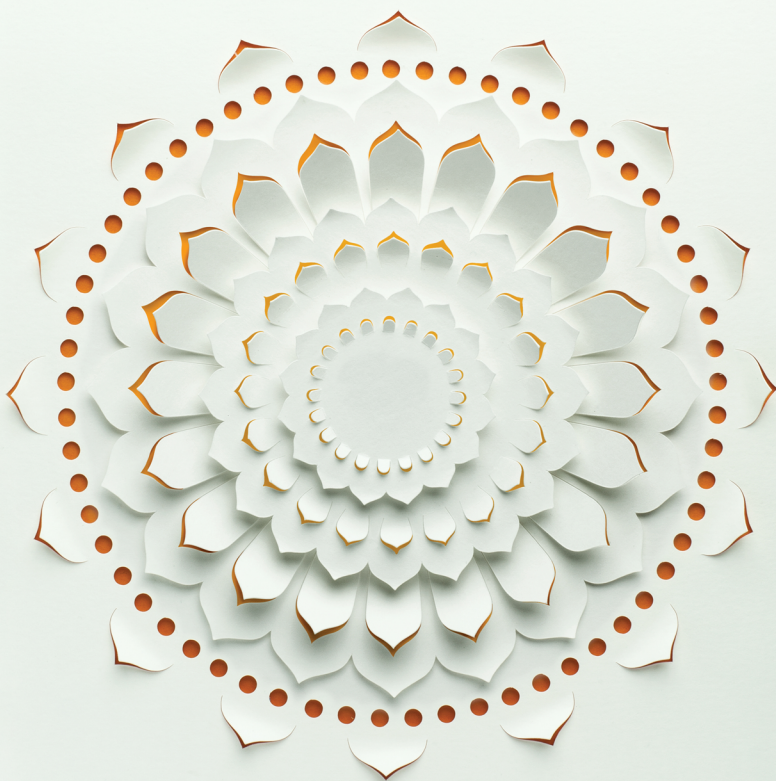


Foundations of Mindfulness

A Manual for Meditators

SATIPATTHĀNA



Tarchin Hearn

Foundations of Mindfulness
A Manual for Meditators
Satipaṭṭhāna

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Foundations of Mindfulness

A Manual for Meditators

(Revised and Extended Edition)

Satipaṭṭhāna

Tarchin Hearn



With Heartfelt Gratitude
to
Ven. Namgyal Rinpoché

There is no mystery more profound than mindfulness/awareness.

This is the path of living dharma.

This is spirituality and practical living all rolled into one.

This is the source of joy and well-being,

the well-spring of health and happiness,

the treasure at the heart of everything and everyone.

There is no greater mystery.

Mindfulness

is the flavour of healthy knowing in action.



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Preface to the 2019 edition

In the course of my life, the idea of mindfulness has transformed from being an esoteric oddity associated with eastern religion, to something popularised on talk shows and explored and practiced in schools, universities, laboratories, and even corporate training seminars. In this attention-deficit, media-driven world, the prospect of pausing and relaxing and being more attentive is understandably attractive, in fact it's very much needed.

Many people today embark on some form of mindful practice, not necessarily realising that they are on the threshold of rediscovering a deep hunger for meaningful living. How does everything connect? What is important? What do I value? What commonality do I share with other people, animals, plants, and so forth. How do I fit in this evolving universe?

Pursuing these questions needs more than relaxation and a little more attentiveness. It requires skill in calm, clear, precise observation. It requires intense curiosity, a generous dollop of unpretentious honesty, and a natural bent for compassion and being of service to others. The Buddha's Satipaṭṭhāna outlines a progressive augmentation of meditative skills that can help give shape to such enquiry.

At this stage of my life, it is quietly satisfying to see this "Manual for Meditators", along with my books "Breathing: The Natural Way to Meditate" and "Walking in Wisdom", being used as a mindfulness trilogy to support both individual

students, and the training of a new generation of dharma teacher/practitioners. May these expressions of the heart of Buddhist meditation and practice, benefit many beings.



Background

This ‘manual for meditators’ began as a collection of notes, initially compiled while teaching a one month Satipaṭṭhāna retreat at the Wangapeka Study and Retreat Centre in New Zealand. At that time, I wanted to enter some of the essential definitions, lists of categories, correct spellings and references into my laptop in order to have them on hand as I travelled and taught. Since then, with the encouragement of people studying with me, I have added various comments and fleshed out the grammar.

The book was never intended to be a thorough presentation of the subject, nor is it aimed towards people brand new to meditation. Think of it as an extended set of notes; a reference manual for meditators who have come to the point in their investigations where a more detailed study of this essential teaching on the path of awakening could augment and enrich their practice. In the following pages, I gather together a few key aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna along with some references that will allow a student to consult original sources, should that be of interest.

My grateful appreciation goes to Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi for their inspired translation of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and to Maurice Walshe for his clear translation of the Mahasatipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Both of these suttas have been published by Wisdom Publications. May these efforts towards making available the Buddha Dharma, continue to flourish.

Originally compiled in the year 2000, the notes were revised in 2007 and made available in coil bound format. In 2016, they were published in e-book PDF format on Green Dharma Treasury. At that time I added further revisions and comments, appearing in the greyed areas of the text, and some appendices found at the end. The e-book version was translated into Portuguese by Verena Reid and published in Brazil in 2018.

This 2019 edition has provided an opportunity to make further fine tunings and to add two new appendices. After all these years, I'm delighted to see this manual, finally appearing in print.

The generous and dedicated layout, design, proof reading, encouragements and suggestions of Mary Jenkins, Alan Dodds, Andy McIntosh, Daniel Burgess-Milne, Stephen Martin-Rolsky, Anne Sharplin, Juliana Griesse, Mike Cox, Ian Moore and the team at Assertiva in Brazil have added refinements and made this a better text. Many thanks to everyone. May your efforts support deepening sanity and well-being in these chaotic times.



Introduction

Two thousand five hundred years ago, a man, who eventually became known to us as the Buddha, was driven to grapple with some of the great conundrums of life. How can one live well in a world that is constantly changing, unpredictable, and impossible for any single being to control? How can one live with impermanence and death, unsatisfactoriness and suffering, without shutting down, or escaping into fantasy, or grasping after facile philosophical explanations, or simply burying oneself in never ending reactivity and busyness? These questions, or ones similar, have moved yogis, philosophers and enquiring beings throughout history. They are as relevant today as they were hundreds or thousands of years ago.

The Buddha's life demonstrated what I have come to think of as the path of the contemplative scientist. He looked directly into his moment by moment experience of living. This was deep and intimate exploration. His ongoing body, speech, mind and activities became a laboratory for experimentation and observation. With tremendous clarity and attentiveness, he investigated these processes, trying to understand the roots of dissatisfaction and suffering. Through doing this, he discovered profound and essential keys for living well.

Abandoning many of the religious and philosophical preconceptions, beliefs and biases of his day, he explored in a very pragmatic and factual way, letting his immediate actual experience guide the search. Eventually he came to

understand what later became known as *The Four Noble Truths* or less conventionally, *The Four Realities of the Noble Ones*, or *The Four Great Realities*.

The Buddha saw that wherever there are compounded formations¹ – things, appearances or arisings – whether physical or mental, there will inevitably be unsatisfactoriness or suffering (*dukkha*). Everything lives by eating. Everything is ultimately eaten by other things. All things wear out. Dynamic systems fluctuate – being in tune, or out of tune with other dynamic systems. Collision produces friction. Situations and circumstances arising in myriad domains of being, are continuously changing in ways we cannot completely control. Suffering is a great reality of life. This is *The First Noble Truth*.

With courage and determination not to run away from the suffering, he carefully examined these unavoidable facts of living and recognised the fundamental causes of *dukkha*. He saw that dissatisfaction, suffering and confusion are inevitably preceded and accompanied by partial or incomplete understanding of one's currently arising situation. This in turn gives rise to clinging or grasping, manifest in the forms of hope, fear, and expectation; 'trying to make permanent, that which is impermanent'. The recognition that suffering arises from these causes – incomplete understanding, plus clinging and the activity flowing out

¹ A 'compounded formation' is an object, assemblage, or process, made from contributing parts.

from this – is another great reality of life. A thorough understanding of this is called, *The Second Noble Truth*.

Through bringing a profound degree of friendly enquiry and wide awake interest to every moment of experience – in effect, through surrendering into and warmly embracing the fullness of living in all its un-pin-down-able-ness – he came to realise and experience a cessation of suffering. This cessation of suffering or the presence of well-being, peace, wholeness, connectedness and health, is *The Third Noble Truth*.

Having clearly experienced profound peace (*nirvana*) – the cessation of suffering – he then reflected on how this came about and then understood the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. He called this the Eight Fold Noble Path. This path to the cessation of suffering is *The Fourth Noble Truth*.

The essential key for unfolding these Four Noble Truths lies in persistent, friendly enquiry/investigation of what is taking place in our moment by moment living, in other words, the skilful cultivation of mindfulness. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is one of the most succinct and detailed outlines given in the Buddhist tradition for how to do this. It sketches out, in a methodical step by step way, a very practical path of awakening. You could think of it as a map to guide us on the journey, with a few hints at the general landscapes we are likely to encounter on the way. Of course, even with the best map in the world, you still would have to do the actual walking yourself.

The text begins with where to meditate and how to sit. It then directs us to an exploration of our physical body through *Ānāpanasati* or mindfulness of breathing. Here we investigate and make friends with the entire phenomena of breathing. These contemplations and enquiries eventually lead to a place of deep stillness and calm.

The next step is to learn to carry this clear, calm, responsive, awareness into the midst of activity. Gradually we come to experience directly the inter-beingness or communal nature of the physical body, the fact that it is a collaborative endeavour of many parts and processes. These studies can lead to the dropping of all sorts of unhelpful attitudes and assumptions that we may have about the body. Eventually, all physical bodies reveal themselves to be beginningless, endless arisings, embedded in a vast interconnected, interdependent, constantly dynamic universe. This could be considered the birth of a deep ecological understanding of the physical world and the gateway to realising what is referred to in Buddhist texts as *śūnyatā* or 'emptiness'.

Having investigated and become somewhat familiar with the complex interdependent danceings that comprise all physical forms, the meditator then begins to explore the mystery of mind. The sutra directs us to examine what could be called the feeling or evaluation function; the processes of body/mind whereby likes, dislikes and preference emerge. With a deepening wonder for the body and an increasing equanimity in the way we evaluate new situations, liking, disliking etc., we are invited to explore the play of mind states, the huge

array of emotions and flavours of knowing and attentiveness that colour and sometimes dictate human experience. Finally, equipped with a bright, clear, appreciative awareness of body, feelings and mind states, one expands the investigation to include the vast array of *dharma* – the complex phenomena or truths of nature/life unfolding as a multidimensional dance of wholeness.

Jesus once said that the truth alone shall set you free. Simply by deepening one's understanding, and learning to rest easily and alertly with whatever is arising, inevitably leads to realisation.

From the perspective of what could be called sectarian Buddhism, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is often seen as belonging to the *Theravādin*² tradition. Unfortunately, many so called *Vajrayāna*³ students feel they have little or no time for this teaching of 'bare insight' which, to some, seems devoid of devotion and compassion! But is this really the case? Actually, these views won't stand up to close scrutiny.

The realisation of the unity of compassion and 'emptiness', the very heart of *Vajrayāna*, is implicit in this great *Theravādin*

² *Theravādin* => 'The Way of the Elders'. This is the name commonly given to the forms of Buddhism found in Myanmar (Burma), Thailand and Sri Lanka. It is considered to be the most ancient tradition of Buddhism and is the preserver and upholder of the Pali sutras.

³ *Vajrayāna* => 'The diamond vehicle'. This is the name of the form of Buddhism that was found in Tibet, Mongolia and in the Shingon tradition of Japan.

sutra. Any person with an open heart and a passion for enquiry, who is wrestling with what it means to live meaningfully in a world that is being shaped by blind grasping and widespread human ignorance, will surely find useful guidance and inspiration in this text. By bringing an unshakeable friendliness and a gentle but probing curiosity and interest to what is happening in and around you; by doing this again and again and acclimatising to this way of living, you will come to see the very ordinary things in life as extraordinary miracles. At the same time, the so called extraordinary moments and events will reveal themselves to be absolutely ordinary.

This is the way of the contemplative scientist, the lover and explorer of life. It is not particularly a 'religious path', nor is it divorced from the awe and wonder and natural reverence that arise when we meet with vast unfathomable mystery. Blending the pragmatic analysis and experimental questioning of the scientist with the ecstatic union of the mystic, it is a path of wholesome living that is as vital and precious today as it was back at the time of the Buddha.

I feel extremely fortunate that my root teacher/lama, the Ven. Namgyal Rinpoché, received his early monastic training in Burma. Consequently, he taught us Satipaṭṭhāna as well as the classical Vajrayāna approaches. Over the many years of my exploring these two great treasures of awakening, it has become ever more apparent that the seeds of all the

*Mahāyāna*⁴ traditions are rooted in the practices described in this short sutra. At the same time, the essence or spirit of Satipaṭṭhāna lies at the heart of all Mahāyāna practice.

Abbreviations

MN => Majjhima Nikāya,

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha

PTS => Pali Text Society, Pali-English Dictionary

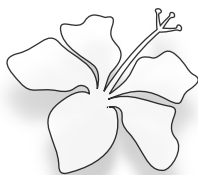
T-Abd notes => Tarchin's hand written abhidhamma notes (unpublished) compiled at The Dharma Centre of Canada in 1976 after a three month study with Namgyal Rinpoché

Vis => The Visuddhimagga

The Path of Purification (A greatly revered compilation of the Buddha's teachings, originally written by the Venerable Buddhaghosa. It is one of the oldest and most complete 'manual for meditators' arising from the Theravadin tradition.)

⁴ Mahāyāna => The Great Vehicle, or Magnanimous Vehicle. This is the form of Buddhism that is practised outside the Theravadin countries. It contains within it the Vajrayāna traditions.

Foundations of Mindfulness
A Manual for Meditators



THE SATIPAṬṬHĀNA SUTTA

In Buddhism, the term *suttas* or *sutras* generally refer to the collection of discourses and teachings given by the Buddha. They were originally memorised and passed down from teacher to student in an unbroken flow of oral transmission. It was hundreds of years before any of them were written down. Pali is the language that the earliest Buddhist Sutras were preserved in. It was probably very close to the actual language that the Buddha spoke.

Sutta => Pali Text Society Dictionary (PTS), 1. a thread or string. 2. the (discursive, narrational) part of the Buddhist Scriptures containing the suttas or dialogues, later called the Sutta-piṭaka. In Sanskrit, the word for sutta is *sutra*. In this text, I will use both terms interchangeably.

Suta => PTS, heard; in special sense “received through inspiration or revelation”; learned; taught; sacred lore, inspired tradition, revelation; learning; religious knowledge.

Sati => PTS, memory, recognition, consciousness; intentness of mind, wakefulness of mind, mindfulness, alertness, lucidity of mind; self possession, conscience, self-consciousness. Bhikkhu Bodhi defines it as ‘attentiveness directed to the present’.

Paṭṭhāna => PTS, setting forth, putting forward. In combination with sati, ‘setting up of mindfulness’. Paṭṭhāna also has the meaning of origin, starting point or cause. Setting forth could indicate setting forth on a journey. It could also indicate setting forth in the sense of “laying out for

examination". The seventh book of *Abhidhamma*, a collection of the deep psycho-philosophical teachings of Buddhism, is called "*Paṭṭhāna*". This presents a profound analytical study of causal relations, an extensive contemplation of the various seminal factors; physical, mental, animate and inanimate, that together support or contribute to the arising of any particular thing.

Considering a more literal interpretation of the word Satipaṭṭhāna we might get ; 'a lucid, alertness in the presence of the interdependent, interrelatedness of things' or another possibility, 'an alert, wakeful, recognition of how a complex weaving of factors is comprising this present moment of experience'. Try rearranging the various definitions of *sati* and *paṭṭhāna* and see what different flavours of meaning you can come up with.

Though often rendered "*The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*", or perhaps more usefully, *The Four Applications of Mindfulness*, it would be misleading to think of Satipaṭṭhāna as a linear progression of four separate themes that one needs to meditatively explore. The experiential essence of Satipaṭṭhāna involves the process of investigating with insightful understanding, not just once but again and again (*anusati* => re-remembering) the rich interdependent weaving that is your present ongoing experience.

In order to bring increasing clarity and discrimination to this ongoing investigation of what is actually happening right now, one is encouraged to thoroughly explore, in an unbiased, lucid and intimate way, four basic areas of human experience: body

or forms of embodiment (*kaya*), feeling/evaluation (*vedanā*), states of mind (*citta*) and objects of mind (*dhamma*).

As one's experience with each of these four deepens and matures, it will become clear that they are profoundly interdependent; continuously shaping and affecting each other. In time, a rich sense of how they interweave and support each other in an unbroken, flowing, creative continuum, will come to the fore. At this point, the flavour of practice transforms from effortful meditation to effortless contemplation arising in the midst of whatever is occurring.



Buddhism is renowned for its many meditation practices. A classic Theravādin text, 'The Visuddhimagga', details 40 different types of meditation. In the Tibetan canon you can find many more, and if you include the myriad practices associated with Mahāmudrā, Dzogchen, Mantrayana and the yogas of skilful fabrication and effortless naturalness, along with meditations arising in the traditions of Zen, Pure-land, T'ien T'ai and Avatamsaka, it could be said that the number of meditation practices are infinite. From the standpoint of 'awakening' though, all meditations are the same. They are lenses that can help us both illumine and look deeply into what is happening here and now, in this very act of looking.

Each lens could be thought of as a particular focal setting, or angle of enquiry, that can reveal fresh dimensions of experience

and hence contribute to greater intuitive understanding. You might think of the four foundations of mindfulness as four different lenses that we can look through for the purpose of clarifying our understanding of what is actually happening in this constantly transforming holistic mystery we commonly call ‘the here and now’.



1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Kuru country at a town of the Kurus named Kammāsadhamma. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: bhikkhus. – Venerable sir, they replied. The Blessed one said this: ⁵

Kammāsadhamma literally - ‘the activity of good dharma’ or ‘the activity of wholesome truth’ – said to have been a town in the vicinity north of present day Delhi.

Bhikkhu => PTS, almsman, mendicant, a Buddhist monk or priest. Bhikkhu is often translated as ‘homeless one’ or wanderer. In a nut shell, becoming a bhikkhu would entail taking vows to live in ways that are conducive to deepening calm attentiveness and wellbeing both for oneself and for others.

⁵ These indented italicised paragraphs are translations by Bhikkhus Bodhi and Narada and are the versions I studied with Namgyal Rinpoché in my early years of being introduced to these teachings.

At the time of the Buddha, entry into the *sangha*, the monastic community, was marked by a very simple ceremony, compared to how it is done today. Then, the Buddha, would say; "*Ehi Bhikkhu*" and snap his fingers. 'Come, wander forth for the benefit of the many folk.' And that was it! In English the word wander is very close to wonder. Wonder forth for the benefit of the many-folk. Question, investigate and explore the universe for the benefit of the many-folk. The Tibetan equivalent for bhikkhu is *gelong* and stretching the derivation a bit, you do get this sense of wondering. *Dge*, the d is silent, means virtuous, good or excellent. *Slong*, with silent s, means to want, wish, ask for; one who asks for something. Namgyal Rinpoché once paraphrased *gelong* as "one who is free to ask question".

This teaching was and still is, addressed to ones who are free to ask question, ones who are moved to investigate the universe in all its multi-levelled detail. Most adults are constrained in their questioning. It's as if the curiosity, that is naturally present in any well loved child has been distorted, if not largely obliterated, through the process of growing up and learning to survive in the family myth and the general social delusion/confusion. When it comes to question, most people are often more concerned about finding answers; avoiding discomfort, or achieving a 'correct' result, or pleasing the teacher or whoever is seen as the authority; rather than dwelling in a playful state of vibrantly awake, focussed, curiosity-filled enquiry. When we are unconscious or unaware of areas that shape the process of our living, we are not capable

of investigating them as they simply don't exist for us. In this unconscious, unaware state, there is little or no freedom.

Are you actually free to ask question? Are you genuinely interested in life? Do you want to understand and experience more deeply and profoundly? Or is your motivation to primarily get by with the least amount of pain?



There is another aspect of 'bhikkhu' which is often overlooked in today's secular society. 'One who is free to ask question' will inevitably enquire into the quality of their living vis a vis others and so bhikkhu also refers to one who is consciously attending to or taking upon themselves the practice, discipline or training of wholesome living (*sila*). In general, the word *sila* refers to one's ethics and moral conduct. You might have the aspiration to practice mindfulness but if, at the same time, you show little concern for your own body, speech and mind or the body, speech and mind of others, you will not have much success. A monk or nun (*bhikkhu* or *bhikkhuni*) would cultivate mindfulness practice in the soil of respect for life, honesty, integrity, compassion, and restraint from harmful activity and unnecessary consumption. Traditionally this training involved undertaking various vows to do with abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, harmful communication and using substances that cause intoxication to the point of heedlessness. As a modern lay bhikkhu, one could join one's passion for

enquiry with the intention to live in accord with what I often refer to as "The Five Wholesome Life Trainings".

*I will train myself to support and appreciate
the life of all living beings.*

*I will live with a sensitive and responsible awareness
for the whole ecology of life.*

*I will train myself to dwell more and more
in the mind of spontaneous generosity.*

*Daily I will give material support, emotional support,
and an example to others of awakening in action.*

*I will train myself to use the senses
to further awakening, explore Dharma,
and to come to know the world
more profoundly and more compassionately.*

*I will train myself to listen deeply
and to speak truthfully;
to commune with others
in a skilful and compassionate manner.*

*I will train myself to be ever more directly aware
of how nutriment affects the mind and body.
I will eat and drink and nurture myself and others,
in ways that support awakening.*



If the spirit of contemplative enquiry is vibrantly alive in you, then you will be able to put this teaching to immediate good use. Whether you are male or female, whether you are ordained as a monk or nun, or are living as a lay person, if you are interested in realising the cessation of suffering for yourself and all beings, if you are courageous enough to question deeply, to investigate the universe as it arises, with fully engaged passion, honesty and interest, then you are bhikkhu in spirit and this sutra is addressed to you. Try to read it as if the Buddha was sitting in your presence speaking personally to you and your friends.

2. Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of Nibbāna – namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.



One can sometimes gain valuable insight through playing with language, thus finding fresh meanings through looking at things in novel ways. I can imagine the Buddha saying; *"Bhikkhus, this is the direct path. . ."* and as he said *'this'* he might have gestured with his finger or hand, indicating the entire process of everything around him and within him. *"This, bhikkhus, is the direct path. . ."* This beyond words mystery of

life unfolding, this dancing of responsive knowing, this holistic inter-being that we are, this multidimensional field of being and knowing – this is the direct path – the only path . . . *namely the four foundations of mindfulness.*



direct path *ekāyāna māgga* – sometimes translated as the one way, the only way, the sole way, the path that goes only one way – i.e. to Nibbāna.

eka => one. *yāna* => vehicle. *māgga* => path.

