

Instructions from teachers at Wat Marp Jan



I wrote down these instructions from various senior teachers from the temple Wat Marp Jan in Thailand. They deal with different practices, discipline and etiquette for a monk.

General instructions

- ◆ Imagine the lay people in the eating hall and on *Pindapat* as skeletons (Ven. Somchai).
- ◆ Guard the sense doors so emotions & connected thoughts don't arise (Ven. Somchai).
- ◆ See the food (meat) we eat as corpses, dead body parts.
- ◆ Start *Nam pana* (evening drinks) at 17.00 and end at 17.30.
- ◆ Follow *Korwat* times/schedule.
- ◆ Don't talk outside the meditation hall.
- ◆ Don't talk between finish meal and *Grap* (formal bowing).
- ◆ Imagine the monk in front of you, on *Pindapat* (alms round), as a skeleton.
- ◆ Everybody should do *Asubha* practices (reflections on the unattractive side of the body).
- ◆ Eat little, sleep little, talk little (with moderation).
- ◆ Spread *Metta* every day to lay supporters, deva helpers, parents, friends etc.
- ◆ Go to morning meetings at least 6 times/week.
- ◆ Go to evening meeting every day.
- ◆ Don't look lay people in the face on *Pindapat*.
- ◆ Go to guard eating hall (even though nothing ever happens).
- ◆ Don't read so much.
- ◆ Leave your mobile phone at the office.
- ◆ Don't talk too much to lay people.
- ◆ Eat healthy food.
- ◆ If you can: be at evening meeting at 19.00.
- ◆ Don't go out of evening meeting unless you have a soar back/pain (Ven. Somchai).
- ◆ Must remove grosser *Kilesas* first (food, sleep, talk) etc.
- ◆ When doing choirs, have the mindset of offering service to the *Sangha*.
- ◆ After the food, do one hour of walking meditation. Then rest one hour, and then continue to meditate.
- ◆ Stay up all night on *Wan Phra* (weekly observance day). Don't sleep.

- ◆ Be constantly mindful (be with meditation object).
- ◆ Don't talk at *Nam pana* time.
- ◆ Sleep 6 hours/day at most. 4-6 hours is good.
- ◆ If nothing else to do, go to the meditation hall after *Nam pana* (from Ajahn Anan, told to me by Kruba Greg).
- ◆ Do the food requisite contemplation when standing in the food line and taking food.
- ◆ Switch bowl with a friend and take food for each other.
- ◆ Don't take food the mind desires.
- ◆ Mix ones food.
- ◆ Finish everything in the bowl.
- ◆ Walk until very tired, then got to sit.
- ◆ *Nesen-chick* (stay up all night) as an offering to Ajahn Cha or the Buddha.
- ◆ If not raining, in the cold season, stay in the *Glol* (mosquito net).
- ◆ Hang up the robe when coming back to the *Kuti* (hut).
- ◆ Wear *Sanghati* (the thick robe) on *Pindapat*.

Signs of progress

- ◆ For *Sati*: need less sleep, hard to sleep, energetic, aware, efficient, doesn't hesitate, don't waste time.
- ◆ “When you actually don't want to kill the mosquitoes.” /Taan Dhammiko (no intention based in anger).
- ◆ When there is fear of letting go, go there and let go! (it's a discovered attachment, something important).
- ◆ When there is more energy, effort and peace. /The book Simple teachings...
- ◆ If you before got angry at something 10 times and now only get angry 9 times. /Ajahn Anan Or worry 1 hour instead of 2 hours /Tobias :)

Meditation instructions

Body contemplation

How to do it

Think it through, analyze, view it, investigate, use imagination, visualize. For 5-20 minutes keep the awareness only in the body.

Do it with these questions or ways of looking:

- ◆ Can this part bring me lasting satisfaction?
- ◆ Is this body really me?
- ◆ Where is the self in this body?
- ◆ Which part of the body is a self?
- ◆ Which part of the body lasts?
- ◆ Look at the 32 parts of the body (mentally) and:
 - Take them out, put them all on the floor in front of you. Which part is the self? Which part is me?
 - Notice the hardness of each part, see the earth element in each part. Is that earth element self?
 - The moisture, the liquid, the glue that holds the solid parts together. Is there any self in that? When you urinate or spit out saliva, is that self?
 - The air we breathe in and out of the lungs. Oxygen, CO₂. Is there any self in that? Is it our air? Is it part of nature? Who really owns the air that makes this body work?
 - Heat and coolness of the body. Does anyone really own that? Or is it just a process, part of nature? Based on natural processes as we eat food. Food is digested → generates heat. We get hot and cold according to different conditions. Is there and self in that? Is there anything that is “me” in that cold/heat?
- ◆ See that the body is impermanent.
- ◆ How did the body look at conception?
- ◆ What was it like in the womb?
- ◆ Consider the body's appearance as a child, gradually growing and maturing but always inconstant and changing.
- ◆ The sense organs gradually deteriorate with age.
- ◆ The body is just mere elements shifting and changing according to causes and conditions.
- ◆ The body is just merely a body, neither a self, nor soul, nor person, nor being, nor “me”, nor “you”.
- ◆ If I breathe in but don't breathe out, or breathe out but don't breathe in, then the body dies in accordance with its nature.

