

# Samatha and Vipassaná in Harmony

## by Ajahn Chandako

Imagine you needed to chop down a dead tree with an ax. To be successful the ax would have to be both sharp and reasonably heavy. But where does the sharpness end and the weight begin? It's clear that even with great effort neither using a razorblade nor a baseball bat is going to do the trick. The weight is *samatha*. The sharpness is *vipassaná*.

Although the word '*vipassaná*' has come to be associated with particular meditation techniques or a style of Buddhist practice in the Theravada tradition, and I have personally benefited from and am grateful to these methods, what the Buddha originally taught was '*samatha/vipassaná*'. *Samatha* means calm, tranquility, and serenity. *Vipassaná* means insight and clear seeing. When they are both present, a person's heart and mind are in balance. *Samatha* is unifying, unconditionally accepting, non-discriminating, still, bright, radiant, internally silent and blissful. It is a holistic peace of mind. *Vipassaná* on the other hand arises from the discriminating side of the mind. It dissects, analyzes, compares, contrasts and penetrates. It observes and understands the changing, unfulfilling and selfless nature of all conditioned physical and mental phenomena. While *samatha* generates energy, *vipassaná* puts it to work. They are not two different styles of Buddhist meditation with different goals, but two sides of one hand. They are interrelated and mutually supportive aspects of one harmonious path of practice leading to *Nibbána*, enlightenment. Together, both *samatha* and *vipassaná* work to free the mind.

It first may be helpful to clarify some terms. *Samatha* is a virtual synonym for *samádhi*, peaceful focused attention or concentration. *Samma-samádhi*, right or perfected *samádhi*, is the eight part of the Noble Eightfold Path. For *samádhi* to be 'right' and leading to *Nibbána* there must be clear sustained mindful awareness (*sati*) moment by moment. A state of *samádhi* without clear awareness may also feel peaceful and relaxing but is not part of the Buddhist path. Because it is not leading to wisdom and *Nibbána*, its called 'wrong *samádhi*' (*miccha samádhi*). The perfection of *samádhi* is called *jhána*, meditative states of deep mental unification and peace. The Buddha taught eight distinct levels of *jhána*. After the Buddha passed away the commentaries on the original teachings introduced many new concepts and terms. For example, 'full-absorption' (*appaná*) *samádhi* refers to *jhána*. 'access' (*upacára*) *samádhi* refers to concentration which is almost as deep and strong as *jhána* but not quite. 'Momentary' (*khanika*) *samádhi* refers to the sustained awareness that arises from being mindful of many different objects of attention in succession, rather than focusing on a single meditation object. This effectively redefines *samádhi* to be more like mindful awareness.

The distinguishing between *samatha* and *vipassaná* as different styles of practice begins to be made in some places in the commentaries. There the terms *samathayana* and *vipassanáyana* were coined to describe people whose main emphasis (or 'vehicle') is either one or the other. Still, the references are few and brief. It is only in the sub-commentaries, written long after the Buddha's time, where these two are developed and described as different paths of practice. It is here that the term 'dry-insight meditator' (*sukkhavipassaka*) is introduced. This refers to a person who only develops momentary *samádhi*, or practices insight meditation without any *samatha* whatsoever, maintaining a bare, non-discursive, moment to moment observation of the changing process of the body and mind.

## Jhána

The Buddha taught that it is impossible to realize *Nibbána* without perfecting all eight parts of the Noble Eightfold Path. In the collection of his teachings, the *suttas*, the definition the Buddha overwhelmingly gives for right *samádhi* on that Path is the first four *jhánas*.

