten Asubha meditations, there is also:

Kayagatasati Kammatthana (mindfulness of the body): This involves contemplating the body as it truly is—full of nothing but foul-smelling and impure things, from oneself and others. No one is truly beautiful; everyone is dirty.

The 10 Anussati (Recollections) Taught by the Buddha

Buddhanussati Kammatthana: This is the recollection of the Lord Buddha's virtues: his great wisdom, his purity, and his great compassion in teaching beings to escape the cycle of rebirth and aim for Nibbana as the ultimate goal for our minds. You can use any of these mantras: Buddhho, Itisugato, Namō Buddhaya, Sammā Araham, or Nama Phatha. All of them are correct. Do not form factions or separate into different schools, such as the Buddhho school or the Sammā Araham school, as this is incorrect. All schools are disciples of the Tathagata. We practice to reduce and eliminate our sense of self. Therefore, all teachers and masters, please ensure that your students understand not to be attached to one school or another, or

one lineage or another. This is not the purpose of the Lord Buddha. If you remain attached to a school or a teacher, and to a specific mantra, you will continue to suffer in the cycle of rebirth for a long time before you truly understand the Buddha's teachings. By constantly reflecting on his wisdom, purity, and great compassion, your mind will soon become wise, pure, and peaceful. Defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion will automatically disappear. Recalling the image of the Buddha is also a good practice, as it can act as a Kasina, helping the mind to reach the 4th jhana. When the image of the Buddha in your mind becomes crystal clear, your mind will enter the 4th jhana, feeling happy and refreshed, with sharp wisdom that can quickly cut off defilements, cravings, and ignorance. This can lead to rapid Arahantship. Buddhanussati is the quickest and easiest meditation. When we constantly reflect on the Buddha's virtues, our mind becomes a "Buddha mind," an Arahant's mind, just as the Tathagata taught. This is excellent and can be proven by practicing the path to liberation as described in the Visuddhimagga, which includes 40 methods, plus the Maha Satipatthana Sutta, for a total of 41 paths. All of them can lead to Arahantship, as they all contain morality (sila), concentration (samadhi), and wisdom (panya). All methods are equally good, depending on the practitioner's temperament.

Dhammanussati Kammatthana: This is the recollection of the virtues of the Dhamma. The Dhamma's teachings include prohibitions (the five precepts) and instructions (to have loving-kindness and compassion, to give and practice meditation). The Dhamma teaches us to contemplate that everything in this world is impermanent. Everything we acquire—money, homes, cars, clothes—comes with suffering and is subject to decay and change. Our bodies are also constantly afflicted with disease and are not permanent. Soon, we will all die. Everything

that is born will eventually die; this is a law of nature beyond anyone's control. Even the Buddha's own body was subject to this law. Our own bodies are constantly dying—we die from being a child to become an adult, then an old person. There is nothing truly good in them. By thinking this way, you are respecting the Dhamma. You can choose any of the 40 meditation topics or the Mahā Satipatthana Sutta; all are equally good. The 84,000 sections of the Dhamma taught by the Buddha can be summarized into three parts:

Adisīla (higher morality) makes one a Sotapanna.

Adicitta (higher mind/concentration) with meditation practice makes one an Anagami, which includes the 4th jhana.

Adipaññā (higher wisdom) makes the mind free from attachment to one's own body, leading to Arahantship.

This wisdom is supreme and is the best knowledge there is. The knowledge of Nibbana taught by the Buddha can eliminate all mental and physical suffering, both in this life and after death. The practitioner can attain happiness in the heavens, the Brahma worlds, and finally Nibbana, according to their dedicated practice. The Dhamma is something that must be personally experienced (paccattam).

ออกสอบถึงตรงนี้

Sanghanussati Kammatthana: This is the recollection of the virtues of the Noble Sangha—the Buddha's disciples who practiced the Dhamma correctly and sincerely, cutting off defilements like greed, hatred, and delusion, and heading straight for Nibbana. They have passed down the teachings to later generations,

helping them understand the Vinaya (morality), the Sutta Pitaka (concentration), and the Abhidhamma Pitaka (wisdom). Our faith in the Noble Sangha gives us the wholesome power of wisdom. The joyous confidence and appreciation for the merits of all Noble Monks, from the Buddha's time to the present, allows our minds to easily attain the same fruits of practice. This is known as Saddhāvimutti—liberation of the mind from defilements, cravings, and attachments through sincere faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Noble Sangha.

Sīlanussati Kammamattana: This is the mindful recollection of the virtues of keeping the five precepts. The five precepts close the doors to hell, the realms of ghosts, demons, and animals. Those who do not commit these five wrong actions—not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct with others' spouses or children, not lying, and not using intoxicants—are protected. For laypeople, this includes not gambling or betting. A lay follower should constantly reflect on the five precepts and not even think about violating them. If one has violated a precept in the past, the Buddha taught that one should resolve to do good, keep the five precepts completely, and ask for forgiveness from the Triple Gem every day, without dwelling on past wrongs. By diligently practicing mindfulness of the five precepts in the present, your mind will be a clean and clear foundation with Nibbana as its ultimate destination. Constantly reflecting on the five precepts will lead to jhana, making the mind wise and peaceful. Before death, these precepts will be a great bridge that allows the mind to enter a meditative state, serving as a foundation for insight knowledge (Vipassana Ñāna). This insight allows one to see the suffering in having a body and the impurities of the five aggregates, leading to a mind of sincere faith that ultimately reaches Nibbana. Recollecting precepts can lead to Appanā Samādhi, or absorption concentration (the jhana state).