- ◆ Visualize any of it's parts, these visualizations can then be transformed into fixed mental images which can be enlarged or expanded for deeper contemplation.
- ◆ Body is of the nature of decline and fall, will return to earth.
- ◆ As a mere composition of earth.
- ◆ Reduce the earth element (analyze it) to it's most refined state – seeing it break apart into dust and then disperse as mere atoms.
- ◆ How does the body develop and upon what does it's life depend?
- ◆ If this body is really self, then how come we cannot control it?
- ◆ We don't desire it, but the body grows old, sick and dies.
- ◆ Body of others: what is there inside this body wrapped in skin and hair, with it's nails and teeth?
- ◆ Look at each part of the body and see that “this part is subject to pain and illness”.
- ◆ As unattractive, loathsome, repulsive.
- ◆ The skeleton as many different parts: skull, arms, legs, hands, feet and rib cage.
- ◆ Have any of these parts ever declared that they are our self?

More body contemplation

- ◆ Where does the body go back to?
- ◆ What we like about bodies is different for different people. It's just conventions.
- ◆ ”Beauty is just skin deep”.
- ◆ The body is fragile, temporary, subject to pain, illness, aging and death.
- ◆ *Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta* of the 32 parts.
- ◆ ”You are now as a yellowed leaf”.
- ◆ The lack of inherit worth in the body. There is nothing worth clinging to as ”me” or ”mine”.
- ◆ What the parts look like, where they are positioned.
- ◆ This body brings us *Dukkha* in the form of tiredness, heat, cold, pain, hunger, illnesses.

Results of body contemplation

- ◆ The mind becomes light, pure, fluffy, malleable, bright, content within itself, happy. Notice how it becomes more pure over time.

Samadhi bhavana (develop concentration)

Purpose:

To train the mind to be aware. Aware of a single object/point.

Vitakka:

Bringing the mind to the object, repeatedly.

Vicara:

Sustaining the focus on the object. Holding attention on one object/point.

Piti/sukha:

Rapture, contentment and interest in the breath comes the longer we can sustain focus on the object. These grows and becomes more refined → *Sukha vedana*, a sense of ease and contentment.

Ekkagata:

Goes to one-pointedness: the mind is completely satisfied to stay with it's one object, refining awareness. Breath becomes subtle and refined.

Khanika samadhi:

Momentary unification of the mind. Few moments/minutes of peace, rapture, joy, contentment. Letting go of all other distractions and sense objects.

Upacara samadhi:

“Access concentration” or “neighborhood concentration”. More sustained periods of peace and calm. The mind is hardly thinking of anything at all other than the breath and focusing the attention on the breath.

Close to one-pointedness but not quite there yet.

Might be a few subtle thoughts but they are harmless – don't take away the concentration of mind. Like a chicken in it's cage. It's safe but can still move around a bit.

Suitable state for contemplation. But state is coarse if not coming from one-pointedness, and can easily be lost.

Appana samadhi:

One-pointedness, completely absorbed, drops all thoughts, serene, tranquil, no distractions, absorbed in the knowing of the present moment, undisturbed, unshakeable.

Tips:

Don't label states (if you are unsure or inexperienced):

Just know if the mind is peaceful or not, if there is distracted thinking or not. If still thinking – redouble effort to letting go and return to present moment awareness of the breath.

Where to focus

Hold, sustain attention of the breath, know each breath. If no sense of breath, have awareness as the object of focus at the point where the breath was last felt.

Metta bhavana (develop loving kindness)

- If angry: consider that all of us are heading towards death. That's a certainty. Everybody born into the world must die. We must die, other people must die.
- If somebody makes us angry: reflect – they will one day have to die, just like us. No point in holding on to anger. Maybe we will die today, we don't know. It's uncertain. So it is more profitable to make our mind peaceful now, than to hold on to angry thoughts.

If I do die today with anger in the mind, I might be reborn in a place of suffering. This is more important than what the anger wants.

- Make a resolution when you wake up: I'm not going to give in to anger today. Do it every day.
- Develop *Metta* every morning: “May I be happy”, “May all beings be happy”.
- If angry: just be mindful of the experience and turn to the meditation object.
- Develop *Metta* in stages (if it feels hard to have *Metta* for oneself then do the order below, otherwise go with *Metta* for yourself first):
 1. For dear and respected people.
 2. Neutral people.
 3. Oneself.
 4. Difficult people.

Compiled by Tobias Heed, august, 2013.

Notes from Wat Marp Jan, 2011-2012.