*"And what, friends, is right samádhi? Here, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, having risen beyond unwholesome states of mind, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhána, which is accompanied by the placing and holding of attention, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. With the stilling of the placing and holding of attention, he enters upon and abides in the second jhána, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without the placing and holding of attention, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure, he enters upon and abides in the third jhána, on account of which noble ones announce: 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.' With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters upon and abides in the fourth jhána, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. This is called right samádhi.*

*This is called the Noble Truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering."*

**MN 141.31**

**DN 22.21**

*"'This Dhamma is for one with samádhi, not for one without samádhi.' So it was said. For what reason was this said? Here a monk enters and abides in the first jhána ... second jhána ... third jhána ... fourth jhána. "*

**AN 8.30**

*"One trains in the higher virtue (sila), the higher mind, and the higher wisdom ... What is the training in the higher mind? Here a monk... enters and abides in the first jhána ... second jhána ... third jhána ... fourth jhána. "*

**AN 3.84, 88, 89**

*"That one could perfect samádhi without perfecting virtue or that one could perfect wisdom without perfecting samádhi - this is impossible."*

**AN 5.22**

*"It is impossible to abandon the fetters that bind us to samsára (samyojana) without having perfected samádhi. And without abandoning those fetters it is impossible to realize Nibbána. "*

**AN 6.68**

*"I say, monks, that the destruction of the mind's poisons is dependent on the first jhána ... eight jhána."*

**AN 9.36**

So what then is the experience of *jhána*? The mind's energy gradually pulls away from its usual dispersion at the various sense doors and gathers internally. This concentrated mindfulness is like a light bulb's light being focused into a laser beam. Any negative emotions or unwholesome states of mind disappear. The sensation of having a body disappears. One feels light and joyful, and the mind becomes silent without any thinking whatsoever. The mind's awareness focuses more and more on itself until the subject/object relationship melts away into an experience of oneness. The mind is then

unified, boundless, bright, clearly aware, immobile and rapturous. There is no awareness of what is taking place at the five senses. What remains is the essential 'knowing' nature of the mind. This state can last from a few minutes to many days. These profound meditative experiences form the basis for mysticism in all spiritual traditions. It often appears to be full enlightenment: the all-pervading clarity, the radiant purity, the unity with all things, seeing phenomena as interdependent, and a deeply satisfying bliss-these are the hallmarks of a mystic.

## Attachment to Jhāna?

It is very rare to find someone who is attached to *jhānas*. By their very nature they are states of letting go, of relinquishment. A person who is proficient in the *jhānas* has already greatly reduced the deeply ingrained defiled inclination to seek gratification through the world of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, physical sensations and thinking. If that person is familiar with the Buddha's teachings, then they are well on their way to *Nibbāna*. It's simply that they haven't yet arrived.

*'Bhikkhus, just as the Ganges River slants, slopes and inclines towards the ocean, so too a bhikkhu who develops and cultivates the four jhānas slants, slopes and inclines towards Nibbāna.'*

SN 53.6

*Worried about attachment to jhānas? Experience them first; worry about the attachment afterwards. It seems that the only people who warn against jhānas are those who haven't experienced them. The worst that can happen is that we'll be reborn in a heavenly realm for 1-84 aeons of quintessential bliss. Considering the range of possible rebirths within samsāra that's still very good. The best that can happen is that we realize enlightenment. Virtue and states of samādhi are like rungs of a ladder. We have to hold onto higher and higher rungs in order to pull ourselves up. If we have already heard the wisdom teachings of the Buddha and are sincere about liberating the heart, then reaching the top of the ladder should not be difficult. As one goes up, the attachment to the lower rungs is let go of. But we have to first hold on firmly to each rung. If we let go too soon, we fall.*

Placing the fear of attachment to *samādhi* in the mind of a new meditator is cruel indeed. That fear may then prevent them from entering *jhāna*, denying them the pure joy praised by the Buddha and his great disciples. Haven't we had enough of fear and denying ourselves happiness? The Buddha described *jhānas* as

*'the bliss of renunciation, the bliss of seclusion, the bliss of peace, the bliss of enlightenment. I say of this kind of pleasure that it should be pursued, that it should be developed, that it should be cultivated, that it should not be feared.'*