In Tibetan teachings, *māgga* or ‘path’ is sometimes used interchangeably with the word *bhūmi*. Paths or *bhūmis*, “primarily refer to the inner spiritual development of mind (‘mind’ is sometimes even given as a synonym for ‘path’). In other words, this refers to the continuum of cultivating, and familiarizing with, certain states of mind and insights in many different ways, from the levels of a beginner up through perfect buddhahood, which entails increasingly positive and powerful mental qualities.”⁶

purification of beings – Traditionally this means to free beings from greed, hatred and delusion. In western cultures the understanding of purity is inevitably mixed up with ideas of impurity or defilement, and a huge amount of value judgement.

⁶ *Gone Beyond, Volume 1*, p 37, Snow Lion, 2010, Karl Brunnhölzl

To take it right out of these realms, consider purity or purification in a very different way. Consider what it means to be pure in terms of the ingredients listed on a package of food. We might read, Peanut Butter – 100% pure – no additives. Pure in this sense means 100%. To be purified is to be 100% present with no additives of fantasy, hidden agendas, or active ignoring. To be pure is to be willing and able to be totally present with and for the totality of another, and that other could be a human being, a tree, a feeling, a memory, a situation, or an entire ecosystem. It could be anything. This 100% implies a capacity for radical inclusivity and wide awake presence.

sorrow – *soka* => PTS, from *suc*, to gleam; the flame of fire, later in the sense of burning grief; grief, sorrow, mourning.

lamentation – *parideva* => PTS, lamentation, wailing.

Walshe translates *sokaparideva* as sorrow and distress.⁷

pain and grief – *dukkhadomanassa*, => an unpleasant state of mind and body.

dukkha => PTS, unpleasant, painful, causing misery; discomfort, suffering, ill, trouble, unsatisfactoriness. The term *dukkha* includes all the varied kinds of uneasiness, unpleasantness, difficulties, problems, sorrows, and pain that sentient beings experience in the ordinary course of living.

domanassa => PTS, distress, dejectedness, melancholy, grief;

⁷ *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Wisdom Publications, 1995, Maurice Walshe

mental pain as opposed to physical pain (*dukkha*). Walshe translates *dukkhadomanassa* as pain and sadness.



The Pali term *dukkha* (*duḥkha* in Sanskrit) is thought to derive from *dus* + *kha*. ‘*Dus*’ was a syllable used to invoke a sense of something bad or corrupted. ‘*Kha*’ referred to: cavity, hollow, cave, cavern; ‘the hole in the nave of a wheel through which the axle runs’; vacuity, empty space, air, ether, and sky. If an axle doesn’t fit properly into the hub of a wheel, the wheel won’t roll smoothly. It is off-centre. In this sense, *dukkha* refers to the discomfort, dissatisfaction, or suffering of living in a way that is ‘off-centre’.

The universe is a dynamic inter-weaving of myriad domains and dimensions: atoms and galaxies, bacteria and blue whales, individuals and ecosystems, physical realms and mental processes. Considering that we experience everything through the lens of our own need and preference-driven perceptions and knowing, it makes sense that we will always have trouble understanding the whole picture. We are centred in our personal worlds rather than in the inter-beingness of everything and everyone. In the light of this, we can understand the Holy Truth of *dukkha*. Compared to the totality of what is occurring or the fullness of what is happening, any particular experience when abstracted out

from the whole will be inherently off-centre, even if subjectively, it seems to roll along smoothly (*sukha*) for a while.



true way => right path, right method, the way of truth, a life of dharma. Traditionally, this is referring to the Noble Eightfold Path.

Nibbāna is the Pali equivalent of the more widely recognised Sanskrit word, *Nirvāna*.

nibbāna => PTS , 1. the going out of a lamp or fire. 2. health, the sense of bodily well-being. 3. the dying out in the heart of the threefold fire of greed, hatred and delusion. 4. the sense of spiritual well-being, of security, emancipation, victory, peace, salvation and bliss.

Nibbāna or nirvāna is often spoken of as if it were a transcendent state. This paragraph hints at something much more immediate, by indicating that the direct path for the realisation of "peace" is to be found through investigating the collaborative interweaving of four areas: body, feelings, states of mind and objects of mind. The path is not about abandoning the physical and mental processes in order to ascend to a place of spirit – an other worldly transcendent elsewhere. One realises Nibbāna, a sense of well-being and profound meaningfulness, right here in the midst of life as one finds it. This path is very practical. It is also do-able by anyone willing to make the effort.

I'm reminded of Thich Nhat Hanh's statement; "If you want peace, peace is with you now." The key in this statement is not so much that peace is with you now but that first of all you have to want peace. Do you actually want peace? Have you become tired of the suffering – the madness of a human world dedicating immense amounts of energy to making money from greed, hatred, fear and confusion?

3. What are the four? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.⁸

abides – *viharati* => PTS, to stay, abide, dwell, sojourn (in a certain place); in general: to be, to live; to behave, to lead a life.

This term 'abide' is used throughout the text. It indicates that

⁸ This classic translation uses the pronoun "he" as the Buddha was addressing bhikkhus. Please keep in mind however that he was really addressing 'ones who are free to ask question' and that can take place in beings of any gender.

these contemplations involve more than just sitting meditation. They are to be explored in the midst of any and all activities – however we are abiding.

the body as a body – This phrase is sometimes rendered ‘the body in the body’, or ‘the body within the body’ or ‘the body as body’. (*A similar formula is applied to feelings, states of mind and phenomena.*) Essentially it is drawing attention to the possibility of examining the body while dwelling in direct visceral/tactile experience of the body – rather than just thinking about it in a theoretical way as if one was a bystander. Thai meditation master, Ajahn Chah phrased it ‘contemplating the body within the body’. One contemplates the body, from within the body experience, not as an armchair theoretician thinking about how the body has been or how it could or should be, but through experientially knowing/appreciating how the myriad forms and processes of one’s physiology are arising and passing away, in this immediacy of contemplation.

In a similar fashion one contemplates the feelings from within the direct experience of feeling; and so too, states of mind and objects of mind.



More than simply being a collection of meditation instructions on mindfulness, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutra encourages an active life of ever fresh sensitive, engaged, experiential, exploration. From an evolutionary perspective, you could say we were born

to do this. The actual process of our ongoing here and now existence is essentially whole and radically (*at the root*) inclusive. After all, to make anything from scratch requires the collaboration of an entire evolving universe. To illustrate this further, consider what is happening right now in the midst of your reading these words. The living dynamic that you are is a mirror-like morphing of physiology and mental processes, each reflecting the other. Your posture, breathing, metabolising and neural functioning, along with your thinking, reflecting, evaluating, remembering and even your moments of drifting attentiveness; the sounds of the birds and the traffic on the street, in fact everything that makes up the world within you and around you; all these processes are responding with and to each other. Everything is mutually shaping. Your ongoing lived experience, your ongoing 'beingness', is a summation of an entire universe of experience – a dance of continual transformation.

You are not constructed out of fundamentally separate bits with vacuous gaps between the bits. There are no 'gaps' between these things. The on-going living process that makes you up is a dynamic seamless whole, with only arbitrary beginnings and endings, or inner edges and outer edges. In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutra, the Buddha invites us to awaken to our participation in this immense unfolding mystery.



ardent – in other words, with passionate interest and energy.

Fully aware is a translation of *sampajāna* => PTS, thoughtful, mindful, attentive, deliberate.

Mindful – *sati* is sometimes translated as self-composed, in other words not distracted or dispersed but focussed and present.

“Having put away covetousness and grief for the world.”

This is sometimes translated as “hankering and fretting for the world” or “hankering and dejection common in the world”. Basically the phrase is referring to the various expressions and flavours of desire which, together with a wide spectrum of ambiguity and worry, so often colour our interactions with others.

“Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.” This sentence hints at the flavour of meditative experience. If we were to rephrase it, we might come up with the following, while still preserving the basic intent. ‘One who is free to ask question abides energetically, fully aware, concentrated, in a state of easeful, engaged, attentive, inquisitive, responsive presence; moment by moment by moment.’



Having introduced the "*direct path . . . namely the four foundations of mindfulness*", the Buddha asks a rhetorical question, "What are the four?" and then answers by listing them: 1) *kāya* – perceived forms or shapes of experience. The translation we have here uses the word 'body'. 2) *vedanā* – 'feelings', in the sense of a continuous process of evaluation in terms of what supports the organism and what threatens or diminishes it. 3) *citta* – states or modes of 'mind'(ing) or consciousness. 4) *dharma* – 'mind objects'. You could usefully think of this fourth category as intuited understandings or frames of reference through which we conceive the world. Or put another way, the over-all understandings or paradigms that *vasana*, or perfume, our entire field of experience – this expanse of body, feelings, states of mind and mind-objects interweaving as a seamless whole.

These four aspects or foundations: *kāya*, *vedanā*, *citta* and *dharma*, that together comprise our lived experience, are mutually shaping and influencing each other in a continuous manner. As Thich Nhat Hanh might have said, 'they inter-are'. You won't find one without the other three. The fundamental practise or discipline of Satipaṭṭhāna involves cultivating and refining curiosity about, interest in, and close attentiveness to, this rich 'holomovement' of life-unfolding that we are.

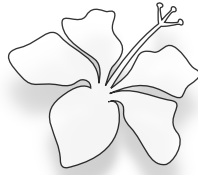
When we settle into mindfulness, we open to a continuously present or presenting now – an integrated field of experience

made up of these four inter-weavings. Contemplating ‘the body’ (kāya) really means, we are contemplating the inter-beingness of all four with emphasis or particular focus on body or form. The same can be applied to the other three.

To intentionally cultivate the skills which can support deepening clarity and understanding about the whole – about holistic flowing experience, as it is happening – we are encouraged to make each of these four the centre of our contemplative study. Then with increased mastery and deepening familiarity, the four will appear to merge and mingle until we are left with a profoundly confident understanding of being a life of unfolding wholeness.



Kāyānupassanā
Contemplation of the Body
Awareness of the Body



1. MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING

4. *And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating, the body as a body? Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out. Breathing in long, he understands: 'I breathe in long'; or breathing out long, he understands: 'I breathe out long.' Breathing in short, he understands: 'I breathe in short'; or breathing out short, he understands: 'I breathe out short.' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body [of breath]'; he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body [of breath].' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in tranquillising the bodily formation'; he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out tranquillising the bodily formation.' Just as a skilled turner or his apprentice, when making a long turn, understands: 'I make a long turn'; or when making a short turn, understands: 'I make a short turn'; so too, breathing in long, a bhikkhu understands: 'I breathe in long'... he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out tranquillising the bodily formation.'*

First of all the Buddha suggests some ideal places in which to meditate: in a forest, or at the root of a tree or in an empty hut or space. None of these places will be very useful for the many beings living in urban areas. They seem to be less and less

readily available. However these three are not just pleasant places to sit. They also symbolise inner qualities, attitudes and ways of understanding that can profoundly support the natural flow of awakening.

The forest symbolises the mind – which could be thought of as the entire field of knowing that we are. Imagine a dense jungle with huge trees, lianas, flowering plants, insects, birds, large creatures and micro organisms; things growing in and on other things; life forms eating other life forms, and being eaten by other life forms, everyone ultimately energised by transformed sunlight; a vast inter-being of bodies and consciousness, in other words, a healthy, well functioning ecosystem. Ancient Buddhist texts sometimes used the image of a ‘netted undergrowth’ when referring to our initial intuitive glimpse of mind – this complex and intricate tangling of diverse levels of knowing which all together comprise the field of knowing that is our ongoing experience. Metaphorically, ‘going to a forest’ is to enter into an intimate and detailed appreciation for the profound inter-being and inter-knowing nature of everything. This forest of knowing, or forest of mind, is a rich ecology of responsive phenomena – myriad forms of experience, continuously coming into being and passing away, mutually shaping each other in the process. Thoughts are influencing feelings, shaping physiology, promoting activity, moulding intentions, giving birth to emotions, leading to thoughts and on and on. This is a ‘place’ where we can ‘sit down’ into the full mystery of living, a place where it is relatively easy to recognise the fundamental ground of being as a dynamic

unfoldment – the womb of continuous becoming. This is a very fruitful 'place' in which to meditate.

To live and practice in a real forest, can deeply enhance our explorations. After all, the historic Buddha and his followers spent much of their lives living outdoors under the canopies of old growth forest trees. Few people today would have the opportunity to do this, but in order to significantly awaken, whether we are in an actual forest or in the jungle of a city, we can benefit by abiding in this forest of inter-becoming, the great forest community of heart/mind.

The root of a tree is another special place for insight. It is the point where the visible tree disappears into the earth or where the invisible, earth-hidden-tree emerges into the light. Earth and roots are feeding branches and leaves. Branches, leaves, light and air are feeding the roots. This parallels a place in our experience where the unconscious and the conscious meet and interact. When we are lost in the underground of our being, groping blindly in the dark, there is little or no insight. When we are high up in the branches, we may feel we can see a long way, but the roots of our being are often out of sight and we lose connection with the ground of being that we are rooted in – the ground of becoming that we are.

Imagine a 'tree of life', like *Tāne Mahuta* the great kauri tree in northland New Zealand. It has a huge trunk that supports massive branches in which live numerous other forms of life. Its roots are anchored deep in the earth, the ground of becoming. The root of a tree is a very stable place, but also a

very dynamic place as nutriment of different kinds are simultaneously flowing upward and downward, outward and inward. To sit in this place that borders both light and dark, knowing and not knowing; a place where the conscious and unconscious are both available, where they can be experienced as 'not two' – a seamless interacting process – this is another very fruitful physical place and metaphoric space in which to meditate.

An empty hut is the third place that the Buddha suggests. In some texts the phrase is translated as, 'an empty space'. This is pointing to a mental space that is uncluttered with shoulds and oughts. A place that is spacious and empty in the sense of having room for new insights and understandings. It helps to meditate in a physical place that is free from clutter; free from stuff that is repeatedly reminding us of things to do, obligations to fulfil and unfinished business to attend to. This third place is one that supports the arising of new possibilities.

There are other ways we could understand these three places. They could refer to three levels of psychological or spiritual maturity. *Hīnayāna*, from *hina* – small, and *yāna* – vehicle, refers to a mindset where one is primarily concerned with one's own suffering and the possibility of getting free from it. This 'me' centredness is a small, yet to be matured, viewing of life. A person who has this as their predominant attitude will do best to meditate in the forest, in order to better understand and make peace with the myriad details and phenomena that comprise the forest of their experience.

Mahāyāna, from *maha* – great, refers to a larger viewing of life. A being who is living the way of mahāyāna has already recognised something of the interconnectedness of the forest of life. They are beginning to realise that it is not really possible to find meaningful peace in one's own life without supporting peace in others as well. The prime motivation of this maha mindset is compassion. Understanding that greed, hatred and confusion are the roots of the tree of suffering, the mahāyāna meditator brings compassion and clear seeing to these roots of the tree. This is a very fruitful way of practising.

Vajrayāna is from *vajra* – diamond; unshakeable, firm. The unshakeable diamond vehicle is an attitude to life that knows everything to be inherently pure. With this understanding, there is no negativity to escape and no dysfunction to fix. There is only a vast unshakeable space of lovingkindness/ clarity/ understanding. The meditator with this vajra view will best unfold by meditating in an 'empty hut or space', the fundamentally ungraspable spacious openness of inter-being; creative awareness dancing in the vast space of infinite possibility.

In this context, hīnayāna, mahāyāna and vajrayāna should be understood without value judgement. They are a Buddhist way of acknowledging three common psychological attitudes found in the human experience. You may recognise you have moments of all of them. In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha is teaching skilful means. When you are being a hīnayāna meditator, then go to the forest. When you are a mahāyāna

meditator, go to the root of a tree. When you are a vajrayāna meditator, meditate in the midst of spacious openness.⁹

So, having gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty space, you ‘sit down and having folded your legs crosswise, set your body erect.’ Now the text draws attention to your posture. There are many teachings on posture and meditation. In essence though, they all encourage us to take up a posture that supports a sense of alertness and ease in both mind and body. As we see in a later section, these explorations need to be done while sitting, standing, walking, and lying down, in fact, in whatever way our body is ‘disposed’. With this in mind, you may find that the cross legged part isn't applicable for you and that you can be more easeful and alert sitting in a chair or lying flat on your back.

Having taken up a posture that supports a deep experiential investigation of the ever-fresh rich weaving of now, the text then recommends that we “establish mindfulness in front”. This really means that we are alert, ‘up front’ in the sense of being honest and not hiding anything, straight forward, not looking for a pre-conceived result.

⁹ To be absolutely clear; by hīnayāna, I am not referring here to the Theravadin tradition. All three mindsets can be found in practitioners of Theravadin, Tibetan, Zen, Pureland, in fact, any school of Buddhism. This may be an unusual interpretation but I know Theravadin monks who are living expressions of vajrayāna and conversely, I have met ‘Vajrayāna practitioners’ who, caught in continual self reference, are really living out a hīnayāna view.

The rest of the section introduces the meditation on the body through investigating the process of breathing, *Ānāpānasati*.¹⁰ The text speaks of breathing in long and short. Here you begin to study and explore all the different rhythms and textures of breathing. Long and short are examples. Without controlling the breathing in any way one simply experiences and notes the shape and quality of the in-breath and out-breath. For example, when breathing in smooth and short, one understands or realises one is breathing in smooth and short. When breathing out rough and shakily, one realises one breathes out rough and shakily. At this initial stage, one simply notes all the different types of breaths that can occur. Noting the breath means to directly and intimately feel or sense the changing textures and rhythmic physical movements that, functioning together comprise this experience we refer to as 'breathing'.

Gradually you begin to notice that your entire body is involved with breathing. You also begin to notice the entire body of the breath, i.e. the beginning, middle and end of each inhalation and exhalation. At this point you might think, 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body'. Here, the whole body refers to the whole physical body and the whole body of the breath. The two are not separate. In other translations, this part says, 'Experiencing the bodily formations

¹⁰ Further teaching on the path of *Ānāpānasati* meditation can be found in *The Breath of Awakening* by Namgyal Rinpoché, and in *Breathing; The Natural Way to Meditate* by Tarchin Hearn, and in *The Path of Purification; The Visuddhimagga*.

I shall breathe in. Experiencing the bodily formations I shall breathe out'. As you explore in this way, it becomes more and more apparent that the tensions of the body are shaping the breathing and vice versa.

At this stage when you discover a blissful flow in the body and breath, you will probably just enjoy it and settle more deeply into it. However, when you find tension in the body and breath, you might think, 'Calming the body, breathing in. Calming the body, breathing out'. Or as it says in this translation, "He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in tranquillising the bodily formation'; he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out tranquillising the bodily formation'." To calm or 'tranquillise' the body doesn't mean to fix it or to change it in any way. To calm the body and breath means to make friends with the state of the body and breath just as you find them – and then to invite these tensions to soften and ultimately relax. When we cease rejecting difficult states that are present and cease wishing for states that aren't present, we begin to feel more easeful with what we have and what we are; this is the process of calming the body formations.

As you become more experienced with this section on breathing, five qualities will show you that you are on the right track.

- (1) increasing calm

- (2) increasing clarity of mind

- (3) decreasing verbalisation

(Verbalisation is the tendency to create stories or to speculate about what is happening.)

(4) increasing absorption – Less sense of separation between you the meditator and, in this case, the breathing, the object of meditation.

(5) a gradual slowing and settling of the rate of breathing.

* SECTION ON INSIGHT

5. In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that ‘there is a body’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

This paragraph, and others throughout the sutra that are similar to it, is encouraging a deepening process of insightful, penetrative enquiry. We call this *vipassana*. Many western meditators have become familiar with the term *vipassana* and associate it with a technique called ‘Insight Meditation’ a particular form of practice that emerged in Burma (Myanmar).

When not referring to this technique, insight meditation is often understood to involve looking for, or trying to grasp, a special object or knowledge – an ‘insight’ – that one could somehow possess, describe and share with others. We speak of ‘having an insight’ into something.

In Satipaṭṭhāna, the term *vipassana* is hinting at much more than specific technique or an explanatory understanding or knowledge. Essentially it is pointing to the activity of looking deeply and discerningly into what is presently arising. Think of ‘in-sight’ as the activity of ‘sighting’ into; insight as process – a verb – something you do rather than some resultant knowledge that you have. Looking/experiencing/enquiring more deeply into any object or phenomenon will inevitably reveal that phenomenon or object to be an inter-dependent relating of countless dynamic factors, including factors supporting perception and consciousness.

This is a very important paragraph in the Satipaṭṭhāna. In each of the many sections of the sutra we are introduced to a particular area of life experience to be explored in a calmly absorbed, one-pointed, focussed way (*samatha*). It is then followed by this paragraph (#5) which is repeated again and again throughout the sutra with virtually no changes, nudging us in the direction of deepening insight (*vipassana*).

The text suggests a number of different approaches. You could do this . . . or do this . . . or do this . . . and so forth. For beginners, it is assumed that at least one of the seven suggestions would engage our attention. Eventually we will

come to appreciate that each approach leads to a slightly different, though overlapping, understanding of what we are investigating. With more experience, we may begin to intuit the interweaving of all seven, simultaneously contributing to an extraordinarily rich multi-levelled experiential appreciation of what is taking place.

Internally, Externally and Both

In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally.

Many commentaries explain that to contemplate the body 'internally' means to contemplate one's own body while to contemplate the body 'externally' is to contemplate someone else's body. 'Both internally and externally' is to contemplate these two together at the same time. Though there is much to be learned through practising this way, this interpretation can obscure some of the more subtle levels of experience, that are alluded to here.

internally => *ajjhatta* PTS, that which is personal, subjective, arises within (in contrast to anything outside, objective, or impersonal), interior, personal, inwardly.

To contemplate the body, 'internally' means to feel, or to experience, or to viscerally sense oneself as physiology in

process. This is a subjective and personal experience – as if from the inside. No-one else can experience your body the way you are experiencing it. One might describe it as ‘being the body’, rather than detachedly observing it, or being the breathing rather than merely watching it, as if from the position of a bystander.

externally => *bahiddhā* PTS, outside, external. To contemplate the body ‘externally’ is to experience it ‘objectively’, as if you were an observer or a bystander looking from the outside.

To contemplate the body **both internally and externally** is to be simultaneously observing the body and being the body with no confusion or contradiction.

The terms internally and externally could also be associated with Carl Jung’s concepts of introvert and extravert. The introvert type finds their reality or place of identity in their private and personal subjective experience. The whole world is an expression of their knowing. This could be called a first person perspective on life. I am. Introvert has an interior self feeling/quality. The whole world of experience is an expression of my knowing and feelings.

The extravert type, on the other hand, finds their reality and sense of identity in a world of ‘out there’ objective experience that can be shared and discussed with others. Extravert is a focussing on the public domain rather than one’s private experience. It is more a third person perspective of life. She is. He is. It is. Extravert has an exterior feel. Everything seems

external and 'out there'. We can even externalise our own processes and say things like; my thoughts, my stomach, and my feelings, as if they were somehow exterior to the me who, in some un-definable place, is busy 'knowing' them.

This way of understanding of 'internally' and 'externally' can be applied to all the other sections of the sutta. It solves a few problems such as how you would observe feelings or mental processes in another person (i.e. 'externally') without resorting to unverifiable 'psychic powers'. The words internally and externally, acknowledge a recognition of the fact that a meditator can and will experience from different viewing points.

