

An extract from “**Calm Abiding and Special Insight: Achieving Spiritual Transformation through Meditation by Geshe Gedun Lodre**”

Vasubandhu’s own system of meditating on the breath is in six ways:

1. Counting
2. Following
3. Placement
4. Investigation
5. Change
6. Purifying

“**Counting**” refers to the ability to withdraw the mind inside and count the breaths from one to ten single-pointedly without confusing the order; this count from one to ten comprises one meditative equipoise.

The second, **following**, involves thinking about how the inhaled breath pervades the body. The body has many coarse and subtle channels through which the breath passes. It is easy to recognize its passage through the coarse channels, but for awareness of the subtle channels careful analysis is needed.

After one has practiced observing where the breath does and does not go in the body, it is necessary to examine that which is still unknown-how the breath brings help or harm to the body. Therefore, in the third meditation, **placement**, the yogic practitioner observes what feelings-pleasurable, painful, or neutral-arise from the breath’s movement in the body, and whether there is help or harm.

These three ways of meditating on the breath all involve meditation on the breath itself, which is a tangible object. Breath is wind. Since wind on the four elements and is included within the form aggregate, at this point, putting aside the examination of breath as wind, one investigates what is and is not of the nature of the five aggregates in relation to wind. This is the fourth meditation, **investigation**. One examines whether wind itself is established as having the nature of those aggregates which are not it-whether it is of the nature or entity of that part of the form aggregate which is not wind, or of the feeling aggregate, discrimination, compositional-factor, and consciousness aggregate. ...

When yogic practitioners have gained facility in these four, they change the object of observation and observe the path of preparation, This is the fifth meditation, **change**. Previously, the practitioner was observing the breath, which is relatively coarse. We know from experience that form is coarser than consciousness; a path is even more subtle than other types of consciousness.

Then, when these practitioners have gained facility in the fifth meditation, observing the path of preparation, they reflect on the sixth, **purifying**, which involves observing the paths of seeing, meditation, and no more learning, This is even more subtle than the previous object of observation. Thus, as yogis become practice in the coarser objects of observation, they move on to more subtle ones.

There are slightly different ways of setting out these six and explaining their meaning; this is probably Vasubandhu’s own system. However, there are many interpretations of what Vasubandhu’s system is, since there are many different commentaries on the root text of his *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge*. ...