

Right Mindfulness

In

Early Buddhism

## *Samatha* and *vipassanā* together

But why is it that they develop together?

The hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) fuel delusion, which is the opposite of *vipassanā*:

- “And what is the fuel for ignorance (*avijjā*)? You should say: ‘The five hindrances.’”  
(AN 10.61)

## *Samatha and vipassanā* together

The hindrances also oppose *samatha/samādhi*:

Three kinds of  
misconduct >

Three kinds of good  
conduct >

Five hindrances >

Four applications of  
mindfulness >

Delusion (*avijjā*)

Seven factors of  
awakening >

Knowledge (*vijjā*) and  
liberation

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## *Samatha and vipassanā* together

What this means is that the hindrances hinder both *samatha* and *vipassanā*.

When the hindrances increase, both *samatha* and *vipassanā* decline.

When the hindrances decrease, both *samatha* and *vipassanā* improve.

The two always go together.

Yet *samatha* and *vipassanā* are also conditioned by other factors.

Do *samatha* and *vipassanā* always go together?

“As for the person who has calm but not clear seeing: they should approach someone who has discernment and ask:

‘Venerable, how should phenomena be seen?

How should they be comprehended?

How should they be discerned?’

That person would answer from their own experience: ‘This is how phenomena should be seen, comprehended, and discerned.’

After some time they have both calm and clear seeing.”

(AN 4.94)

## Kinds of reflection

Developing discernment is called developing perceptions (*saññā*) in the *suttas*:

- Perception of impurity (*asubhasaññā*)
- Perception of death (*maraṇasaññā*)
- Perception of being fed up with the entire world (*sabbaloke anabhiratisaññā*)
- Perception of impermanence (*aniccasaññā*)

(E.g. AN 10.60 + AN 10.56)

Do *samatha* and *vipassanā* always go together?

“As for the person who has clear seeing but not calm:

they should approach someone who has calm and ask:

‘Venerable, how should the mind be calmed? How should it be settled? How should it be unified? How should it be stilled?’

That person would answer from their own experience: ‘Venerable, this is how the mind should be calmed, settled, unified, and stilled.’

After some time they have both calm and clear seeing.”

(AN 4.94)

Do *samatha* and *vipassanā* always go together?

“A monastic may develop calm (*samatha*) as a forerunner to clear seeing (*vipassanā*).

As they do so, the path is born in them. They cultivate, develop, and make much of it.

By doing so, they give up the fetters and eliminate the underlying tendencies.

Another monastic develops clear seeing as a forerunner to calm.

As they do so, the path is born in them. ...

Another monastic develops calm and clear seeing in conjunction.

As they do so, the path is born in them. ...”

(AN 4.170)

Do *samatha* and *vipassanā* always go together?

So it is generally true that *samatha* and *vipassanā* develop together.

It is also true that the relative strength of each will vary from person to person:

“And what’s the painful practice with slow insight? It’s when someone is ordinarily full of acute desire, ill will, and confusion. ... These 5 faculties manifest in them weakly: confidence, energy, mindfulness, stillness, and wisdom.”  
(AN 4.162)

Do *samatha* and *vipassanā* always go together?

“And what’s the painful practice with swift understanding? It’s when someone is ordinarily full of acute desire, ill will, and confusion. ... And these five faculties manifest in them strongly: confidence, energy, mindfulness, stillness, and wisdom.”  
(AN 4.162)

This means the hindrances and *samatha* and *vipassanā* are correlated differently for different people.

## Reducing the hindrances

If the development of *samatha* and *vipassanā* both depend on reducing the hindrances, then this becomes the main task of the path, including meditation.

This can be done in two ways:

- By observing a meditation object: the main aim is calm, with clear seeing coming along
- By contemplating and reflecting: the main aim is clear seeing, with calm coming along.

## Reducing the hindrances

Observing a meditation object is typically what happens in the first 12 steps on *ānāpānasati*.  
(MN 118)

Contemplating and reflecting is what happens by developing *saññā* and in the last 4 steps of *ānāpānasati*.

## How to combine reflection and meditation

If mindfulness is not yet strong enough to stay with an object, then use reflection to clear the way.

If you get stuck in watching the breath, use reflection to get rid of hindrances.

After deep meditation, use reflection to see the nature of reality (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*).

## *Satipaṭṭhāna and samādhi*

“... you should train like this: ‘I’ll meditate observing an aspect of the body (feelings/mind/mental qualities)—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of desire and aversion for the world.’ That’s how you should train.

When **this stillness** (*samādhi*) is well developed and cultivated in this way, you should develop it with movement of the mind ... without movement of the mind ... with rapture ... with bliss ... with equanimity.”  
(AN 8.63)

## *Satipaṭṭhāna and samādhi*

“Venerables, you should meditate observing an aspect of the body (feelings/mind/mental qualities)—keen, aware, at one, **with minds that are clear, stilled, and unified**, so as to truly know the body.”

(SN 47.4)

“No absorption for one without wisdom, no wisdom for one without absorption. But one with absorption and wisdom—they are truly close to extinguishment.”

(Dhp 372)

## *Satipaṭṭhāna and samādhi*

“As they meditate observing an aspect of the body, there arises physical tension, or mental sluggishness, or the mind is externally scattered. That monastic should direct their mind towards an inspiring foundation.

As they do so, joy springs up. Being joyful, rapture springs up. When the mind is full of rapture, the body becomes tranquil. When the body is tranquil, one feels bliss. When blissful, the mind becomes stilled. Then they reflect: ‘I have accomplished the goal for which I directed my mind.’”

(SN 47.10)

## *Satipaṭṭhāna* and deep insight

“The four applications of mindfulness ... is the path to purify sentient beings, to get them past sorrow and crying, to make an end of pain and sadness, to end the cycle of suffering, and to make them realize extinguishment.”

