

Early Buddhism 4: Meditation



What is meditation? Etymology

c.1200, "contemplation; devout preoccupation; devotions, prayer," from Old French meditacion "thought, reflection, study," and directly from Latin meditationem (nominative meditatio) "a thinking over, meditation," noun of action from past participle stem of meditari "to meditate, think over, reflect, consider," frequentative form from PIE root *med- "to measure, limit, consider, advise, take appropriate measures" (cf. Greek medesthai "think about," medon "ruler;" Latin modus "measure, manner," modestus "moderate," modernus "modern," mederi "to heal," medicus "physician;" Sanskrit midiur "I judge, estimate;" Welsh meddwl "mind, thinking;" Gothic miton, Old English metan "to measure;" also see medical).

Meaning "discourse on a subject" is early 14c.; meaning "act of meditating, continuous calm thought upon some subject" is from late 14c. The Latin verb also had stronger senses: "plan, devise, practice, rehearse, study."

What is meditation? Wikipedia

Meditation is a practice in which an individual trains the mind or induces a mode of consciousness, either to realize some benefit or as an end in itself.

What is meditation? Buddha

- Cittabhāvanā: development of the mind
- Samādhi: oneness, stillness, coalescence
- Jhāna: Absorption
- Samatha: tranquility
- Vipassanā: discernment, insight
- Anupassanā: contemplation, sustained observation
- Satipaṭṭhāna: presence of mindfulness

Why meditate?

- To relax

Why meditate?



Why meditate?

- To be more loving

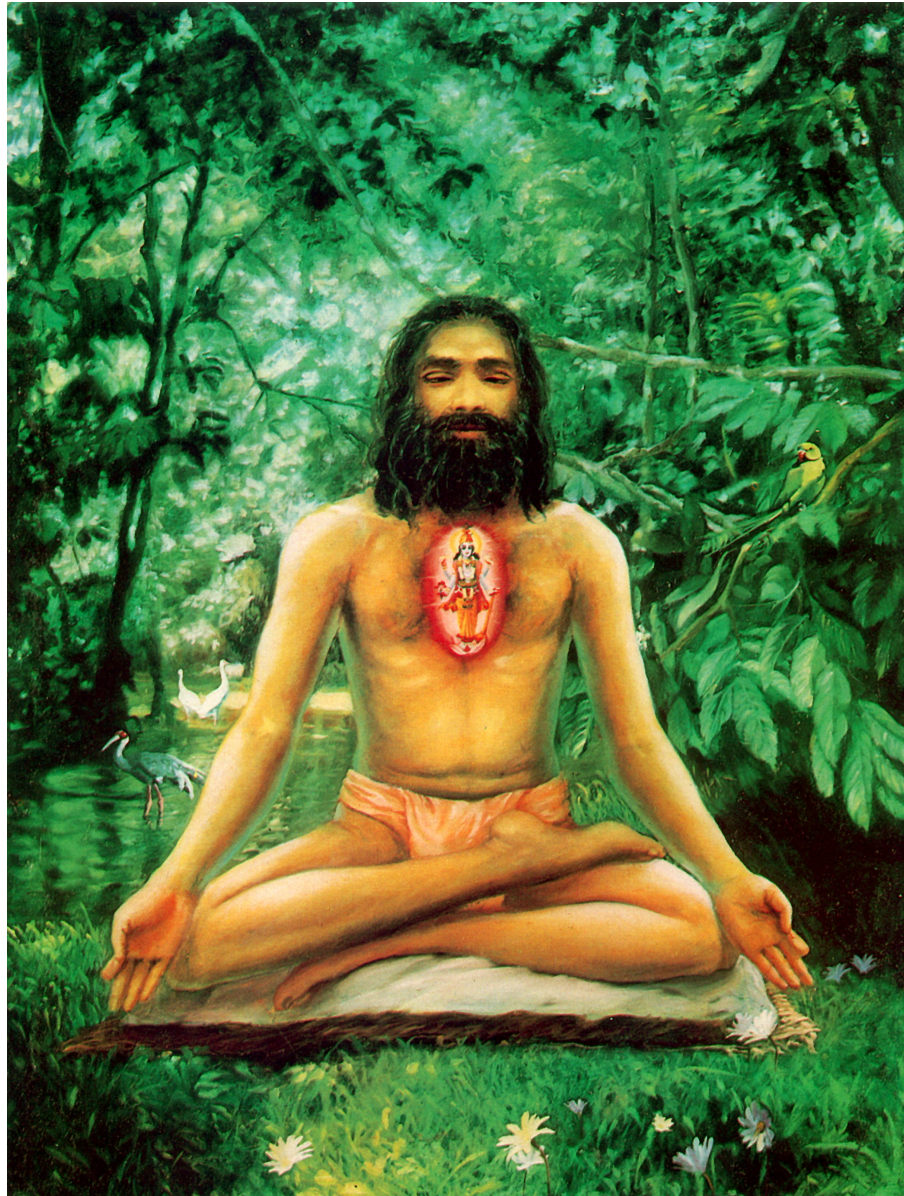
Why meditate?



