

3 (Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi Sutta 3

Tatiya (Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi Sutta

The Third Discourse on Samadhi (in terms of calm and insight) | A 4.94/2:93-95

Theme: 4 ways of meditating for awakening

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2013

1 Triad of suttas

There are three (**Samatha Vipassanā**) **Samādhi Suttas**—all dealing with 4 ways of meditating for the sake of awakening—as follows:

(Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi S 1	A 4.92/2:92	a mere list of 4 kinds of meditators	SD 95.7
(Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi S 2	A 4.93/2:92 f	samatha-vipassana by personal effort	SD 95.8
(Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi S 3	A 4.94/2:93-95	samatha-vipassana through consultation	SD 41.3

These three suttas deal with the same subject: a harmonious practice calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) for the sake of awakening. **Sutta 1** merely lists the 4 kinds of practitioners, that is,

- (1) one who attains calm but not insight;
- (2) one who attains insight but not calm;
- (3) one who attains neither;
- (4) one who attains both calm and insight.

Sutta 2 admonishes us to practise a harmonious balance of calm and insight *through personal effort*, while **Sutta 3**, with essentially the same material, instructs that whichever aspects we have not attained, we should consult a meditator who has attained it, and if we have harmonized our practice, then we should work for awakening.

2 (Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi Sutta 3

2.1 THE 4 KINDS OF MEDITATORS. The (**Samatha Vipassanā**) **Samādhi Sutta 2** (A 4.93) has essentially the same material as the (**Samatha Vipassanā**) **Samādhi Sutta 3** (A 4.94), except that while the former points to personal effort, the latter advises the meditator to consult an experienced meditator, thus:

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|--|-------------------------------------|-------|
| (1) A meditator who is able to attain only calm | should consult an insight-attainer. | [\$2] |
| (2) A meditator who is able to attain only insight | should consult a calm-attainer. | [\$3] |
| (3) A meditator who is unable to attain both | should consult one skilled in both. | [\$4] |
| (4) A meditator who is able to attain both | should work for awakening. | [\$5] |

Here, it should be understood that attaining “**calm**” (*samatha*) refers to dhyana or at least some level of mental concentration. For full mental concentration, that is, dhyana, the mind must be completely free from the five mental hindrances of sense-desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and spiritual doubt¹ [3.4].

“**Insight**” (*vipassanā*) is the perception and understanding that formations or conditioned phenomena are impermanent (*anicca*). Building on this perception, we go on to reflect that whatever is impermanent is also unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and that whatever is impermanent and unsatisfactory is beyond our control, that is, does not constitute an unchanging or abiding self, soul, entity or essence—hence, is non-self (*anatta*).²

2.2 CALM AND INSIGHT: THE RIGHT QUESTIONS. The third kind of meditator is described in the most detail, because he needs to master both the aspects of calm and insight in his meditation. The Sutta advises the proper questions that should be asked for the purpose of rectifying our meditation. These

¹ On the 5 mental hindrances, see *Nīvaraṇa*, SD 32.1.

² See **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59/3:66-68), SD 1.2.

questions are the Sutta's core teachings, and come into two sets, those concerning calm and concerning insight.

For the cultivation of calm, the basic questions are:

How should the mind [thoughts] be steadied?	<i>Kathaṃ nu kho...cittaṃ saṅghapetabbam?</i>
How should the mind be composed?	<i>Kathaṃ cittaṃ sannisādetabbam?</i>
How should the mind be unified [made one]?	<i>Kathaṃ cittaṃ ekodī,kattabbam?</i>
How should the mind be concentrated?	<i>Kathaṃ cittaṃ samādahātabbam?</i>

The Commentary explains that the mind is *steadied, composed, unified* and *concentrated* by way of the four dhyanas (AA 3:116). [§§3.3, 4.3A]

For the cultivation of insight, the basic questions are:

How, avuso, should formations be seen?	<i>Kathaṃ nu kho...saṅkhārā daṭṭhabbā?</i>
How should formations be comprehended?"	<i>Kathaṃ saṅkhārā sammāsittabbā?</i>
How should formations be penetrated with insight?"	<i>Kathaṃ saṅkhārā vipassitabbā?</i>

The Commentary explains that formations should be *seen* as impermanent, *comprehended* as impermanent, and *penetrated with insight* as impermanent; and so too as suffering, and as non-self (AA 3:116). [§§2.3, 4.3B]

3 Balanced meditation

3.1 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS. The **Aṅguttara Commentary** explains “mental calm” (*ceto, samatha*) here as the attainment concentration or full concentration of mind (*appanā, citta, samādhi*) (a theme of the Samatha Vipassanā Samādhi Sutta 3), and “higher wisdom that is insight into states [things]” as the insight knowledge that discerns formations (*saṅkhāra, pariggaha, vipassanā, ñāṇa*), that is, insight into the five aggregates (AA 2:325).