Laypeople should reflect on the five precepts, those in the monastery on the eight precepts, and novices on the ten precepts, while monks have 227 and nuns have 311. The benefits of morality are a life free from trouble, without enemies, and filled with love. One's good reputation spreads in all directions. One becomes brave and fearless. When death is near, the mind is radiant and joyful because of one's complete morality. Past karma cannot make the mind impure, and one will not be reborn in the lower realms. One will at least be reborn in heaven, and at best, one will enjoy happiness in Nibbana.

Cāgānussati Kammattana: The Buddha taught us to donate for the support of the religion and to help the poor. This is a sacrifice that eliminates the defilement of greed and stinginess. Give with willingness, respect, and a humble demeanor. Feel a sense of joy and satisfaction after you have given, regardless of who the recipient is, because the Buddha praised this as a virtuous act. Giving brings happiness because the recipient is relieved of their suffering. Giving destroys greed, a defilement that hinders our path to Nibbana. When we cut off this major root of defilement, we feel a sense of lightness, as only two major defilements remain: hatred and delusion. Hatred can be cut off with loving-kindness and forgiveness. Delusion can be cut off by seeing that everything will be destroyed and will eventually die. This helps the mind stop clinging to and attaching itself to things that are worthless and temporary illusions. Clinging to these things brings suffering. A person who is happy to give will have a mind filled with loving-kindness. Hatred and delusion will not bother them, which helps the mind attain Upacāra Samādhī (access concentration). If one continues to practice with insight, seeing that everything will be destroyed and die, one can attain the fruits of the path in an unexpected way.

Kammatthana 26: Devatanussati Kammatthana

The word Deva means "a being with a beautiful and noble mind." This meditation is about recollecting the virtues of celestial beings and Brahma gods. When they were human, they possessed Hiri (a sense of shame or a moral conscience) and Ottappa (a sense of fear or dread of the consequences of their actions). They kept the five precepts and refrained from evil deeds in body, speech, and mind. They had loving-kindness and compassion, gave charity, worshiped and chanted, and donated to the poor.

In the time of the Buddha, many celestial beings would come to worship and listen to his sermons. They would shower him with celestial flowers and food as an offering. They would also come to ask the Buddha questions about the Dhamma. The Buddha often spoke about the devas to his disciples. Buddhism acknowledges and respects the virtue of these celestial and Brahma beings, many of whom are Noble Ones (Ariya) and Arahants. They have accumulated far more merit than humans. They do not have to carry the burden of the five aggregates, nor do they suffer from illness or old age like humans. The devas and Brahmas are much happier than humans.

The Buddha taught that there are three types of devas, categorized by their level of merit:

Type 1: Kamavacara Devas

These are devas of the sense-desire realm, starting from Bhumma Devas (earth deities), who are caretakers of places, and Rukkha Devas (tree deities), who reside in trees with a trunk at least one inch in diameter. Then come the Akasa Devas

(sky deities) in the Cātumahārājika heaven, the Tavatimsa heaven, the Tusita heaven, the Nimmanarati heaven, and the sixth level, the Paranimmita-vasavatti heaven.

Type 2: Rupavacara Brahmas

These are the 16 levels of Form-realm Brahmas, for those who attained jhana 1 through 4 before they died. When their bodies pass away, their minds are reborn in these Brahma realms according to the level of jhana they reached. The 16 Rupavacara Brahma realms are named as follows:

Brahma Parisajja

Brahma Purohita

Maha Brahmas

Parittābha

Appamāṇābha

Abhassara

Parittasubha

Appamāṇasubha

Subhakinha

Vehapphala

Asaññīsatta

Aviha

Atappa

Sudassa

Sudassī

Akanittha

There are also Arupavacara Brahmas (Formless Brahmas), four realms for those who have no physical form but experience mental pleasure. They mistakenly believe that a physical form is the cause of change and decay, so they desire only a mental existence. This is a misunderstanding, a form of ignorance (avijja), believing that the four Arupa Brahma realms are the ultimate happiness.

Akasanancayatana Brahma: The mind, in jhana, is fixed on the emptiness of space. When they die, their mind is reborn in this realm because they mistakenly believe this jhana is the highest state and that they have overcome defilements.

Viññananancayatana Brahma: The mind is focused on consciousness itself.

Akiñcaññayatana Brahma: The mind is focused on nothingness, thinking that nothing remains.

Nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana Brahma: The mind is in the eighth jhana, a state of neither perception nor non-perception. They believe that memory and perception are the cause of suffering.

The Suddhavaśa realms, from 12 to 16, are for Noble Ones who will not be reborn as humans again.

Type 3: Visuddhideva

These are celestial beings without defilements, cravings, attachment, ignorance, or unwholesome karma. Their minds are those of Arahants, many millions of

them, along with the minds of Paccekabuddhas and countless Buddhas. Their minds are pure and reside in the blissful, sublime realm of Nibbana.

Nibbana has two types:

Saupadisesa Nibbana: The mind is pure, an Arahant's mind, but the being still has a human, deva, or Brahma body. They have not yet entered the sublime realm of Nibbana. This is sometimes called "unripe Nibbana" in a colloquial sense, meaning the mind itself is Nibbana.

Anupadisesa Nibbana: The Arahants', Paccekabuddhas', and Buddhas' minds are in their celestial Nibbana bodies, experiencing eternal bliss. They enjoy this sublime Nibbana realm after their bodies pass away. This is called "ripe Nibbana," or true Nibbana, as it no longer has the five aggregates or a deva or Brahma body.