MN 66.21

So if anyone tells you that *samādhi* or *jhāna* should be feared or avoided, you can be confident that they are contradicting the Buddha. *Samādhi* brings a blameless, pure happiness arising from within. This makes the path of the Buddha one of joy, serenity and contentment. He described and praised *jhānas* as a *'happy abiding here and now'* and *'Nibbāna here and now'*. It is important to allow ourselves to relax, let the *samādhi* deepen and give ourselves permission to enjoy spiritual delight without feeling guilty. Be kind to yourself. Allow the mind to be still and at peace for as long as possible. When that state of tranquility wears off then begin to contemplate the body, mind and other conditioned phenomena. Rest assured that this is what the Buddha taught.

It is natural that the more pure the mind becomes the more happiness arises. This is a sign that we are getting closer to *Nibbāna*. Some people have the view or assumption that by punishing themselves

through not allowing themselves any happiness that they become holy. This is not the Middle Way of the Buddha. He taught that by letting go of self-indulgence in sensuality a person experiences a superior, more refined and satisfying happiness. This natural process is described in many places in the *suttas*.

*'When someone knows that the mind is free from the five hindrances [negative emotions that are obstacles in meditation: sensual passion, anger, drowsiness, restlessness and remorse and doubt] then joy arises, from joy comes bliss, when there is bliss, the body is tranquil, with tranquility one feels happiness and happiness leads to samádhi. In this way, being detached from sense desires, detached from unwholesome states of mind, one enters and remains in the first jhána, with the placing and holding of attention, born of detachment, filled with bliss and happiness. One then suffuses, drenches, fills and radiates this bliss and happiness until there is no spot untouched by it.'*

**DN 2.75**

The Buddha prophesized that in the future when people lose respect and reverence for five things it will be a sign that the Dhamma is degenerating. What five? The Buddha, his teachings, the community of enlightened and ordained people, the monastic training and discipline, and *jhána*.

*In the time of the Buddha there were some ascetics from other sects who criticized the Buddha and his disciples for indulging in the pleasure of meditation. The Buddha answered: 'There are these four kinds of life devoted to pleasure which are entirely conducive to disenchantment, to the fading away of passion, to cessation, to tranquility, to realization, to enlightenment, to Nibbána. What are they? [The Buddha then gives the stock definition of the four jhánas.] So if wanderers from other sects should say that the followers of the Sakyan are addicted to these four forms of pleasure-seeking, they should be told: 'Yes', for they would be speaking correctly about you, they would not be slandering you with false or untrue statements. 'Then such wanderers might ask: 'Well then, those who are given to these four forms of pleasure-seeking--how many fruits, how many benefits can they expect?' and you should reply: 'They can expect four fruits, four benefits. What are they? The first is when a monk by the destruction of three fetters has become a Stream-Winner (sotapana, the first stage of enlightenment), no more subject to rebirth in lower worlds, firmly established, destined for full enlightenment; the second is when a monk by the complete destruction of three fetters and the reduction of greed, hatred and delusion, has become a Once-Returner, and having returned once more to this world, will put an end to suffering; the third is when a monk, by the complete destruction of the five lower fetters, has been spontaneously reborn, and there will reach Nibbána without returning from that world. The fourth is when a monk, by the destruction of the mental poisons has, in this very life, by his own knowledge and realization, attained to Arahantship, to the liberation of heart through wisdom. Such are the four fruits and the four benefits that one given to these four forms of pleasure-seeking can expect.'*

**DN 29.24,25**

## **Jhána and Wisdom**

After the Buddha-to-be (*Bodhisatta*) rejected the path of extreme asceticism and self-denial, he ended his torturous fasting with a bowl of milk rice and made his way to the Bodhi tree. There he sat down. He remembered an occasion when he was a young boy sitting under a rose-apple tree waiting for his father to finish a royal ceremony. At that time his mind calmed and then unified in the first *jhána*, and he experienced a pure inner bliss. It then occurred to the *Bodhisatta*, 'Could this be the path to enlightenment?' Intuitively the answer came to him, 'Yes, this is the path.' He then directed his focused attention into states of deeper and deeper peace, and upon emerging from the *jhánas* he was able to contemplate with a clarity that uprooted all of his mental poisons.

