

DHAMMA EXAM PAPER 2008
(Disclaimer: these are NOT model answers! ;p)

1. Explain any one of the four foundations of mindfulness (cattaro satipatthana) forming the content of Maha Satipatthana Sutta.

The word "satipatthana" is the name for an approach of meditation aimed at establishing sati or mindfulness. The practice of satipatthana is for the purpose of attaining Nibbana. The practice of the 4 Satipatthanas is identical with Right Mindfulness of the Noble Eightfold Path. The 4 Satipatthanas are amongst the 37 Bodhipakkhiya Dhammas as well.

The 4 Satipatthanas are the 4 Foundations of Mindfulness by which one prevents the mind from wandering to other sense objects and keeps the mind fixed attentively and firmly on the object of meditation.

The *mindful* concentration can be applied to 4 objects:

- i. Kayanupassana-satipatthana - mindfulness of the body
- ii. Vedananupassana-satipatthana - mindfulness of feelings
- iii. Cittanupassana-satipatthana - mindfulness of consciousness
- iv. Dhammanupassana-satipatthana - mindfulness of mental objects

The 4 objects of contemplation suit the different temperaments of individuals. One is free to choose any of the 4 objects according to one's temperament and to cultivate it until one attains Arahantship or, for practical purposes, all the 4 alternately.

Mindfulness of the Body

Mindfulness of the body is a practice which aids one to get rid of the misconception of the so-called beauty or desirableness (subhaviṇṇasa). This contemplation enables one to understand there is no doer but just doing, no actor but just action. One realises that there is no "I".

Mindfulness of the Body comprises of 14 meditation exercises. These are:

1. Mindfulness of breathing (anapanasati)
2. Mindfulness of the four postures of the body
3. Clear comprehension / full awareness of activities
4. Reflection on the 32 parts of the body (i.e. perception of foulness)
5. Reflection on the four elements
- 6 - 14. The nine cemetery contemplations of corpses at different stages of decay

Mindfulness of the body begins with mindfulness of breathing to gain one-pointedness of mind (ekaggata) which leads to ecstasies (jhanas) and ultimately to Arahantship.

In practicing mindfulness of breathing, the meditator is aware of whether his in-breath and out-breath is long or short. He trains himself to breathe in and out sensitive to the entire body. He trains himself to breathe in and out calming bodily fabrication, contemplating its rising and perishing nature.

Mindfulness of the four postures of the body involves being aware of the postures of walking, standing, sitting, lying down. Full awareness of activities means that a meditator, when going forward & returning; when looking toward & looking away... when bending & extending his limbs... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe & his bowl... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring... when urinating & defecating... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert. These practices

also lead to concentration and self-awareness and to understanding that there is no agent but causally conditioned movements.

Reflection on the 32 parts of the body (i.e. perception of foulness) means contemplating that in this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.

Reflection on the four elements means reflecting on this body in terms of properties: earth liquid, fire & the wind properties.

The nine cemetery contemplations means contemplating on the various stages of decay of corpses — (i) bloated, livid, & festering... (ii) picked at by crows, vultures, & hawks, by dogs, hyenas, & various other creatures... (iii) a skeleton smeared with flesh & blood, connected with tendons... (iv) a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, connected with tendons... (v) a skeleton without flesh or blood, connected with tendons... (vi) bones detached from their tendons, scattered in all directions... (vii) the bones whitened, somewhat like the color of shells... (viii) piled up, more than a year old... (ix) decomposed into a powder - and applying it to the meditator's own body.

The above contemplations tend to remove selfish desires one may entertain towards this evanescent body.

Summary

If mindfulness or attention is firmly established on a part of the body, it is tantamount to attention being firmly established on all things. This is because the ability to place one's attention on any object at one's will has been acquired.

Comparisons may be made with the taming and training of bullocks for the purpose of yoking to ploughs and carts. In the case of the bullock, the young calf has to be regularly herded and kept in a cattle-pen, then a nose-rope is passed through its nostrils and it is tied to a post and trained to respond to the rope's control. It is then trained to submit to the yoke, and only when it becomes amenable to the yoke's burden is it put to use for ploughing and drawing carts and thus effectively employed for trade and profit

A person who performs the practice of samatha and vipassana (calm and insight) without first attempting mindfulness as regards the body, resembles the owner who yokes the still untamed bullock to the cart or plough without the nose-rope. Such an owner would find himself unable to drive the bullock at his desire. Because the bullock is wild, and because it has no nose-rope, it will either try to run off the road, or try to break loose by breaking the yoke. On the other hand, a person who first tranquillises and trains his mind with contemplation of the body before turning his mind to the practice of samatha and vipassana (calm and insight), his attention will remain steady and his work will be successful.

