

The Mystery of Trance Jhanas



Introduction – Jhana (*samatha*) practice is man effort to reach out for Brahma world with ultimate aim to take rebirth in the Brahma world. *Vipassanasati* practice is to realize the Universal law of *Anicca, Dukha* and *Anatta*, to reach for Nibbana. *The practice of Jhanas (also known as Samatha practice) is one of the three practices taught by the Buddha – Sila, Samadhi and Panna – in his Eightfold Noble Path.*

1,0 Samatha Practice

A person in **Jhanas** rapture is in the state of Trance. Trance is a great mystery to most of us who are trying to explain how a person could be in the state of trance? The physical science of today has yet to explain the mystery of trance. The one who could explain will be one who has had the personal experience of being in the state of trance. Is there an explanation in Buddhism that could shed some light on this mystery? Yes, Buddhism is a religion that deals with the entire Universe with all beings including beings that exist outside the physical worlds, beyond the human world.

To explain the mystery of trance, its complexes, Buddhist religion said: we first need to know the Buddhist cosmology – *the 31 planes of existence*. In general term, we can classified the 31 planes into four main classifications: – *Human, Deva , Brahma* and *Animal* worlds. The beings in the human world are so constructed that their physical senses could not – see, hear or physically touch the being in another world, except to those in the animal world.

The question then is who are the beings outside the human world and in what form are they? The answer is simple; outside of the human and animal worlds, they are spiritual being, we cannot see them touch them or hear them; some with miraculous power we called *God (celestial spiritual beings)*; and some with not so miraculous power we called *Ghosts or Petas (terrestrial spirits)* who live on this earth. We human do not have the ability to see the celestial or the terrestrial spirits. That is how we have been constructed. Now, because we don't see them, many of us took on the belief that these spirits don't exist. In fact, Gods (the celestial spirits) and the Ghost or Petas (terrestrial spirits) do exist, just like you and me.

Jhanas (Samadha) is a practice of man to communicate with the celestial spiritual world. The spirit, most of them, has special power to take possession of human and control us only for a good reason. When there is a reason to send a message to a particular person, they could take control of a person, which we called it as spiritual possession. An individual in this state of spiritual possession is termed as being in Trance. We can also reach out to them through the practice of *Samatha* (Jhanas). So in the reverse way, here we only deal with celestial Devas and Brahmans through the practice of Samatha... This practice is being expounded by Buddha for people living skilfully or virtuously.

2. Trance – The State of Jhanas

When an individual is absorbed in deep concentration and is in the state of rapture and happiness, Jhanas, that individual is in the state of trance. In that state of trance, an individual is known as having another spiritual entity and perceives in the same level as that spiritual entity. In such a state, human being could recollect the past, many thousand of years in the past to the extent of that spiritual entity's ability.

Those desire to practice Samatha must lead a virtuous life, free of all sinful acts, in Buddhist term, maintaining the five precepts recommended to Buddhist laities. Virtuous life style is the prerequisite to fruitful Jhanas practice.

2.1 Can Trance be induced?

The spiritual law is such that not any or every individual can be possessed by a spirit. That is why we have the separation between the spiritual and our human world. There are barriers between the two worlds. Our senses are such that it could not penetrate the barrier of senses to see, hear or touch the spiritual world.

Then the natural question is why some could be possessed and some could not? The answer is very simple; as said earlier, we have celestial world and the terrestrial world: For an individual to be possessed by a spirits the following conditions must be met:

- a. One must have close affinity with that particular spirit in his or her past lives.
- b. One must be given to the spirit or introduced to the spirit by another individual, another human, or
- c. One has been introduced to the spirit by eating the food offered to that particular spirit.
- d. Food you eat must be compatible with the possessing spirit.

2.1.1 Close Affinity in the Past

In Buddhism, we called this close affinity in the past lives, the ancestor lineage or parami of the individual. A person who came to the human world immediately from the spiritual world will be a candidate for easy possession by the spirit from where that individual came from. These individual will find some physical uneasiness, sense of cold running down the spine, or the body starts to shake when they are in front of a shrine or in front of a person with high Samadhi (concentration practitioner). A common occurrence will be shedding tears uncontrollably and being in the state of emotion.

