MATERIAL 2A

MEDITATIONEN IN THERAVADA (WAY OF THE OLD ONES)

Among the other teachings the Buddha gave, he also taught a lot about meditation: Meditation means bringing the mind into a balanced state so that one can effortlessly dwell in what is. Happy moments in one's life happen mostly on the basis of a non-distracted mind resting in the here and now.

Basically, Buddhism distinguishes between two types of meditation: the "meditation of tranquility of mind" and the "insight meditation". The meditation of calmness of mind is included as a basic principle in all Buddhist meditations and enables deep insight (insight meditation).

As an example, imagine a glass of clay water: Only when the glass is left standing do all the clay particles come to rest and eventually sink to the bottom. Here, one learns to observe the mind mindfully and to hold it in one place (meditation of stillness of mind). When all the clay pieces have sunk to the bottom (the mind has come to rest), the water appears unclouded and clear, and there are no more obstacles to deep insight (insight meditation). In the long run, the goal of the meditation of tranquility of mind is the liberation from everything that disturbs (the clay parts in the water): Fears, emotional outbursts and confusion decrease more and more and eventually disappear.

Through the application of insight meditation, the mind shows more and more its timeless nature (one recognizes the quality of clear water), for which no intellectual understanding is necessary. All the skills of the mind come out and one experiences unshakable fearlessness in every situation, boundless joy that is not dependent on anything, and compassion for all beings. This state is called "enlightenment" and is the goal of insight meditation.

Insight can only happen on the basis of a calm mind. Meditation does not have to be complicated and you do not have to leave your usual life behind or sit in a cave to meditate. Just a few minutes of meditation a day can bring powerful results. According to Buddhist teachers and scientific studies, meditation increases the ability to concentrate and devote to something without being distracted. At the same time, one also becomes mindful of what is happening around one. One becomes more aware and relaxed in everyday life. Finally, one becomes aware of one's own thoughts, feelings, and reaction patterns, gets more distance from mood swings and disturbing feelings, and experiences more freedom of mind.

The sitting posture one chooses for meditation allows one to sit quietly, stably and comfortably for as long as possible. The traditional sitting posture for meditation is full lotus. Many prefer half lotus sitting, with the right leg in front of or on top of the left leg. However, one can also meditate sitting on a chair. It is important that the back is straight, but not stiff. This helps concentration. The eyes are either closed or slightly open.

MEDITATION IM THERAVADA (WAY OF THE OLD ONES)

Buddha gave many different teachings because people are different. This gave rise to three major Buddhist schools/paths (Theravada, Great Way, Diamond Way) in which different meditations are used.

In Theravada, one finds the meditation of calm abiding (shine meditation) as the central means. One focuses on an external object (such as a candle), one's own breath, or a Buddha form that one visualizes. This helps to quiet the mind. As soon as one notices a distraction, one consciously returns to the meditation object again and again. In doing so, the goal is "liberation." Anxieties, disturbing feelings, and confusion diminish and eventually disappear. The mind becomes clear. Part of this is that a lot of emphasis is placed on practicing mindfulness, so that one even notices how one acts with body and speech, and what feelings, thoughts, and habitual patterns are present in the mind (from which one also acts and judges).

The most common meditation is on the breath, focusing on inhalation and exhalation, letting thoughts and feelings pass like clouds in the sky without holding onto them, and returning again and again to the tip of the nose where the breath comes and goes.

Although many positive feelings can arise from the first practice, regular continuity is needed. The same principle applies to meditation for calming the mind as to any exercise: start slowly and steadily increase the intensity. A good start is five to ten minutes of sitting quietly, or just as long as it feels good. Once the mind stops drifting for the entire duration of the meditation, you can increase to 15-30 minutes. Regular short meditations are in any case more useful than infrequent, hour-long meditation marathons.