Why meditate?

- The see the god within

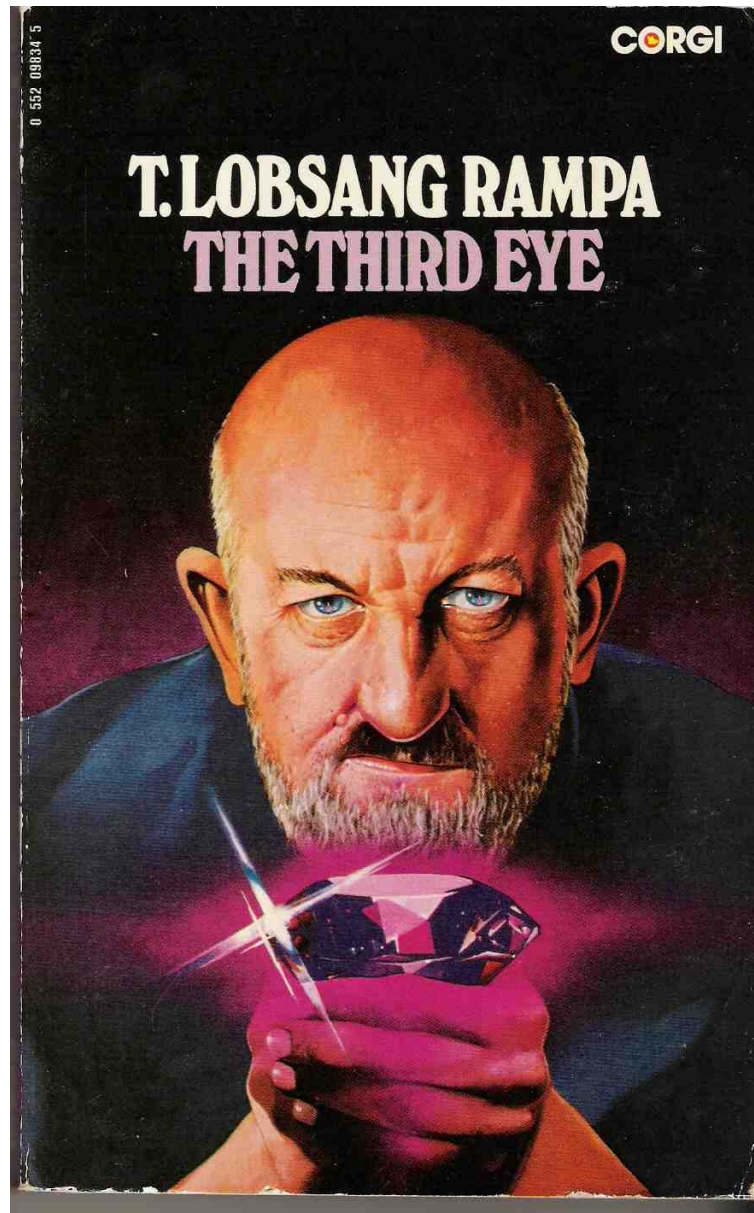
Why meditate?