If you look into your own experience you might realise that you are shifting back and forth between the two all the time. Most people are not aware of this. For those who are familiar with the arising yoga practices in the Tibetan schools, inward and outward can also correspond to 'self arising', and 'front arising' yogas. 'Both' refers to experiencing self arising and front arising simultaneously, without conflict.

Arising and Vanishing Factors

Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors.

Rhys Davids translates this section: “He keeps on considering how the body is something that comes to be, or again he keeps on considering how the body is something that passes away; or again he keeps on considering the coming into being with the passing away.”¹¹

Here the meditator contemplates the many factors that together support the arising of a particular state of body and or the factors that contribute to its dissolving. Or, recognising that every state of ‘being’ – every moment of experience – is a simultaneous coming into being of something and a passing away of something else, the meditator contemplates these two processes as one continuously fluid whole.

In this section, one contemplates the interdependent nature of the physical body. In the Abhidhamma, the main causal factors listed for the appearance of the body are: ignorance, craving, karma (activity) and food. A modern scientific view might describe it as a co-dependent arising.

*This body of mine is composed of atoms born in stars,
molecules, cells, tissues and organs.*

*It is a union of uncountable viruses, bacteria,
fungi, plants and animals.*

*It is conditioned by families and societies,
by thoughts and dreams.*

It is moulded by sun and gravity

¹¹*Dialogues of the Buddha* Rhys Davids, T. W. & C. A., translated (1899–1921).

and the whole of the ecosphere.

It is an inter-being of all these processes, from micro to macro,

Wondrous, transient,

May it teach me wisdom.¹²



Clear and penetrating analysis of anything will reveal a web of dynamic relationships. In other words, any one thing, or unit of experience, when thoroughly investigated, will reveal itself to be composed of many things, themselves engaged in the process of relating to many other things. This dynamic mandala of relationships extends in two directions simultaneously.

Take your own body as an example. The single unit called 'your body' is composed from, or arises out of, the activity of uncountable 'interior' biological, chemical, and physical processes. At the same time, your body is actively engaged in myriad 'exterior' relationships with things and processes existing beyond your skin. Your body is in a continual dance of relationship with an evolving ecosystem. How it functions depends on the weather, the rhythms of the sun, the behaviour of your parents; on social conventions of economics, education and religious belief, and so forth. Your body's interior physiological and chemical functioning at any particular time is intimately responsive to where your body is located in a

¹² *Daily Puja* – Wangapeka Books, and Green Dharma Treasury

larger exterior world. Simultaneously the surrounding world is adjusting to the summation of this interior functioning. It wouldn't be unreasonable to say that you are nothing but a constantly transforming field of multi-dimensional relating in action.

*Inner and Outer
both are giving rise to
this body*

Clear 'analysis' is a process whereby we deconstruct an initially assumed single thing or unit into a dancing of internal and external factors which themselves can be analysed into further internal and external factors and so forth until the initial, so called solid, form 'disappears' into a dance of non-abidingness.

This, however, is not the whole story. The study of multi-levelled relationship will also reveal 'synthesis' which could be thought of as the experiencing of particular forms or units – identified things – arising from this dancing non-abidingness. With deep pervasive looking, the world dissolves into un-pin-down-able mystery while simultaneously it appears, rainbow-like, from an interweaving of myriad factors and processes.

*Nothing arises from a single cause.
Nothing exists by its own power.
Nothing arises singly.
This is a heart truth of interdependent arising.*

In this insight paragraph of the Satipaṭṭhāna, we are encouraged to look more deeply into our object of meditation, to look from many different angles or points of view: internally, externally and both; arising factors, vanishing factors and both.

‘Internally’ could be referring to the internal relations that are contributing to our experience. ‘Externally’ might involve looking into the external relations that are contributing to our experience. ‘Both internally and externally’ draws attention to how the internal factors and external factors are collaborating together in synthesis, the act of bringing forth this current arising world of experience. Inner and outer inter-are. What I do is affecting you. What you do is affecting me. Where does a body, or feeling, or mind-state, or phenomena begin or end? And with this we begin to glimpse a vast ocean of relationship.

Arising factors, vanishing factors and both arising and vanishing factors can be seen in a similar way. We analyse arising, then passing, then the relational arising and passing. Internal relations determine external relations. External relations determine internal conditions (relations). Both together is full mandala viewing. (See Appendix C, p 153.)



Bare Attention

Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness.

The phrase, “bare knowledge” is hinting a state of naked knowing – dynamic, creative experience that is not clothed in concepts. If your attention is insufficiently engaged by the preceding themes of internal and external or the arising and passing away factors, you might simply focus on the fact that: “there is a body” or “this is a body”, to the extent necessary for “bare knowledge and mindfulness”. This implies abiding in and as this just-as-it-is fullness of present awareness, without embellishing, diminishing or modifying it in any way. This seventh suggestion for insight is deceptively profound. Without analysing or value judging, one simply acknowledges or recognises this experience of ungraspable knowing embodiment – “there is a body” or “this is a body” – where the experiencer and the experience are not two.

The paragraph finishes by saying that the bhikkhu abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. To abide independent doesn't contradict the earlier contemplation of inter-dependent. Here it means independent of states of greed, hatred and delusion; not involved with them, not in their grip. Not clinging to anything in the world particularly means not identifying as 'self' any of the five aggregates or *skandhas*. (See page 92 for more on the skandhas.)

2. THE FOUR POSTURES

6. Again, *bhikkhus*, when walking, a *bhikkhu* understands: 'I am walking'; when standing, he understands: 'I am standing'; when sitting, he understands: 'I am sitting'; when lying down, he understands: 'I am lying down'; or he understands accordingly however his body is disposed.

Here one continues the exploration of breathing but now extending the practice to include whatever posture you happen to be in. To 'understand you are sitting' means to have a rich interior awareness of the physical sensations of sitting. The word translated as understanding is *pajānati* => PTS, to know, find out, come to know, understand, distinguish.

Physiology is never static. All sorts of muscular movements and adjustments are needed to rest in any particular position. Even when lying down, if you give your attention to the detail of what is happening, you will notice all kinds of shifts and changes. The breathing shifts in response to the posture. The posture shifts in response to the breathing. The body is an inter-being of innumerable factors.

Kum Nye, a Tibetan form of body awareness work or Feldenkrais/awareness-through-movement, or any other body awareness practice, can help to augment this section.¹³ You need to be able to see the ordinary – i.e. walking, standing and so forth – as extraordinary. Because the ordinary is so habitual

¹³ *Walking in Wisdom* by Tarchin Hearn contains numerous exercises that will help extend these explorations.

and familiar, a lot of awake, sensitive, attentiveness to detail, is needed in order to experience these familiar postures in fresh, new and revealing ways.

7. In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

The above paragraph appears to be the same as #5 (p 39). In the Satipaṭṭāna, each theme for exploration is followed by this paragraph with sometimes minor adjustments.

3. ALL ACTIVITIES

8. Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu is one who acts in full awareness when going forward and returning; who acts in full awareness when looking ahead and looking away;

who acts in full awareness when flexing and extending his limbs; who acts in full awareness when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl; who acts in full awareness when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting; who acts in full awareness when defecating and urinating; who acts in full awareness when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent.

With this section, the meditator brings awareness into all the activities of daily living. This paragraph touches on aspects of a monk's life but you can get the idea and apply it to the various activities of your own life. To deepen this exploration it will help if you pause many times in the course of the day to enjoy what you are doing. Take one thing at a time – each activity as it arises – and give it all of your attention. One breath at a time. One activity at a time.

When drinking tea, really drink tea. When washing dishes, give all your attention to washing dishes. When getting dressed, picking something up, answering the phone, driving the car, stroking the cat, preparing a meal; flood the activity with sensitivity and interest. It seems like such a simple thing but giving attention to our physical activities will hugely enrich the pleasure and meaningfulness of each day. This is an area in which many people find *gathas* or short memory verses to be useful. Thich Nhat Hanh's book *"The Miracle of Mindfulness"* gives many excellent hints for supporting this section's explorations.



When cultivating mindfulness there are two aspects to develop and then blend together. The first aspect involves living; or acting; or engaging, with pleasurable attentiveness and love. A common block to doing this takes place when we wrap our experience in mental chatter and then become more interested in the story we are telling than in what is directly taking place. To love something or someone is to be actively and pleasurably interested in them. Cut through any inner dialogue that might be cloaking your activity by strengthening the question/experience, “What is actually going on here?” Give all your attentiveness to it.

The second aspect involves exploring, or deepening your appreciation for, the inter-beingness of the activity. If you look deeply, whatever you're involved with will reveal itself to be an extraordinary inter-dancing of myriad levels and domains of existence. As your mindfulness practice matures, these two aspects (looking with eyes of inter-being and touching with pleasurable attentiveness and love) will gradually blend and merge as a naturally rich way of moving with and through the world.



9. *In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.*

4. THE PARTS OF THE BODY

10. *Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reviews this same body as bounded by skin, and full of many kinds of impurity, from the soles of the feet up and from the top of the head down: 'In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, liver, diaphragm, spleen, bones, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine,' Just as though there were a bag with an opening at both ends full of many sorts of grain, such as hill rice, red rice, beans, peas, millet, and white rice, and a man with good eyes*

were to open it and review it thus; 'This is hill rice, this is red rice, these are beans, these are peas, this is millet, this is white rice'; so too, a bhikkhu reviews this same body as bounded by skin, and full of many kinds of impurity, from the soles of the feet up and from the top of the head down: 'In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, liver, diaphragm, spleen, bones, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine,'

This section was traditionally referred to as meditation on the foulness or repulsiveness of the body because it could act as an antidote to lust and excessive infatuation for the 'body-beautiful'. It encourages the meditator to investigate the reality of a body made of parts; many of them smelly, slimy and unmentionable in polite company! I have noticed that even modern, well educated people often relate to their body in a very superficial way, as if it was no more than what appears to them in a mirror. The reality of the insides and the fact that all the parts of the body are themselves dynamic expressions of responsive change and transformation, is something that many people don't much know about and, often don't want to know about. While lavishing attention on the outer skin and the various adornments that clothe it, they are squeamish about what's inside.

The classical method of practising this meditation is described in detail in *The Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) section

VIII 42 - 144, and in *The Vimuttimagga* (The Path of Freedom) pages 170 - 177. Here, the description of this meditation is very extensive. The essential method involves reciting the names of thirty two parts of the body again and again to help the mind become one-pointedly focussed in awareness of these parts. One begins with what, at that time, was called the **skin pentad**; head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, reciting it forward and back. When the mind stabilises in observing this pentad, then one begins to include the **kidney pentad**; flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys. One goes forward to kidneys and then all the way back to head-hairs. Then one adds the **lights or lungs pentad**; heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, again going forward and then all the way back. Then add the **brain pentad**; large intestine, small intestines, contents of stomach, faeces, brain. Then the **fat sestad**; bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat. Lastly the **urine sestad**; tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.

The text says: "The recitation should be done verbally in this way a hundred times, a thousand times, even a hundred thousand times. For it is through verbal recitation that the meditation subject becomes familiar and, the mind being thus prevented from running here and there, the parts become evident."

Once the verbal recitation has been well established, it may then become internalised as a mental recitation. At this point, the meditator looks more carefully into each part, discerning it clearly as to colour, shape, direction, location and

delimitation (distinguishing it from other similar parts.) Classically, all this detailed attention to and investigation of grease, spittle, snot, blood etc. gradually establishes the body as something that is *asubha*, “not-beautiful”, and one experiences great detachment from it.

Many people today have too much anger, hatred, aversion and fear energy shaping their lives. Such people are frequently quite out of contact with their bodies, living much of their lives in states of conceptual fantasy and speculation. This meditation in its classical form, emphasising foulness and repulsiveness, rarely helps people who are living this way. To cultivate deep healing, they need to experience wholesome contact with the wondrous miracle which is their body and this requires encouraging lovingkindness, not a sense of foulness and repulsion. With scientific medical knowledge and technology, this meditation could go in a very different direction.

*The ancients said, look at that body.
Foul, corrupt, full of filth,
A bag of faeces, urine and blood,
of vomit, gases, fats and oils.
And so they did, those monks of old,
And came to release all lustful selfish clinging
to this walking breathing corpse.*

*Today the teachers say, look at that body.
And looking in, I find the entire universe,
Miraculous voyagings of stardust atoms,
Water cycles, chemical cycles, symbiotic*

*dancing of plants and animals,
molecules, cells and organs.
My breath is the breath of the rainforest.
My excretions the banquet of others.
My muscles and tissues, blood and bone are
the temporary arrangement of carrots,
fish and herbs on the way to being worms,
insects, birds and trees. How vast and wondrous!
And so they do, those contemplative-scientists of today
And come to release all self-ish clinging to
a separated 'me'
And take a few more steps
on the way to home we never left.¹⁴*

For a well balanced being, the classical form of meditating on the 32 parts of the body (outlined in '*The Visuddhimagga*') is potentially a very rich practice, however, if you find it doesn't engage you sufficiently you could begin with any of the many body-scan meditations that are common today. Body-scan in Four Parts and the Inner Smile, both described in my book, *Natural Awakening*, can be very fruitful ways of working. Also, as I mentioned earlier, 'Awareness Through Movement' explorations can greatly augment this meditation as can Kum Nye, a Tibetan system of body awareness work. Ironically, it's often only after we have an intimate and appreciative knowing of the body that we can practice the classical form of this meditation in a wholesome way.

¹⁴ Daily Puja, Wangapeka Books



When meditating on the parts or anatomy of the body, don't approach them as disconnected mechanical bits. This is my head. This is my leg. This is my heart, stomach, hair, nails and so forth. Just as a person lives in an ocean of memories, a *whakapapa*¹⁵ of meaning, implications, responsibilities and capacities; so too, each organ, each identified part, exists in an ocean of 'memories', in this case molecular, cellular, genetic, developmental, structural, and so forth – a *whakapapa* of unfolding familial engagements and relationships, that ultimately links all of us to all of us.

Meditate on the 'parts of the body' in this way. Not a *Lego* set of immense complexity, but a multi-dimensional living fabric of ever more deeply revealed integration and mutual being and belongingness. This is how we can eat each other and use tissues and parts from each other. We lean on each other and support each other. We gestate and nourish each other. We are all deeply related. Our activities shape and affect the activities of others at the same time the activities of others are shaping and affecting the very substance and processes that we are. We are flowing through each other, myriad currents of becoming; mingling and merging, communing and communicating, conserving and creating, knowing and being

¹⁵ *whakapapa* => a Maori word meaning: genealogy, cultural identity, family tree, ancestral lineage.

known – an ocean of embodiment. Try approaching the ‘parts of the body’ this way.



11. In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that ‘there is a body’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

5. ELEMENTS

12. Again bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reviews this same body, however it is placed, however disposed, as consisting of elements thus: ‘In this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element,’ Just as though a skilled butcher or his apprentice had killed a cow and was seated at the crossroads with it cut

up into pieces; so too, a bhikkhu reviews this same body, however it is placed, however disposed, as consisting of elements thus: 'In this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element,'

This meditation is outlined in detail in the Visuddhimagga. (section XI, paragraphs 27 – 117) One begins by recognising the attributes of the four elements and then applying this way of viewing to each of the thirty-two parts of the body. Eventually the meditator comes to experience their body not in the conventional sense of 'having a body' but as a dance of four elements which arise dependent on many causes and conditions.

Earth element *paṭhāvi-dhātu*

dhātu => element.

paṭhāvi => PTS from *puthu* or *prath* – to expand; *paṭhāvi* => the earth, the broad one, breadth, expansion, extension, solid, firm.

T-Abd notes – *Paṭhāvi* => the degree to which space is occupied. There are the two relative conditions of this element.

a – extension; dimension, thickness etc.

b – density; hardness, softness

Water element *āpo-dhātu*

āpo => PTS from *ap*, to arrive, to come in, attraction, gravitational pull.

T-Abd notes – water element is the intangible cohesive or

binding tendency which gives rise to the body of something.
It's attributes are fluidity and contraction.

Fire element *tejo-dhātu*

tejo => PTS from *tij* to be sharp, to pierce, *tejo* => “sharpness”,
heat, fire, light, radiance.

T-Abd notes – Tejo is the heat element and applies to all temperature ranges. These control the maturing and progression of the body, i.e. metabolic processes of catabolism and anabolism. It is the vitalising energy and traditionally was thought to determine the life span and rate of material generation/degeneration.

Air element *vāyo-dhātu*

vāyo => PTS from *vāy*, to vibrate, move and oscillate; and from *va*. to weave. This is the vibratory aspect. It is seen in the body as movement.

Vis; XI 39; “What has the characteristic of stiffness is the earth element, what has the characteristic of cohesion is the water element, what has the characteristic of ripening (maturing) is the fire element, what has the characteristic of distending (supporting) is the air element.” Traditionally you could think of the elements as being inner qualities that together give shape and form to anything. However, these explorations require a very focussed and subtly discerning attentiveness, otherwise we can be seduced into a fog of philosophical thinking and speculative fantasy.

Although not really the traditional approach, it can be very valuable to contemplate the four elements in an outer way. To do this one contemplates how one's body is literally made of earth through the medium of plants which are eaten as food. The liquids in one's body were once a cloud, a snow field, the tears in another being's eyes, a river flowing to the sea. The radiation from the sun is the ultimate source of energy, powering photosynthesis, which creates sugars which are released as heat and energy in our bodies through metabolism. Air is composed of chemical elements and compounds which themselves are inter-being with other systems and processes. All these elements are continuously flowing through the ecosphere, dancing together in complex ways giving rise to the temporary appearance of bodies. Meditating in this way, we understand the body as a dynamic process of transformation, interdependent with everything else in the world.

Eating and drinking is an obvious time for exploring this meditation. Before bringing the food to your mouth, consciously breathe in and out a few times while contemplating how this food or drink has come to be here. Look deeply and appreciate the journey of the water in your tea as it comes to you and leaves from you. Look into the story of potato. Woven from sunlight, earth, water and air, we are a matrix of elements – a dancing periodic table of elements – whose earliest grandparents were stars.

13. In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a

body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that ‘there is a body’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.



When exploring arising and vanishing factors, it is common to begin by viewing the object or activity you are meditating on as a dancing or kaleidescope of interdependent things and events. A whole lot of objects, reacting to and with each other, together comprising a particular vibrant whole. This probably describes a very common initial experience of inter-beingness. It's how we often understand ecology – a dynamic matrix of inter-dependent objects.

With deepening contemplation however, we might begin to see the situation differently. Rather than an inter-dependent weaving of separate objects, we may have moments of experiencing the situation as a collaborative communion of sensitive, feeling, subjects; each factor itself an engaged

participant; each with its equivalent hopes and fears, needs and aspirations.

Now the contemplation becomes expansively alive. It feels juicy and personal – living relationships in action. This is a deeply meaningful ecology. By comparison, meditation can lead into a loneliness of mechanical technique when our analysis of arising and vanishing is overly detached and piecemeal with little, if any, sense of the fact of our living in intimate, sensitive relationship with myriad other sentient beings. In the living world, relationship is not optional.

*Expanding into the gifting fullness,
living collaborations of sensitive responsiveness,
Volumes of sentience within volumes of sentience,
Oceans of knowing in the tiniest drops.¹⁶*



6. THE NINE CHARNEL GROUND CONTEMPLATIONS

14. Again, bhikkhus, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, one, two, or three days dead, bloated, livid, and oozing matter, a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: 'This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.'

¹⁶ "We are in this Together", www.greendharmatreasury.org/poetry

15. *In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.*

16. *Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, being devoured by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals, or various kinds of worms, a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: 'This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.'*

17. *In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is*

a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

18. Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together with sinews – a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: 'This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.'

19. In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally ...

20. Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together with sinews ...

21. In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally ...

22. Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together with sinews ...

23. In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally ...

24. Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, disconnected bones scattered

in all directions – here a hand-bone, there a foot-bone, here a shin-bone, there a thigh-bone, here a hip-bone, there a back-bone, here a rib-bone, there a breast-bone, here an arm-bone, there a shoulder-bone, here a neck-bone, there a jaw-bone, here a tooth, there a skull – a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: 'This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.'

25. In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

26 – 30. Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, bones bleached white, the colour of shells ... bones heaped up, more than a year old ... bones rotted and crumpled to dust, a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: 'This body too is

of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.'

The Charnel Ground Contemplations, known as *asubha* (not beautiful), study the body as it disintegrates after death. In ancient days the meditator would go to a charnel ground where there were human bodies in various stages of decay and decomposition. Today one has to practise in one's imagination. If you see the corpse of an animal you can use it as a stimulus for developing this meditation. I remember many years ago when emerging from the train station in Calcutta, the first thing I saw was a beggar's corpse being thrown into the back of a garbage truck. This plunged me into contemplation. There, but for the grace of God, go I.

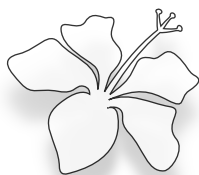
31. In this way he abides, contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.



Appendix E, (p 166) outlines some suggestions for extending exploration of kāyānupassanā in the spirit of contemplative science and modern ecology.



Vedanānupassanā
Contemplation of Feeling



32. *And how bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating feelings as feelings? Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling, a bhikkhu understands: 'I feel a pleasant feeling'; when feeling a painful feeling, he understands: 'I feel a painful feeling'; when feeling a neither-painful-nor pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.'* When feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel a worldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel an unworldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling a worldly painful feeling, he understands: 'I feel a worldly painful feeling'; when feeling an unworldly painful feeling, he understands: 'I feel an unworldly painful feeling'; when feeling a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.'

Vedanā => PTS, from *ved* or *vid* => to know, to feel, to sense, to experience; to weigh something up, to evaluate.

Vedanā refers to the process of evaluation that is continuously taking place in any living organism. We could think of it as being rooted in the dance of physiology – a chemical, cellular, visceral responsiveness in the organism to what is supportive of ongoing life, what is threatening to it and what is neutral.

T–Abd notes – Vedanā is a conscious subjective impression prior to recognising or identifying an object. It can modify the stream of consciousness either positively or negatively.

The text refers to three types of vedanā. Pleasurable, unpleasurable and neither pleasurable nor unpleasurable. A moment of vedanā emerges from the integrated activity of all the parts and systems making up an organism. You could think of it as an over-all organism response to any stimulus whether internal or external. This response leads to the creature moving either towards or away from the stimulus. The automatic moving towards something is experienced as pleasurable. Moving away is unpleasurable and neither moving towards or away as neutral or indifferent.

Vedanā could be thought of as an organism preservation mechanism. It's what allows us to jerk our hand away from a hot stove element before it burns us. Experientially, the moment of vedanā seems to come before one is even consciously aware of the object. Vedanā can be so fleeting and subtle that what we commonly perceive as vedanā is usually a stream of many similar vedanā moments. In the action of responding we belatedly recognise the vedanā.¹⁷

People often confuse feelings with emotions. As one can see by the PTS derivations above, vedanā is feeling but in the sense of evaluation. When you have a feeling it is going to rain you don't usually mean you are having an emotion that it will rain.

¹⁷ See appendix C for further comments on vedanā.

An organism is constantly monitoring the inner and outer environment. It's as if it were asking: Is this situation or object life enhancing? Is it supportive? Is it dangerous to life? Is it neutral? Throughout life there is a constant stream of *vedanā* taking place.

