



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

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Physical Body

The physical body is neither glorified nor despised; it is to be understood as a natural process, impermanent and conditioned, and is used skillfully as a basis for awakening (bodhi).

The body is a material form (rūpa) and is one of the Five Aggregates (khandhas):

1. form (rūpa),
2. feeling (vedanā),
3. perception (saññā),
4. mental formations (saṅkhāra), and
5. sense consciousness (viññāṇa).

Death is not annihilation of a self but the dissolution of aggregates.

The body is subject to the Three Characteristics of Existence (tilakkhaṇa):

1. impermanence (anicca), the body is constantly changing and decaying;
2. suffering (dukkha), the body is subject to aging, illness, and death; and
3. absence of a permanent self, not-self (anattā); the body is not an enduring “I” or “mine.”

See the October 2023 Newsletter - Insight Meditation (vipassanā) for a discussion of the Three Characteristics of Existence.

The Dhammapada translated by Acharya Buddharakkhita

147. Behold this body — a painted image, a mass of heaped-up sores, infirm, full of hankering — of which nothing is lasting or stable!

The body is an object of mindfulness taught in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10): Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Contemplation of the body (kāyānupassanā) is the first foundation of mindfulness and includes the following:

- Mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati) is a form of tranquility meditation (samatha), which aims to cultivate mindfulness (sati) and concentration (samādhi). This practice involves focusing the mind on the physical sensations of the natural breath, observing it as it comes in and goes out.
- Awareness of the four postures (īryāpatha sañña):
 1. walking (gacchanta),
 2. sitting (nisinnā),
 3. standing (ṭhita), and
 4. lying down (sayāna).

Contemplating the body while stationed within one of the four postures is a practice aimed at developing mindfulness and insight into the impermanent and ever-changing nature of the body.

- Clear comprehension of daily activities (sampajañña) involves being fully present and aware while engaging in various activities throughout the day.
- Attention to the foulness (asubha) of the 32 bodily parts (dvattiṃsākāra) is to contemplate the impurities (asubha bhāvanā), the unattractive and impermanent aspects of the physical body. The aim of this practice is to overcome attachment and desire for the physical form.
- Four great elements (catudhātuvavatthāna) are:
 1. earth (solidity),

2. water (cohesion),
3. fire (temperature), and
4. air (movement).

The four great elements are the foundational components of all material phenomena in the world. The practice develops insight into the impermanent and not-self nature of the body and conditional reality. The elemental analysis reduces attachment to the body.

- Charnel ground or cemetery contemplations (paṭikkūla manasikāra) are composed of nine impure and loathsome (asubha) objects of repulsion (paṭikkūla), the various stages of decay of the body. These contemplations involve visualizing decomposition and reflecting on the body's mortality, and are used to highlight the impermanence of the body, the inevitability of death, the unattractiveness, fragility, and disintegration of the body. The purpose is to develop the urgency to remove attachment to the body, which is a requirement for the realization of nibbāna.

In the above contemplations, the body is not denied; it is observed carefully as a conditioned process in order to weaken lust, pride, and identification with the body. The purpose is not to have disgust but to have dispassion and clarity towards the body. See the October 2023 Newsletter - Insight Meditation (vipassanā) for a discussion of the above contemplations.

The body is a field for insight, a laboratory for investigation into conditional reality. Meditators observe how physical sensations arise and pass, pain arises and passes, and the breath arises and passes. Through observation, there is direct seeing into impermanence and not-self. The body is a doorway through which delusion (avijjā) is dismantled.

The body is neither a self nor an enemy. The body is not a permanent soul, a divine vessel, nor an enemy to be punished. Extreme self-mortification was rejected by the Buddha. At the same time, sensual indulgence is taught to cause craving (taṇhā) and suffering (dukkha). The body is simply a conditioned process to be understood. See the March 2023 Newsletter - The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering for a discussion on how craving causes suffering.

The body is a necessary vehicle for liberation and is therefore precious. Paradoxically, although the body is impermanent and not-self, through a human body the mind can practice Dhamma, and enlightenment occurs while alive, embodied.

The early Thai forest tradition, late 19th to early 20th century Thailand and Laos, treated the body in a way that was intensely practical, ascetic, and insight-oriented. The body was not theorized about; it was used as a direct tool for liberation. Ajahn Mun Bhuridatta and his disciples emphasized direct realization over scholastic study. The body became the primary meditation ground.