The causes for the mind to suffer in the four lower realms (Apaya bhumi)—hell, ghost realm, demon realm, and animal realm—are as follows: Violating the five precepts, such as killing humans or animals, stealing, having illicit affairs with someone else's child, spouse, or lover, abusing one's spouse or children, lying, speaking rudely, cheating, backbiting, using drugs like opium, ya ba, and ya ma, drinking alcohol, and gambling.

The cause of being reborn as a human is having fully kept the five precepts and not committing any of the five wrongdoings.

The cause of being reborn as a deva is being a person who does not commit the five misdeeds, whose five precepts are pure, who has a compassionate mind, who worships, chants, and gives charity willingly to both humans and animals, and who is ashamed of and fears the results of unwholesome actions, both in secret and

in public. After death, such a person is reborn as a deva, goddess, or guardian spirit, even if they have not practiced meditation.

The cause of being reborn as a Form-realm Brahma is keeping the five precepts, giving charity, worshiping, chanting, and training the mind to become skilled in one of the 40 Kammatthana topics.

If one attains the 1st jhana before death, one is reborn as a Brahma in the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd realm.

If one attains the 2nd jhana before death, one is reborn as a Brahma in the 4th, 5th, or 6th realm.

If one attains the 3rd jhana before death, one is reborn as a Brahma in the 7th, 8th, or 9th realm.

If one attains the 4th jhana before death, one is reborn as a Brahma in the 10th or 11th realm.

If a Non-returner (Anagami) attains the 4th jhana before death, they are reborn in the Suddhavasa Brahma realms (12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, or 16th).

The cause of being reborn as an Formless-realm Brahma is that these beings, in all four realms, have practiced Kasina meditation and then cultivated the four formless jhanas. They are under the misconception that a formless existence is the highest happiness, and because they do not understand Nibbana, their practice leads to these worldly jhanas.

Akasanancayatana (the jhana of the infinity of space)

Viññananancayatana (the jhana of the infinity of consciousness)

Akiñcaññayatana (the jhana of nothingness)

Nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana (the jhana of neither perception nor non-perception)

Before death, they enter a formless jhana, mistakenly believing that being without a celestial body is true happiness. After they die, they are reborn as a formless Brahma.

The five Suddhavasa Brahma realms (12th-16th) are the dwelling places of Non-returners. They have reached the fruits of the path and attained the 4th jhana while they were human, deva, or Brahma. These realms are reserved for Non-returners who no longer need to be reborn as humans, animals, or devas. They wait there until they attain Arahantship and enter Nibbana.

With Devatanussati Kammatthana, if you practice recollecting the virtues of celestial beings until you reach Upacara Samadhi (access concentration), and then you cultivate insight (Vipassana Ñana) by seeing the world and the body as suffering, a burden, and a temporary illusion that will dissolve into nothingness, your mind can quickly and easily reach the fruits of the path. This is because it is a refined mental state that brings you close to Nibbana and the Noble Ones.

Many people who have never seen or heard of celestial beings attack the idea, saying that devas and Brahmas are not real and are just a lie. But you shouldn't think that things you can't see don't exist. And don't believe that what you see is permanent, because it will all eventually fade away and die. Our eyes are coarse. They cannot even see dust in the air in a dark room. The devas have pure, subtle celestial bodies, so how can our coarse eyes see them or ghosts? There are far more devas in this world than there are people. There are also many more ghosts and spirits living among us. And there are more animals on land, in the sea, and

in the air than there are people. Yet we humans think we are the most important beings on Earth. This is ignorance (avijja), a delusion that we have because we do not know the truth about life and the world. We just spend our lives chasing after money for our short existence, then we die and are separated from those we love, only to be reborn again. As long as our minds have not reached the level of a Noble One, we do not have the merit to attain Nibbana.

Therefore, if you accept and appreciate the virtues of the celestial beings, your mind will soon have Hiri and Ottappa and will share in their virtues. It will be easy for your mind to become like a deva's mind, and they will watch over you and protect you from harm, allowing you to live a happy life in this world and the next.

Kammatthana 27: Marananussati Kammatthana

Marananussati is the practice of recollecting and contemplating death. We must see that all humans and animals—and even ourselves—will die. No one is immortal. Even the Buddha, who had great spiritual power and was the most extraordinary being in the world, in heaven, and in the Brahma realms, had to die. So how can our bodies escape illness and death?

There are four types of death:

Samuccheda Marana: The death of defilements, craving, and attachment for an Arahant. An Arahant has completed the holy life and eradicated their defilements permanently. This is a final death, a cutting off of the cycle of rebirth.

Khanika Marana: The everyday death of all humans and animals. This is a small, continuous death. We die from being a child to becoming an adult, from being an adult to becoming old. Life is constantly dying with every breath we take. If we don't get new air, food, and water to sustain our bodies, they will wither and die. Our bodies survive today because new air, breath, water, and food replace what is lost.

Kala Marana: Death at the end of one's lifespan. After death, the spirit immediately goes to receive the results of its good or bad karma.

Akala Marana: Death before one's appointed time. This can be caused by evil karma, natural disasters, war, crime, plagues, or bombs. These days, as seen in the news, people can die suddenly and easily from a plane crash, being run over by a car, or countless other ways. This kind of death is called a violent or unexpected death (tai-hong). Those who die this way are often startled. Their spirits leave the body and become wandering ghosts without a home, food, or loved ones. They remain ghosts until the time they were supposed to die as a human, only then can they go on to receive the results of their karma.

In the time of the Buddha, he performed a ceremony to extend the life of a boy who was destined to die prematurely, a practice called "Sado Khro" (a ceremony to ward off bad luck).