Confusion and suffering can occur if the *vedanā* function becomes 'hijacked' by the ego. Situations are then 'evaluated' on the basis of what will augment a relatively static and more or less defensive ego image, rather than on the basis of what is good for the overall creative functioning of the organism. When this happens we can begin to make bad 'decisions'. We can identify as unpleasant, something that is actually good for the organism and then back away from it. Similarly, we can identify as pleasant, something that is essentially bad for the organism and then move towards it. Addictions to alcohol, to compulsive chronic activity, or to junk food, are examples of this. A poorly functioning *vedanā* can cause no end of suffering.

The Buddha once said that he knew the pleasant for the pleasant and the unpleasant for the unpleasant. It sounds very straight forward but in practice, especially in this day of powerful advertising and media manipulation, many beings don't know. They have lost touch with this basic life support function. Their wrong reading of *vedanā* leads to all sorts of unskillful actions. In *vedanānupassanā* one begins by simply noting the process of *vedanā*, experiencing it as it arises and passes, without necessarily acting on it.

worldly and unworldly feelings

worldly => *āmisa* PTS, originally raw meat hence prevailing notion of raw, unprepared, uncultivated; fleshy, of the flesh (as opposed to mind or spirit) hence physical, material, or worldly.

unworldly => *nirāmisa* PTS, having no meat or prey; free from sensual desires, disinterested, not material, unworldly.

In the Theravadin tradition, ‘worldly feelings’ refer to feeling/evaluations arising in the life of a householder. Unworldly feelings are feeling/evaluations arising in the life of a renunciate. They are described in detail in (MN 137, 9 - 15) under the ‘six kinds of joy’, the ‘six kinds of grief’, and the ‘six kinds of equanimity’. The six refer to the six sense doors – the ‘doors’ for: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting touching and thinking (mental phenomena)

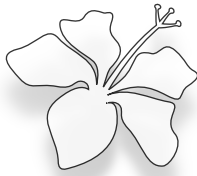
The three types of *vedanā* of a householder refer to the common responses to sensory experience (liking, disliking, and neutrality) arising through any of the six doors, without any accompanying insight or understanding.

According to the MN text, the three types of *vedanā* for a person living the life of renunciation, are the feeling/evaluations that arise in response to insight into the nature of any of the six sense objects and the situations supporting their arising. For example, the renunciate might experience joy in recognising the truths of impermanence, suffering, and non-abidingness (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*), arising through, or in connection with, any of the six sense doors. For the renunciate,

grief can arise when experiencing anicca, dukkha and anattā through any of the six sense doors and then longing for liberation. The grief is the renunciate's response to the longing. Equanimity arises on seeing that all sense objects are impermanent. They are subject to change, fading away and cessation.

33. In this way he abides, contemplating the feelings as feelings internally, or he abides contemplating the feelings as feelings externally, or he abides contemplating the feelings as feelings both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in feelings their arising factors, or he abides contemplating in feelings their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in feelings both their arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is feeling' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating feelings as feelings.

Cittānupassanā
Contemplation of Mind



34. *And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind as mind? Here a bhikkhu understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and mind unaffected by lust as mind unaffected by lust. He understands mind affected by hate as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate as mind unaffected by hate. He understands mind affected by delusion as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion. He understands contracted mind as contracted mind, and distracted mind as distracted mind. He understands exalted mind as exalted mind, and unexalted mind as unexalted mind. He understands surpassable mind as surpassable mind, and unsurpassable mind as unsurpassable mind. He understands concentrated mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind. He understands liberated mind as liberated mind, and unliberated mind as unliberated mind.*

mind => *citta* PTS, from *cit*, *cinteti*, to think, perceive, appear; hence associated with the word mind. PTS also translates *citta* as heart in the sense of psychologically being the centre and focus of man's emotional nature as well as being that intellectual element which inheres in and accompanies its manifestations. In this way, *citta* denotes both the agent and that which is enacted.

The meaning of citta is best understood when explaining it by expressions familiar to us such as: with all my heart; heart and soul; I don't have the heart to do it; and blessed are the pure at heart. All of these phrases emphasise the emotional and cognitive side of 'thought' more than its mental and rational side. Citta may therefore be rendered as intention, impulse, design, mood, disposition, state of mind, reaction to impressions.

As you can see from above, the meaning of citta depends on the context in which it is being used. The translation we are using here renders it as 'mind'. In other translations you can find 'consciousness' or 'thought'. Namgyal Rinpoché referred to citta, in the context of Satipaṭṭhāna, as 'state of mind'.

A state of mind roughly corresponds to what people often consider to be their emotional state. Research into brain damaged people has shown that intellect without emotional content often loses its moral or value component. It seems to operate out of context. Hence the PTS dictionary describes citta as "man's emotional nature as well as that intellectual element which inheres in and accompanies its manifestations." Citta, the 'state of mind' or 'state of knowing' or perhaps even 'state of heart/mind' could be thought of as the overall flavour or texture of knowing – a reflection of our current intention, mood and disposition.

To illustrate this in a simple way, imagine that you had a collection of sunglasses, each tinted with a different colour. If you wear a pair of pink ones the whole world appears to be

tinted pink. If you have green ones the world is tinted green and grey ones tint the world grey. If you wear a pair of glasses for a long time you often forget that you have them on and don't realise that the glasses are affecting the way you see and experience the world. We might think an object is pink when in fact it is the glasses that make it look pink. States of mind are like this. It's as if you were wearing anger glasses or happiness glasses or glasses of any other emotional texture. This mode or way of experiencing, colours our perception, thus shaping the sense of meaning arising in any given situation.

The text gives only a very generalised range of examples of possible states of mind. "The bhikkhu abides contemplating mind as mind." In other words, in the very presence of the mind state, without departing from it, you the meditator understand that this particular 'state of mind' is present. In the direct experience of meditation you may not be able to precisely name the citta, however, you may feel an overall texture of knowing or experiencing. It may be something rough or bouncy or bubbly or bright or smooth or still. It may be focussed or diffused, open or closed. It may be a more commonly named emotion. With the familiar emotions it is valuable to notice the texture rather than simply rubber stamping them with a label. This will encourage you to examine the state more closely.

After acknowledging mind states of lust or greed, hatred and delusion, the text refers to a **contracted** or shrunken mind. This can have a feeling quality of lassitude, energylessness, or

sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*). A **distracted** mind is busy and buzzy, flitting here and there with no stability of focus. It arises as states of restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*).

An **exalted** or developed mind refers to expanded states of deep integration/union through the development of absorption (*jhāna*) on form, (*rūpajhāna*). An **unexalted** mind and a **surpassable** mind, in the sense that it can be surpassed by more refined states of experience, are mind states in which there has been no cultivation or development of (*jhāna*). These would correspond to everyday levels of sense sphere consciousness (*kāma-vācāra*) in which there is a generally unquestioned sense of separation between the subject and the object.

The **unsurpassable** mind is referring to the very deep levels of mental absorption on boundless states of consciousness (*arūpajhāna*)¹⁸. The **liberated** mind is referring to a degree of freedom from defilements either through *jhāna* (a state of deep meditative absorption) or through insight.

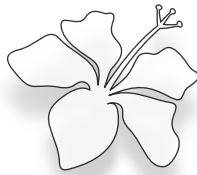
35. In this way he abides, contemplating mind as mind internally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind externally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind its vanishing factors, or he abides

¹⁸ There are four *arūpa jhānas*: boundless space, boundless light or consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception.

contemplating in mind both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is mind' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind as mind.

Cittānupassanā, is deepened as we discern the arising of these mental or emotional states. We investigate the various factors that contribute to these arisings and we investigate the factors that accompany their passing. We investigate the inter-beingness of these arising/passing processes; increasingly understanding that they are utterly transient, and that they arise and pass dependent on many different factors. Ongoing physiological and evaluation functions (*kāya* and *vedanā*) are contributing to this, as are the constantly changing outer situations and circumstances (the environment around us). With practiced familiarity, mindful appreciation of these arising and passing states becomes more and more continuous and refined. Gradually we will recognise an increasing sense of freedom from being blindly caught up in reactive patterns, and unconscious projection.

Dhammānupassanā
Contemplation of Mind Objects



In Buddhism, the Pali word *dhamma* (*dharma* in Sanskrit), is used in many different ways; for example, it can mean teaching (of the Buddha), truth, fact, natural law, phenomena, logic, understanding or, in a modern sense, paradigm.

dhamma => PTS, from *dhṛ* (*dhāreti*) => to hold, support: that which forms a foundation.

=> PTS, *psychologically*: ‘mentality’ as the constitutive element of cognition which is presented as ‘object’ to the imagination and as such has an effect of its own: – a presentation or idea, or purely mental phenomenon as distinguished from a psychophysical phenomenon or sensation.

=> PTS, *subjective*; mental attitude, thought, idea, philosophy, truth and its recognition by the Buddha, i.e. the Dhamma or world wisdom/philosophy of the Buddha as contained in the Sutras. That which the Buddha preached, the Dhamma, was the order of law of the universe, immanent, eternal, uncreated, not as interpreted by him alone, much less invented or decreed by him, but intelligible to a mind of his range, and by him made intelligible to mankind as *bodhi*: revelation, awakening. The Buddha (like every great philosopher) is a discoverer of this order of the Dhamma, this universal logic, philosophy or righteousness in which the rational and the ethical elements are fused into one. Thus by recognition of the truth, the knower becomes the incorporation of the knowable.

=> PTS, *objective*; ‘rationality’, any thing that is; as it should be according to its reason and logicity i.e. natural law.

In this version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the fourth ‘foundation of mindfulness’ *dharmānupassanā* is translated as awareness of ‘mind-objects’. Generally, we could think of this as awareness of phenomena. Virtually anything that is not covered in the sections on *kāya*, *vedanā* and *citta* would come under the category of dhamma. Here, *dharmānupassanā* is particularly addressing the dharmas, truths or processes to do with awakening – *buddhadhamma*. Because the meanings of dharma are so wide ranging, I prefer to leave the word ‘dharma’ or ‘dhamma’ untranslated and so avoid restricting my understanding to a particular chosen word or phrase.

When we are just beginning our explorations of meditation, difficult, challenging or negative dhammas often appear to be more obvious and more demanding; more in-your-face than positive, pleasurable dharmas. Perhaps for this reason the section on *dharmānupassanā* begins with an investigation of the five hindrances. Once there is a lessening of these tendencies, one moves on to investigate the five aggregates of clinging to a sense of self. This is a more hidden source of suffering. After that, the meditator investigates the realm of sensing and the reactions of greed, hatred and delusion that commonly arise with sensory experience. As this area becomes less of a problem the investigation turns to the positive, looking into the seven factors of enlightenment; a study of the qualities of being that accompany a well functioning mind and are inseparable from the experience of dwelling in freedom. In the last section of *dharmānupassanā*, one comes to know directly the Four Noble Truths, the culmination of the path.



In this section on *dhammānupassanā*, dharmas could be thought of as commonly shared matrices or mandalas of being, through which we, and the society we are part of, understand the world of our experience. Each section points out what might be thought of as a common gestalt, paradigm, world view, or global understanding – a bit like the tinted glasses we spoke of in the context of states of mind but on a grander scale. These dharmas act as sophisticated lenses or sets of conceptual understandings or attitudes, profoundly shaping the world of our experience. In the grip of these dharmas different worlds are revealed.

The first section of *dhammānupassanā* is somewhat about 'me' as something separate from the environment. The world of my difficulties and struggles. The second section considers the world as a dance of my body, feelings, perceptions, habitual patterns and consciousness. The third section on the sense bases, consider 'me' in the act of relating with 'others'. The last two sections on the factors of enlightenment and the Four Noble Truths shift from a pervasive sense of separation and not being very present, towards a state of radical inclusivity that reveals wholeness and union everywhere we look.



THE FIVE HINDRANCES – *Pañca Nīvaraṇa*

36. *And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects? Here a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances?*

Here, there being sensual desire in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is sensual desire in me'; or, there being no sensual desire in him, he understands; 'There is no sensual desire in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sensual desire, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen sensual desire, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned sensual desire.

Here, there being ill will in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is ill will in me'; or, there being no ill will in him, he understands; 'There is no ill will in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen ill will, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen ill will, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned ill will.

Here, there being both sloth and torpor in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is both sloth and torpor in me'; or, there being no sloth and torpor in him, he understands; 'There is no sloth and torpor in me'; and he

also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sloth and torpor, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen sloth and torpor, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned sloth and torpor.

Here, there being restlessness and worry in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is restlessness and worry in me'; or, there being no restlessness and worry in him, he understands; 'There is no restlessness and worry in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen restlessness and worry, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen restlessness and worry, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned restlessness and worry.

Here, there being sceptical doubt in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is sceptical doubt in me'; or, there being no sceptical doubt in him, he understands; 'There is no sceptical doubt in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sceptical doubt, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen sceptical doubt, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned sceptical doubt.

One begins to explore the realm of dharma by investigating what are traditionally called the five hindrances. Although these five are usually taught in the context of meditation, they also arise in the general activity of daily living. With each of

these five, one is directed to know when they are present and to know when they are not present; to understand clearly how they come into being, in other words, what triggers them, how they manifest in the body and what are the accompanying mental attitudes, memories, associations and so forth. One understands how to let go of and to abandon a hindrance, – essentially through friendly non-clinging awareness/ appreciation. Finally one “understands how there comes to be the future non-arising of an abandoned hindrance”. This last section refers to realisation of various stages of Path in which specific hindrances cease to arise again. (See p 102 - 103)

The hindrances are often taught as if they were five completely separate types of experience. It can be very useful however, to think of them as five common divisions of a single cycle of energy. In brief, the cycle begins with desire for something other than what is currently happening. A yearning or reaching out takes place through one or more of the six sense doors. We want to see, hear, taste, touch, smell or know something. This yearning is not just mental but is also expressed physically in the body as a matrix of tensions. If the desire is not fulfilled, a degree of frustration will augment the tension until it becomes physically unpleasant. If we are unaware of this happening, it's not uncommon to look outside the body for the cause or source of tension, with the idea of getting rid of it. It's someone else's fault! This is the birth of the second hindrance; ill-will.

It's hard work to maintain the tensions of anger and ill-will. If this goes on for too long, it sucks up so much vitality that we fall into the third hindrance; a tired, lethargic, exhaustion. At this point in the cycle it's as if the creative life energy has almost stopped flowing. If there is still a spark of health in us, it pushes against the dam of tension–frustration and everything begins to tremble. Now we experience the fourth hindrance; restlessness and worry. At this point, if we can't let go, and relax into what is actually present, we will find ourselves sinking towards the fifth hindrance; closed minded scepticism which is often accompanied by varying degrees of depression. Most people linger in this fifth state until another desire for sensing picks them up and they begin the cycle all over again.¹⁹

1. *kāmacchanda* => desire for sensing

kāma => sensing or sensual. *chanda* => moon, aspiration, desire. This first hindrance is desire for experience at any one of the six sense doors. It is a hindrance in that it is inevitably desire for something that is not currently present. Verbalisation i.e. plotting, planning, story making, general chatter and so forth is usually a sure sign of *kāmacchanda*. The present moment isn't sufficiently engaging or satisfactory enough so one starts hankering or fantasising over things or activities that might make it better.

¹⁹ For a more detailed description of this cycle of five hindrances along with some hints at how to dissolve them; see *Breathing: The Natural Way to Meditate* – p 56.

2. *vyāpāda* => ill will.

=> PTS, making bad, doing harm, desire to injure, malevolence, ill-will, anger, hatred. *Pāda* which means foot or base is symbolically referring to energy fields, like a lotus (*padme* in Tibetan) upon which the buddha sits. The *vya* is associated with the idea, 'gone astray'. Hence the sense that ill-will is an expression of energy fields gone astray.

3. *thīna-middha* => sloth and torpor. Essentially this is a state of tiredness, dullness, or sleepiness.

T- Abd notes – *Thīna* => PTS, to become hard, to congeal; from *the*, to shrink; the shrinking mind. *Thīna* is the opposite of *virīya* energy. It is associated with *citta gellāññaṃ*, sickness of mind, depression and is the opposite of *citta kammaññatā* adaptability of mind. *Thīna* is very much an energy reference; a stickiness of mind; unwieldy.

Middha, from *middh* => to be inactive, inert, incapable of function. *Thīna* and *middha* are always in conjunction – a weak, sticky mind, rigidity; an energyless unwieldiness resulting in a limp, defensive state of mind; *middha* is a sleeping of the senses i.e. weak *sañña*, *vedanā*, and *saṅkharā*.

4. *uddhacca-kukkucca* => restlessness and worry, or agitation and regret

T - Abd notes – *Uddhacca* => from *U* => up, above, over + *dhu*, to waver, shake off, tremble; a state of throwing up; an unsettled state of mind, like a flurry of grey snowflakes,

agitated, trembly and somewhat manic. This is the opposite of *sukha*, which is deep settled satisfaction / well-being.

Kukkucca => worry, sorrow, remorse, a grieving kind of worry; fidgeting, overly scrupulous, mental self-sacrificing; the psychic masochist; the psychic picker.

5. *vicikicchā* => sceptical doubt.

=> PTS, perplexity, uncertainty. *Vicikicchati* => to dis-reflect; to be distracted in thought. *Kicca* => PTS, that which should be done; function. *Vi* expresses negation and ambivalence towards 'that which should be done'. Hence doubt, uncertainty, perplexity.

Vicikicchā is the state of being incapable of deciding this is this and that is that. It is an ambivalence that leads to mental paralysis 'can't do this . . . can't do that . . . what's the point?' It is the fundamental life doubt i.e. doubt in existence or the possibility of awakening, or the validity of the teaching or the integrity or value of the teacher, or the point of continuing with the practice.

37. In this way he abides, contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects externally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects their arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects both

their arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there are mind-objects' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects.

THE FIVE AGGREGATES

38. Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging? Here a bhikkhu understands; 'Such is material form, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is feeling, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is perception, such its origin, such its disappearance; such are the formations, such their origin, such their disappearance; such is consciousness, such its origin, such its disappearance.'

five aggregates of clinging => *pañc'upādānakhanda*.

Khandha (Pali) or *skandha* (Skt) => aggregate, collection, gathering, conglomeration, heap. *Pañca* => five. *Upādāna* => grasping, clinging, attachment.

In the Heart Sutra, a central text of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, looks with

profound understanding, into the fullness of the present moment and, “beheld but five heaps” – five skandhas. According to legend, when the Buddha first taught the five skandhas, in order to more clearly illustrate what he was talking about, he placed five piles of rice on the ground in front of him, hence ‘five heaps’. Each pile, represented one of the skandhas and also indicated that the heap itself is comprised of a multitude of sub-factors represented by all the grains of rice. Contemplating the five aggregates, is a way of deepening our understanding of how each moment of life experience is dependent on uncountable other situations and circumstances.

Together, the five categories hint at the myriad factors that weave together the human experience – this present moment of embodied mind, or perhaps we should say, ‘minding body’. They are called ‘aggregates of clinging’ because each one can be a focus for clinging to a sense of a separate, independent, autonomous self or ego. Some people identify more with their body, some with their feelings, some with perceptions, some with habit patterns and some with consciousness.

material form => *rūpa*. This includes one’s physical body with its sense faculties as well as external material objects. There is no universally applicable single meaning for *rūpa*. Some renderings are form, body, matter, corporeality. *Rūpa* means both the fundamentals of matter and the laws and changes and processes of matter.

Rūpa => PTS, from *rup*, to break, destroy, perish. This is the root of the English word ‘rupture’. *Rūpa* is that which breaks

up or changes. It continuously moulds to the changing conditions of the environment. Abhidhamma describes twenty eight species of rūpa distinguished in terms of how they arise, persist and perish.

Rūpa is also derived from *rūpapakāsaṇe* => PTS, to shine forth, to be visible, to become known. *Pakāsaṇe* => explaining, making known, information, evidence, explanation, publicity. Rūpapakāsaṇe is a shining, an announcement, a declaration, a manifestation, a statement.

T-Abd notes – *Rūpa* actually means, that which changes its colour due to elemental shifts. All form perceived by mind comes in 28 textures. Rūpa is that which manifests itself through different colours *vaṇṇā*, wavelengths or pigmentation. In a sense, you don't actually see the object but rather the wavelengths of light that are not absorbed and are excluded by the object. Rūpa is a living force, a field or sphere of colour *vaṇṇāyatana*. Perception of rūpa springs from four sources, *kamma* activity; *citta* mind; *utu* seasonal phenomena i.e. cycles and undulations; and *āhāra* nutriment. For example if the organism has a low fuel energy, it will not perceive as wide a range of rūpa.

feeling => *vedanā* (see p 70 and Appendix C)

perception => *saññā*, PTS, from *saṃ* (together, with, containing) + *jñā* (knowing, recognising, having insight) *Saññā* => 1. sense, consciousness, perception. 2. discernment, recognition, assimilation of sensations, awareness. 3. consciousness of

diversity. 4. conception, idea, notion. The chief characteristic of sañña is identification or recognition. It notes the qualities or characteristics of things.

formations => *saṅkhāra* PTS, from *saṃ* (together) + *kṛ* (to work); a related word is *sankhata* => put together, compounded; conditioned, produced by a combination of causes, created, brought about as effect of former actions. *Saṅkāra* => habitual formations, dispositions. This includes all volitional, emotional and intellectual aspects of one's mental life.

Saṅkāra is “(o)ne of the most difficult terms in Buddhist metaphysics, in which the blending of the subjective-objective view of the world, peculiar to the East, is so complete, that it is almost impossible for Occidental terminology to get at the root of its meaning in a translation. Various meanings: 1. aggregate of the conditions or essential properties for a given process or result e.g. (i) the sum of the conditions or properties making up or resulting in life or existence; (ii) Essential conditions, antecedents or synergy (co-ordinated activity), mental coefficients requisite for action, speech and thought. 2. One of the five *khandhas*, or constitutional elements of physical life, comprising all *cetasikas*, the mental concomitants, or adjuncts which come, or tend to come, into consciousness at the uprising of a *citta* or unit of cognition.”²⁰

²⁰ *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary* 1979

In a simple and rather general sense, saṅkāra could be thought of as the habitual patterns, attitudes, tendencies and concepts resonating from past experience that help shape and give meaning to the present moment.

Saṅkhāra has a feeling of bits and pieces being put together to make a particular formation. In the abhidhamma, saṅkhāra refers to the 50 mental factors or elements of knowing, *cetasikas*. In Tantrayāna these are represented by the fifty freshly severed human heads hanging around Vajra Yogini's neck.

50 Mental Factors or Cetasika (that are classified as saṅkhāras in the abhidhamma system) I have listed them here to give you a sense of a detailed Buddhist approach to exploring saṅkhāra. When considering saṅkhāra as one of the five *khandha*, you will likely find your reflections extending beyond these fifty factors to include things like subliminal memories, mental and physical habit patterns, habitual attitudes and so forth.

Common to all States of Consciousness -

Sabbacittasādhāranā

Contact	- <i>phassa</i>
Volition	- <i>cetana</i>
One-pointedness	- <i>ekaggatā</i>
Vital energy	- <i>jīvitindriyaṃ</i>
Attention	- <i>manasikāra</i>

(There are two more cetasika usually listed in this section; vedanā and sañña which would make the total number of cetasika come to 52.)