(MN 10)

“With a mind well developed in the four applications of mindfulness—seeing their limits and fully fathoming their meaning—a monastic makes an end of suffering in this very life.”

(AN 10.28)

## *Satipaṭṭhāna* and deep insight

Yet this way of exposition is confined to the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas and a few other *suttas*.

And what is peculiar to the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas is that they do not just show the path to stillness, but also the attainment and contemplation of that stillness (*samādhi*).

So it seems there is *satipaṭṭhāna* practice on both sides of *samādhi*.

## *Satipaṭṭhāna* and deep insight

The tenfold path (AN 10.103):

...

right mindfulness (*sammāsati/satipaṭṭhāna*) >

right stillness (*sammāsamādhi*) >

right knowledge (*sammāñāṇaṃ/satipaṭṭhāna*) >

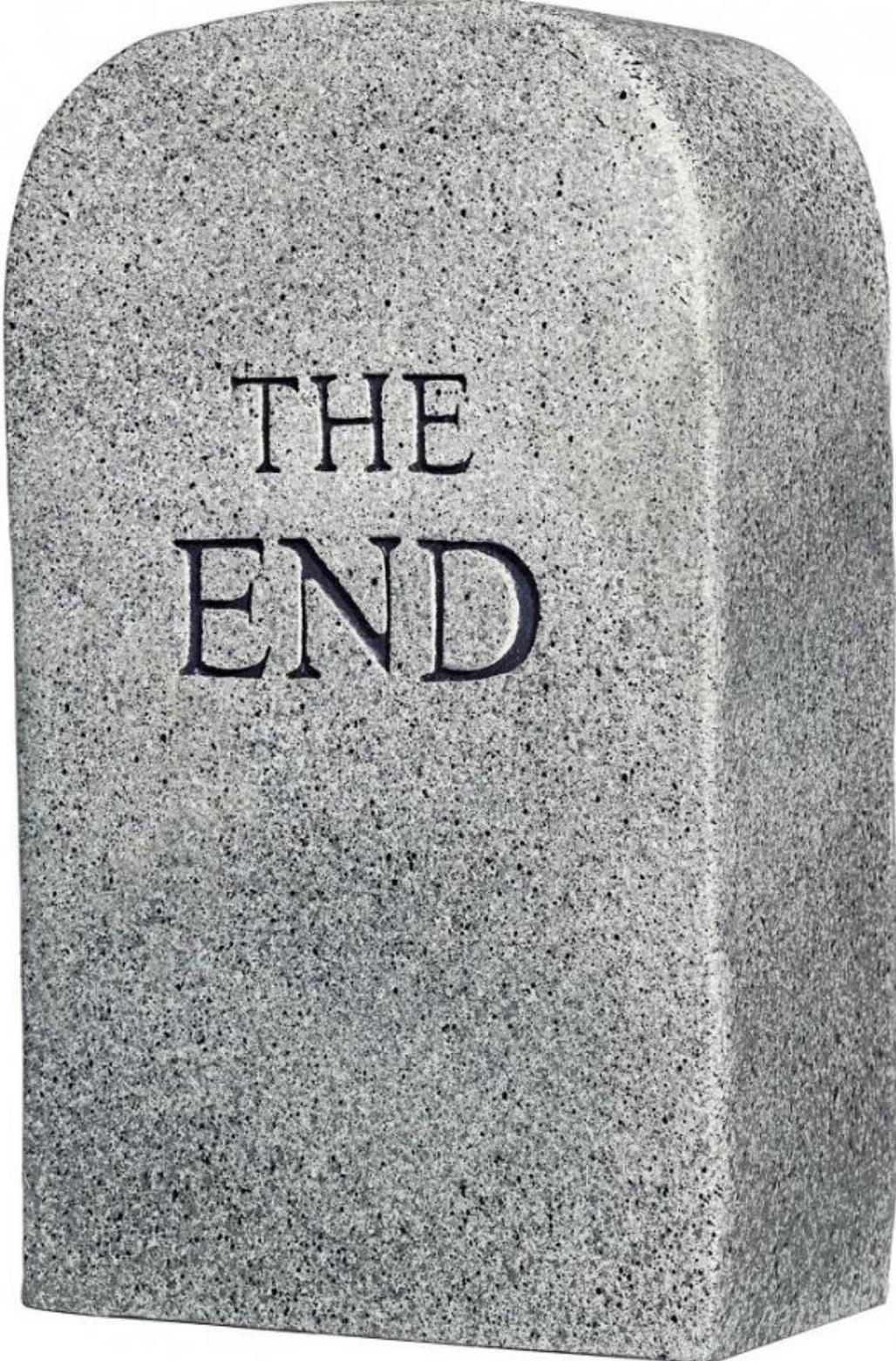
right liberation (*sammāvimutti*)

# Summary

- *Vipassanā* is not a kind of meditation but a result.
- *Vipassanā* and *samatha* are a result of reducing the hindrances. This means they must always develop together.
- *Vipassanā* is explained as understanding the nature of phenomena = three characteristics.
- The most direct way of achieving this is through reflection, which in the suttas is called developing perception.

## Summary

- There is little evidence in the *suttas* for the contemporary *vipassanā* meditation techniques, such as watching the changing nature of feelings.
- Because *samatha* and *vipassanā* develop together, you can measure your success in *vipassanā* by how much your *samatha*, your calm, has improved.
- There is effectively *satipaṭṭhāna* before and after *samādhi*. Their purpose is different.

A grey, textured stone marker with a rounded top and a rectangular base. The words "THE" and "END" are engraved in a serif font on the front face. The stone has a porous, granular texture. The background is white, with black bars on the left and right sides.

THE  
END