The story goes like this: a mother and father took their infant son to see the Buddha. The Buddha said to the parents, "May you live long," but when the boy was brought forward, the Buddha remained silent. The parents asked why he didn't give a blessing to the child. The Buddha replied that their son would die in seven days, so he did not give such a blessing. The parents were shocked and

begged the Buddha for help. The Buddha instructed them to build a ceremonial shelter in their yard and have monks chant the Paritta Sutta for seven days and seven nights. On the seventh day, the day the boy was to die, a demon came to claim his life. The Buddha, along with the great devas and Brahmas, arrived. The demon couldn't get to the boy. When the time for the boy's death had passed, the demon had to flee. Demons are bound by the law of karma; they can only cause death at the appointed time. Since the time had passed, the demon could do nothing. The Buddha and the monks then left, and the Buddha blessed the boy, saying, "May you live long." Later, the boy was ordained as a novice at age seven and attained Arahantship. He lived to be 120 years old before passing into Nibbana. This boy's name was Ayuvattaka Kumara, Ayuvattaka Samanera, and later, the Venerable Ayuvattaka Thera.

The Benefits of Reflecting on Death

The benefits of contemplating death are vast:

It is a superior form of Vipassana insight. Death is Anatta (non-self) and the breaking apart of a form. This contemplation makes the mind wise and sharp, easily cutting off the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion. When we contemplate death, we realize there is nothing left to be deluded by. We will die, and so will everyone else.

It inspires a sense of urgency. Contemplating death motivates us to quickly do good deeds, cultivate morality (Sila), concentration (Samadhi), and wisdom (Panna) so that we can attain Nibbana and not be born and die again.

It leads to liberation. A person who constantly reflects on death does not desire to be reborn as a human, a deva, or a Brahma. They are content with Nibbana and make their mind empty of birth. Such a person is certain to attain Nibbana in this very life.

Even the Buddha himself reflected on death with every incoming and outgoing breath. As he said to Venerable Ananda, "Ananda, to recall death seven times a day is still far too little. The Tathagata himself recalls death with every incoming and outgoing breath." Therefore, we, as children of the Buddha, should reflect on death with every breath, just like our Lord. Before long, we will be free from suffering, following the path that the Buddha taught.

Kammatthana 28: Kayagatasati Kammatthana

This is the mindful recollection of the body of a human or an animal as it truly is: dirty, filthy, unattractive, ugly, and foul-smelling both inside and out. This contemplation of the body is a very important and special meditation. The result of contemplating the body is that the mind can reach the first jhana. However, if you use the red color of the body's blood and practice it as a Kasina, you can reach the 4th jhana.

In the Visuddhimagga, it is taught to contemplate the 32 parts of the body, from the hair, body hair, nails, and teeth to the skin and flesh. We should honestly examine them to see whether they are lovable or disgusting. The body is full of dirty, putrid, and foul-smelling things: the liver, kidneys, intestines, lungs, heart, ribs, tendons, veins, brain nerves, stomach, spleen, large and small intestines, bone marrow, joints, membranes, blood, pus, urine, and feces. If you remove the

skin, there is nothing that looks good. The body is so dirty that it must be washed every day. The fluids that come from it are smelly.

Those who see a beautiful young person but refuse to see the filth that comes from their body are deluded. Beautiful people give off a foul, rotten smell. They are stained and dirty in ways that are unpleasant to see and smell, so they try to cover up this reality. They refuse to talk about it or acknowledge it because ignorance, craving, and attachment have blinded their eyes and their minds. They try to lie to themselves and others that their body is still beautiful, young, and charming. In truth, a human or animal body is a mobile toilet. We use it to deposit feces and urine in a toilet every day, and then we adorn ourselves with expensive clothes, jewels, and accessories, fooling ourselves and others into thinking we are beautiful.

A person who sees the body of a human or animal but does not wisely contemplate it becomes infatuated with its form and falls in love with the body of their beloved. Soon they will encounter mental and physical suffering because the body will change, become sick, or be disabled. Or their loved one's mind will change due to disagreements. Their love will not last long before boredom sets in, and they will, driven by greed, hatred, and delusion, seek new and beautiful things and a new lover.

The Noble Ones are wise. When they contemplate the body of a human or an animal, they see that no one is truly good or beautiful. They see that the body is full of dirty and smelly things. They are not interested in anyone's body. They become disillusioned and ordain. They find the lay life tedious because they see every person's body as a walking toilet, made of the four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire—a talking, walking corpse. Because of this, they are no longer

infatuated with physical form, as it is not real and will soon wrinkle, fall apart, and die. While a person is alive, the Noble Ones see them as a raw corpse; after they die, they become a cooked corpse. The Buddha emphasized that we must get our minds to let go of our attachment to our own bodies to be free from suffering and find happiness in Nibbana. The cause of suffering is having the five aggregates (the body). To end suffering, we must end the cause: the mind must no longer cling to the body. Then the mind will be free and will not be a slave to the defilements of the body. The mind will have Nibbana as its object, and after death, the pure mind will experience the eternal bliss of the sublime Nibbana realm.

Kammatthana 29: Anapanasati Kammatthana

Anapanasati is the practice of maintaining mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath at all times during meditation. This practice is fundamental and serves as a foundation for all 40 meditation topics. To practice any of them, you must first become aware of your breathing.

If practitioners do not cultivate awareness of the in-breath and out-breath, their progress toward the noble path and its fruits will be very slow. However, if you combine mindfulness of breathing with the contemplation of the body, the ten corpses, or the impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anatta) of all things, you will attain the noble path and its fruits much more quickly.

