

Jhana Practice and Study Group
Metta Dharma Foundation
www.mettadharm.org
Berkeley, CA

Homework for November`2019

This month we will begin to examine the various ways meditation is understood in the source texts and the differences between the paths of practice in the Visuddhimagga and in the Pali Suttas. They represent two different systems of meditation practice. The Visuddhimagga separates meditation into two distinct paths – samatha (tranquility or calm) and vipassana (insight), while the Pali suttas integrate tranquility and calm into a single path of practice. Each of these can only be properly understood within the context of its own system. We will examine all of these in detail.

These two distinct meditation systems in the Pali tradition lead to very different approaches to meditation practice. All of the ways meditation is taught in these texts can be practiced and experienced.

In our first meeting last month the meditation instructions were geared toward supporting the mind to become more settled and calm. The instructions were given as if you had not yet developed any degree of concentration in your practice. Beginning this month the instructions will focus on how to practice once the experiences of samadhi begin to deepen and grow.

How do you know when you are concentrated in meditation? The experience of samadhi can manifest in many ways, such as calm, stillness, peace, expansiveness, energies in the body, bliss, light, or many other possible experiences.

The meditation instructions for the rest of the class series will work with the range of ways samadhi can unfold and, for all of these possibilities, aiming the meditation to unfold toward the experience of jhana.

Optional Reading for October:

The Experience of Samadhi. pages 32-76.

Reflections

1. Continue the reflections and practices from last month's homework on finding ease, letting go of struggle, and balancing ease and effort.
2. How regular has your daily meditation practice been?
3. What would support you to be more regular?
4. Notice if you are striving for meditative experiences.
5. Do you judge your practice by the nature of the experience?
6. Do you separate mindfulness and concentration in your practice? Can they be synthesized into one practice?

Practices Continue These From Last Month's Homework

| | Theme | Practice |
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| 1 | Finding Ease | Begin each of your meditation sessions this month with a few moments dedicated to relaxation and ease. Notice if it is easy or difficult to bring a sense of ease into the practice. |
| 2 | Letting Go Of Struggle | Check in a few times each sitting to notice if you are struggling or tense in any way. Try relaxing mindfully into your present moment experience, even if it is unpleasant. Notice when this is easy to do and when it is challenging. |
| 3 | Balancing Ease and Effort | Right Effort is the sixth element of the Noble Eightfold Path, and entails the balance of ease and making effort. We need a certain amount of effort, which can sometimes be quite strong. Notice the balance of ease and effort in your meditation. When is more effort needed? When does effort become over-striving and feel tense? |

Next Page: Practices New For This Month

Practices New For This Month

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| 1 | Experiencing Samadhi in Breath Meditation | During your sitting meditation, notice if and when the experiences of samadhi naturally are stronger in your awareness than the experience of the breath. Continue to let the meditation unfold that way, on its own. |
| 2 | Experiencing the Breath When Samadhi Begins to Strengthen | Notice if and when the experiences of the breath naturally are stronger in your awareness than the experience of samadhi. This can happen even if the concentration is strong. Continue to let the meditation unfold that way, on its own. |
| 3 | Experiencing Breath and Samadhi Together | Notice if and when both the experiences of samadhi and the experience of the breath naturally are both equally present in your awareness. Continue to let the meditaion unfold that way, on its own. |