In simpler terms, “mental calm” refers to the attainment of dhyana or at least some level of mental concentration marked by some depth of bliss.³ The “higher wisdom that is insight into states” is the understanding of all formations or condition phenomena as impermanent, and so on. [2.1]

3.2 THE CALMATTAINER. The first practitioner—who gains *only* mental calm—clearly refers to what the commentaries is called the “calm [tranquillity] practitioner” (*samatha, yānika*), literally, “one whose vehicle is calmness.”⁴ It should be noted that in **the (Samatha Vipassanā) Samādhi Suttas**, the term calm (*samatha*) refers to only one of the two integral aspects of a proper meditation; the other aspect is insight (*insight*).

In the commentaries, however, the meditation aspect became a meditation specialist: the method became reified into a person, “the one whose vehicle is calmness” (*samatha, yānika*). While it is meaningful to use this term to describe a meditator who *needs* to cultivate vipassana to balance his practice, it should not be understood to refer to one who meditates *only* to attain samatha or dhyana.⁵

3.3 THE INSIGHT ATTAINER. The second—who attains only insight—is the “insight practitioner” (*vipassanā, yānika*), became, in the commentarial tradition, the “dry-insight practitioner” (*sukkha, vipassaka*) who practises “*only* insight.” An insight aspect of meditation here become reified into a person. Such a practitioner would understandably not have balanced practice, as the other vital wing of meditation (that of calm) is missing.

In other words, we should not read the sutta texts merely on the *word* level, but we need to understand them on a “spiritual” level (“in the spirit”), based on personal experience of meditation. The reality is that

³ See *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1 (9) The signs and stages of zest,

⁴ Eg DA 3:754; MA 1:239; AA 3:142; KhpA 182; SnA 1:277, 2:547; NmA 2:313; NcA 102; PmA 3:696; VbhA 215.

⁵ We could, of course, use this term—*samatha, yānika*—as one who is only interested in dhyanas (say for the pleasure of them). Such a person, however, would be regarded as meditating for the wrong reason, and not working to correct his wrong views.

no one ever really experience meditation properly from either only samatha or only vipassana (that is, one without some help from the other)—remember the parable of the bird flying with two wings (Dh 275).⁶

3.4 THE NON-ATTAINER. The third “meditator” is one who attains neither aspects. He is probably a novice meditator, or someone who has some difficulties in his practice, which happens in many practitioners. Furthermore, a meditator who is unable to attain both samatha or vipassana, or either of them possibly because he does not have a competent teacher, or the meditator is undiligent or uncertain in applying what he has been taught. In other words, he is troubled by the 5 mental hindrances of sense-desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and spiritual doubt⁷ [2.1].

3.5 THE CALM-INSIGHT ATTAINER. The fourth practitioner—the “twin-method” (*yuganaddha*) meditator—attains both samatha and vipassana, as elaborated in **the (Yuganaddha) Paṭipadā Sutta** (A 4.-170), where vipassana is said to be developed before, after, or together with samatha.⁸ This is, in fact, the next step in meditation after we are able to understand and accept the teachings of the 3 characteristics⁹ or we are able to attain some level of mental concentration.¹⁰

In practical meditation, when we feel calmness in meditation, we should, sooner or later, reflect on such states or on whatever is going in and around us (even when we are unable to feel mentally focussed) as being impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self.¹¹

Such passages as the above (M 4.92+93+94) are merely listing the various ways we can balance or harmonize samatha and vipassana to this effect. The two are never treated in the suttas as being any kind of separate or independent meditation “method,” but are really two strategies for proper meditation and personal growth.¹²

3.6 FUNCTIONS OF CALM AND INSIGHT. Essentially, the purpose of cultivating calm or samatha is to overcome the mental hindrances [2.1] and that of insight or vipassana is to properly direct the mind to liberating wisdom. Calm clears the mind for wisdom, while wisdom empowers the mind to better clear itself of distractions. Hence, samatha and vipassana must work together for the sake of mental liberation.

According to **the Samatha Vipassanā Sutta** (A 2.3.10), both samatha and vipassana are needed to gain liberating knowledge; indeed, when properly cultivated, they both ripen as “supreme knowledge” (*vijjā*).

Bhikshus, there are these two things that comprise supreme knowledge.¹³ What are the two?
Calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*).¹⁴

⁶ See **Samatha and vipassana**, SD 41.1 (1.3.2).

⁷ On the mental hindrances, see *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1 (8.2) & (14) Tips for effective meditation

⁸ A 4.170.2/2:157,4-6 = SD 41.5.

⁹ On the 3 characteristics, see **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.12-16/3:67 f), SD 1.2 & **Arahatā S 2** (S 22.27/3:84), SD 42.9.