The result of Anapanasati is concentration that can lead to the 4th jhana. For a Buddha's disciple, this is sufficient. But for those who aspire to become a Bodhisattva (a future Buddha), they must attain the 5th jhana. In the 4th jhana,

the mind separates from the body and is no longer aware of physical suffering. The mind becomes solely blissful and is one-pointed (ekaggata), still in the 4th jhana. For a Bodhisattva, the 5th jhana (Pañcama Jhana) is a state where the mind is blissful and one-pointed, with the addition of equanimity (upekkha).

When you achieve the 4th jhana with Anapanasati, where bliss is one-pointed, and you then contemplate other meditation topics on impermanence, suffering, and non-self, the sharp wisdom from the jhana will enable you to attain Arahantship within three days at the latest, or in a single sitting at the fastest. When you are so aware of your breath that your mind no longer registers the in-breath and out-breath, nor any physical sensations, you are said to be in the 4th jhana.

How to Practice Anapanasati

Anywhere, anytime: You can practice it while doing anything—sitting, walking, standing, lying down, running, driving, washing dishes, making chili paste, reading a book, watching TV, or talking to someone. It is a simple practice that doesn't require wearing white or saffron robes. You don't have to go to a temple or a forest; you can do it right in a busy city. Your breath has been with you since you were born. All you have to do is be aware of whether your breath is short or long, fast or slow. Just follow the breath. You can do this with your eyes open or closed. You don't have to sit still or walk slowly. You are training your mind, not your body.

Be patient with your mind: Your mind is used to wandering and thinking about many things. It is used to being indulged. Trying to force it to only be aware of the

breath right away will be difficult. The mind will resist and run off to think about things as usual. When you realize it, that's okay. Just gently bring your attention back to your breath. If you can practice for just five minutes a day, that is a great start.

Add a mantra: To improve your practice, you can mentally repeat "Puth" on the in-breath and "Tho" on the out-breath. This is a name of the Buddha. By recalling the Buddha, you are practicing Buddhanussati Kammattana, which brings great merit and makes the mind pure, concentration stable, and wisdom clear. It helps you quickly understand the Dhamma teachings and easily enter the stream of Nibbana.

Combine with a visual object: To help the mind become even more stable and prevent it from wandering, the Buddha taught us to visualize a Buddha image you like. Mentally see the image in yellow or green. This combines Anapanasati with a Kasina practice, making it a triple practice. By being aware of the breath, recollecting the Buddha's virtues, and holding the mental image of the Buddha, your mind will quickly enter a state of concentration (Samadhi) and jhana. It won't wander aimlessly. The mind will become one-pointed, gathering its power to cut off the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion quickly.

Be flexible with yourself: When you start practicing, your mind may feel restless and agitated. Some days will be good, and some days will be not. The Buddha taught to be flexible—don't be too strict or too lazy. If you are struggling, you can stop and resume your practice when you feel better.

6. When the mind becomes comfortable and clear through the practice of being aware of the breath, it becomes powerful with wisdom and merit. It can solve the complicated problems of life with ease. As for spiritual problems, it can quickly abandon defilements, cravings, and attachments. The mind becomes happy, the body becomes healthy with few illnesses, and the mind becomes virtuous. Fame, status, praise, and happiness will follow, without needing to wait for the next life. If one no longer desires the world, heaven, or the Brahma realms, Nibbana is a sure goal, because morality, concentration, and wisdom are truly one and the same; the monks simply separate them for us to understand more easily.

7. To practice mindfulness of breathing as part of the 40 meditation topics or to reach the 4th jhana, you should focus on the breath touching three points: the tip of the nose, the chest, and the rising of the abdomen. On the out-breath, you should be aware of the falling of the abdomen, the chest, and the breath leaving the tip of the nose. However, practitioners of the Maha Satipatthana Sutta should simply be aware of the breath entering and exiting the tip of the nose, whether it is slow or fast, while also contemplating the body, feelings, mind, and Dhamma. If one can attain the 1st jhana, one can use the wisdom from that jhana to cut off defilements, ignorance, cravings, and attachments, and to sever the first three fetters. By seeing that the body will surely die, without doubt, and by keeping the five precepts of the Buddha's teachings, one has the merit to quickly enter the stream of Nibbana and attain the first stage of the noble path, Sotapanna.

Kammatthana 30: Upasamanussati Kammatthana

This is a meditation practice where the practitioner reflects on the immense goodness, excellence, and peace of Nibbana, which is freedom from the cycle of birth, death, and karma. Nibbana means the extinguishing of defilements, cravings, ignorance, attachment, and unwholesome karma. The more often you reflect on Nibbana, the better. Your mind will easily become empty of these defilements because it already has morality, concentration, and wisdom within it, thanks to the contemplation of the sublime happiness of Nibbana.

Venerable Buddhaghosa Thera, the author of the Visuddhimagga, was a wise Arahant with Patisambhida-ñāna (analytical knowledge). He explained the virtues of Nibbana by listing eight points from the Pali scriptures to guide us in our reflection. Nibbana has the following characteristics and benefits:

Madanimmadano: Reflecting on Nibbana removes our delusion that life is permanent and that we will not die.

Pipasavinayo: The mind becomes pure and is a Nibbana mind, which relieves the desire and thirst for form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. The attraction to the five sense pleasures completely vanishes from the mind.

Alayasamugghato: Reflecting on Nibbana makes the mind pure and free from defilements. A person who has reached Nibbana is completely free from defilements. Their mind is not attached to the five sense pleasures and sees them as nothing more than a foul-smelling corpse.

Vattapacchedo: Reflecting on the virtues of Nibbana enables the mind to completely cut off the cycle of birth and death. It cuts off all kinds of defilements and bad karma, completely freeing one from the suffering caused by karma.

Tanhakkhayo: Nibbana is the complete cessation of craving.

