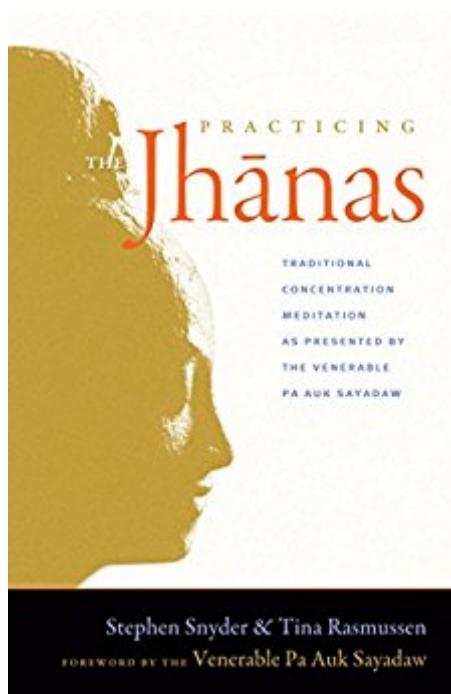


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Practicing The Jhanas: Traditional Concentration Meditation As Presented By The Venerable Pa Auk Sayada W



Synopsis

This is a clear and in-depth presentation of the traditional Theravadin concentration meditation known as jhāna practice, from two authors who have practiced the jhāna in retreat under the guidance of one of the great living meditation masters, Pa Auk Sayadaw. The authors describe the techniques and their results, based on their own experience.

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Customer Reviews

i really do not know where to start. First, My Jhana practice is Abhidhamma based. I can only say this book got me started. To say you learned Jhana meditation from it is not accurate. My closest analogy would be to say that you bought a book on how to drive a five speed manual transmission car and practiced shifting the gears standing still and you think you learned to drive. The Jhanas are closely tied to Abhidhamma study in the sense that learning the whole process is essential and not just the form of meditation. This book will get you started but there is more to Jhana meditation than shifting the gears between the Jhanas. Buy it as a first step.

This is a book written by two students of Pa Awk Sayadaw and their experience practicing all material/immaterial jhanas according to the ven. curriculum (which is heavily based on the Visuddhimagga). I have gone through a lot of books and manuals that cover samatha/jhana practices, both classical (tipitaka, Visuddhimagga) and modern (Shaila Catherine's, Bante Gunaratana's, Joseph Goldstein's, Pa Awk Sayadaw's, ...). Considering my own study and practice on how to reach the 1st jhana, after reading one, every other modern manual added very little -- though personally, in a significant way. This book did the same for me. The little details on going through each jhana (like the insistence on anapanasati focus during the entire day, the mastery programme summary, etc) counted for me as very informative and extremely valuable (helping me diagnose problems with my practice) and inspiring complementary notes. After all, it always helps to read someone's testimony to boost the confidence and put more energy to go the extra mile. I don't think however this book would be comprehensible for someone who is alien to orthodox/theravada buddhist meditation. I see it as mostly a complementary addition to an actual body of material (like the books mentioned above). Having said that, and on another aspect, I agree with one reviewer, which I quote: "I have to say that this book is important. Because it articulates an ancient practice in terms that are understandable and accessible for our time"

I have to say that this book is important. Because it articulates an ancient practice in terms that are understandable and accessible for our time. I am moved to write a review because I feel, for those inclined toward Jhana practice, Tina and Stephen are two important teachers on this particular path. Reading this book is one thing, actual participating on a retreat is another. I encourage anyone who is interested in learning the Jhana path to sit with these two teachers. They are very heart centered people, and help create a wonderful container for this practice to be learned. What I have noticed about their retreats is they deeply respect every person they interact with. They also are sometimes humorous which helps immensely when practicing this form of meditation. This book is important, and, it is also a stepping stone - sitting in retreat is so wonderful! I highly recommend that as much as reading about it.

Although I've had a meditation practice for years, I can see clearly after reading this book that my efforts have been minimal and without adequate direction. Have you ever gone to Disney World without doing some research first on how to approach the parks? You can spend an exhausting day like a salmon swimming upstream. Yet if you come prepared and follow the advice from a good guidebook, you can navigate and time the attractions at the parks in an efficient manner and have a

really good experience. This book is like having a detailed road-map that has been highlighted by someone who intimately knows the area. The optimal path has been clearly marked by the authors and they've included obvious recognizable trail-markers along the way. They kindly point out common misconceptions that one might have and miss-steps that one might take that could hinder meditation progress. Skillfully chosen examples and similes are provided to help the reader connect with descriptions of experiences and practices that may otherwise seem foreign if you have not personally experienced the jhanas. The authors speak with confidence resulting from personal experience. The tone of the book is inviting and refreshing. Instead of feeling demoralized by the relative lack of progress in my personal meditation practice to date, I feel inspired by the authors to take up this practice systematically. They have shown what lies ahead and made it clear that with proper effort it is attainable. This book is such a gift! Practicing the Jhanas takes the beginning meditator from the first sit all the way through to what I consider very advanced meditation. But the authors haven't stopped there. They provide a bridge to the teachings of Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw which will facilitate the meditator's continued progress beyond the scope of this book. I feel gratitude to the authors for sharing their knowledge and experience of this ancient yet vibrant path to liberation.

I had been practicing vipassana meditation for three years and felt that my concentration could use a boost, so I sat a jhana retreat with Tina Rasmussen and Stephen Snyder. They explicate the teachings in this book in a way that is clear and accessible for contemporary meditators in the West, and I found them to be extremely responsive and knowledgeable guides in person. Working with them really deepened my understanding of, and enthusiasm for, meditative technique in general, and I have found that intensive engagement with these concentration practices has moved my vipassana practice in new directions much faster than I could have expected. As they point out in the introduction, these practices predate the teachings of the Buddha, and they seem to me to be foundational for anyone interested in seriously pursuing any contemplative path. Indeed, among my fellow retreatants were practitioners from several different traditions, including Christianity, paganism, and Buddhism. This book is an excellent resource.

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