2.1.2. Close Affinity by Introduction

By introduction, I mean, introducing the person to the spirit by the use of food that was offered to the spirit, or being given to the spirit by parents for safety and protection against evil spirits. In the Buddhist community, usually when a baby has more than usual case of sickness, the parents will go to the temple and offer the child to God for adoption. The act of adoption is a potent means of given protection to the child against evil spirits, or the spirits that disturbed the child.

Usually, babies are given to Deities God when they are young for adoption so he or she will be protected against disturbing ancestor spirits or the unwanted spirits that dwell the nearby or inside the house antique.

2.1.3 Close Affinity by means of Food

It is a common practice in the Buddhist community to offer food to the Deities God and Goddesses; later the foods are shared among the family members. Any individual who has taken the food will be closely protected by that Deity God or Goddess. Later in their lives he or she will find out that the Deity God or Goddess has been protecting him or her. That is how the closeness is established. The presence of the Deity or Deities cannot be seen or heard or felt physically, but in fact the Deities are with them through the entire life time.

2.1.4 Food you Eat

In the Jhana practice, one must take foods that are compatible with the spirit that you are communicating. This is a prerequisite to fruitful practice; I will not go into the details of dealing with the terrestrial spirit, for now. Here, I will only mention the celestial spirits – Deity God and Goddesses. In Jhanas practice, one should abstain from Red-meat, vegetable and fruits are preferred food, to accrue the real benefit.

3.0 Opening the Gateway

Many will question, how can a person be introduced to the spiritual world? The answer to this is simple; the practice of *Samadha*¹ in Buddhism is how one could be introduced to the world of spirits, the celestial world of Devas and Brahmas. This is a little different from the practice of *Vipassasati*.² People go for retreat with Vipassana teacher is to condition oneself to realize the law of *Anicca, Dukha* and *Anatta* and nothing else. One will not learn how to attain jhana. Real and fruitful Jhana could only be attained from a teacher who practices *Samadhi* (Samadha).

Vipassana teacher in most cases frown upon those who practice Samatha. The main reason being that their sole belief that Vipassana is the only vehicle to the path to Nibbana and that Samatha practice could lead one to the Brahma world, which is still within the *Samsara* – cycle of birth and rebirth (*Mahasi Sayadaw* is a good example).. This is not to say that we don't have Vipassana teacher who first conditioned you with Samatha practice and then move on with the Vipassana practice (*Pa Auk Sayadaw*) is one good example. Buddha taught us to practice both Samatha and Vipassana equally; yes, it is the human nature to innovate one's practice to adapt to one's philosophy or thought. The fundamental is to practice the Eightfold Noble Path – include *Sila, Samadhi* and *Panna* (Vipassana) to attain one's liberation.

To practice Samatha, one needs to be introduced by a teacher. In this article, I will not touch on how to introduce you to Vipassana practice, because one must be a Buddhist to accrue the benefit of practicing Vipassana. The process of introduction to Samatha practice could be through a variety of ways:

- a. Be in the field of influence – within the Monastic compound
- b. Be eaten the food served by the teacher
- c. Be touched by the teacher, physically.

¹ *Samadha* – is the practice of samadhi: Concentration; the practice of centering the mind in a single sensation or preoccupation

² *vipassana*: Clear intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena as they arise and disappear, seeing them for what they actually are -- in and of themselves -in terms of the three characteristics - the realization of the Universal law of *Anicca, Dukha* and *Anatta* – the world of impermanence, painful and no-self. The realization to be on the path of holiness.

3.1 Field of Influence

Depending on the level of attainment of Samadha teacher, its field of influence will vary. The field of influence could range from physically in close proximity to the teacher to as far across the world in distanced location.

- a. The candidate must be physically be touch with his hand or foot by the teacher.
- b. The candidate must stay within the designated compound –eg. Monastery
- c. The candidate must be living with the teacher and accrue its power through Osmosis.
- d. The candidate could be located far across the Globe.