Classwork: Choose 1 of the following questions to write. CT

1. State the benefits that one will get when practicing the Satipatthana Sutta. State the Objects of meditation that are mentioned, according to the Mindfulness of the Dhamma (Dhammanupassana).
Or
"The only way for the purification of beings is Mindfulness". Discuss with special reference to Mindfulness of the Body. (2001, Dhamma Q7)
2. Satipatthana is the basis to develop Vipassana. Elaborate on this idea. (2004, Dhamma Q7)

A Brief Introduction to Buddhist Meditation

http://www.buddhastation.org/english/about_meditation.html

Bhavana or Meditation means the cultivation and development of mind. As a religion that aims to realize the ultimate truth (Nibbana), meditation plays an essential role in Buddhism. One main purpose of practicing meditation is to eliminate negative mental states and defilements that delude the mind from its purity. At the same time, meditation is practiced to cultivate positive mental states that help to purify the mind and nurture the arising of insights. These insights will ultimately result in the realization of Nibanna.

Meditation brings in concentration and joy to the mind. It trains the mind on how to develop mindfulness and clear comprehension of the natural occurrences of phenomena. In other words, Buddhist meditation trains its practitioners to realize the three universal characteristics of existence, i.e. impermanence, suffering and non-self, in every moment. With this realization, and when the mind gets purified along the way, understandings will arise.

Meditation method refers to the tools to cultivate mindfulness and concentration. They can be classified into two groupings, Samatha Bhavana (Tranquility Meditation) and Vipassana Bhavana (Insight Meditation).

Samatha Bhavana refers to methods that focus on cultivating high levels of concentration (one-pointedness of mind) and calmness (pleasant state of mind) by making successive efforts in focusing one's mind on a meditation object. The purpose of Samatha Bhavana is to cultivate concentration. As one progresses through various levels of concentration, different stages of joy and calmness will arise. And this will temporarily eradicate the three cankers of mind, i.e. greed, hatred and delusion.

In Vipassana Bhavana, practitioners focus their minds on ever-changing objects of reality. Their minds investigate the natural phenomena of the mind and body processes in every present moment. One main difference between Vipassana and Samatha bhavana is their meditation objects. The object of meditation for Vipassana is reality while the object for Samatha are Concepts.

In the practice of Vipassana Bhavana, the arising and dissolving nature of the entire mind and body processes are used as the object of meditation. Practitioners who are mindful of the mental and physical processes of these objects will develop clear comprehension of their true nature. By constant mindful observation, insights will emerge as a result.

Concentration is also an essential element in Vipassana practice. The only difference between the concentration of Samatha and that of Vipassana is that the former is applied on a fixed meditation object while the latter on ever-changing objects. In Vipassana, practitioners concentrate on observing four main objects, i.e. body, feelings, consciousness and mental object. With the increment in concentration level, their minds will become sharper and more balanced. They could observe and experience the changing nature of mind and body in every moment clearly. They will then realize the reality of mind

and body and thus, understand that they too are formed by the same elements that follow the natural karmic law of arising and dissolving. Practitioners will soon realize the non-existence of a 'self' or soul.

With these understandings, higher levels of insights become apparent. With the arising of insight of clear knowing, the mind becomes equanimous. When the mind is absolutely balanced, at peace, pure, energetic and mindful, the practitioner will experience the cessation of all these ever-changing processes and realize the state of Nibbana, the cessation of all suffering.

Difference between Samatha and Vipassana

http://www.chanmyay.org/samatha_vipassana.htm

There are two types of meditation in Buddhism. One is samatha meditation, the other is vipassana. The purpose of samatha meditation is to attain higher concentration of the mind. We call this jhana or appana.

Appana and Jhana

Jhana means the state of mind which is fixed to the object. It is translated by Pali scholars as fixedness of mind. Appana is another word for jhana. Her appana means absorption. When the mind is totally absorbed into the object, that state of mind is called appana. It has the same sense as jhana. When the mind is completely absorbed into the object, it does not go out. It cannot be distracted by anything. As long as the mind is absorbed into the object (of concentration) it is free from all kinds of hindrances such as sensual desire, anger, hatred and aversion, sloth and torpor, worries, restlessness, remorse and sceptical doubt.

Benefits of Concentration

The deeply concentrated mind is free from all kinds of mental hindrances. The meditator lives peacefully and happily as long as the mind is concentrated on the object of meditation. That is the result of samatha meditation.