However when considering the five skandhas, these two stand on their own, hence 50 cetasika listed in the category of saṅkhāra.)

Variables - *Pakiṇṇakā*

Focus	- <i>vitakka</i>
Scanning	- <i>vicara</i>
Decision	- <i>adhimokkha</i>
Enthusiastic perseverance	- <i>viriya</i>
Interest-joy-ecstasy	- <i>pīti</i>
Aspiration	- <i>chando</i>

Unwholesome - *Akusala*

Delusion	- <i>moha</i>
Shamelessness	- <i>ahirikaṃ</i>
Fearlessness	- <i>anottappaṃ</i>
Restlessness	- <i>uddhaccaṃ</i>
Desire-clinging	- <i>lobha</i>
View	- <i>diṭṭhi</i>
Conceit	- <i>māna</i>
Hatred	- <i>dosa</i>
Envy	- <i>issā</i>
Avarice	- <i>macchariyaṃ</i>
Worry	- <i>kukkuccaṃ</i>
Energyless-mind	- <i>thīnaṃ</i>
Energyless-body	- <i>middhaṃ</i>
Sceptical doubt	- <i>vicikicchā</i>

Common to the Beautiful - *Sobhanasādhārana*

Confidence	- <i>saddhā</i>
Mindfulness	- <i>sati</i>

Moral shame	- <i>hiri</i>
Moral caution	- <i>ottappaṃ</i>
Generosity	- <i>alobha</i>
Lovingkindness	- <i>adosa</i>
Equanimity	- <i>tatramajjhataṭṭā</i>
Tranquillity of (mental) body	- <i>kāyapassaddhi</i>
Tranquillity of mind (citta)	- <i>cittapassadhi</i>
Lightness of (mental) body	- <i>kāyalahutā,</i>
Lightness of mind	- <i>cittalahutā</i>
Pliancy of body	- <i>kāyamudutā</i>
Pliancy of mind	- <i>cittamudutā</i>
Adaptability of body	- <i>kāyakammaññatā</i>
Adaptability of mind	- <i>cittakammaññatā</i>
Proficiency of body	- <i>kāyapaguññatā</i>
Proficiency of mind	- <i>cittapaguññatā</i>
Straightforwardness of body	- <i>kāyajjukatā</i>
Straightforwardness of mind	- <i>cittajjukatā</i>

Abstinences - *Viratiyo*

Right Speech	- <i>sammāvāca</i>
Right Action	- <i>sammākamanto</i>
Right Livelihood	- <i>sammā-ājīvo</i>

Illimitable - *Appamañña*

Compassion	- <i>karuṇā</i>
Sympathetic Joy	- <i>muditā</i>

Wisdom Faculty - *paññindriya*

Viññāna => consciousness, PTS from *vi* + *jñā* (to produce, think)

There are many words for consciousness. Here the *vi* means to divide, hence *viññāna* is a knowing that divides into subject and object. 'I' am conscious of 'that'. The existence of the object is helping to establish the sense of being a subject and simultaneously, the state of the subject is shaping the perception of the object. This co-dependent process of knowing is *viññāna*.

Kalu Rinpoché defined *viññāna* as 'discursive consciousness'; the ability of mind to recognise something other than itself as an object – to decide this is this and that is that.

39. In this way he abides, contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects externally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects their arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects both their arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there are mind-objects' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging.

When contemplating the arising factors and the vanishing factors, you will find it useful to consider how each *skandha* is, in a sense, composed of the other four. For example, if you enquire deeply into the nature of form or material and try to describe it, you might say it arises when there is a particular configuration of perception, evaluation, habitual patterns and consciousness. Perception arises when there is a particular coming together of form, evaluation, habitual formations and consciousness. Evaluation is a combination of form, perception, habitual formations and consciousness. In a similar way you can explore habitual formations and consciousness.

THE SIX BASES

40. Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases? Here a bhikkhu understands the eye, he understands forms, and he understands the fetter that arises dependent on both; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen fetter, and how there comes to be the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of the abandoned fetter.

He understands the ear, he understands sounds and he understands (The entire preceding paragraph

40 is repeated replacing eye for ear and so forth for the five sense doors.)

He understands the nose, he understands odours and he understands

He understands the tongue, he understands flavours and he understands

He understands the body, he understands tangibles and he understands

He understands the mind, he understands mind-objects, and he understands the fetter that arises dependent on both; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen fetter, and how there comes to be the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of the abandoned fetter.

The six bases or *āyatanā* are sometimes referred to as the twelve sense spheres *dvādasāyatanā*. *Āyatanā* => PTS, sphere of perception or sense in general, object of thought, sense organ and object.

The six bases refer to the six senses (internal bases) and their six objects (external bases) hence 'twelve'. In Buddhism, the mind is considered the sixth sense. It has concepts, feelings, memories and so forth as its objects.

The fetters are basically greed, hatred and delusion. Sometimes these three are extended out as the ten *saṃyojana*

or ten fetters. These ten are listed below.

<i>kāmarāga</i>	attachment to sensuality <i>kāmāvacara</i>
<i>rūparāga</i>	attachment to the realm of form <i>rupāvacara</i>
<i>ārūparāga</i>	attachment to the formless realms <i>ārūpāvacara</i>
<i>paṭigha</i>	hatred
<i>māna</i>	conceit
<i>diṭṭhi</i>	partial view
<i>silabbatapārāmāssa</i>	blind belief in rule and ritual
<i>vicikicchā</i>	sceptical doubt
<i>uddhacca</i>	restlessness
<i>avijjā</i>	ignorance

rāga => PTS, excitement, passion, lust, craving.

Kāmāvacara is the realm of the five senses.

Rūpāvacara is the realm of ‘fine material form’. This refers to the subtle levels of meditative absorption on form.

Ārūpāvacara is the formless realm and refers to the very subtle meditative absorptions of: boundless space, boundless consciousness, nothingness, and ‘neither perception nor non-perception’.

The future non-arising (of a fetter) refers to a stage of path attainment. In the abhidhamma system these ten fetters fall away permanently at specific stages of deepening realisation or attainment.

The first stage of path is called *Sotāpanna* or ‘Stream entry’. Here three fetters drop away: 1) *diṭṭhi*, specifically belief in a

permanent or independent self/ego, 2) *vicikicchā*, especially doubt about the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, about the necessity of moral conduct and about the fact of cause and effect, and 3) *silabbataparāmāssa*, the belief that blind adherence to rule and ritual and to mere good works will be sufficient to bring awakening.

The second stage of path is called *Sakadāgāmi* or ‘Once returner’. Here two fetters, *kāmarāga* (attachment to the realm of sensing) and *paṭigha* (hatred), are reduced to half their intensity.

The third stage of path is called *Anāgāmi* or ‘Non returner’. Here, *kāmarāga* and *paṭigha* are fully eliminated.

The fourth stage of path is called *Arahat* or ‘Fully purified’. Here the remaining five fetters: *rūparāga*, *arūparāga*, *māna*, *uddhacca* and *avijjā* are eliminated.

41. In this way he abides, contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects externally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects their arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects both their arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that ‘there are mind-objects’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and

mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases.

THE SEVEN ENLIGHTENMENT FACTORS

42. Again bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors? Here, there being the mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is the mindfulness enlightenment factor in me'; or there being no mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, he understands: 'There is no mindfulness enlightenment factor in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen mindfulness enlightenment factor, and how the arisen mindfulness enlightenment factor comes to fulfilment by development.

This paragraph 42 is then repeated six more times, replacing the first enlightenment factor of mindfulness, with one of the remaining six factors: second => investigation of dharma; third => energy; fourth => rapture; fifth => tranquillity; sixth => concentration; and seventh => equanimity.

Sattasambojjhaṅga => a compound of: *satta* seven + *sam* good, complete + *bodhi* enlightenment + *anga* factors.

In a well integrated, fully matured human being, these seven factors will all be present – harmoniously functioning together. They reach their fullest flowering of expression in what is called the state of liberation or ‘enlightenment’. The first factor, mindfulness, is considered to be neutral. Two, three and four are considered to be active. Five, six and seven are considered to be passive.

1. **Mindfulness** *satisambojjhaṅgo* ²¹

As one of the seven enlightenment factors, mindfulness is the factor that balances the three active and three passive factors. A well developed presence of mindfulness can show us how to bring into harmony the other six.

2. **Investigation of dhamma** *dharmavicayasambojjhaṅgo*

vicaya => PTS, search, investigation, examination.

dharmavicaya => investigation of dhamma, insight, direct seeing of seeing of reality.

This is the factor of question, interest, curiosity. It's what carries us into new territory. In Zen, it is said; “The greater the question, the greater the awakening — no question, no awakening.” To awaken to the fullness of being human there needs to be curiosity, investigation, active enquiry or question, present and active in your being.

²¹ See p 12 and Appendices B and C and D.

This factor is often weak in meditators who see meditation primarily as a technique for establishing calm or tranquillity. For awakening, one needs more than just calm, one must have a tremendous depth of interest and curiosity about all arisings of life, particularly about what is currently taking place, both within you and around you. Eventually, dhammavicaya must take you beyond mere verbal question. This inquisitiveness and curiosity needs to sink into the bones of your being so that your very existence is an expression of enquiry in action. Dhammavicaya is really a factor of open, responsive, receptive, probing; an alert readiness to experience and know more broadly and profoundly. I am reminded of a quote by the biologist Alexander Skutch.

*"An outstanding attribute of an awakened spirit is its expansiveness, its insatiable hunger to experience more widely, to know more broadly and profoundly, to cultivate friendly intercourse with the whole of Being. The noblest mind is that which understands, appreciates and loves the largest segment of the Universe."*²²

3. **Energy**, *viriyasambojjhaṅgo* is also referred to as diligence and enthusiastic perseverance.

viriyam => PTS, (from *vi* + *īr*) *iriyati* => to set in motion, to move, to wander about, to stir, to show a certain way of deportment i.e. to be methodical.

²² from *Daily Puja*, Wangapeka Books, 2007

vi => As a prefix, *vi* not only indicates division, as was pointed out earlier, (p91) but it also can be used to denote expansion, intensification or thoroughness.

vīra => PTS, manly, mighty heroic.

virīya => PTS, moving in an invincible way; uninterrupted strenuousness in conquering obstacles; that which is carried out completely and methodically.

This factor is often allied with what are called in Buddhist teaching “The Four Great Efforts”. 1. The effort to recognise the unwholesome when it is present. 2. The effort to take steps to bring it to an end and to prevent the arising of such states in the future. 3. The effort to recognise the wholesome when it is present. 4. The effort to take steps to encourage a present wholesome to flourish and continue, and to encourage unarisen wholesomes to arise in the future.

4. **Rapture** *Pītisambojjhaṅgo*

Pīti => This word is difficult to translate accurately with one English word. ‘Rapture’ doesn’t really do it justice. PTS, (from *piya* dear, beloved, pleasant, liked) => uplifting joy, delight, zest, exuberance.

Pīti refers to the experiential knowing of the thrill and pleasure of the aliveness of the organism; the coursing of the energy of a well functioning physiology. It’s very much a visceral excitation felt in or throughout the body, particularly when it is functioning well.

Abhidhamma texts describe five major categories of pīti ranging from interest to ecstasy: *kuddaka pīti* – slight joy causing the flesh to creep; *khaṇika pīti* – instantaneous joy, like a flash of lightning; *okkantika pīti* – floods of joy, like waves on a beach; *ubbega pīti* – transporting joy, floating like a dandelion seed in space; and *pharaṇa pīti* – overflowing joy, like a flood engulfing everything.

5. **Tranquillity** *passadhisambojjhaṅgo*

Passadhi => PTS, tranquillity, calm, quietude, serenity, repose. It suppresses feverishness and calms hysteria, like the cool shade of a tree.

6. **Concentration** *samādhisambojjhaṅgo*

samādhi => PTS, (from *sam* complete + *dhi* which has a sense of firmness) => concentration; a concentrated, self-collected, intent state of mind and meditation.

To many people, it seems odd that concentration is considered to be a passive factor. It can sometimes feel that it takes great effort and energy to focus your attention on a chosen object and then to keep it there. A better understanding of concentration might be had if you pronounced it with the accent on the second syllable; CEN-tration in other words *con* (with) plus *centrate* (centre). We are concentrated when we are effortlessly centred in whatever we are doing or experiencing. With the enlightenment factor of *samādhi* we are not dispersed, not scattered, and not experiencing our attention darting all over

the lot. When well developed, concentration is very relaxed, centred, balanced and grounded.

7. **Equanimity** *upekkhāsambojjhaṅgo*

Upekkha => PTS, *upa* impartially, just + *ikkhati* to see, view, look. Usually translated as equanimity, or serenity. It means to see justly, correctly, impartially or ‘as it really is’.

Equanimity is a balanced state of being that embraces the diverse aspects of any situation, including seeming opposites such as: subject and object, self and other, inner and outer. It is a completely balanced state of mind – not grasping after this or that. There is a continuum of calm clear seeing discernment, without bias and without taking sides.

Upa also carries the meaning of ‘on top’ or ‘over’ so *upekkha* hints at an equanimity that arises from having an overview or a complete viewing of all aspects of what is currently happening.

43. In this way he abides, contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects externally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects their arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects both their arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that ‘there are mind-objects’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and

mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

44. Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths? Here a bhikkhu understands as it actually is: 'This is suffering'; he understands as it actually is; 'This is the origin of suffering'; he understands as it actually is: 'This is the cessation of suffering'; he understands as it actually is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.'

The Four Noble Truths Ariyasaccāni

ariya => noble + saccāni => truth or reality

- 1. Dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ – the noble truth of suffering*
- 2. Dukkhasamudaya ariyasaccaṃ – the noble truth the origin of suffering*
- 3. Dukkhanirodha ariyasaccaṃ – the noble truth the cessation of suffering*
- 4. Dukkhanirodhagāminipatipadā ariyasaccaṃ – the noble truth the path leading to the cessation of suffering*

The phrase ‘four noble truths’ is sometimes translated as ‘four holy truths’ or ‘four realities of the noble ones’. We could think of them as ‘four realities’ that are faced by all courageously contemplative investigators-of-life. To live the first reality requires a mental ‘stopping’. We need to stop running away from suffering, to stop blindly reacting to it or avoiding it and instead, to willingly stand firm in the midst of our experience, tasting it fully with curiosity and deepening understanding. Exploring the second reality emphasises ‘seeing’ – looking deeply into all the aspects of this suffering and thus gaining understanding of the causes and conditions that give rise to it. The very act of investigating with openness and interest, is a positive non-suffering state of mind and so familiarity with this second truth gradually leads to a recognition/experience of the third reality – the cessation of suffering. Cultivating the third noble truth involves acclimatising to, and coming to feel at home in, a natural state of spontaneously present, spacious, open, calm, clear, accepting awareness. The fourth noble truth or reality involves a reflective review of what aspects of living support and nourish a cessation of suffering. This fourth reality reveals the eightfold noble path, a way of living marked by ‘wise engagement’.

In the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (a longer version of the Satipaṭṭhāna, found in the *Dīgha Nikāya* – “The Long Discourses of the Buddha”) the text is identical to the one we have used thus far, except for this section on the Four Noble Truths which is greatly expanded.

What follows is an excerpt from the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta translated by Maurice Walshe.

Again, monks, a monk abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in respect of the Four Noble Truths. How does he do so? Here, a monk knows as it really is: "This is suffering"; he knows as it really is; "This is the origin of suffering"; he knows as it really is; "This is the cessation of suffering"; he knows as it really is; "This is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering."

FIRST NOBLE TRUTH

And what, monks is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness and distress are suffering. Being attached to the unloved is suffering, being separated from the loved is suffering, not getting what one wants is suffering. In short the five aggregates of grasping are suffering.

And what, monks is birth? In whatever beings, of whatever group of beings, there is birth, coming-to-be, coming forth, the appearance of the aggregate, the acquisition of the sense-bases, that monks is called birth.

And what is ageing? In whatever beings, of whatever group of beings, there is ageing, decrepitude, broken

teeth, grey hair, wrinkled skin, shrinking with age, decay of the sense faculties, that, monks, is called ageing.

And what is death? In whatever beings, of whatever group of beings, there is a passing-away, a removal, a cutting off, a disappearance, a death, a dying, an ending, a cutting off of the aggregates, a discarding of the body, that, monks, is called death.

And what is sorrow? Whenever, by any kind of misfortune, anyone is affected by something of a painful nature, sorrow, mourning, distress, inward grief, inward woe, that, monks, is called sorrow.

And what is lamentation? Whenever, by any kind of misfortune, anyone is affected by something of a painful nature and there is crying out, lamenting, making much noise for grief, making great lamentation, that, monks is called lamentation.

And what is pain? Whatever bodily painful feeling, bodily unpleasant feeling, painful or unpleasant feeling results from bodily contact, that, monks is called pain.

And what is sadness? Whatever mental painful feeling, mental unpleasant feeling, painful or unpleasant sensation results from mental contact, that, monks, is called sadness.

And what is distress? Whenever, by any kind of misfortune, anyone is affected by something of a painful nature, distress, great distress, affliction with distress, with great distress, that, monks, is called distress.

And what, monks, is being attached to the unloved? Here, whoever has unwanted, disliked, unpleasant, sight-objects, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles or mind-objects, or whoever encounters ill-wishers, wishers of harm, of discomfort, of insecurity, with whom they have concourse, intercourse, connection, union, that, monks, is called being attached to the unloved.

And what is being separated from the loved? Here, whoever has what is wanted, liked, pleasant, sight-objects, or whoever encounters well-wishers, wishers of good, of comfort, of security, mother or father or brother or sister or younger kinsmen or friends or colleagues or blood-relations, and then is deprived of such concourse, intercourse, connection or union, that, monks, is called being separated from the loved.

And what is not getting what one wants? In beings subject to birth, monks, this wish arises: "Oh that we were not subject to birth, that we might not come to birth!" But this cannot be gained by wishing. That is not getting what one wants. In beings subject to ageing, to disease, to death, to sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress, that wish arises: "Oh that we were

not subject to ageing . . . distress, that we might not come to these things!" But this cannot be gained by wishing. That is not getting what one wants.

And how, monks, in short, are the five aggregates of grasping suffering? They are as follows: the aggregate of grasping that is form, the aggregate of grasping that is feeling, the aggregate of grasping that is perception, the aggregate of grasping that is mental formations, the aggregate of grasping that is consciousness, these are in short, the five aggregates of grasping that are suffering. And that, monks, is called the Noble Truth of Suffering.

aggregates of grasping ²³ => Suffering arises in the act of grasping or trying to make permanent something that is actually an ungraspable dynamic process. The "aggregates of grasping" include grasping or identifying with, or hanging onto: form, feeling, perception, habitual formations and consciousness.

SECOND NOBLE TRUTH

And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering? It is that craving which gives rise to rebirth, bound up with pleasure and lust, finding fresh delight now here, now there: that is to say sensual craving, craving for existence and craving for non-existence.

²³ The Five Aggregates p 92

craving => *taṇhā* PTS, (from *tarśna*, thirst and *ters*, to be or to make dry) => drought, thirst, craving, hunger for, 'the fever of unsatisfied longing'. *Taṇhā* is driven by trying to make permanent, that which is impermanent. In classic Buddhist teaching there are three categories of *taṇhā*.

sensual craving *kāmatanaṇhā* => craving for sensual experience.

craving for existence *bhāvaṇaṇhā* => T-Abd-notes; craving for being, for form (*rūpa*); craving what one thinks will extend one's being or will extend life. Essentially, *bhāvaṇaṇhā* is craving for 'more'.

craving for non-existence *vibhāvaṇaṇhā* => T-Abd-notes; craving for not being, (*ā rūpa*), for invisibility and unpindown-ability.

Bhāva and *vibhāvaṇaṇhā* can be caricatured in common types of behaviour or attitudes to life. The *bhāvaṇaṇhā* type is the person who likes certainty. They want to know exactly when something is going to happen and when it will end. They feel more secure with written contracts. They like to own their house, have a well filled appointment diary and exhibit tendencies to hoard things. Commitment and responsibility are important to them. They like definition and walls. In extremis they can be a bit obsessive. They are clinging to being.

The *vibhāvaṇaṇhā* type, on the other hand, likes to hang loose. They feel uncomfortable when constrained by timetables or formal contracts. Preferring to rent they don't like to be saddled with commitments. They idealise spontaneity and

they value space and a sense of freedom. In extreme cases they can be very narcissistic – disconnected from others.

*And where does this craving arise and establish itself?
Wherever in the world there is anything agreeable and
pleasurable, there this craving arises and establishes
itself.*

Note: for clarity, I have added a title in bold, for each of the following sections. The sutta text begins in standard italic font.

Sense organs: *And what is there in the world that is agreeable and pleasurable? The eye in the world is agreeable and pleasurable, the ear . . . , the nose . . . , the tongue . . . , the body . . . , the mind in the world is agreeable and pleasurable, and there this craving arises and establishes itself.*

Sense objects: *Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world are agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving arises and establishes itself.*

Sense consciousness: *Eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving arises and establishes itself.*

Contact phassa: *Eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact in the world*

is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving arises and establishes itself.

Feeling *vedanā*: *Feeling born of eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving arises and establishes itself.*

Perception *sañña*: *The perception of sights, of sounds, of smells, of tastes, of tangibles, of mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving arises and establishes itself.*

Volition *cetanā*: *Volition in regards to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving arises and establishes itself.*

Craving *taṇhā*: *The craving for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving arises and establishes itself.*

Thinking *vitakka*: *Thinking of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving arises and establishes itself.*

Vitakka is often translated as initial application. A more useful translation might be ‘focus’. When one focusses one's attention

on a meditation object and does not wander to any other object, this is the initial application of mind. It is not really 'thinking' in the sense of verbalising or conceptualising about the object. It is more the application of attention or interest to an object. One can remember the meaning by thinking of 'tacking' the mind, or tacking one's attention, to an object, like thumb-tacking something to a notice board.

Pondering *vicāra*: *Pondering on sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving arises and establishes itself. And that, monks, is called the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.*

Vicāra is frequently translated as sustained application. A perhaps more useful term would be scanning. Having 'tacked' – *vitakka*-ed – the mind onto the meditation object, one then scans or studies the details of the object without departing from the object. In this way it is sustained application. Perhaps we could call this pondering, but it would be a pondering without necessarily verbalising.

THIRD NOBLE TRUTH

And what, monks is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering? It is the complete fading-away and extinction of this craving, its forsaking and abandonment, liberation from it, detachment from it. And how does

*this craving come to be abandoned, how does its
cessation come about?*

The ‘cessation of suffering’ is synonymous with realisation of *nibbāna* – peace. Peace or *nibbāna* comes with a profound experience of all inclusive completeness; the experiential knowing that this moment is not lacking in any way, that it is a perfect dynamic inter-being and inter-knowing of everyone and everything. True peace comes with the fading away of craving, *taṇhā*. *Taṇhā* thrives in the soil of ignorance, *avijja*.

An ‘a’ letter at the beginning of a Pali or Sanskrit word indicates negation. *Vijja* denotes ‘seeing’, so *avijja* means not seeing or not understanding. Ignorance of, in other words, not seeing/understanding the interdependent nature of everything, often supports the sense of an autonomous ‘craver’ that can crave a desired thing. Where there are no separate cravers and craven objects, there is no craving.