- The body is viewed as a battlefield of attachment. The body was where lust and fear arise, and identity forms. Rather than avoiding the body, forest monks confronted it directly. The goal was not self-hatred but cutting sensual attachment at the root. Ajahn Mun reportedly said that unless one truly sees the body as unattractive and impermanent, craving will not end.
- Identification with the body generates fear. One of Ajahn Mun's distinctive emphases was confronting fear of death. Disciples would meditate alone in tiger-infested jungles, at night in cemeteries, and in remote mountains. When fear surges in the body (tight chest, racing heart, shaking), the mind sees clearly: "This body is not under my control." Fear reveals not-self. If the mind can remain unmoved while the body trembles, then insight deepens.

The body is not neglected nor indulged. The body is maintained. Medicine is taken when needed. Physical strength and flexibility are valued for meditation. Physical comfort is not a priority but is useful during meditation.

The Dhammapada translated by Acharya Buddharakkhita

204. Health is the most precious gain and contentment the greatest wealth. A trustworthy person is the best kinsman, Nibbāna the highest bliss.

The following is a summary of how to regard the body.

- The body is impermanent and not-self.

- The body is to be contemplated in terms of the Three Characteristics of Existence.
 - The body is cared for appropriately because health supports practice.
 - Illness is an opportunity for insight.
 - Self-mortification is rejected.
- The body is not to be worshipped, not to be hated, not to be ignored, but to be understood.

Announcements

- Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center has a presence on Meet-Up social media, and we ask that you please sign up for every event that you are planning to attend at www.MeetUp.com. Some people are intimidated by a small number of attendees, and a larger number will be encouraging.
- Please help advertise Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center by providing a review at www.google.com/maps.

Activities of the Meditation Center

- Group sitting meditation practice for one hour is held Monday through Friday at 6:30 a.m. and every day at 5:30 p.m. After meditation, Ajahn Kumāro is available to answer questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- Group sitting meditation practice for two hours is held every Saturday and Sunday at 6:30 a.m.
- The days of the full moon, new moon, and the two half moons are called in Pali: The Uposatha, and is a Buddhist day of observance. A lunar calendar is available at <https://cal.forestsangha.org>. Ajahn Kumāro will perform the ceremony of giving the five precepts on the full and new moon days after the 5:30 p.m. meditation. You may elect to keep the precepts as long as you see fit (one night, a week, a lifetime, etc.).
- Meditation Workshop is held on the first Sunday of each month between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The workshop will provide instruction and practice for sitting and walking meditation. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- A recording of a Dhamma Talk from an experienced Thai Forest Teacher will be played on the third Sunday of each month. Sitting meditation starts at 4:30 p.m. and the Dhamma Talk will be played afterwards. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- Every Saturday at 4:15 p.m. the Meditation Center will be cleaned. Please join us in maintaining a clean space for practicing and discussing the Dhamma.
- There is a library at the Meditation Center. You may browse for books to borrow at 5:00 p.m. and check out the books for three weeks.
- Everyday at 8:40AM Ajahn Kumāro leaves for alms-round in order to give residents of Asheville the opportunity to earn merit by practicing generosity of giving food and placing it into the alms bowl. Ajahn does not accept or handle money. Ajahn usually arrives at the Whole Foods Market, 70 Merrimon Ave., just before 9:00 a.m. and stands in front of the store for alms.
- Ajahn is available at other times during the day to meet with individuals or groups when requested.
- For more additional information, please send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com. We also have a presence on Facebook and Meet-Up social media.

Request for Support

The Meditation Center is in need of support in order to accomplish its mission and vision. The support may take various forms. You will support the Meditation Center by:

- Being present at the Meditation Center for group meditation.
- Giving alms during alms-round.
- Bringing to the Meditation Center items that are listed on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com.
- Volunteering your skills, energy, and time at the Meditation Center.
- Informing your family and friends about the Meditation Center and encouraging them to participate in the activities.
- Donating financial contributions for the Meditation Center's expenses. Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center is recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). Donations are deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. Financial contributions may be made on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com, and additional means for making financial donations may be discussed with Elisha Buhler at (910) 922-1549.