When the Buddha later considered teaching, he pondered who would be most suitable to teach. His first two teachers came to mind. Because they had already mastered the seventh and eight *jhānas*, he felt that they would certainly be able to understand what he had discovered. Unfortunately for them they had already died.

If a person is familiar with the main concepts and contemplations of the Buddha's Dhamma and they then develop *jhāna*, enlightening wisdom arises relatively easily. As the Buddha taught,

'For a person with right *samādhi* there is no need to arouse the wish, 'May I see things as they truly are. ' It is a natural process, it is in accordance with nature that someone with right *samādhi* will see things as they truly are.'

### AN 10.3

This then is the condition for the arising of the turning away from and fading away of passion, liberation and *Nibbāna*.

In another place the Buddha taught:

*'Whoever develops loving-kindness (metta) to the level of boundlessness [jhāna] and aims their mind toward seeing the end of birth, their fetters (samyojana) are worn thin. '*

### AN 8.1

When *samatha* reaches its peak in unification, *jhāna*, where the mind enters into a powerfully still state of lucid awareness and bliss, significant parts of what one had previously assumed to be immutable aspects of oneself cease for long stretches of time. That which forms intentions to act, speak and think (*cetana*) disappears in *jhāna*. The functioning of the five senses also ceases, so one receives no sense impressions from outside. Although while in *jhāna* it is impossible to investigate or contemplate because the mind is simply one, once one emerges, the experience of having known a different level of reality cannot help but to change one's view of the world.

The Buddha said it is impossible to have liberating insight as long as one or more of the five hindrances are infecting the mind (AN 5.51). They make it agitated, rigid, unworkable and dull. After emerging from *jhāna*, the mind is freed of those weakening and confusing influences. With the resultant tender, pliable, brilliant and energized mind, clear seeing (in-sight) naturally follows. What is seen is seen in accordance with reality. Normally the denial mechanisms of the mind strongly influence how we see life. What we think we see, hear and experience may be very different from the reality. Immediately after *jhāna* however, the defiled assumptions and perverted perceptions that distort the bare sense data are temporarily subdued. This is the window for wisdom. It's then that bare awareness is possible.

*Jhāna* empowers mindfulness. Both *samatha* and *vipassanā* are based on developing continuous mindfulness in the present moment, but mindfulness alone doesn't have the ability to enlighten. Even dogs and cats have some mindfulness, an awareness of their surroundings, but it is not focused and directed in a way which will free their minds. *Jhāna* gives the mind strength, so that when we contemplate something our understanding has the ability to deeply penetrate to its essential nature. Practicing *vipassanā* on it's own, the mind tends to merely skim around on the surface of reality without penetrating. Or it's like trying to shave or put on make-up in an airplane toilet while the plane is bouncing with turbulence.

As anyone knows who has attempted to develop *samādhi* through the repetition of a word internally, watching the breath, cultivating loving-kindness or some other pure *samatha* technique, one inevitably gains a lot of insight into the workings of the mind. At each stage the reason that the mind won't go deeper into *samādhi* is because of some attachment. It's then necessary to seek out and understand what it is that we are attached to. The more refined the *samādhi* becomes, the more subtle and deep are the

attachments that are discovered - the cravings and clinging that is preventing more profound peace and happiness. Without developing meditation it is very difficult to see the defiled motivations, assumptions and concepts that dictate how we live our lives; and without developing deep *samádhi* it is impossible to have insight into the most subtle attachments which block enlightenment. Even if one is attempting to solely develop *samádhi*, as a natural matter of course one will also develop a non-discursive observation of the changing process of body and mind, a dynamic *samádhi* that is aware of the flow of internal and external phenomena, precisely what *vipassaná* techniques aim to develop. Therefore, in practice, so called 'momentary' (*khanika*) *samádhi* is developed alongside a *samatha* object and is not exclusively the domain of the dry-insight meditators. Through discovering, investigating and overcoming the obstacles to peace of mind, *samádhi* deepens and becomes more stable.

