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Summary

A brief explanation of the different Satipattana meditations and the beneficial results of practicing it correctly.

SATIPATTHANA : A SELF-HELP

By Venerable Dr. Prajna Nandasri

The Satipatthana or the Way of Mindfulness is the source and the method of the Vipassana Meditation. "To see the things as they really are; is the basic of the Buddhist Meditation. The objects of the Satipatthana meditation are the mind and Matter (Namarupa) or the five Aggregates (Pancaskandas). There are four types of Satipatthana:

1. Kayanupassana - Body contemplation on the body.
2. Vedananupassana - Feelings contemplation on the Feelings.
3. Cittanupassana - Mind contemplation on the Mind.
4. Dhammanupassana - Mind-objects contemplation on the Mind-objects.

It includes Perception (Sanna) and Karma formation (Samskara).

A person has to take one object to practise meditation. He has to select a suitable place such as a forest, under the root of the Tree and the lonely place of a house. He has to sit cross-legged, keep his body erect and be mindful on the object of his meditation. He is ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world.

At the outset, a person practises Mindfulness of Breathing (Anapana Sati). It helps the person to concentrate his mind to the object. When his mind is thus, he feels Piti (rapture), Sukha (Joy) and calms down his bodily-mental formation (Kaya Sankhara). Without mindfulness and clear comprehension, there will be no contemplation on the object. The practice of Mindfulness of Breathing serves both Samatha (tranquility) and Vipassana (insight). It combines Samatha Vipassana system of Satipatthana meditation.

Mindfulness should be applied to the objects in such a way as to give attention to arising, continuation and passing away of the objects. Whenever a person is practising meditation, when he wants to do something either by body, words or mind, he must do it with mindfulness and clear comprehension. Not a single action is to be done by him without Mindfulness. "Mindfulness", the Buddha said, "is helpful everywhere".

The Body contemplation (Kayanupassana) is of 14 types, including Mindfulness of Breathing. The body consists of four great elements

(Mahabhutas) Pathavi Apa, Teja Vayu. There are 24 physical elements derived from the Mahabhutas, called upada rupa. With fully concentrated mind, when we see the body, it is not "mine" (netam mama), is not "I" (naamashami), is not "soul" (namesoatta), thus, the body contemplation on 14th object - the result comes out - Same.

For Feeling contemplation one must understand that there are pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent feelings, but there is no being, no ego to feel. The reality feeling is changing, is impermanent, miserable and without self.

For contemplation Mind, one knows the state of the mind. There are 16 types of minds and they are ever changing one by one. But such of nature of mind is impermanent, miserable and no self.

For contemplation of Mind-object (Dhammanupassana). There are a number of objects to contemplate on Mind-objects. They are also not stationary, appearing and disappearing is their nature. Things which are ever changing are not permanent, is not ego or self.

Thus he understands the life is mere illusion and finds nothing good in it. He detaches from it and by gradually destroying the fetters he arrives at the highest goal of life - Nibbana.

At the first stage when three fetters - self-illusion (sakkayaditthi), scepticism (vicikiccha) and attachment of mere rites and rituals (silabbata paramasa) - cease, he is called "Stream Enterer" (sotapanna), which leads him to the final goal of Enlightenment.

The next two fetters - Kamaraga (sensual craving) and Patigha (ill-will), when ceased is called Sakadagami (Once-Returner). When these lower five fetters completely cease, he is called Anagami (Non-Returner).

The remaining five higher fetters cease at the attainment of Arahamthood. These fetters are Ruparaga, Aruparaga, Mana uddacca and Avijja.

Satipatthana is the only effective method of self-help. It is the process of self-examination. Self-control and self-realisation; relying on no other "you yourself must put forth effort, the Tathagata only points out the way" said the Buddha.

Thus the self-help method of Satipatthana makes one both see and know and it leads to peace, to insight, to enlightenment, Nibbana.

Further the exhortation of the Buddha on the self protection is thus: "I shall protect myself and I shall protect others: Protecting oneself one protects others; Protecting others one protects oneself." In that way the Satipatthana should be practiced regularly. It is possible to do the repeated practice of

Satipatthana together with cultivation of patience, non-violence, loving-kindness and compassion.

"By self alone is evil done.
By self one is defiled;
By self evil is left undone,
By self alone is one purified." (Dhammapada)