3.1.1 By Touch

There are times if a teacher is willing, he could just touch you by their hand or by their foot to a specific part of your body to transfer the power so you could be linked up with the deities. This practice is most commonly seen with devotees who so wished to massage their teacher of their hand or legs.

3.1.2 By Food

It is a common tradition of a good devotee to collect left over food from a miraculous teacher and eat the food to get a piece of the Deva or Brahma power, with whom the teacher was linked up with. Some will collect foods offered to the Deities at his monastery. Some will collect chewed food out of the teacher's mouth to receive power.

3.1.3.Living in

There are instances in the old tradition of living in with the teacher to learn Samatha practice by Osmosis. Through exemplary practices a candidate could learn from the teacher. It will take months to receive the power by Osmosis.

Unlimited Field of Influence

There are very few teachers who could command unlimited field of influence. They could send their power to candidates located in far away places across the Globe to teach.

4.0 Spirit Possession

In the general term, when a person is in trance, he or she is in the state of being possessed by spirit. There are two types of spiritual possession:

- a. When one loss total control of his or her physical senses and ability.

- b. When one still retains his or her physical senses, but loss only partial control of the speech

4.1 Terrestrial Spirit Possession

In the case of type (a), the person in trance is being possessed by terrestrial spirits. It is typical of the terrestrial spirit possession. The characteristic of terrestrial spirits is that their power is low ; as a result they need to take total control of another human. That possessed individual now assumed all the characteristics of the spirits in behaviour and in the tone of their speech.

The individual possessed by terrestrial; spirit will not remember what he or she actually performed after the trance ceases. Many of the spiritual medium belongs to this category.

4.1.1 – Sight and Hearing

The individual possessed by terrestrial spirits could possess the extra sensory perception of sight and hearing. In some cases, the spirit stays near by to speak to the individual and act as a guide. In most cases, the individual could see things outside of the human world: they could see images and spirits. They could see in their eyes, illustrated messages.

Many with terrestrial spirits do perform fortune telling of people. Their ability to see the past or forecasting is limited and their ability to provide protection against evil doers is also limited.

5.0 Celestial Beings Possession

A person in Jhanas is in the state of one with the Devas or Brahmas. They have the ability to recollect many thousand of years back in time. An individual who practice Samatha, must have maintained a virtuous living by keeping the five Buddhist precepts, as a minimum. He will sit and meditate to gain concentration and thereby maintaining a clear channel – the celestial six senses, that will include – intuitive channel, channel of sight and channel of hearing. The most valued channel is the intuitive channel – clairvoyance. He or she receives messages through their intuition. This in modern term could be called a secured channel. Message that received through this channel is only private between the two parties.

5.1. Teaching Dialects

Deities depending on their specialty could teach a Samatha practitioner many arts of healings, dialects and wisdom. An individual without attending schools could learn to speak in many dialects, generally, the dialects used in ancient time along with the modern usages. Eg. A person who has never attended school to learn Hindi

or Pali could speak in Pali or Magadha dialect, the dialect used at the time of Buddha. One could learn unlimited number of dialects.

5.2. Teaching Healings

A Samatha practitioner is like living in the two worlds: in one character, as an example, he could be a normal school teacher; and in another he could be writing symbols while in meditation, he could write symbols through Ghost writing many different types of symbols, Some could have the potency of healing; and some to ward off evil spirits.

5.3. Teaching Yoga

A Samatha practitioner in this case could be practicing Yoga while in meditation. He could be learning strange position that no ordinary teacher could have taught him. The teaching comes automatically to the practitioner. Under spiritual guidance, all the knowledge and wisdom come to a Samatha practitioner.

6.0 Summary

Jhana practice is to gain the Brahma knowledge; and acquiring such miraculous knowledge must be directed only for the good of humanity. A practitioner must have a set goal with total dedicated intent to help others only while helping to reach for higher realm of existence.



Samatha Practitioner

This is a Gift of Dhamma