*'There is no jhána without wisdom,  
there is no wisdom without jhána,  
but for someone with both jhána and wisdom,  
Nibbána is near.'*

**Dhp 372**

## **Is Jhána Possible for Me?**

One thing is for certain: if you don't try, it will never happen. And if you believe that it's impossible for you, then you kill your chances even before you start. Of course it's possible. Dhamma functions according to natural laws. If the causes and conditions leading to *jhána* are developed, then the results will begin to happen by themselves. You will then know for yourself, independent of what others say, a deeply *satisfying* peace of mind that leads to wisdom.

Even in this hectic age there are still laypeople, monks and nuns who can attain *jhána*. It's not like they're all born with that ability; it has to be developed. Rather than trying to change the Buddha's teaching to fit our lifestyle, we should try to change our lifestyle to fit the Buddha's teaching. Is life too busy and chaotic? If so, then slow down and simplify. Do you find life stressful? If so, learn to relax. Do you regularly maintain a high level of virtue, living in a compassionate and responsible way towards yourself and others? Keeping the five precepts is an important foundation for meditation. Do you meditate everyday? For how long? Success in meditation requires practice and consistent training.

Do you live for thrills and excitement? The Buddha compared the fun that comes from sensual gratification to a fire dependent on fuel of grass or wood. It's smoky and it leaves a mess. The bliss that arises in *jhána* however, apart from sensual pleasures, is like a flame that burns independently. When we take our refuge in external stimulation and our hearts are preoccupied with the search for it, *jhána* cannot happen. Look inwards for real and reliable happiness. Over-eating or self-indulgence will also make it more difficult to meditate with clear awareness. People usually experience *jhána* in retreat situations, where it's quiet, they are keeping silence, a teacher is encouraging them, there is nothing to worry about and they are meditating a lot. So from time to time offer yourself the gift of a meditation retreat. If the conditions for *jhána* don't exist in your life, then create them.

It's also important to have the right attitude. Although it's necessary to motivate ourselves to meditate, *jhána* will not arise from ego-based craving for altered states of consciousness. This can actually increase stress. There's too much desire and sense of self. The quickest way to make progress in meditation is to be perfectly content, putting energy into being mindful in the present moment and not hoping or expecting anything. Relax and allow nature to take its course. Fear of the unknown can sometimes be an obstacle, so have faith and confidence in the Buddha's teaching. If anything strange

happens and you are not sure if it's correct or not, then simply stop meditating or go back to a more familiar level of meditation. No problem. When you get the chance you can consult with a qualified teacher. If awareness becomes foggy, dim or disappears, then open your eyes and reestablish mindfulness. It's essential to be clearly aware the entire time. Pushing too hard, being impatient for quick results or trying to force specific experiences will be counterproductive. Whatever level of serenity you experience, use that for developing insight. And remember, we develop *jhānas* not in order to become the best meditator in the country, but in order to be humble, kind and wise. Whenever we find ourselves in circumstances that are not conducive to developing *jhāna* - and life will always be somewhat out of our control - then it's important to focus on the letting go of acceptance.