Samatha here means concentration. So it can be translated as tranquility or calm because when the mind is concentrated on a single object, it becomes tranquil, serene and calm. So samatha can be translated as calmness meditation, tranquility meditation, serenity meditation or concentration meditation.

Samatha Meditator cannot Destroy the Defilements

But a meditator who practices samatha and attains this state of the concentrated mind cannot realise bodily and mental processes in their true nature. Because the Samatha meditator is not able to realise the appearance and disappearance of mental and physical phenomena, he cannot destroy any of the defilements.

The purpose of samatha meditation is to attain deep concentration and live happily and peacefully. This is so as long as the mind is concentrated well on the object of meditation. But without realisation of the three characteristics of existence or three characteristics of the body/mind process, no one can destroy any of the mental defilements of lust greed, desire, craving, hatred, anger, aversion and so on.

When one is not able to destroy these mental defilements, he will not be free from all kinds of suffering. He is still on the ocean of suffering. Only when he has realised anicca, dukkha and anatta or impermanence, suffering, no soul, no self, the nature of body/mind process, will he be able to exterminate all the defilements and live happily and peacefully.

Vipassana Meditation Preceded by Samatha

When a samatha meditator has attained deep concentration of mind, he should switch his noting mind to vipassana meditation. Any mental process or physical process will be observed with the concentration attained through samatha meditation. Such meditation is known as vipassana meditation preceded by samatha meditation.

Samatha meditation alone cannot destroy any of the defilements even though there is deep concentration. We have to practice vipassana.

Sometimes, when we find it difficult to concentrate the mind by means of vipassana meditation, we have to use samatha for some time so that we can concentrate our mind well on the object of meditation.

Having attained deep concentration of the mind, we return to vipassana and observe whatever arises in body and mind as it really occurs.

The purpose of vipassana meditation is to attain nibbana or liberation through realisation of the mind/body process and their true nature. That is why we have to practice vipassana meditation.

Vipassana may be preceded by samatha meditation or we can practice pure vipassana meditation. If we have enough time, say a year or more, we can start with samatha meditation to attain higher concentration of the mind. After that we should practice vipassana based on that powerfully concentrated mind.

In the early suttas

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samatha>

The Buddha is said to have identified two paramount mental qualities that arise from wholesome meditative practice:

- calm abiding (Pāli: *samatha*) which steadies, composes, unifies and concentrates the mind;
- insight (Pāli: *vipassanā*) which enables one to see, explore and discern "formations" (conditioned phenomena based on the five aggregates).

Through the meditative development of calm abiding, one is able to suppress the obscuring five hindrances. With the suppression of these hindrances, the meditative development of insight yields liberating wisdom. Moreover, the Buddha is said to have extolled serenity and insight as conduits for attaining the unconditioned state of *nibbana*. For example, in the *Kimsuka Tree Sutta* (SN 35.245), the Buddha provides an elaborate metaphor in which serenity and insight are "the swift pair of messengers" who deliver the message of *nibbana* via the noble eightfold path.

In the *Four Ways to Arahantship Sutta* (AN 4.170), Ven. Ānanda reports that people attain arahantship using calm abiding and insight in one of three ways:

1. they develop calm abiding and then insight (Pāli: *samatha-pubbangamam vipassanam*)
2. they develop insight and then calm abiding (Pāli: *vipassana-pubbangamam samatham*)
3. they develop calm abiding and insight in tandem (Pāli: *samatha-vipassanam yuganaddham*), for instance, obtaining the first *jhāna* and then seeing in the associated aggregates the three marks of existence before proceeding to the second *jhāna*.

In the Pāli canon, the Buddha never mentions independent *samatha* and *vipassana* meditation practices; instead, *samatha* and *vipassana* are two "qualities of mind" to be developed through meditation. As Thanissaro Bhikkhu writes, "when [the Pāli suttas] depict the Buddha telling his disciples to go meditate, they never quote him as saying 'go do vipassana,' but always 'go do jhana.' And they never equate the word "vipassana" with any mindfulness techniques. In the few instances where they do mention vipassana, they almost always pair it with samatha — not as two alternative methods, but as two qualities of mind that a person may 'gain' or 'be endowed with,' and that should be developed together... In fact the two are indivisible facets of the same process. Calm is the peaceful happiness born of meditation; insight is the clear understanding born of the same meditation. Calm leads to insight and insight leads to calm."

Nonetheless, some meditation practices such as contemplation of a *kasina* object favor the development of *samatha*, others such as contemplation of the aggregates are conducive to the development of *vipassana*, while others such as mindfulness of breathing are classically used for developing both mental qualities.