¹⁰ *Vipassanā, pubb’āṅgamaṃ samatham*. This refers to a practitioner who naturally gains insight, with which he cultivates one-pointedness of the mind*—this is the insight practitioner (*vipassanā, yānika*) (MA 1:112). According to **the Paṭisambhidā, magga**, this second mode of meditation begins right away with the contemplation of the 3 characteristics. This is followed by the cultivating of “letting go” (*vossagga*), perhaps as a result of the detachment arising from insight (Pm 2:96). *On “one-pointedness of the mind” (*cittassa ekaggatā*), see **Samādhi**, SD 33.1a (1.2).

¹¹ An easy method of beginners is to simply reflect on such states as being “impermanent,” going on to the other 2 characteristics only when we feel more ready.

¹² See **Samatha and vipassana**, SD 41.1 (2.1.2).

¹³ “Comprise supreme knowledge,” *vijjā, bhāgiya*, lit “have a part of knowledge,” “partake of supreme knowledge” (A:NB 42). According to A:NB (1999:280 n3), “supreme knowledge” (*vijjā*) here may refer to “the 3 knowledges” (*te, vijjā*) or an “eightfold division.” The three knowledges are: (1) the knowledge of the recollection of past lives; (2) the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings according to their karma; (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes. The “eightfold division” are: (1) insight knowledge (*vipassanā, ñāṇa*); (2) the power of creating of a mind-made body (*mano.mayā iddhi*); (3) psychic powers (*iddhi, vidhā*); (4) the divine ear (*dibba, sota*); (5) the knowledge of reading the minds of others (*parassa ceto, pariya, ñāṇa*); (6) the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu* or *cutūpapāta, ñāṇa*); (7) the knowledge of the recollection of one’s past lives (*pubbe, nivāsānussati ñāṇa*); (8) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya ñāṇa*) (A 3.100.1-10/1:253-256).

Bhikshus, when **calm** is cultivated, what benefit does it bring? The mind is developed.
When the mind is developed, what benefit does it bring? All lust is abandoned.

Bhikshus, when **insight** is cultivated, what benefit does it bring? Wisdom is developed.
When wisdom is developed, what benefit does it bring? All ignorance is abandoned.

Bhikshus, a mind defiled by lust cannot free itself, and wisdom defiled by ignorance cannot grow.

Thus, bhikshus, through the fading away of lust there is the liberation of mind (*ceto, vimutti*);
through the fading away of ignorance, there is the liberation by wisdom (*paññā, vimutti*).

(A 2.3.10/1:61) = SD 3.2(4.2); cf Dh 372

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The Third Discourse on Samadhi

A 4.94/2:93-95

The 4 kinds of meditators

1 Bhikshus, there are these four kinds of persons in the world. What are the four?

- (1) Here, bhikshus, a certain person is an attainer of inner mental calm,
but *not* an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states [things].¹⁵
- (2) Here, [94] bhikshus, a certain person is an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states,
but *not* an attainer of inner mental calm.¹⁶
- (3) Here, bhikshus, a certain person is *neither* an attainer of inner mental calm,
nor an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states.¹⁷
- (4) Here, bhikshus, a certain person is *both* an attainer of inner mental calm,
and an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states, too.¹⁸

(1) Attainer of calm but not of insight

2.1 Here, bhikshus, as for that person who is an attainer of inner mental calm, but *not* an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states—

2.2 he, bhikshus, should approach an attainer of *higher wisdom* that is insight into states with these words:

“How, avuso, should formations [conditioned states]¹⁹ be seen?²⁰
How should formations be comprehended?”²¹

¹⁴ “Calm” (*samatha*) is the “one-pointedness of the mind” (*cittassa eka-g, gatā*), ie mental concentration culminating in the dhyanas (*jhāna*). “Insight” (*vipassanā*) is “the knowledge that comprehends the formations” (*saṅkhārā, -pariggāhaka, ñāṇa*) as impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self” (AA 2:119).

¹⁵ *Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo lābhī hoti ajjhataṃ ceto, samathassa, na lābhī adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya.*¹⁶

Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco puggalo lābhī hoti adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya, na lābhī ajjhataṃ ceto, -samathassa.

¹⁷ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco puggalo n’eva lābhī hoti ajjhataṃ ceto, samathassa, na lābhī adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya.*

¹⁸ *Idha pana bhikkhave ekacco puggalo lābhī c’eva hoti ajjhataṃ ceto, samathassa, lābhī ca adhipaññā, dhamma, vipassanāya.*

¹⁹ *Saṅkhārā*, here referring to all existence, conditioned phenomena, ie, everything except nirvana.