## Vipassaná Only

To the extent that '*vipassaná* meditation' has been successful in helping people bring understanding into their lives and free their hearts from pain and suffering is the extent to which it is practiced in balance with *samatha*. Some People - Dipa Ma, for example - have a natural gift for *samádhi* and don't need to develop it. In pre-modern times it seems that bringing the mind to a focused and silent inner stillness was much easier. In old Burma (presently Myanmar) where the current *vipassaná* practices originated, conditions of life were very different than for the modern meditator. If you took a person who grew up in that Buddhist culture, where strong faith in the Dhamma and good morality was normal; where life (especially in countryside) was very simple and unstressful; where interest in meditation was widespread and popular; and you cloister them alone in a room for weeks or months doing 12 or more hours of meditation a day, you can bet they will be generating quite a bit of *samádhi* - possibly enough to support deep insight.

Even today *vipassaná* retreats rely on creating very special conditions: little or no speaking, reading, eye contact or external distractions. These are the conditions which generate *samádhi*. If it was truly only *vipassaná* the retreat could be held in the midst of noisy and chaotic everyday life. Goenka disciples even focus exclusively on mindfulness of breathing (*ánápánasati*) in order to generate *samádhi* for the first portion of their retreats. Sayadaw Upandita teaches that in the field of awareness of a *vipassaná* meditator, the breath should take preference. Thus in the beginning stages, it is not much different than *ánápánasati*. *Vipassaná* centers in the west are finding it increasingly beneficial to teach loving-kindness and compassion meditation (*mettá, karuná bhávaná*) - another pure *samatha* technique. The aim is to liberate the heart (albeit temporarily) through boundless, undifferentiating and impartial positive states of mind - precisely what *jhāna* is.

So let's just be open and admit it. We of the current generation, raised in fast-paced societies with TV, rock music and computers, highly educated and pumped full of information, are in need of serenity. Most people are out of balance on the side of a *samatha*-deficiency. The analytical side is already well developed, but without the focused energy of sustained mindfulness the 'insights' don't have much power to transform our lives.

*'Samádhi is the path. No samádhi is the bad path.'*

AN 6.64

## The Original Teachings

Interestingly enough, it seems as if the Buddha never taught a way of Dhamma practice that would correspond with what we know of today as *vipassaná* meditation. As far as we know there was

originally no path of dry insight. In the entire collection of teachings there is hardly a single reference to *vipassaná* where it is not conjoined with either *samatha* or *jhána*. For example:

a) Right view is assisted by five factors in order for it to mature in the liberation of heart by wisdom: virtue, learning, discussion, *samatha* and *vipassaná*.

**MN 43.14**

b) For one who has brought the Noble Eightfold Path to fulfillment, '*samatha and vipassaná occur in him yoked evenly together.*'

**MN 149.10**

c) Venerable Sariputta's method of attaining arahantship is described as insight into stages one by one as they occurred (*anupada dhamma vipassaná*). It sounds like insight only, but the states that he was contemplating were the factors of the first though eight *jhánas* and the cessation of perception and feeling.

**MN 111.2,3**

d) '*And what, bhikkhus, is the path leading to the unconditioned? Samatha and vipassaná.*'

**SN 43.2**

e) The dry-insight practitioners trace their roots to a sutta in the *Anguttara Nikaya* where Venerable Ananda outlines the four ways one may attain enlightenment. The first is the standard pattern of *samatha* leading to *vipassaná* leading to realization (*magga phala*). The second is *vipassaná* leading to *samatha* leading to realization. The third is *jhána* and *vipassaná* alternating, which deepens *jhána* and then leads to realization. The fourth has to do with overestimation of one's meditation experiences and correcting it, resulting in realization. There is no path mentioned of *vipassaná* leading straight to realization. To the contrary, the message seems to be that different meditators will have different inclinations, but only when *samatha* and *vipassaná* settle into a healthy balance will realization occur.

