

## DEVELOPMENT OF CONCENTRATION FOR MENTAL WELLNESS; A CONCISE CLARIFICATION

Dr. Rathnasiri Rathnayaka<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, concentration is “profitable unification of mind” (*cittassaekaggatā*) which refers to harmony (*samagga*) of consciousness and its concomitants in focusing on a single object. It is in this sense that the term ‘concentration’ is known as ‘one-pointedness.’ ‘*Samatha*’ and ‘*samādhi*’ are often used as synonyms for concentration. ‘*Ekaggatā*’, according to the *Abhdhammatthasaṅgha*, is one-pointedness on one object or focusing the mind on one object. It is further explained with several similes; it is like a lamp-flame in a windless place. It is like a firmly fixed pillar that cannot be shaken by the wind. It is like water that binds together several substances to form one concrete compound. This mental state prevents its concomitants from dissipation and fixes them on one object.

Right Concentration in its widest sense is the mental concentration which is present in every wholesome state of consciousness (*kusala-citta*), and this is the reason why the *Visuddhimagga* mentions it as *kusala-citta-ekaggatā*. This state of mind is manifested as non-wavering, non-distraction and non-agitation, steadiness and steadfastness of mind or unscattered mentality which establishes inward tranquility or calmness.

Concentration (*samādhi*) develops in the four absorptions (*jhānas*). When one begins to concentrate, *upacārasamādhi* develops. It is the access to concentration. When it is developed, *appaṇāsamādhi* is attained. It is the attainment of concentration in the process of Concentration Meditation (*Samathabhāvanā*). At this stage of concentration, a suppression of the fivefold- sense activity and the Five Hindrances takes place giving rise to mental wellness. However, the state of consciousness is of complete alertness and lucidity.

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<sup>1</sup> B.A. (BPU) / M.A. Eng. Ling. (UKEL) / M.A. Bud. / Ph.D. Bud. (PGIPBS)  
Dean, Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Nāgānanda International Institute for Buddhist  
Studies, Manelwatta, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, rathnasiri66@gmail.com

1. Detached from sensual objects (unwholesome consciousness), he enters the First Absorption filled with reasoning, investigation, zest, happiness and one-pointedness (*vitakka, vicāra, pīti, sukha* and *ekaggatā*). They are called *paṭhamajjhānaṅga*.
2. Detached from reasoning and investigation (*vitakka* and *vicāra*), he enters the Second Absorption filled with zest, happiness and one-pointedness (*pīti, sukha* and *ekaggatā*). They are called *Dutiyajjhānaṅga*.
3. Detached from zest (*pīti*), he enters the Third Absorption filled with happiness and one-pointedness (*sukha* and *ekaggatā*). They are known as *Tatijjhānaṅga*.
4. Transcending from happiness (*sukha*), he enters the Fourth Absorption endowed with one-pointedness purified by equanimity, and they are known as *Catutthajjhānaṅga*.

High degree of concentration can be developed by one of the forty subjects of tranquility meditation (*Samatha –kammatṭhāna*).

*Samādhi* or *cittassaekaggatā* (one-pointedness of mind) is established by Right Concentration. Right Concentration is cultivated by Right Mindfulness (*sammā sati*) and Right Effort (*sammāvāyāma*). In other words, Right Mindfulness and Right Effort are conducive to Right Concentration. Right Concentration is established by the four applications of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). *Samādhi* is of three degrees of development;

1. Preparatory Concentration (*parikamma – samādhi*) which exists at the beginning of mental exercise.
2. Access Concentration or Neighborhood Concentration (*upacāra–samādhi*) which approaches the First Absorption (*jhāna*) without attaining it. *Upacāra* literally means ‘approaching near’ and it is the degree of concentration just before entering any of the absorptions. Thus, it belongs to the sensuous sphere (*kāmāvacara*). In Access Concentration, unification of mind is obtained by the Six Recollections, Mindfulness of death, the Recollection of peace, the Perception of Repulsiveness in Nutriment and the Defining of the Four Elements.
3. Attainment Concentration (*appanā–samādhi*), which is present in the Four Absorptions (*jhānas*). *Appanā* literally means ‘fixing together’, or

mounting to.’ It is associated with the systematic development of *jhānas* and thus, it belongs to formless attainments (*arūpāvacara*) as well as the transcendental states (*lokuttara*). The *Visuddhimagga* says that Absorption concentration is the unification that follows immediately upon the preliminary-work. Concentration (*samādhi*) according to its intensity can be of three degrees of development.

1. The first phase is inferior (*hīna*) at the beginning for it is recently attained.
2. Next it is of medium degree of development (*majjhima*)
3. It is fully developed into superior degree (*pañīta*)

Wrong concentration is the one-pointedness of mind grasping and clinging onto an object in an obsessed manner. Holding onto an object with calm, clear, peaceful and stable or firm mind is the right concentration. In other words, it is the concentration of clear awareness or pure mind. The *DasuttaraSutta* shows fivefold perfect concentration that should be developed by a meditator. They are (1) suffusion with delight (*pīti*), (2) suffusion with happiness (*sukha*), (3) suffusion with will (*ceto*), (4) suffusion with light (*āloka*) and (5) reviewing sign (*paccavekkhanānimitta*).

Both *Samathabhāvanā* (Tranquility meditation) and *vipassanābhāvanā* (Insight meditation) develop one –pointedness of mind or absorption into its objects because both need to hold the mind its object for long periods to give it strength, to serve their purpose. But they are not exactly the same. The main aim of concentration meditation is to develop right concentration – concentration of the pure mind. In Insight Meditation, the concentration is used to develop understanding into the nature of the world, the nature of mind-body processes. Firstly, the aim is different. Secondly, the object is different. The object in *samatha* meditation is a concept conceived by mind. It is not real. It is something that is created by the mind. But in insight meditation, the object is real in the sense that it is a mind-body process. Faculties concerned in concentration in *samatha* and *vipassanā* are also different. In *samathabhāvanā*, the main faculty concerned is one–pointedness of concentration, with the support of mindfulness. Whereas in *vipassanābhāvanā*, the main factor involved is mindfulness.

## Conclusion

Arising of concentration at the access level (*upacārasamādhi*) or absorption level (*appañāsamādhi*) is not possible in the practice of insight meditation. However, a spontaneous concentration existing concurrently with itself, scrutinizing with undistracted attention the ever-changing phenomenal process is produced in successive moments of contemplation. This type of concentration which unifies the mind with the contemplation is known as momentary concentration (*khaṇikasamādhi*) and this momentary spontaneous concentration enables the meditator to prevent the disturbances from the hindrances to the constant contemplation which allows the insight to arise. The access concentration (*upacārasamādhi*) helps the meditator of *samatha* to suppress the hindrances firstly and then to develop insight. The momentary concentration (*khaṇikasamādhi*) that eliminates the hindrances helps the meditator of *vipassanā* to contemplate the four foundations of mindfulness and awaken insight leading to mental wellbeing.

**Keyword :** Concentration, Samatha, Vipassanā, Mental-wellness

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