The great philosopher Nāgārjuna wrote in his famous treatise *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*: “Whatever that comes to be dependently, that is inherently peaceful.”²⁴ In the experiential knowing of inter-dependence, there is no single separate part that can be isolated out to praise or blame or be held responsible. All arisings are mutually shaping. Each moment is a completeness of everything. It is not on the way to becoming something. It’s not going anywhere. It rests in itself.

²⁴Mūlamadhyamakakārika of Nāgārjuna translated by David Kalupahana p 168

With this understanding, the cessation of suffering and the experience of nibbāna becomes realisable in any situation without necessarily changing a thing. It is closer than hands and feet. All that's needed is a profound degree of calm, clear seeing.

The last paragraph ended with the question, “*And how does this craving come to be abandoned, how does its cessation come about?*” This next paragraph gives an answer.

Wherever in the world there is anything agreeable and pleasurable, there its cessation comes about, And what is there in the world that is agreeable and pleasurable?

To illustrate the spontaneous naturalness of cessation, a simple metaphor is used in many of the Mahāmudrā/Dzogchen texts. Imagine using your finger to draw a picture on the surface of a calm pool of water. The image that you draw vanishes as fast as you draw it. In a sense, it continuously self-liberates. No effort is needed to liberate it. This cessation or self-liberation is automatic and instantaneous.

“*Wherever in the world there is anything agreeable and pleasurable, there its cessation comes about.*” In the earlier paragraphs we saw that anything agreeable and pleasurable is also where taṇhā arises. Each of the following pleasurable or agreeable dharmas are like pictures drawn in water. If you look into them with assumptions and expectations you will end up with suffering and taṇhā. If you look into them with careful discernment, you will experience the inter-beingness of the

entire situation of you in the act of experiencing such dharmas. In this situation these 'pictures' will continuously transform, vanishing as fast as they appear.

The eye in the world is agreeable and pleasurable, the ear . . . , the nose . . . , the tongue . . . , the body . . . , the mind in the world is agreeable and pleasurable, and there this craving comes to be abandoned, there its cessation comes about.

Eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving comes to be abandoned, there its cessation comes about.

Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving comes to be abandoned, there its cessation comes about.

Eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving comes to be abandoned, there its cessation comes about.

The perception of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving comes to be abandoned, there its cessation comes about.

Volition in regard to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving comes to be abandoned, there its cessation comes about.

Craving for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving comes to be abandoned, there its cessation comes about.

Thinking of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving comes to be abandoned, there its cessation comes about..

Pondering on sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, mind-objects in the world is agreeable and pleasurable and there this craving comes to be abandoned, there its cessation comes about. And that, monks, is called the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.

As illustrated above, in this teaching the cessation of suffering isn't an abstract, transcendent state. It is to be discovered in the very midst of ordinary living.

FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH

And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Way of Practice Leading to the Cessation of Suffering? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, namely: – Right View; Right Thought; Right Speech; Right Action; Right Livelihood; Right Effort; Right Mindfulness; Right Concentration.

Noble Eightfold Path *ariya-aṭṭhangika-magga*

magga => avenue, path, way. *aṭṭhangika* => eight

The Eightfold Path could be thought of as description of the enlightened state, or the state of a fully matured human being. It is composed of eight factors which seamlessly inter-weave in and through each other – a spontaneously present ever-fresh whole. Using standard translations, the eight are:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Right View | <i>sammā-diṭṭhi</i> |
| 2 Right Thought | <i>sammā-sankappa</i> |
| 3 Right Speech | <i>sammā-vācā</i> |
| 4 Right Action | <i>sammā-kammanta</i> |
| 5 Right Livelihood | <i>sammā-ājīva</i> |
| 6 Right Effort | <i>sammā-vāyāma</i> |
| 7 Right Mindfulness | <i>sammā-sati</i> |
| 8 Right Concentration | <i>sammā-samādhi</i> |

1. Right View *sammā-diṭṭhi*

And what, monks, is Right View? It is, monks, the knowledge of suffering, the knowledge of the origin of suffering, the knowledge of the cessation of suffering,

and the knowledge of the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering. This is called Right View.

In the context of the Eightfold Noble Path translating *sammā* as 'right' doesn't really do it justice. *sammā* => PTS, "connected in one", thoroughly, properly, rightly, in the right way, as it ought to be, best, perfectly.

Namgyal Rinpoché often pointed out that the word *sammā* derives from *sam* [pronounced sum or sahm], which has the sense of 'complete' or 'total' as in the English phrases, 'doing your sums', or 'summing up'.²⁵

Diṭṭi means view, though when used on its own, it usually implies a view that is partial or incomplete. When coupled with *sammā* as it is in this first factor of the Eight Fold Noble Path, it would be more helpful to treat *diṭṭi* as a verb. Consider the activity of viewing, or appreciatively experiencing or understanding. Much more than merely 'right' view as opposed to 'wrong' view, the phrase *sammā-diṭṭi* is pointing towards complete, or total, or thorough, or all embracing viewing; in other words, seeing/understanding all the contributing aspects of an arising, rather than falling into bias based on conditioned hopes, fears and fantasies. In a way, *sammā-diṭṭi*, this activity of seeing/experiencing in a non-fragmenting radically inclusive way, would be the equivalent of total lovingkindness; completely engaged, utterly responsive, presence.

²⁵ *Body, Speech and Mind* by Namgyal Rinpoché, p 29.



When contemplating each section of this Eightfold Noble Path, avoid falling into concern about what is right or wrong and instead, try holding the following question. Who or what is doing the viewing? Who or what is bringing forth this moment of understanding or 'doing' this knowing? Since everything is an interdependent arising of myriad dharmas spanning a range of dimensions and domains; since everything is connected with everything else, (ultimately with everything else in the universe) then the 'totality of being which makes up this present moment of one's unique knowing', is what is doing the viewing. Totality is viewing. Totality is thinking. Totality is speaking. Totality is acting . . . and so forth. The fullness of each moment of experience reveals itself to be spacious, open and fundamentally un-pin-down-able. Contemplating '*sammā*' in these different ways, reveals the Eightfold Noble Path as a means for directly realising the Buddhist mystery of *śūnyatā*; the ultimate realisation/understanding that lies in the heart of mahāyanā teaching and practice.

It is difficult to accurately translate *śūnyatā* with a single word. Emptiness is the usual attempt. Unfortunately, for many people today, using emptiness as an equivalent for *śūnyatā* is quite misleading as it can conjure a nihilistic view of things, as if we should try to convince ourselves that nothing exists. Psychologically speaking, emptiness is often associated with feelings of meaninglessness and isolation. This is so far away

from the intention of teachings on śūnyatā that it might be better to think of 'fullness' rather than emptiness.

A more useful translation could be hinted at with a more descriptive phrase. The word śūnyatā is referring to 'the spacious, open, un-pin-down-able nature of inter-dependent phenomena', or simply, 'the spacious openness of inter-being'. Looking deeply into anything will reveal a network of causes and conditions, an inter-being of myriad things and processes, such that you can't say definitively, it is this or it is that, and so it is said to be 'empty' of this and that. In essence, everything reveals itself to be fundamentally ungraspable. On one hand it appears solid and present, while on the other hand when examined clearly with discerning analysis, it reveals itself to be an immeasurably vast dynamic matrix.



2. Right Thought *sammā-sankappa*

And what, monks, is Right Thought? The thought of renunciation, the thought of non-ill-will, the thought of harmlessness. This is called Right Thought.

sankappa => PTS, thought, intention, purpose, plan. In the context of the eightfold noble path, *sankappa* has more to do with intention than with thinking: total thinking/intending, or complete thinking/intending. One might even consider 'total

aspiration' or totality aspiring – one's mental processes altogether as a whole, leaning in the direction of awakening. This is the essence of *bodhicitta*. Here are a few lines from a prayer in the meditation practice of Guru Rinpoché that poetically illustrates this point.

One's view of things is all embracing. (*sammā-dīṭṭi*)

May the Dharmakāya bring blessings.

One's thoughts are in tune with every situation. (*sammā-sankappa*) May the Sāmbhogakāya bring blessings.

All one's actions spring from this. (*the rest of the Eightfold Path*)

May the Nirmānakāya bring blessings.

These three become one, in the vision of the ground of being.

May the union of these three bring blessings.

3. Right Speech *sammā-vācā*

And what, monks, is Right Speech? Refraining from lying, refraining from slander, refraining from harsh speech, refraining from frivolous speech. This is called Right Speech.

Total or complete communication. Not just avoiding these unwholesome forms of expression but considering all aspects of communication so that one's body language, one's inner feelings, one's intention and one's expression are all in harmony and supporting the unfolding of the wholesome. Complete communication is not just concerned with speaking.

It also requires profound listening; hearing what is actually being said and empathically sensing the meaning and intent behind the words.

4. Right Action *sammā-kammanta*

And what, monks, is called Right Action? Refraining from taking life, refraining from taking what is not given, refraining from sexual misconduct. This is Right Action.

Sammā-kammanta points us towards total or complete activity in terms of bringing forth what is wholesome and what is supporting the awakening of beings. Beyond refraining from taking life, one should strive to support and nurture life. Beyond not taking that which is not given, one should practice generosity and give unstintingly to beings. Beyond refraining from sexual or sensual misconduct, one should skilfully use the senses to explore dharma.

Right speech and right action together touch on the aspect of the path that is covered by studying and practising the precepts.

In *Daily Puja*, there is an expression of the precepts in a positive form that hints at a much broader discipline than simply avoiding certain activities. We have met them earlier on page 18 where they were called "The Five Wholesome Life Trainings". I will repeat them again since now you might be able to appreciate their relevance in a more expansive way.

*I will train myself to support and appreciate
the life of all living beings.*

*I will live with a sensitive and responsible awareness
for the whole ecology of life.*

*I will train myself to dwell more and more
in the mind of spontaneous generosity.*

*Daily I will give material support, emotional support,
and an example to others of awakening in action.*

*I will train myself to use the senses to further awakening,
explore Dharma, and to come to know the world
more profoundly and more compassionately.*

*I will train myself to listen deeply and speak truthfully;
to commune with others in a skilful
and compassionate manner.*

*I will train myself to be ever more directly aware of
how nutriment affects the mind and body.*

*I will eat and drink and nurture myself and others,
in a way that supports awakening.*

5. Right Livelihood *sammā-ājīva*

*And what, monks, is called Right Livelihood? Here,
monks, the Ariyan disciple, having given up wrong
livelihood, keeps himself by right livelihood.*

This sutra was originally taught to fully ordained monks
whose livelihood was already one of living lightly on the earth,

with minimal needs and appetites, while avoiding the harming of others. For a lay person in today's very busy, consumption driven, money oriented, globalised society, there probably needs to be a bit more guidance.

Complete or total livelihood *sammā-ājīva* refers to a livelihood or way of earning a living that uplifts and sustains all of life. It is complete or total in the sense that it is a manner of earning your living while supporting the health and well-being of your body, energies and mind. At the same time it also supports the wholesome unfolding bodies, energies and minds of all the other beings whom your livelihood brings you into contact with. This includes not just other people, but animals, plants and entire ecosystems. Essentially, complete livelihood implies living in a way that values and strengthens the entire living matrix that is this planet. Wrong livelihood is any form of livelihood that disrupts life by causing harm to oneself or others.

In the face of climate change and ecological breakdown, this section presents a major challenge to how we humans today do business, and how we relate to the non-human world.

6. Right Effort *sammā-vāyāma*

And what, monks is called Right Effort? Here, monks, a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of un-arisen evil unwholesome mental states. He rouses his will... and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental

states that have arisen. He rouses his will... and strives to produce un-arisen wholesome mental states. He rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development. This is called Right Effort.

This is explained quite clearly above and also in the section on *viriyasambojjhaṅga* in the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (p.106 - 107). It is often taught separately as a complete path of practice in itself and is called 'The Four Great Efforts'.

7. Right Mindfulness *sammā-sati*

And what, monks, is Right Mindfulness? Here, monks, a monk abides contemplating body as body, ardent, clearly aware, and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world; he abides contemplating feelings as feelings...; he abides contemplating states of mind as states of mind...; he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. This is called Right Mindfulness.

Complete mindfulness. This section recapitulates the entire Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

8. Right Concentration *sammā-samādhī*

And what, monks, is Right Concentration? Here, a monk, detached from sense-desires, detached from unwholesome mental states, enters and remains in the first Jhāna, which is with thinking and pondering, born of detachment, filled with delight and joy. And with the subsiding of thinking and pondering, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he enters and remains in the second Jhāna, which is without thinking and pondering, born of concentration, filled with delight and joy. And with the fading away of delight, remaining imperturbable, mindful and clearly aware, he experiences in himself the joy of which the Noble Ones say: "Happy is he who dwells with equanimity and mindfulness", he enters the third Jhāna. And, having given up pleasure and pain, and with the disappearance of former gladness and sadness, he enters and remains in the fourth Jhāna, which is beyond pleasure and pain, and purified by equanimity and mindfulness.

This is called Right Concentration. And that, monks, is called the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering.

Right or 'complete' concentration refers to a degree of mastery of various factors of absorption *jhāna*.

Jhāna => PTS , from *jayati* and Skt *dhyāna*; *jhayati* => to shine, perceive, to meditate, contemplate, think about, brood over; to

burn, be on fire, dry up. Jhāna burns up the hindrances. In a broad sense jhāna can refer to any form of absorption or one-pointedness.

Inexperienced meditators often imagine that jhānas are exotic states of concentration where there are no thoughts or mental activity. It would be more realistic to think of the jhānas as a progression of increasing degrees of profound peace. When the mind is well concentrated, when it is spaciously centred, with little or no sense of separation between you the meditator, and the object of your attention, in this flow of absorption, the five hindrances, will not be active. If you examine this peaceful mind, you will find what are sometimes referred to as the 'five factors of jhāna': *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha* and *ekaggatā* (or *upekkhā*).

The stages or degrees of absorption/jhāna are differentiated by the presence of these factors. In the first jhāna all five are active. The mind is focussed, while investigating or scanning the object. There is a degree of pīti. Sukha, the sense of mental well being is present and there is an overarching quality of equanimity or oneness. As the meditator acclimatises to this peaceful yet engaged state, the effort that goes with vitakka and vicāra can begin to feel a bit gross and unnecessary and so these two naturally drop away.

Without a need to emphasise vitakka or vicāra, attention quickly settles in a peaceful, alive state where there is pīti, sukha and upekkhā. Eventually, even the pīti seems to be crude and it dissolves in the increasing subtlety, leaving just sukha and

upekkhā. Deepening further, the sukha drops away, like a rainbow vanishing, leaving only upekkhā.

The factors of jhāna could be understood as a process of intensifying absorption. Deepening *vitakka* (initial thought or mere thought) leads to *vicāra* (reflection, scanning, sometimes thinking with rich associating). This broadens to include increasing flows of *pīti* (full body/energy involvement; embodied knowing) which, becoming more and more subtle, moves one towards *sukha* (the pleasure of approaching oneness, wholeness or fully integrated attunement, involving a softening of the distinction of self and other, subject and object). With further intensification, one relaxes in complete *ekaggatā* or *upekkhā* (oneness/equanimity; confidence/trust/ knowing of perfect completeness). In general, moving from *vitakka* to *ekaggata* is to deepen in a direction of enriched knowing; enriched inter-beingness and increasing translucency.

In the Abhidhamma traditions there seem to be very technical definitions as to what is jhāna and what is not. In the Mahāyāna traditions, the word *samādhi* is often used interchangeably with jhāna and there are uncountable numbers of *samādhis*. From a meditator's perspective, a valuable state to become familiar with in terms of *sammā-samādhi* is called *upacāra samādhi* => PTS, *upacāra*; approach, access; habit, practice, conduct; way, means, use of, application; entrance, access, neighbourhood. This is a calm clear state of presence where one has almost entered into complete absorption but there is still a subtle sense of being the meditator meditating on

an object. Here, all the factors of jhāna are present and the five hindrances are not manifesting. This calm, clear, presence is the optimal state in which to deepen insight and to unfold the meditative explorations that are highlighted throughout this Satipaṭṭhāna: *kāyānupassanā*, *vedanānupassanā*, *cittānupassanā* and *dharmānupassanā*.



The Four Noble Truths could be thought of as four truths or aspects of life experience that can potentially ennoble us. It is sometimes hard to see what is noble about suffering. If, however, we have the courage to explore the states of suffering that arise in the course of our lives rather than running from them. If we meet them with wide open curiosity and interest, instead of being afraid of them or trying to ignore them and generally becoming lost in all the other common reactions of irritation, anger, shame and avoidance coupled with feelings of victimisation and helplessness. This gentle yet courageous grappling with suffering will gradually lead to a flowering of many qualities such as patience, love, forgiveness, understanding, discrimination, compassion, and empathy. When this happens we could say that the experience of suffering has ennobled us.

Looking into the causes of suffering will lead us to a deepening experience of the interconnectedness of everything. As this understanding flowers in our living, qualities such as openness, presence, awakeness, and responsiveness

— a sense of profound unavoidable engagement in the creative weaving that is this fabric of all life — will become more and more apparent. In this way, investigating the ‘causes’ of suffering, leads to a deepening sense of embeddedness in a beginningless, endless, living mystery. Here lies the key to the second great ennobling of our being.

Our active investigation of the first two noble truths will support a deepening sense of engagement and a profound sense of connectedness. Becoming more familiar with these, our capacity for empathy and appreciative understanding will increasingly nourish a sense of well-being in the midst of a broadening range of situations and circumstances. This potential, that is in each and every being, to be utterly present and engaged, becomes the heart/ground/seed of profound peace; the ‘cessation of suffering’ This is the third great ennobling of our being.

Having tasted the nectar of letting go – or perhaps more accurately, ‘letting be’ – into the fullness of life and living, just as it is, we might look back on how this process became stable and functional in our experience and discern various factors that a human being can consciously encourage in order to live their own life to the fullest. The Buddha enunciated this in eight steps calling it “The Eightfold Noble Path”. Clarity about what truly supports life gives us the confidence to continue to engage with what we need to do thus deepening and enriching our own living experience. At the same time, it gives us knowledge to be able to meaningfully help and assist others.

This is the fourth great enrichment or ennoblement of our being.

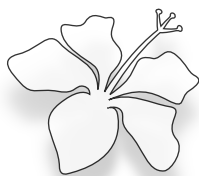
The Four Noble Truths are the heart teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha and are revered by every school of Buddhism. The expression of the Four Noble Truths given in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is probably very close to how the Buddha himself explained them. As his teachings flourished and evolved, moving to other countries and cultures, this relatively short outline was elaborated into the vast, universal vision you find in chapter eight of the *Avatamsaka* or “Flower Ornament Sutra”. Here it is explained that there are many different world systems or modes of experience. The Four Noble Truths are taught in each of these realms but illustrated and explained in different ways depending of the understandings and experiences of sentient beings living there. In the Tibetan teaching it is said that one should focus not on the words but on the meaning behind the words. This chapter of the *Avatamsaka* hints at the meaning behind the words. It is well worth studying in order to open one's understanding of the Four Noble Truths in a vast and universal way.



At this point the Mahasatipaṭṭhāna becomes the same as the Satipaṭṭhāna and so we will return now to and finish with the Majjhima Nikāya version.

45. *In this way he abides, contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects externally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects their arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects both their arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there are mind-objects' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the four Noble Truths.*

Conclusion



46. Bhikkhus, if anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven years, one or two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

Let alone seven years, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven months... for six months... for five months... for four months... for three months... for two months... for one month... for half a month, one or two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

Let alone half a month, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven days, one or two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

47. So it was with reference to this that it was said: "Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of Nibbāna – namely, the four foundations of mindfulness."

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed Ones words.

The Pali Cannon, the collected teachings of the Buddha, is quite vast, occupying thousands of pages of print. Some people, monks and nuns in particular, spend significant amounts of their adult lives studying these texts. In theory, if we were to lose all of them but somehow managed to preserve the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta; if then we were to put the teachings of this sutta into practice in a thorough and ongoing way, we would eventually come to experience everything the Buddha was trying to point to throughout his forty years of teaching the dharma.

The text concludes with what today might be considered as a product guarantee. The Buddha states that if anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness for seven years, seven months . . . seven days, they would realise *“either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return”*.

Seven years is a long time. This hints at the degree of thoroughness and dedication that is necessary in order to realise the intent of these teachings. The seven days is a short time and indicates how realisation is to be experienced in the here and now. It is fresh and available to any who are free to ask question.

“Final knowledge here and now” indicates that there is no higher teaching. Full realisation of this practice will enable one to live well in the midst of a world that is constantly changing, unpredictable, and impossible for any single being to control. One can live with impermanence and death, with

unsatisfactoriness and suffering, without shutting down, or escaping into fantasy, or grasping after facile philosophical explanations, or simply burying oneself in never ending reactivity and busyness. In Buddhist terms, this is the state of *nibbāna* or the state of *arahat*.

“If there is a trace of clinging left”, then full realisation will come at the moment of dying. This is referring to the state of *Anāgāmi*.

Afterthought

Reading through these notes, I am struck, yet again, by the clarity, richness and pragmatic straightforwardness of the Buddha's teaching. I pray that this manual will be a support to your ongoing study and meditations. If you are just beginning your explorations of Buddha Dharma, I do hope they will encourage you to investigate further. If you already have a background of meditative experience, my aspiration is that these notes will enrich your contemplations.

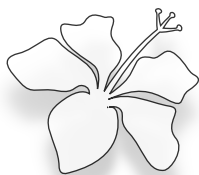
with love and good wishes,

Tarchin

*May any merit
arising through
writing, reading and putting into practice
these notes on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta,
support the flowering of wisdom and compassion
in all beings!*

sarvamangalam

Appendices



*These appendices may augment and extend your appreciation and understanding of the Foundations of Mindfulness. **Appendix A** gives a bare summary of the meditations found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. **Appendices B, C and D** introduce different views of mindfulness and mindful practice. **Appendix E** outlines a progression of meditations that could eventually become a basis of what I've come to think of as a path of contemplative science – a modern day extension of Satipaṭṭhāna. **Appendix F** links the practice of these Foundations of Mindfulness and the entire path of awakening as described in Buddhism.*



Appendix – A

THE GENERAL ORDER OF SATIPAṬṬHĀNA CONTEMPLATIONS

1) *Kāyānupassanā*

breathing
posture
daily activities
anatomy
elements
decay and decomposition

2) *Vedanānupassanā*

3) *Cittānupassanā*

4) *Dhammānupassanā*

five hinderances
five skandhas
sense bases
factors of enlightenment
four noble truths



Appendix – B

MIND AND MINDFULNESS IN VERSE A FRESH APPROACH

How to speak about this mystery?
Mind is that which minds.

Do you mind?
Do you care or have concerns?
Please be mindful of the fact that
In other words,
be careful and responsive
with and to this mystery.

To touch something mindfully implies
touching gently and sensitively;
with reverence and caring for the integrity of that
particular ‘what’ that you are touching:

 a hand,
 a hip,
 a thought,
a breath of ineffable.

And as you touch,
in turn, you are touched.

With mindfulness
we don't hurt this object when touching it.
We treat this ‘otherness’ with respect;
 this otherness

touching their otherness,
that is you.