**A 4.170**

Other examples in the Pali Canon which indicate the inseparability of *samatha* and *vipassaná* include:

a) The peak of *vipassaná*, the insight into and realization of *Nibbána*, is described by the Buddha in many places as:

*'This is peaceful. This is sublime. That is, sabbe sañkhára samatha, the samatha-ing of all conditioned phenomena.'*

b) For one who has attained the peak of *samatha* (*nirodha samapatti* or *saññavedayitanirodha*), upon emerging from that state of deep *samádhi* it is impossible that they do not gain the insight resulting in the third stage of enlightenment (*anagami*).

c) The liberation of mind (*ceto-vimutti*), which refers to *jhána*, and liberation by wisdom (*pañña vimutti*) are two aspects of one and the same realization of arahantship.

d) '*And what, bhikkhus, is the path leading to the unconditioned? Samádhi with the placing and holding of attention (first jhána) Samádhi without the placing but with holding of attention Samádhi without the placing or holding of attention.*' (second *jhána*)

**SN 43.3**

*'And what, bhikkhus, is the path leading to the unconditioned? Emptiness samádhi. '(suññata samádhi)*



Although there is no evidence in the *suttas* for equating *vipassaná* with the four focuses of mindfulness (*satipatthána*), the *vipassaná* school tends to look to these *suttas* for inspiration. The *Mahasatipatthána sutta* however, outlines the *jhánas* in full detail. The *suttas* also state that *satipatthána* should be undertaken after the mind is freed from covetousness and grief for the world (*abbijja-domanassa*). This term is a synonym for the five hindrances. For the mind to be purified of the five hindrances for long periods of time requires pretty good *samádhi*. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that the *satipatthána suttas* were originally simpler and intended to be practices for developing *samádhi* more than insight. (see Sujato Bhikkhu's upcoming book)

## Balance

I think we're all aiming at the same thing: an uninterrupted awareness of changing phenomena with none of the five hindrances present, in order for enlightening insight to arise. The question is: is this possible without *jhána*? To maintain this degree of purity of mind for long stretches of time while we investigate the body and mind as constantly changing, unable to fully satisfy and as non-self is already an exalted achievement. For the average meditator, subtle forms of the five hindrances will sneak into the mind and remain undetected.

In the Thai Forest Tradition *samatha* and *vipassaná* go hand in hand. We need to have some wisdom in order to sit down and meditate in the first place. We then discover a bit of calm that helps us see life more clearly. The clarity leads to living a wiser, more virtuous life that offers some serenity. The serenity then supports contemplation. Focusing attention on the inherent defects and unreliability of the external world leads to letting go, and as the heart increasingly looks inward for happiness, serenity deepens and insight is awakened. *Samatha* and *vipassaná* gradually get stronger, proceeding like feet walking a path, until one day, some lifetime, they result in unshakable peace and wisdom.

Of all the dozens and dozens of monks, nuns and laypeople in the forest tradition, past and present, that are reliably reputed to be enlightened, I have never heard of one that did not have the ability to enter *jhána*. That doesn't mean it's not possible, but even Ajahn Chah - well-known and widely respected for his wisdom teachings - had developed his *samádhi* to the degree that he could enter *jhána* on one in-breath. He likened *samatha* and *vipassaná* to two ends of one stick. If we pick it up, do both ends come up or only one? And he asks, "Is a mango when it's unripe and when it's ripe the same or different?" Similarly with *samádhi* and wisdom. It's the same mango, yet *samádhi* is continually ripening into wisdom. Or it's like the biting and tasting of an apple. They are different, but how can you taste the apple without taking a bite?

So in the end, by all means, do *vipassaná* retreats. The more the better. But I also encourage people not to stop there. Make the effort to develop *samádhi* - even *jhána* - so that *samatha* and *vipassaná* may once again return to their original harmonious and complimentary relationship. The heart then achieves balance. But please - everything I've said here - don't simply believe or reject it. Find out for yourselves.

For a more in-depth and comprehensive examination of *samatha* and *vipassaná* see:

A Swift Pair of Messengers, Sujato Bhikkhu

Serenity and Insight, Bhante Guneratana

How Buddhism Began, Chapter IV, Richard Gombrich