Virago: Reflecting on Nibbana makes desire (raga) and craving for the three realms completely disappear.

Nirodho: Reflecting on Nibbana makes defilements, desire, and craving completely cease and not arise again. There is no longer any suffering, only supreme happiness and peace.

Nibbanañ: The state of being completely free from ignorance, craving, attachment, and unwholesome karma. The power of these four kinds of karma can no longer harm a person whose mind has reached Nibbana.

He taught to reflect on the eight virtues of Nibbana, or any one of them that you prefer, while mentally repeating the mantra “Nip-pa-nang” with each in-breath and out-breath. Continue this until the mind reaches Upacara Jhana (access concentration), which is a subtle and profound mental state. It is a form of contemplation with power, but not yet at the level of the first jhana. Contemplating Nibbana has great benefits. It easily helps you to extinguish ignorance, craving, attachment, defilements, and unwholesome karma. It is the path and the fruit of the Noble Ones, from Sotapanna onward, and is a factor that makes it easy for the mind to reach Nibbana.

Is Nibbana truly empty, as the Pali scripture says, “Nibbanaṃ paramaṃ suññaṃ”?

According to the Visuddhimagga, written by the Arahant Venerable Buddhaghosa, the eight characteristics of Nibbana do not contain the word "empty." Instead, they mean empty of defilements, craving, attachment, and ignorance. Empty of

the four elements (earth, water, wind, and fire). Empty of the five aggregates, which are impermanent, suffering, and non-self. It is completely empty of all suffering and difficulties. But there is one thing that is not empty: a mind that is wise, pure, and free from defilements, craving, and ignorance. The Arahant's mind is not empty; it is the Nibbana-mind or the Buddha-mind, the mind that is awake, knowing, and joyful. If Nibbana were truly empty, as some mistakenly believe, the Buddha would not have continued by saying, “Nibbanaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ,” which means that a pure mind free from defilements, the Nibbana-mind, is the supreme happiness. Even with the impure and suffering five aggregates of the body, the mind is happy and does not suffer along with the body.

For those who doubt whether Nibbana is empty, the Buddha, out of great compassion, granted the knowledge of Manomayiddhi Kammatthana for everyone to practice and prove for themselves, to experience hell, heaven, the Brahma realms, and Nibbana. As long as you doubt or misunderstand Nibbana based on the incorrect interpretations of some writers who have translated the Pali incorrectly—because their merits are not sufficient to understand Nibbana—you will continue in the cycle of rebirth for a long time. This misunderstanding is the second fetter, vicikicchā, which is doubt and uncertainty about the Buddha's teachings and Nibbana.

The Buddha's discovery of Nibbana was extremely difficult, but some of his disciples later claimed that Nibbana is empty and that after death, there is nothing left—that hell, heaven, the Brahma realms, and Nibbana do not exist. This is an ignorant distortion of the Buddha's teachings, which leads to defilements, craving, attachment, and a conceited view (ditthi) that one's own ideas are correct. It will be a long time before such a person sees the light of the Dhamma and Nibbana.

The karmic consequence of distorting the Lord Buddha's teachings is that the mind will have only one destination: to suffer in the lower realms.

This book, Dhamma Prathana Phon (Dhamma Bestows Blessings), came to be because I, the author, practiced Manomayiddhi as taught by Venerable Luangpho Phra Ratchaphromyan, who traveled to America to teach his disciples. I was one of the fortunate ones who had the chance to practice with his students. After my practice, my mind remained with the Buddha at all times. I often asked him questions, as I was a person full of doubts and wanted to know and see everything, both useful and not. I was scolded often until I stopped asking and resolved to focus on cutting off my own defilements until I die. Later, the Buddha, out of his great compassion, instructed me to write this book, giving it the title Dhamma Prathana Phon. Every word was inspired by him.

Readers who doubt Nibbana should practice meditation with morality, concentration, and insight knowledge. Find a teacher of Manomayiddhi to prove the state of Nibbana for yourself. You will gain the wisdom to correctly understand Nibbana and will not have to suffer the negative karma of criticizing and misunderstanding things you do not know. Nibbana has not disappeared. It is still in the minds of all Noble Ones and Arahants. Many Arahants are still alive in Thailand today. Their minds have not disappeared. They are waiting for their bodies to die so their minds can enter the supreme bliss of the Nibbana realm forever.

The Four Brahma Viharas

Metta (Loving-kindness): Having a mind that loves and wishes well for all beings who are subject to birth, old age, sickness, and death. This is not the love of a couple, nor is it a love with an expectation of a return.

Karuna (Compassion): Having a mind that wants to help others and relieve them from physical and mental suffering, helping them as much as you can.

Mudita (Sympathetic Joy): Having a mind that rejoices when others are happy and successful, without jealousy or envy. The mind becomes gentle.

Upekkha (Equanimity): The mind remains neutral when you cannot help someone. It is not happy when it receives gain, status, praise, or happiness, and it is not sad when it loses them. It remains neutral with loving-kindness; it is not a mind that is cold and indifferent. If you always have these four virtues in your mind, the monks say that you have achieved the Brahma Vihara jhana. When you die, your mind will leave the body and will be reborn as a noble deva or a Brahma.

Benefits of the Four Brahma Viharas

Sukham supati: You sleep in peace, as if in a state of absorption.

You wake up with a happy and clear mind, without any bad moods.

Your dreams will be good.

You will be loved by everyone. Devas, Brahmas, and spirits will come to receive your merits. Spirits will not harm you.

You will be safe from fire, weapons, and poison.

Your mind will be stable in meditation and will continue to progress.

Your face will be bright and joyful, and you will age slowly.

When you die, you will not lose your mindfulness and will be fully conscious.