²⁰ *Kathaṃ nu kho āvuso saṅkhārā daṭṭhabbā?*

How should formations be penetrated with insight?”²²

2.3 He then answers him as he has seen, as he has known:

“Formations should be *seen* thus.

Formations should be *comprehended* thus.

Formations should be *penetrated* with insight thus.”²³

2.4 In due course, he is both an attainer of inner mental calm, and an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states, too.

(2) Attainer of insight but not of calm

3.1 Here, bhikshus, as for that person who is an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states, but *not* an attainer of inner mental calm—

3.2 he, bhikshus, should approach an attainer of inner *mental calm* with these words:

“How, avuso, should the mind [thoughts] be steadied?”²⁴

How should the mind be composed?”²⁵

How should the mind be unified [made one]?”²⁶

How should the mind be concentrated?”²⁷

3.3 He then answers him as he has seen, as he has known:

“The mind should be *steadied* thus.

The mind should be *composed* thus.

The mind should be *unified* thus.

The mind should be *concentrated* thus.”²⁸

3.4 In due course, he is *both* an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states *and* an attainer of inner mental calm, too.

(3) Attainer of neither calm nor insight

4.1 Here, bhikshus, as for that person who is *neither* an attainer of inner mental calm, *nor* an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states—

4.2 he, bhikshus, should approach *both* an attainer of inner mental calm, *and* an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states with these words:²⁹

(A) HOW TO CULTIVATE CALM

“How, avuso, should the mind [thoughts] be steadied?

How should the mind be composed?

How should the mind be unified [made one]?

How should the mind be concentrated?

(B) HOW TO CULTIVATE INSIGHT

²¹ *Katham saṅkhārā sammāsītābā?* **Sammāsītābā** is fpp of *saṃ* + *masati* [fr √MRŚ, “to touch,” only in cpds, used figuratively] to touch, seize, grasp, know thoroughly, master, comprehend, S 2:107; Dh 374; Miln 325; to think, meditate on (acc) J 6:379; prp *sammasam* J 2:107 & *sammasanto* Miln 379; J 1:74, 75, fem *sammasantī* ThA 62, *sammasamāna* Miln 219, 325, 398; pp (poss an agent n) *sammāsītā* Sn 69c.

²² *Katham saṅkhārā vipassītābā?*

²³ Comy: Formations should be *seen* as impermanent, *comprehended* as impermanent, and *penetrated with insight* as impermanent; and so too as suffering, and as non-self (AA 3:116).

²⁴ *Katham nu kho āvuso cittaṃ saṅṭhapetabbam?*

²⁵ *Katham cittaṃ sannisādetabbam?*

²⁶ *Katham cittaṃ ekodi, kattabbam?*

²⁷ *Katham cittaṃ samādahātābham?*

²⁸ Comy: The mind is *steadied*, *composed*, *unified* and *concentrated* by way of the first dhyana, and so too by way of the second and other dhyanas (AA 3:116).

²⁹ It should be understood here that we can either approach a meditator who is skilled only in either calm (*samatha*) or in insight (*vipassanā*) for the appropriate instructions, or better to approach one who is skilled in both.

How, avuso, should formations [conditioned states] be seen?

How should formations be comprehended?"

How should formations be penetrated with insight?"

4.3 He then answers him as he has seen, as he has known:

(A) THE CULTIVATION OF CALM

"The mind should be steadied thus.

The mind should be composed thus.

The mind should be unified thus.

The mind should be concentrated thus.³⁰

(B) THE CULTIVATION OF INSIGHT

Formations should be seen thus.

Formations should be comprehended thus.

Formations should be penetrated with insight thus."³¹

4.4 In due [95] course, he is *both* an attainer of inner mental calm *and* an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states, too.

(4) Attainer of both calm and insight

5.1 Here, bhikshus, that person who is *both* an attainer of inner mental calm, *and* an attainer of higher wisdom that is insight into states, too,

5.2 should establish himself further in wholesome states, be one engaged in what is proper for the destruction of the influxes.³²

6 These, bhikshus, are the four kinds of persons found in the world.

— evaṃ —

130104; 130105; 130201; 130324

³⁰ Comy: The mind is *steadied, composed, unified* and *concentrated* by way of the first dhyana, and so too by way of the second and other dhyanas (AA 3:116). [§3.3]

³¹ Comy: Formations should be *seen* as impermanent, *comprehended* as impermanent, and *penetrated with insight* as impermanent; and so too as suffering, and as non-self (AA 3:116). [§2.3]

³² *Tena bhikkhave puggalena tesu yeva kusalesu dhammesu patiṭṭhāya uttarim āsavānaṃ khayāya yogo karaṇīyo*, lit “Bhikshus, further practice (*yoga*, “yoke”) should be done by that monk to bring about such wholesome states for the sake of the destruction of the influxes (ie the attainment of arhathood).”