Surely this applies to all our senses.

Each child finds his or her way;
fumbling, stumbling,
growing into sensitivity,
clumsy at first,
then,
gradually becoming smoother
and more integrated
and sometimes even graceful.

Think of a toddler,
just learning to walk,
sixteen years later,
an olympic gymnast poised
on the balance beam,
vibrantly alert and focussing.

Mind-**full**-ness is a fullness of knowing,
and fullness of knowing is discernment
both detailed and vast,
and love,
and passion,
and detachment
and surrender
and reverence
and so much more.

Mindfulness, care-filled-ness, sensitive, attentive,
respectful, engagement
is nourished in the company of parents,
 then teachers,
 then mentors,
 then lovers and friends.

We copy each other;
imprint on each other;
responding to and with each other.

It matters how we proceed.

Cultivating mindfulness is
to consciously grow;
 maturing in smooth functional integration,
a flowing of bodyhood, languaging
 and integrative experience.

Mindlessness takes us in a different direction;
towards frustration, pain, agitation, fragmentation,
distrust and life sapping suspicion.

Mindfulness arises with inter-dancing.
Body, speech and mind;
the entire field of inter-being / inter-knowing,
 all events and meanings:
 self and other,
 individual and groups;
universes of intelligence
flowering and unfolding.

What mystery!

This body! — physically growing,
an increased capacity for

delicacy,
harmony,
grace,
flexibility,
and co-ordination.

What mystery!

This speech! — skilfully intermingling,

kind,
uplifting,
supportive,
inspiring,
deep and meaningful,
unending communion.

What mystery!

This mind! — a field of knowing;

blossoming,
attentive,
inclusive,
translucent;

a multi-levelled multi-domained shimmering presence
of acceptance/understanding.

This minding mindful mind is the universe in process.

Experience is not a subjective representation.

It's not a personal re - presentation

of some mysterious otherness.
It is a presentation – always present,
a mutually transforming
interaction of participating events.
It takes two or more to 'language'.

It is not a matter of true or false perception,
as if there was a finite fixed being
or universe
out there,
waiting
to be correctly or incorrectly perceived;
something one could
or should
be mindful of.

Rather,
the unfolding dynamic of your living
is engaging with the dynamic unfolding
of so called 'other', in
a collaborative whirling
of ever-fresh transformation
which is your knowing now.

So much more than a focussed action,
a daily discipline,
a Buddhist meditation
to practise
or to neglect.

Fully flowered,
mindfulness perfumes everything,
 a quality of being
 transforming everything,
 even mundane ordinary living;
This Satipaṭṭhāna
this setting up of mindfulness,
 an always available profoundly open
 way of blessing and peace.

Mindfulness is the flavour of healthy knowing in action.

And so, returning to the question . . .
“How to speak about this mystery?”
 this thusness —

Look around you!

This . . . is how we speak!

*Words are like tools
and a good craftsperson
cares for his or her tools
sharpening,
fashioning a new handle,
a particular tool for a particular job.*

Jargon is a blunt chisel.

May these words dance well in our minding.



Appendix – C

YOUR BODY IS AN OCEAN OF AWARENESS:

A DIFFERENT VIEW OF SATIPAṬṬHĀNA

The four foundations of mindfulness are often discussed in terms of actively directing mindful awareness towards the body, feelings, states of mind and phenomena. Here is a slightly different approach that you may find enriching.

Kāyānupassanā is often translated “awareness of the body”. For many people this is understood to involve investigating one's body or one's experience of embodiment. We could however read it in quite a different way. Instead of ‘me’ being aware of my body, it might be referring to something, in this case awareness, that belongs to the body. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony could be expressed as the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. It's his symphony. It belongs to him or is inescapably associated with him. In a similar way awareness of the body could refer to awareness that belongs to the body.

Consider the myriad moments of awareness, the immeasurable dancings of responsiveness, that throughout your life are collaboratively mingling and merging, giving rise to your living body – your enfleshed form/shape-in-action. This multi-domained matrix of awareness/responsiveness, in a sense, belongs to the body or even better, is the body – hence the phrase ‘awareness of the body’, or ‘awareness that belongs to and with the body’. From this perspective, *kāyānupassanā* involves the experiential exploration of all the patterns of

reciprocal sensitive functioning that together compose your body in the act of living. How do these continuously interweaving responsive knowings: sub-atomic, atomic, molecular, cellular, metabolic, social, inter-species, ecological and so forth, bring forth the world of your body?

Let's try to clarify this further. How would we know someone is aware? Actually, we only assume that they are aware based on the way we see them respond to stimulus. An appropriate response usually leads us to assume that there is a certain degree of awareness. If there are no signs of responsiveness, or if the responsiveness seems to be out of sync or disconnected from the stimulus, we might wonder if there is any awareness. Awareness itself is invisible. It is a private, subjective experience of organism responsiveness that only the organism itself can know. Responsiveness, on the other hand, is something an observer can see. The observer may then postulate that this is a demonstration or indication of awareness.

There are many domains and dimensions of responsiveness, we could associate with different realms of awareness. Electrons and protons respond to each other's presence in the process of bringing forth, or being, an atom. We might think of this as a type of 'sub-atomic' or 'quantum' awareness. Atoms respond to other atoms in the process of forming molecules – a type of 'atom awareness'. In a similar fashion we could have molecular awareness, cellular awareness, synaptic awareness, organ and organism awareness, colonial awareness, ecosystem

awareness and so forth. Living form is a volume of interlinking multi-levelled awareness/responsiveness-in-action. Viewed this way, most expressions of awareness that are necessary for our body to exist would be either subconscious or unconscious. What we call conscious awareness or ego awareness, which often seems to appropriate the awareness as something one 'has' or 'possesses' rather than something one 'is', is just one aspect of a rich multi-levelled weaving of responsiveness.

With this in mind, the section on *kāyānupassanā* could be seen as an invitation to become extraordinarily quiet, relaxed and sensitive. Then, in this state of vibrant alertness and wide awake curiosity, to listen to, study, and more deeply understand, the process of shaping – this wisdom of embodiment that we are. Not 'me' being pointedly aware of an object called 'my body' but me softening into a space of stillness and profound sensitivity in order to appreciate the vast ocean of dynamic awareness(es) that together are my body in the process of knowing itself into being.

Through *vedanānupassanā* we investigate how the dancing awareness/responsiveness that composes our body, gives rise to a biological basis of values vis-a-vis homeostasis, the internal milieu of cells, the autoimmune system, symbiotic functioning and so forth. Living systems exhibit an automatic 'pull' towards health – a seeking of good functioning – and an 'aversion' to whatever threatens that. What we call liking, disliking and being neutral, are rooted in biological processes

and then extended into the realm of concepts, memories, language and other habit patterns of preference and shared experience. Cultivating awareness of feelings, we investigate this matrix of myriad levels of awareness that together make up the realm of experience we call feeling/evaluation.

With *cittānupassanā* we explore the matrix of awareness that arises in the form of states of mind. In a general sense, these could be thought of as states of knowing; rhythms, cadences and textures of responsive knowing – like weather systems blowing through the landscapes of our living; blustery, calm, cool, rainy, drizzly, foggy, tempestuous, sunny, hot, variable and so forth. The weather affects everything.

With *dhammānupassanā* we explore the vast expanse or community of awareness/responsiveness-in-action that gives rise to the complex phenomena of social living with others.

Consider –

Kāya: How does this continuously ongoing ecological multi-levelled dance of responsive knowing bring forth a world of embodiment in terms of identifiable forms?

Vedana: How does this dance of responsive knowing bring forth the world of your body in the act of valuing and preferencing?

Citta: How does this dance of responsive knowing bring forth the world of your body, along with the process of valuing, in terms of states of mind or climates of knowing?

Dharma: How does this dance of responsive knowing bring forth the world of your body and the process of valuing, flavoured with a vast array of subtleties and nuances (states of mind), in terms of socially identifiable global understandings and involvements?

In human experience, these four are inextricably woven together. *Kāya/vedana/citta/dharma*, functioning as a seamlessly integrated whole. This is the true foundation of mindfulness – this precious *Satipaṭṭhāna* – the birthright of all of us. Now, smiling and breathing, we might find ourselves;

*Moving through fields of minds of beings
moving as a being of care-filled minding stillness,
movement as a play of mystery unfolding . . .
This flowering here of nowfulness.*

*Grassy meadows
rippling with zephyred thought and feeling,
photons of star parents,
touchings of brother,
scentings of sister,
a buzzing inter-pollination in every direction;
and we flow
as one river;
streams of magic
forging paths of openness,
tracks of transient creatureness,
weavings of life-lines lacing the open sky,
birthing an old forest of ever fresh worlds.*



Appendix – D

BODY / BRAIN / MIND / COMMUNITY AND E.M.A.P. THE FULLNESS OF SATI

Body/Brain/Mind/Community

Experimenting with different ways of speaking can encourage new dimensions of understanding. In the light of this, I'd like to invite some fresh thinking about what we mean when we use the words 'body' and 'mind'. Instead of treating them as nouns that describe seemingly familiar pre-existing objects, one being physical and the other non-physical, we could explore the possibility that 'body' and 'mind' are referring to domains of evolving process. It might help to shift attention from thing to process, by turning the words body and mind into verb forms. Perhaps we could speak of the activities of 'embodying' or 'minding'. If we insist on using nouns, at least we could refer to a mindful body or an embodied mind. In his writings and teachings, biologist Humberto Maturana would sometimes allude to our "bodyhood" and his colleague, Francisco Varela, later in his career, suggested the term "enactive mind".

I can remember, as a teenager in the 1960s, when body and mind were commonly thought to be two distinctly separate entities. If your body was malfunctioning you might consult a medical doctor but if your mind was malfunctioning you would go to a psychologist or psychiatrist. Things are different today and many people are comfortable using the composite

'body/mind', to indicate a seamlessly integrated psychosomatic process. Physiology-in-action (*the somatic part*) is affecting our mental processes (*the psycho part*). At the same time our mental processes are influencing the physiology. Few people have trouble understanding this.

While body and mind are increasingly seen as two facets of an integrated body/mind, or if you prefer, embodied/minding, there is still a lot of writing, especially in popular books on neuroscience, that seem to make a fundamental distinction between the body and the brain. It is as if thinking or mental processes could be explained by brain functioning alone while the body is relegated to being a support vehicle, a mechanism for getting the brain around. Biologically the brain/nervous system is made of the same stuff as the body – (*structurally coupling autopoietic cells*). It functions in such a way that it coordinates the immense range of sensory/motor activities of this multi-celled, multi-organed, multi-tissued, organism in the act of responding to and relating with a constantly changing environment. It is true that without a sufficiently evolved and well functioning brain there is no verbal or conceptual thinking. But it is also true that without a functioning physiology there would also be no thinking. We could draw attention to the inseparable inter-beingness of body, brain, and mental process by using the term 'body/brain/mind'. As a phrase, it is a bit cumbersome but it might help us to view our living in a more integrated and holistic way.

There is however, another aspect that is worth addressing and this is the strange and sometimes disturbing fact that a single living being is actually a collaborating community. In today's world, it is much more common to regard oneself as a single individual unit or entity, rather than as a community of living systems.

How we view ourselves is important. If I assume myself to be an independent unit, or singularity, there is me and everyone else: my partner, children, parents, and extended family relatives; my thoughts, feelings, emotions and so forth, and all the creatures that fill the environment around me. In such a situation I can easily imagine myself as a decision maker, a dictator – hopefully benevolent – deciding on the best course of action. This dictator/self could be wise, benign, or completely insane, but with a manner of understanding that sees a world of fundamentally independent individuals, it is hard to imagine functioning without having an executive controller/boss.

Being a community carries very different implications. It implies that each participant appreciates and listens to the other contributing members of the community thus coming to a consensus of integrated action that is good for everyone. Each member of the community has a particular talent to contribute. Stomach, pancreas, this synapse, that neuronal grouping, this particular mother and that particular brother, this estuary, that temperate forest. To bring forth any world or moment of experience, every participant is necessary. In this

sense we need each other. Treating myself as an independent singularity may be a useful device for the quick decisions often needed in daily living, but the deep ongoing biological basis of multi-cellular life involves consensual co-ordination on a grand scale; collaborations of communities of living systems within communities of living systems.

Reminding myself that none of these distinctions: body, brain, mind, or community, can be understood without reference to the other three, I find it useful to invoke all of them together. I am a body/brain/mind/community engaging with a body/brain/mind/community called you.

The domain of body involves the dynamic physiological structure of cells, tissues and organs which themselves are co-ordinated processes of molecular/chemical functioning. The brain is made of cells, so from this perspective, it is obviously a contributing aspect of the body.

The domain of brain involves all nervous tissues and neuronal groupings and associated chemical secretions that modulate the functioning of body and its responses to the 'outer' world. Although the brain is a massing of neural tissue in the head, the brain/nervous system extends throughout the body.

The domain of mind, or as Kalu Rinpoché would sometimes say, "that which knows", involves a sense of on-going-experience-in-action, knowing-in-action; a sense of an agent engaging with objects. This space of knowing/experience seems to emerge congruently with the functioning of the

body/brain in its course of living. Its activity covers many types of experience, for example: thinking, verbalising, remembering, feeling, emotioning, planning, conceiving, imagining, evaluating and so forth. We refer to this expanse of knowing that we are with the word 'mind' or more often with the phrase 'my mind'.

The domain of community is vast and involves activities of both structural and functional coupling that give rise to a complex multi-leveled symbiosis of multi-celled organisms. You may treat me as a singularity, but biologically I am a community composed of trillions of cells, functioning together as organs and tissues, collaboratively forming this skin encapsulated organism you refer to as Tarchin. Even a single cell could be seen as an evolving community of molecular organelles. We might think of this physiological communal matrix as a body/brain/community

The community that I am, is continuously interlinking and inter-responding with communities beyond my skin; communities of families and societies and the entire evolving ecosphere. We body/brain/mind/communities intimately engage with myriad other body/brain/mind/communities – communities within communities within communities.

In this way, community is a two faceted phenomena. Any living being is simultaneously a community of things and processes that compose it *and* it is part of a larger community that makes up the living environment in which it exists and

with which it participates. We are a simultaneous union, or co-emergence, of collaborative-diversity *and* integrated wholeness.

In a mature human adult these four are totally and seamlessly integrated in their functioning. Bodies, brains, minds and communities cannot exist in isolation. Considered separately, each of these four is continuously adjusting its collective functioning in response to the shifting functionings of the other three. Together they make a whole.

Our sense of wholeness is somewhat arbitrary as it depends on our currently experienced frame of reference. For example, depending on circumstances, we can meaningfully refer to the whole cell, or the whole body, or the whole body/brain, or the whole body/brain/mind. We could speak of the whole body/brain/mind/community, the whole person, the whole ecosystem, and so forth. From a Buddhist perspective the ultimate whole is an un-pin-down-able, evolving fluidity of dynamic relating, which involves the whole universe in all its dimensions of complexity. In Sanskrit, this total field of all events and meanings, is called the *dharmadhātu*.

E.M.A.P.

In the light of these reflections on 'body/brain/mind/community' what do we mean when we speak of mindfulness or *sati*? Given the fact that western educated people still tend to treat mind as something quite different from body, I often wonder if the current popular understanding of mindfulness is

broad enough to include everything the Buddha meant when he used the word '*sati*'. What would it imply for a body/brain/mind/community to engage in *sati*? I'd like to suggest an acronym that might remind us of the Buddha's intention. The acronym is E.M.A.P. It stands for embodied/mindfulness/awareness/in-placeness.

Mindfulness, can only manifest in a particular living organism. The integrated functioning of that body/brain/mind/community determines the arising richness and expression of *sati*. Mindfulness doesn't just float around in space. It is inseparable from the rhythmic flow of a particular physiological and metabolic functioning. To remind us of this we have the first letter 'E' – 'embodied'.

Sati involves an aspect of conscious, intentionally directed attentiveness. One chooses to be mindful of this or that. Consider mindfulness of breathing. The body/brain/mind/community that is me, is actively and consciously engaged in cultivating more and more refined powers of friendly enquiry and attentive discrimination, using physiological sensations of breathing as a support. When we lose touch with the breathing, we can intentionally bring our focus back to the breath. To remind us of the wilful, choiceful, directed, aspect of *sati*, we now have 'E.M.' – embodied/mindfulness.

Considering the inconceivable range of activities of the trillions of cells that compose a human adult in the act of living, it is obvious that myriad dancings of awareness/responsiveness; atomic, molecular, cellular, synaptic, organ system and so forth,

are functions that I, as an ego personality, will never be able to be 'mindful' of, in all their detail. Yet without them, nothing would happen. A matured sense of sati will need to include an appreciation of this ocean of choiceless attentiveness that is singing our 'embodied/mindfulness' into being. To remind ourselves of this dimension of experience, *sati* could be rendered 'E.M.A.' – embodied/mindfulness/awareness.

Finally, every organism exists in intimate relationship with an 'outer' environment. In any given moment, *where* we are affects *who* and *what* we are, and how we function. *Sati* also embraces this dimension of living and so we have 'E.M.A.P.' – embodied/mindfulness/awareness/in-placeness.



Appendix – E

OUTLINING A WAY OF CONTEMPLATIVE ENQUIRY FOR ENTERING THE HOLOVERSE ²⁶

Preparation

- a. Do some physical stretching that leaves you feeling energised and loose.
- b. Smiling, breathing and present, settle your body/brain/mind/community into an E.M.A.P. of easeful presence.
- c. In this calm clear state, begin to explore

1) - Attentively explore your anatomical body and at the same time note how your over-all 'body of experience' is responding to the parts or aspects you are bringing to mind.

- a. gross detail
- b. finer detail
- c. cells
- d. molecules
- e. atoms
- f. quanta
- g. all of the above together

2) - Attentively explore the body as a process.

- a. circulation
- b. respiration

²⁶ Holoverse => I am grateful to David Bohm for this simple way of referring to a universe in which everything is interdependently linked with everything else and where every action ultimately reverberates through the whole.

- c. digestion
- d. metabolism (catabolism - anabolism)
- e. growth
- f. maintenance
- g. decay

As you develop your facility for skilfully fabricating a sense of a rich experiential knowing of physiological process, then combine this with the anatomical explorations of section (1) a through to g.

Note: As you progress through stages 1) to 9) in this 'contemplative enquiry for entering the holoverse', each step carries awareness of previous steps or at least the feelings of the awareness of the previous steps.

3) - Attentively explore the body in process of relating to the surrounding world. Here you apply sections (1) and (2) to everything that is "not" the body i.e. the environment and then how the body and environment interact as one indivisible process. Include interacting with other people, animals, plants and minerals.

4) - Attentively explore the body as a process in time.

Imagine the body as it was as an egg, transforming through fertilisation, => birth => infancy => childhood => adolescence => adulthood, building towards how you are now. See how the future body is being shaped by what happened then and what is happening now. Apply sections (1) (2) and (3) to this.

(5) – Put sections 1, 2, 3, and 4, all together and see the ever fresh now-body as a processing of time, space and knowing unfolding at multiple levels

(6) - Go through the whole process from 1 to 5 in terms of feelings.

(7) - Go through the whole process in terms of mind, thought and mental process.

(8) - Totality – Put all of this together.

(9) – Take these explorations into every aspect of your living, experiencing the world as a communion of subjects rather than a mechanical arrangement of objects.



Appendix – F

THE THIRTY-SEVEN FACTORS OF ENLIGHTENMENT & THE FIVE PHASES, PATHS OR STAGES ²⁷

*I realise refuge in the true state of affairs;
spontaneous, ever-present, timeless awareness,
the vast ungraspable living world/universe that we are.
This is ever fresh buddha in action.*

*I recognise, celebrate and cultivate
the paths, teachings and encouragements
that support our realising the true state of affairs.
This is dharma put to good use.*

*Releasing into a profound sense of communion
with all of life and living, I am home.
This is the knowing of true sangha,
the fruition of all refuge practice.*

*Gradually, buddha, dharma and sangha merge and mingle
until each one contains and reveals the other two.
This is a wondrous three-in-one refuge.
It's where we belong.*

²⁷ This is an adaptation of an article that was originally posted on Green Dharma Treasury

A Life-Journey of Maturing Humanness

Every multi-celled creature functions as a matrix of dynamic relationships. We are conceived in relationship, born into relationship and grow through relationship. Relationship is everywhere we look. It's what I do. It's what I am. Patterns of relating ripple through the tissues, organs and cells of my body and ripple in and through the living world around me. As I live, all that comprises my environment shifts and dances responding to my aliveness. As the world around me reverberates like an ocean of ineffable functioning, I respond with chemical shifts, and riffs of thinking, feeling and remembrance. These ever shifting linkings are seamless.

Intimate relationship is all that is, and the eternally present activity of dancing organism and dancing environment, drifts in the space and time of knowing, tracing the stories of evolution, a planetary community growing into sentience, being the universe coming to know itself.

This awakening, this dawning capacity for lived understanding, which is me and you and all of us together in the very midst of being the beings that we are, reveals itself in textures and flavours, in factors and pathways – life-lines of the ungraspable – symbiosing now as blessing and wonderment. In Buddhism the shared human experiences of these modes of unfolding being, have been examined and named. They are called *bojjhanga* and *magga*. We might think of them as factors or elements of awakening – paths or patterns of maturing into fullness.

This article summarises a general outline of the process of awakening – what we might think of as a life-journey of maturing humanness – expressed in the concepts of Buddhism. In the ancient Theravadin tradition, this way of living is described in terms of cultivating the ‘*Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment*’.²⁸ In the historically more recent traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, these thirty-seven are elaborated and clarified by associating them with five ‘*phases*’, ‘*paths*’ or ‘*stages*’ while at the same time relating them to the view and practices of *Prajñāpāramittā*.²⁹

Generally, without extensive explanation and direct personal experience, these lists of terms and categories will not be particularly informative. Worse than that, they can even be misleading if they reinforce tendencies to view the universe in mechanistic terms. However, for someone deeply engaged in the lifelong adventure of awakening-in-action, they can be both

²⁸ The 37 Factors of Awakening are sometimes referred to as the “thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment”.

For a succinct summation of the 37 see;

– “*Gone Beyond*” vol 2 p 144 – 154,

– “*A Concise Enumeration of the Paths and Bhūmis of Bodhisattvas, the Children of the Victors*” Patrul Rinpoché, found in “*Groundless Paths*”, (p 545 - 552)

– “*Gems of Dharma, Jewels of Freedom*” Jé Gampopa, (chapter 18)

– “*Treasury of Precious Qualities: Book One*” Jigme Lingpa, (p 391 – 395)

²⁹ *Prajñāpāramittā* commonly translated as “the perfection of wisdom” refers to an immense tradition of Buddhist teaching that culminates in a profound understanding of emptiness (*śūnyatā*).

inspiring and reassuring; especially when we begin to discern patterns in our unfolding realisation that parallel the paths and realisations of great bodhisattva-yogis of the past. In this way we begin to feel part of, and at home in, a venerable community of contemplative scientists and practitioners of natural awakening – this magnificent life unfolding that we are.