Devas and Brahmas will watch over you and keep you safe from all dangers, allowing you to live a happy life in this world without worry.

If you do not attain the fruits of the path in this life, the Brahma Viharas will lead to rebirth in the Brahma realms, where you will find great happiness. From there, after being taught by the Arahants, you can easily attain the fruits of the path and enter Nibbana.

Your mind will be fresh, clear, and bright. Your morality will be pure because of your loving-kindness. You will have good wisdom and will not violate the five precepts. The Brahma Vihara jhana gives you a stable mind that is not scattered and is always happy.

The Four Arupa Jhanas

The four Arupa Jhanas are meditation practices focused on formless mental objects. They are subtle and at the highest level of jhana. Practitioners who have attained these four formless jhanas and then cultivate Vipassana (insight) by contemplating everything in the world—including what cannot be seen, such as space, perception, mental formations (good or bad thoughts), feelings (happiness and suffering), and consciousness (the five senses and the mind)—will see them as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. By understanding the truth of everything according to the laws of nature, they can attain Nibbana very quickly because they have reached the highest level of subtle jhana with sharp wisdom. The

nature of these formless jhanas is detachment. The mind does not cling to physical forms, or even to the absence of forms. The mind becomes empty of form, name, consciousness, and perception. When one who has attained the four formless jhanas, and whose mind is empty of defilements and is happy and peaceful in jhana, cultivates insight, they can become a supreme Arahant. This Arahant has special abilities beyond other Arahants, such as Patisambhida-ñāna (analytical knowledge), which includes the six higher knowledges (Abhiññā) and the three knowledges (Tevijja), and also covers the dry-insight Arahants. The four additional special qualities are:

Atthapatisambhida: The wisdom to explain difficult matters easily, to summarize long and complicated topics, making them concise and clear.

Dhammapatisambhida: The wisdom to explain intricate Dhamma topics, making them easy to understand.

Niruttipatisambhida: The wisdom to understand all languages, including animal languages, without having to learn them.

Patibhanapatisambhida: The quick-witted wisdom to solve all problems brilliantly.

Venerable Luangpho Phra Ratchaphromyan of Wat Tha Sung, Uthai Thani, wrote in his meditation manual about the difference between an Abhiññā Arahant and a Patisambhida-ñāna Arahant:

For a Patisambhida-ñāna Arahant:

They must have practiced the ten Kasina meditations until they are proficient.

They then enter one of the Kasina jhanas until they reach the 4th jhana.

They let go of the Kasina mental image and cultivate the four formless jhanas.

They must have attained at least the Non-returner stage or Arahantship beforehand.

The special qualities of Patisambhida-ñāna will only appear when they attain Arahantship.

For an Abhiññā Arahant:

They must have practiced the ten Kasinas until they are proficient.

They must have attained at least eight of the Kasinas, with the exception of the light and space Kasinas.

When they are skilled in eight or all ten Kasinas, they can attain the Abhiññā, even if it is a worldly jhana.

A practitioner who has never practiced or learned Kasina, or has only partially mastered them, cannot succeed in practicing the formless jhanas. This is because to attain the formless jhanas, one must use nine of the Kasinas (earth, fire, wind, water, blue, yellow, red, white, and light), leaving out only the space Kasina. These nine Kasinas are the foundation for the formless jhanas. You must first attain the 4th jhana with a Kasina before you can enter a formless jhana.

Kammatthana 35: Akasanancayatana (The First Formless Jhana)

This meditation is also known as the 5th Attainment in the Visuddhimagga. To enter this formless jhana, you must first reach the 4th jhana in any of the ten Kasinas. Then, you must let the mental image of the Kasina disappear. As long as

there is a form, there will be suffering. The physical body of a human, animal, or even a deva is not permanent and will eventually disintegrate. We do not desire any form, so we abandon the mental image of the Kasina we were holding. We take space as our mental object until a vast, expansive image of space appears. Then we can contract or expand this space as we wish until the mind can maintain this mental object. We contemplate that space has no end. When the mind is in a state of equanimity, this is the first formless jhana, or the 5th Attainment, which comes after the 4th jhana.

Kammatthana 36: Viññananancayatana (The Second Formless Jhana)

This means meditating on consciousness, which has no form. You begin by choosing one of the ten Kasinas and meditating on its physical image until you reach the 4th jhana. Then, you replace the Kasina image with the image of space and remain in a state of equanimity. After that, you set your mind to discard space. Although space has no form, it is still too coarse. We abandon space and focus only on consciousness, the feeling of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. We contemplate that the consciousness from the six sense bases is vast and boundless. But if the mind is still attached to the consciousness of ghosts, devas, or Brahmas, it will continue in the cycle of rebirth. We do not want consciousness because it is a source of suffering and still has feelings. We contemplate this until the mind reaches a state of equanimity. This is the 6th Attainment.

Kammatthana 37: Akincaññayatana (The Third Formless Jhana)

This is the meditation that follows the second formless jhana, Viññananancayatana. You must first reach the 4th jhana in consciousness, contemplating that consciousness has no end. But as long as the mind is attached to consciousness, it will continue to wander in the cycle of rebirth. So we move on from consciousness. We do not want space or consciousness because they do not end the cycle of rebirth. We contemplate that there is no space and no consciousness—that there is nothing at all. If there were, it would change and break apart endlessly. The mind should focus on the idea of nothingness, so that there is no more suffering. The absence of space and consciousness is safe from suffering and danger. We resolve with our minds to not accept or cling to anything, so that there is nothing left in the mind. The mind becomes one, in a state of equanimity. This is the 7th Attainment.