Why meditate?

- To gain special powers

Why meditate?



Why meditate?

- To actualize our spiritual energies

Why meditate?



Why meditate?

- So we can be really, really peaceful

Why meditate?



Why meditate?

- To be free

Why meditate?



The process of meditation

- Ethics
- Meditation
- Wisdom

Ethics & Meditation

- How they are linked
- The power of reflection & the power of cultivation

Willpower or pleasure? AN 11.2

- For a person endowed with virtue, there is no need for an act of will, 'May freedom from remorse arise in me.' It is in the nature of things that freedom from remorse arises in a person endowed with virtue.
- For a person free from remorse, there is no need for an act of will, 'May joy arise in me.'
- For a joyful person, there is no need for an act of will, 'May rapture arise in me.'

Willpower or pleasure? AN 11.2

- For a rapturous person, there is no need for an act of will, 'May my body be serene.'
- For a person serene in body, there is no need for an act of will, 'May I experience pleasure.'
- For a person experiencing pleasure, there is no need for an act of will, 'May my mind coalesce as one.'
- For a person whose mind has coalesced as one, there is no need for an act of will, 'May I know & see things as they actually are.'

Willpower or pleasure? AN 11.2

- For a person who knows & sees things as they actually are, there is no need for an act of will, 'May I feel disenchantment.'
- For a person who feels disenchantment, there is no need for an act of will, 'May I grow dispassionate.'
- For a dispassionate person, there is no need for an act of will, 'May I realize the knowledge & vision of release.'

Willpower or pleasure?

- In this way, dhammas lead on to dhammas, dhammas bring dhammas to their consummation, for the sake of going from the near to the Further Shore.

Breathing: 1st tetrad

- Long
- Short
- Whole
- Calm

Breathing: 2nd tetrad

- Joy
- Pleasure
- Emotion
- Calm

Breathing: 3rd tetrad

- Awareness
- Gladness
- Coalescence
- Freedom

Breathing: 4th tetrad

- Change
- Fading
- Ending
- Letting go

Breathing = Mindfulness

- 1st tetrad = body contemplation
- 2nd tetrad = feeling contemplation
- 3rd tetrad = mind contemplation
- 4th tetrad = dhamma contemplation

Early Buddhist vs. 20th century meditation

- Samatha *and* vipassanā vs. samatha *contra* vipassanā
- Satipaṭṭhāna leads to jhāna vs. satipaṭṭhāna = vipassanā
- Bliss is essential vs. bliss is dangerous
- Skilful eliminantion vs. suppression of hindrances.
- Stillness vs. concentration

Samatha & vipassanā

- What is samatha?
- What is vipassanā?
- Interrelatedness
- Purpose: overcome hindrances

Satipaṭṭhāna & samādhi

- Satipaṭṭhāna overcomes hindrances
- Satipaṭṭhāna → samatha & vipassanā
- Mindfulness of breathing is satipaṭṭhāna
- Satipaṭṭhāna → samādhi

Bliss

- Bliss is essential!
- Bliss → meditation.
- Attachment to bliss?

Calm and will

- Elimination vs. suppression of hindrances
- Stillness vs. concentration
- The way of ease

Meghiya Sutta

- Five supports
- Four meditations

Five supports

- Good friendship
- Virtue
- Teachings
- Effort
- Wisdom

Four meditations

- Unattractiveness
- Loving kindness
- Mindfulness of breathing
- Perception of impermanence

Discussion topic

- How do we translate these teachings to my own experience in meditation?
- What does bliss feel like?
- Is there such a thing as wrong meditation?
- What is it like when everything just clicks?