From the point of view of paths and stages, generally speaking, on “*the path of accumulation*” one gathers experience with the various aspects of life and living that appear to be collaboratively weaving one's current experience of now. On “*the path of preparation*” one deepens one's conceptual understanding of these aspects, particularly in terms of form and function, appearance and process, self and other, and relative and absolute truth. On “*the path of seeing*”, a non-conceptual direct realisation/experience of this seamless mandala of current experience arises. This marks what is called, “the first stage of the bodhisattva”. On “*the path of familiarisation*”, this non-conceptual realisation is refined through living the remaining nine stages of the bodhisattva. On “*the path of no more learning*”, the entire universe, this ungraspable mystery, continues as ever-present, timeless awareness/presence, the source of inspiration and an endpoint of discovery, for all who seek understanding.³⁰

³⁰ For a summary and explanation of the paths and bhūmis, see:

– “*A Specific Explanation of the Manner of Gradually Progressing through the Five Paths and the Manner of Attaining the Qualities of the Ten Bhūmis*” by Patrul Rinpoché in “*Groundless Paths*” p 553 – 584
– “*Gems of Dharma, Jewels of Freedom*” by Jé Gampopa, (chapter 19)

Throughout this article, I have named and numbered the 37 factors of enlightenment in bold. Sanskrit and Pali terms and words mostly stand on their own while Tibetan terms are indicated with square brackets.

I. STAGE OF ACCUMULATION ³¹

(This is also referred to as the path of study and learning.) Throughout this stage, one ‘accumulates’ skills in wholesome engagement ³² which become the foundation for even more subtle explorations and lived understandings. Here one achieves mental quiescence, *samatha* [*shi-né*]. Then, through the power of hearing a correct explanation of *śūnyatā*, thinking about it and reflecting upon it, one achieves a conceptual understanding of this un-pin-down-able, spacious openness of inter-being. In this stage the first twelve factors of enlightenment are emphasised spanning three levels – lesser, intermediate and high.

³¹ The stage of accumulation involves becoming familiar with all aspects of living/experiencing. Everything is an inter-being of everything else, thus revealing the un-pin-down-able, illusory-like nature of oneself, the apprehender. At this stage, one is beginning to understand what one is working with but does not yet have mastery of these factors. Classically there are two categories of experience to be accumulated. They are wisdom and merit, or correct understanding and skilful means.

³² I use the term wholesome engagement, and sometimes wholesome relating (*sīla*) to point towards an experience of life and living that is profoundly integrated.

With the stage of accumulation, one begins to cultivate the skills of absorption *jhāna*, as well as beginning to investigate themes such as: the potential opportunities in becoming a fully matured human, the dynamics of causal relations *paṭiccasamuppāda*, life as a matrix of responsive activity, and the dysfunctional assumptions and patterns of the particular culture one is raised in. Classically, these themes are referred to as “four contemplations to turn the mind towards dharma”.

Lesser level Traditionally, this level of practice is called low or lesser to indicate that there is a sense that fruition of this practice is something that will occur at an unspecified later time. For those for whom the concept of re-birth is meaningful, realisation will come in an unspecified ‘future life’. The lesser level of the Path of Accumulation emphasises *satipaṭṭhāna*.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness *Satipaṭṭhāna*

or Four Applications of Attentiveness

[dran-pa nyer-bzhag bzhi]

1. *Kāyānupassanā* awareness of body [*lus*].
2. *Vedanānupassanā* awareness of feelings [*tshor-ba*].
3. *Cittānupassanā* awareness of mental states [*sems*].
4. *Dhammānupassanā* awareness of dhammas [*chos*].

Intermediate Level This level of practice, built on the preceding, is called intermediate as it is accompanied by increasing confidence *saddha* that fruition will occur in the not too distant future – or from a Buddhist re-birth perspective,

‘next life’. The intermediated level emphasises the Four Efforts enhanced with five aspects.

Four Efforts *Cattāro Sammappadhāna*
or Four Renunciations [*yang-dag-par spong-ba bzhi*]

5. Recognise the presence of an unwholesome state and take steps to bring it to an end.
6. Take steps not to produce or encourage further unwholesomeness.
7. Recognise the presence of a wholesome state and encourage it to flourish.
8. Encourage the future arising of all that is wholesome.

Each facet of these four efforts involves a progression of five aspects:³³

- a) willingness to give rise to striving [*‘dun-pa*].
- b) eagerness to do so (making effort) [*‘bad-pa*].
- c) perseverance or vigour in doing so [*brison-‘grus*].
- d) keeping the mind in check [*sems rab-tu ‘dzin-pa*].
- e) having the mind firmly settled or setting the mind [*sems rab-tu ‘jog-pa*].

High Level This is called high level to indicate a confidence that fruition will occur in the course of this life. Here one emphasises the *iddhipāda*. Progression through these three levels: lesser, intermediate and high, reveal a deepening

³³ These five aspects are applied to enrich one’s experience of each of the four efforts (*virīya*).

confidence or conviction that one's moment by moment living is one's path of awakening. It's all we have to work with.

Four Means of Accomplishment *Iddhipāda* ³⁴
or, Four Footholds for Higher Forms of Cognition
or, Four Limbs (or Bases) of Miraculous Power

It is called miraculous power because it is the foundation for attaining the various qualities of a calm, clear, engaged and profoundly peaceful mind. The general nature of the *iddhipāda* is *samādhi* ³⁵ and so the four are the *samādhis* of: will, endeavour, one-pointed mindfulness, and analysis. Each one involves a global or holistic appreciation for what is happening.

9. *Chando* => will/determination/aspiration [*dun-pa*].

“will to manifest or bring forth compassion” – N.R.³⁶

“*samādhi* of trust in the actuality of what one is trying to familiarise with” – P.R.³⁷

10. *Viriya* => effort, enthusiastic perseverance [*brison-pa*].

“energy from compassion”, N.R.

“*samādhi* of engaging while being enthusiastic” P.R.

³⁴ Means of accomplishing the complete realisation of wisdom/compassion which, ultimately, facilitates and becomes evident in, the seamless functioning of the *dharmadhātu* (the total field of all events and meanings).

³⁵ *samādhi* => absorption/concentration

³⁶ N.R. => Namgyal Rinpoché – personal communication.

³⁷ P.R. => Patrul Rinpoché – *Groundless Paths* p 558

11. *Citta* ³⁸ => thought or attentiveness [*sems-pa*].
“realisation of compassion”, N.R.
“samādhi of one-pointed engagement” P.R.
12. *Vīmaṃsa* ³⁹ => Reason or discursiveness [*dpyod-pa*].
“wisdom arising from compassion”, N.R.
“samādhi of analysing whether or not dullness or agitation are present” P.R.

II. STAGE OF PREPARATION ⁴⁰

(Sometimes called the stage of integration, link-up or junction.)
This is called the stage of preparation because it prepares one for the path of seeing. It is divided into two phases; the tentative phase and the decisive phase. Here, through four sub-stages called: heat or warmth, peak, patient endurance or poised readiness, and supreme dharma, one develops and integrates penetrative insight, *vipassana* [*lha-tong*] and a conceptual/inferential understanding of śūnyāta. (Often translated as ‘emptiness’, the word śūnyāta points towards the

³⁸ *citta* => the heart / mind / intent – effortlessly settled in the heart / mind / intent of what is. “More a thoughtlessness than a process of verbal thinking.” – N.R.

³⁹ *vīmaṃsa* => a quality of subtle discernment arising within the samādhi of citta

⁴⁰ The path of preparation is marked by the arising of deepening insight into the conceptual nature and relational process of apprehender and apprehended. This prepares one for the experience of non-conceptual wisdom on the ‘path of seeing’.

spacious, open, un-pin-down-able nature of interdependent phenomena. Looking deeply into anything will reveal a network of causes and conditions, an inter-being of myriad things and processes, such that you can't say definitively, it is this or it is that, and so it is said to be 'empty' of this and that.)

The tentative phase of preparation/integration is composed of two stages: 'heat' and 'peak'.⁴¹ Here, one's meditation is strengthened through increasing reliance on the Five Faculties. This involves the process of entering one side of 'true reality' (the Four Noble Truths or Four Realities ⁴²) called emptiness of the apprehended. The bodhisattva recognises that everything that appears is an expression of the functioning of his or her mind. At this point distractions of the apprehended are relinquished and only distractions of the apprehender remain.

The stage of heat, warmth or warming up is marked by the warming, or heating up, or dawning of realisation that 'afflicted' phenomena (what is apprehended) are mere mental

⁴¹ The tentative phases of heat and peak, include a progressive mastery of jhāna (factors of absorption). Heat involves the development of the first level of jhāna with emphasis on examination (focus) *vitakha* and analysis (scanning) *vicāra*. Peak involves the development of the remaining jhānas through to the arūpa level of 'nothingness'. Through these trainings the mind is becoming very malleable and responsive.

⁴² For a rich and expanded view of the Four Noble Truths, see *The Avatamsaka Sutra* – Book Eight.

projections, and without nature. This is sometimes called the initial samādhi of 'the illumination of prajñā'.

The stage of peak, summit or maximum level is marked by the realisation that 'purified' phenomena are without nature. This is an intensification in the illumination of prajñā.

Patrul Rinpoché, in his *"Concise Enumeration of the Paths and Bhūmis of Bodhisattvas"* wrote; "When one rubs a wooden support with a wooden stick, before the arising of fire there arises heat in the wood. Likewise, there arise signs of heat in one's mind stream that are unlike what happened before and coarse afflictions are suppressed. Therefore, this is called the level of heat of the path of preparation. Its level of 'peak' is so called because it represents the peak of mundane roots of virtue. Its level of 'poised readiness' is so called because the poised readiness of not being afraid of the basic nature – the actuality of emptiness – is attained. Its level of 'supreme of all dharma' is so called because it is the supreme of all dharmas that arise from mundane meditation. These make up the path of preparation as the four factors conducive to penetration."⁴³ In this phase of preparation, one realises a significant degree of mastery in absorption and flexible inquiry.

⁴³ *Groundless Paths* p 547-8

Five Faculties *Pañcendriyāni*: or Inner Controls ⁴⁴

13. *Saddhā* => faith/confidence in the Four Realities [*dad-pa*] – realisation of which constitutes full enlightenment.

14. *Viriya* => effort enthusiasm and perseverance for realising the Four Realities [*brtson-’grusb*] – This is bodhisattva conduct.

15. *Sati* => mindfulness/remembrance, not forgetting the focal objects and aspects (of an enquiring mind) in terms of the Four Realities. – This is also known as attentive inspection [*dran- pa*] – the supreme study of mahāyāna.

16. *Samādhi* => concentration or holistic experience [*ting-nge-’dzin*] with regard to the actuality of the Four Realities – calm abiding presence.

17. *Prajñā* (or *paññā* in Pali) => wisdom or appreciative understanding, or superior insight in thoroughly discriminating each of the Four Realities.

Wisdom *prajñā* – Scholar and translator Karl Brunnholz, describes *prajñā* as the basic inquisitiveness and curiosity of one's own mind which is very precise and playful at the same time. We might think of this as 'wisdom-in-action'. In Tibetan, this aspect of *prajñā* is called [*sherab*] and is associated with the type of wisdom that arises through study, reflection and meditation. The exercising of *sherab* eventually flowers as wisdom in the form of realisation, which is described in many ways: for example, luminous non-abiding presence, pristine awareness, the ever-fresh expanse of uncontrived wholeness,

⁴⁴ These 5 faculties are directed towards the Four Realities. See *Groundless Paths* p 756, fn 543.

and dharmadhatu wisdom. In Tibetan, wisdom-as-realisation is called [*yeshé*]. It arises in states of non-conceptual absorption, deep attunement and radically inclusive love. Both *sherab* and *yeshé* are forms or faces of *prajñā*.

The decisive phase of preparation/integration is composed of two stages: ‘patient endurance’, acceptance or ‘poised readiness’; and ‘supreme dharma’.⁴⁵ They both involve the process of entering or linking with, full reality – the Four Noble Truths or Four Realities – the emptiness of both apprehended and apprehender. Here, one masters the Five Powers or Inner Strengths.

The stage of patience, patient endurance, acceptance, or poised readiness, refers to the patience that arises with the realisation that the apprehender is without nature and not being afraid of the ungraspableness of profound actuality. In English translations of some of the *prajñāpāramitā* sutras, you may come across the same term rendered as ‘patient endurance of the uncreate’.

The stage of ‘supreme dharma’ or ‘supreme moment’ refers to the realisation that the apprehender as a manifestation of mind – as an imputed individual – is itself without nature. This is the *saṃādhi* that immediately precedes the path of seeing.

Five Powers *Pañcabalāni* or **Five Inner Strengths** to overcome all that impedes the link-up with the Stage of Seeing. Here one manifests the power or inner strength to overcome the obstacles

⁴⁵ *Groundless Paths* p 310 and 559

associated with the Five Faculties: lack of confidence, laziness, forgetfulness, distraction, and lack of alertness.⁴⁶

18. *Saddhā* => confidence [*dad-pa*].

19. *Viriya* => effort [*brtson-'grus*].

20. *Sati* => mindfulness or attentive inspection [*dran-pa*].

21. *Samādhi* => concentration or holistic experience [*ting-nge-'dzin*] – a growing feeling of well grounded thoroughly integrated wholeness.

22. *Prajñā* => wisdom or appreciative understanding [*shes-rab*].

III. STAGE OF SEEING

(Sometimes called the stage of insight or penetration.)

The stage of seeing is explained in a variety of ways depending on the school, the needs of the student, and the background and experiences of the teacher. This stage marks ones' first clear, unmistakable and confident experiencing of the true nature of being. Traditionally this is variously expressed as: seeing the essence, nature and expression of mind; seeing the Four Realities in a fresh way, i.e. through the lens of *śūnyatā*; directly realising personal and phenomenal identitylessness; or fully experiencing the complete view of mahāyāna or madhyamaka. The mahāyāna path of seeing is the path of directly realising

⁴⁶ The difference between the five faculties and the five powers is that with the five faculties, one experiences the flaw and its antidote, for example; lack of confidence is remedied with confidence. Whereas with the powers, one just experiences full-on confidence. A similar approach can be taken for each of the other four.

emptiness free from reference points. The madhyamaka path of seeing is the path of recognising that all phenomena are free from extremes such as permanence or extinction, coming into being or passing away. The Buddhist scholar, Herbert Guenther in his writings poetically described this seeing as a ‘limpid clarity and consummate perspicacity’. In essence the stage of seeing is the yogi’s initial correct experiencing of reality as un-pin-down-able wholeness.

“By relying on mere mind,
One does not imagine outer objects.
By resting in the focal objects of suchness,
One should go beyond mere mind too.
Having gone beyond mere mind,
One must even go beyond non-appearance.
The yogin who rests in non-appearance,
Sees mahāyāna.” – *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*

With the stage of seeing, one attains a non-conceptual, bare perception of *śūnyatā* through fully maturing one’s realisation of the seven factors of enlightenment. This stage of seeing is also referred to as the first stage of the Bodhisattva (the first *bodhisattvabhūmi*) called, ‘Joyous’ or ‘Supreme Joy’ or ‘Spotless Joy’.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ See section, “The Ten Stages of the Bodhisattva” on p 190

Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*sattabojjhangā*)

- 23. *Sati* => mindfulness or attentive introspection [*dran-pa*].
- 24. *Dhammavicaya* => investigation of dharma or appreciative discrimination [*chos rab-rnam-'byed*].
- 25. *Viriya* => sustained effort [*brtson-'grus*].
- 26. *Pīti* => joy/bliss/aliveness [*dga'-ba*].
- 27. *Passadhi* => quietude or tranquillity – sometimes called flexibility/suppleness, or refinement and serenity – a state of increasing physical and mental health and fitness [*shin-tu sbyang-ba*].
- 28. *Samādhi* => concentration – a state of wholeness [*ting-nge-'dzin*].
- 29. *Upekkhā* => equanimity – evenness [*btang-snyoms*].

IV. STAGE OF FAMILIARISATION ⁴⁸

From a mahāmudrā or dzogchen perspective this stage marks the beginning of what might be thought of as true meditation or *bhāvanā*. Although the first two stages of accumulation and integration obviously involve what most people today would

⁴⁸ Familiarisation is the process of making something one's family. We were conceived and grown in a family of relationships that, from an ultimate perspective, is called 'the total field of all events and meanings', the *dharmadhātu*. This family of inter-knowing/inter-being is our ground, our soil, our companionship, our teacher and our life's fruition. The stage of familiarisation is a period of integrating all the implications of knowing our family-ness in and with all that is.

think of as meditation, in fact they are steps towards discovering the seamless wholeness of everything which is glimpsed for the first time in the stage of seeing. At that point, having clearly tasted this radically inclusive way of being, one can embark on the fourth stage – the process of familiarisation.

With increasing confidence we mature the art of settling in, or cultivating, or resting in, or acclimatising to, the nature of mind. This fourth stage is also sometimes referred to as ‘the path of cultivation of refinement’. Here, all latent emotional and conceptual obscurations and misunderstandings are gradually purified and the positive qualities or attributes of the enlightened state are revealed.

In the preceding ‘stage of seeing’, manifest delusions are absent. During the stage of familiarisation, all latent or potential dispositions for mistaken seeing – deeply engrained assumptions, biases, prejudices and so forth – are gradually eliminated. Here, through deepening experience of the Eight-fold Noble Path, the final delusions obscuring one's Buddha Nature are incrementally abandoned. Progressing through the second to tenth stages of the bodhisattva, *bodhisattvabhūmis*, one familiarises oneself with abiding in the non-conceptual awareness of *śūnyatā* – ‘abiding where there is no abiding’ – refining and perfecting the pārami, while at the same time eliminating increasingly subtle obstacles.

Eight Path Factors or Eightfold Noble Path

(*ariya-aṭṭhangka-magga*)

30. *Sammā-dittī* => complete or 'right' view [*yang-dag-pa'i lta-ba*].

To see / experience in a non-fragmenting, radically inclusive way.

31. *Sammā-sankappo* => complete thoughts

[*yang-dag-pa'i rtogs-pa*]. To think in terms of the whole.

32. *Sammā-vācā* => complete speech [*yang-dag-pa'i ngag*].

33. *Sammā-kammanto* => complete action

[*yang-dag-pa'i las-kyi mtha'*].

34. *Sammā-ājīvo* => complete livelihood [*yang-dag-pa'i tsho-ba*].

35. *Sammā-vāyāmo* => complete effort [*yang-dag-pa'i rtsol-ba*].

36. *Sammā-sati* => complete mindfulness [*yang-dag-pa'i drang-pa*].

37. *Sammā-samādhi* => complete concentration

[*yang-dag-pa'i ting-nge-'dzin*].

V. STAGE OF COMPLETION

This final stage is also referred to as the stage or phase of complete accomplishment or the path of non-meditation or sometimes the stage of no more learning. With the culmination of the Stage of Familiarization comes realisation of the tenth *bodhisattvabhūmi* called, "Assembling the Clouds of Dharma". Here, the phrase, "*Done is that which had to be done. For this, there is no more being subjected to becoming.*" which is found in various Theravadin sutras, becomes profoundly meaningful. According to *prajñāpāramitā*, *mahāmudrā*, and *dzogchen* commentaries, this fifth stage is the level of Buddhahood and is

sometimes equated with an eleventh *bodhisattvabhūmi* but now thought of as a *Buddhabhūmi*. It is known by different names such as, “Light Everywhere”, “Unequalled”, “Endowed with Wisdom”, and “All Illumination”.

FIVE STATES ACCORDING TO YOGACARA ⁴⁹

These five states, according to Yogacara, are very close to the five stages outlined in general Tibetan teachings. I am including them here as they can help shed further light of understanding on the over-all process.

1. State of equipment (*sambhara-avastha*), or cultivation of aids to liberation. Here, supported by faith and trust and wonderment, the bodhisattva is able to deeply understand the characteristics, nature and workings of consciousness.

2. State of added effort (*prayoga-avastha*), or cultivation of aids to penetration of mahāyāna. Here the bodhisattva is able to gradually subdue the grasped and grasper (the two clingings or obstacles) and promote a more encompassing view.

3. State of thorough understanding (*prativeda-avastha*), or the path of insight dwelled on by all bodhisattvas. Here the bodhisattva thoroughly understands in accordance with reality.

⁴⁹ *Three Texts on Consciousness Only*, translated by Francis Cook, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation Research, 1999 (See Chapter 11, “The Holy Path” p 297)

4. **State of cultivation** (*bhāvanā-avastha*), or path of cultivation dwelled on by all bodhisattvas. Here, in accordance with principles he or she has perceived in (3), the bodhisattva continuously cultivates clear understanding, thus gradually subduing any remaining obstacles.

5. **State of culmination** (*nistha-avastha*), that is abiding in Supreme Perfect Awakening. Here, the bodhisattva having emerged from entangling obstacles perfect and clear, is able, to help all sentient beings by encouraging them to awaken to and enter into the characteristics and nature of ‘consciousness-only’. Everything is a play of the immeasurable expanse of knowing.

TEN STAGES OF THE BODHISATTVA

BODHISATTVABHŪMIS ⁵⁰

These stages are referred to in different ways and with different names in many Mahāyāna Sūtras. *Bhūmi* literally means ground, foundation, earth, area, level, and stage. The sequence of the ten stages of the bodhisattva are marked with increasing mastery of the illusory/empty/cognising nature of being, culminating in the experience of buddhahood/suchness. Progressing from stage to stage, there is an expanding vision of life and living, and a refinement of the wisdom and skill to be

⁵⁰ *Groundless Paths* p 428 – 436

of service to others. The early stages are just about imaginable for most people. Later stages describe an expanse of awakening activity that is awesomely inconceivable and immeasurable in scope.

From the stance of meditative-absorption on wisdom, each of the ten stages are the same, comprising a profound realisation of the nature of mind and an experiential knowing of the *dharmadhātu* – the total field of all events and meanings. From the point of view of the subsequent activity of compassion or skillful means, the stages are different. Each stage involves a refining of all ten *pāramitā*, with a particular emphasis on one, and a relinquishing of ever more subtle tendencies for clinging.

The first *bhūmi* called “Great Joy” is the equivalent of the “Path of Seeing”. Here training in generosity, *dāna pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.

The second to tenth *bhūmis* arise on the “Path of Familiarisation”.

The second *bhūmi* is called “Spotless Purity”. Here, wholesome relating, *sīla pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.

The third is called “Illumination or Refulgence”. Here, patience, *kṣānti pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.

The fourth is called “Radiant Wisdom”. Here, skilled use of energy, *virīya pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.

The fifth is called “Invincible Strength or Difficult to Conquer”. Here, a continuity of caring and enquiry, *samādhi pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.

The sixth is called “Direct Presence”. Here, wisdom emerging from the integration of the first five pāramitā, *prañā pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.

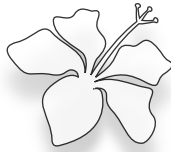
The seventh is called “Far Reaching”. Here training in expansive skillful means, *upāya pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.

The eight is called “Steadfastness or Immovable”. Here training in unshakable aspiration/determination, *praṇidhāna pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.

The ninth is called “Good Mind or Meritorious Wisdom”. Here training in immeasurable power to nourish the wholesome and mature all sentient beings, *bala pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.

The tenth is called “Assembling the Clouds of Dharma”. Here the mastery of enlightened activity; the realisation of effortless

union of wisdom and compassion and the spontaneous rain of blessings, *jñāna pāramitā*, is emphasised conjoined with realising the empty nature of phenomena.



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