Kammatthana 38: Nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana (The Fourth Formless Jhana)

This is the fourth formless jhana, or the 8th Attainment. It begins from the first formless jhana, then the second, and then the third, Akincaññayatana, until the mind is one-pointed in the state of nothingness. But there is still a tiny bit of perception, the ability to remember a name, gender, parents, lover, or property. As long as there is this ability to remember, there will be feelings of happiness and suffering. When there is separation from what is remembered, there will be attachment and regret. So, we let go of that last bit of memory and resolve that we will no longer have any perception. We make our mind feel as if it has no perception. The mind ignores and does not accept memory. We make ourselves like a moving automaton without consciousness, without any feelings in the body,

and without any memory of the world, because memory makes the mind cling, which is a cause of suffering. It leads to having a body and being reborn. The mind does not accept any sensations of cold, heat, hunger, thirst, or pain. The mind does not acknowledge that the body is "ours" because it is not ours. The five aggregates are just a moving puppet that our mind temporarily inhabits. The mind is not agitated by the body's suffering, by painful feelings, or by good or bad thoughts. It does not pay attention to anything because these things do not belong to the mind. We live as if we are already dead—we let go of the body and let things take their course. We release the body and its name from the mind until the mind is completely still in a state of equanimity. This is the fourth formless jhana, or the 8th Attainment.

Kammatthana 39: Ahare Patikula Saññā

This is the contemplation of all food before you put it in your mouth. Let your mind see that food comes from the corpses of plants and animals. Plants come from the earth and from rotten, stinking compost. The food is then cooked and decorated. If you leave it for one or two days, it will spoil and stink. The only reason it looks acceptable is because it has been cooked, fried, and decorated with fresh colors. We should eat food only to relieve the suffering of hunger. We should not be attached to its color, good taste, or bad taste. We should not be attached to food because if our mind becomes attached to the taste, it leads to craving and desire, which are defilements. These defilements keep the mind in the prison of the body and cause it to suffer from hunger, leading to an endless cycle of rebirth.

This meditation is important. The Buddha said that a monk who does not contemplate his food before eating is negligent and is attached to the taste of food, which is not appropriate for a person who has left home to receive alms from laypeople. The mind of a monk who does not contemplate food as dirty is still that of a worldly person, full of defilements, and is not a true monk. A true monk should consider his food as something dirty that nourishes a body that is also dirty. Doing this every day, at every meal, will keep the mind safe from the lower realms. By not being attached to the form, taste, smell, or touch of food, you are in effect cutting off and letting go of the five sense pleasures. This is an easy and profitable meditation. The mind will become wise and can easily attain the noble path and its fruits. It is a meditation for the wise, especially those with a thoughtful temperament, and it helps them quickly enter the stream of Nibbana because they are not attached to the taste of food. The mind is in a state of insight and is not a slave to defilements.

Regarding food, the Buddha forbade the killing of any animal for food because animals also have a mind like a human. However, he did not forbid eating meat, fish, pork, duck, chicken, shrimp, or crab. The Buddha knew that being a vegetarian does not by itself eliminate defilements. When Devadatta asked the Buddha to make a rule that monks should not eat meat, the Buddha did not agree, because it was not beneficial or important. Monks should live and eat simply. Whatever the laypeople eat and offer, the monks can eat. The Buddha forbade monks from eating meat when the animal was killed specifically for them. He forbade them from accepting food when the donor had told them what kind of meat it was before offering it because this could cause defilements and craving to arise in the monk's mind. The Buddha strictly forbade monks from eating human, tiger, turtle,

elephant, dog, leopard, bear, or snake meat because it could be too delicious and cause defilements and craving. A person who is not deluded by the taste of food is not attached to the body. It does not matter if the food is delicious or not, or if it is meat or vegetables, it is all dirty. Dirty food nourishes a dirty body that is like a talking, walking corpse. In reality, both the bodies of dead animals and plants are made of the same earth element, so they can be consumed for the purpose of practicing the Dhamma and for using the body to do good for the sake of Nibbana in this very life.

Kammatthana 40: Catudhatu Vavatthana (The Four Elements)

This is a meditation for the wise, who are curious and want to prove things for themselves. The Buddha taught to contemplate and truly understand the reality of the five aggregates, or the body. He taught that the body is a structure built from the elements of earth, water, wind, and fire. In the language of chemistry, these are carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, calcium, phosphorus, iodine, potassium, selenium, chlorine, zinc, iron, and many others. Simply put, the body is a temporary combination of the earth, water, wind, and fire elements that are always in a state of flux and decay. This body that our mind inhabits is like a rented house that the mind temporarily stays in. When this house, this body, breaks apart and dies, the mind goes to find a new home based on its merits and karma. If the mind does not know the pure path, which is the path to Nibbana, it will continue in the cycle of birth and death without end. The only place the cycle ends is Nibbana.

The four elements of the body are not under the control of the mind. They are under the law of nature: impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anatta). They are not under anyone's control. This is the natural law of this world.

Everything must decay and dissolve into emptiness. When the mind thinks this way until it becomes a jhana, it is both Samatha (concentration) and Vipassana (insight). The mind loses its infatuation with the forms of humans and animals, and with gain, status, and praise. It does not wish to be reborn as a human, a deva, or a Brahma, because the mind has not yet reached the ultimate happiness. Its only desire is Nibbana, to follow the Buddha. When the wisdom of merit is full in the mind, it will see the world as full of change, suffering, and non-self. The practitioner will overcome craving—the desire to be reborn as a human, deva, or Brahma. Their only goal in life will be Nibbana. They will have completed the holy life with good wisdom because they no longer hold on to or are deluded by the four elements.

The End