

Satipaṭṭhāna  
Foundations of Mindfulness  
A Manual for Meditators  
(Revised and Extended Edition)

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## Karunakarma Series: Volume 1

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### Foundations of Mindfulness: A Manual for Meditators

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*Karunakarma:*

*the work of compassion*

*compassionate activity*

*compassion at work*

The Karunakarma Series began as a collection of coil bound A4 booklets published by Wangapeka Books, that could be used for study or as teaching aids. The series is now available on-line in PDF format at <[www.greendharmatresury.org](http://www.greendharmatresury.org)>. Please feel free to print and bind your own copy.

*May your explorations bear fruit  
for the benefit of all beings.*

With Profound 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.*

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## Background

These notes were initially compiled while teaching a one month Satipaṭṭhāna retreat at the Wangapeka Study and Retreat Centre in New Zealand, in the year 2000. 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. Gradually, with the encouragement of people studying with me, I have added some comments and fleshed out the grammar.

The notes were never intended to be a thorough presentation of the subject, nor are they aimed towards people brand new to meditation. Rather, they comprise a 'working manual' for meditators who have come to the point in their investigations where a more detailed study of this essential path of awakening could enrich their practice. The following pages 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 translation of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and to Maurice Walshe for his 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.

The notes were revised in 2007. In 2016, I added further revisions and comments, which are in the greyed areas, along with some appendices at the end. The generous and dedicated proof reading and suggestions of Mary Jenkins, Andy McIntosh and Daniel Burgess\_Milne have added refinements and made this a better text.

## 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 compiled at The Dharma Centre of Canada in 1976 after a three month study with Namgyal Rinpoché (unpublished)

**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.)

## 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 and 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 the 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. Here, 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*.

A 'compounded formation' is an object, or assemblage, that is made of parts. The Buddha saw that wherever there are compounded formations – things, appearances or arisings – be they physical or mental, there will be unavoidable unsatisfactoriness or suffering (*dukkha*). Everything lives by eating. Everything is eaten. All things wear out. Collision produces friction. Situations and circumstances arising in myriad levels of being, are continuously changing in ways we cannot 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*. Dissatisfaction, suffering and confusion are inevitably accompanied by partial or incomplete understanding of the currently arising situation. This in turn gives rise to clinging or grasping, manifesting as hopes, fears and expectations. That suffering arises from these causes – incomplete understanding and clinging – is another great reality of life. Understanding this in depth is *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/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 the cessation of suffering, on reflection, he then understood the path that leads to the cessation of suffering and 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 moment by moment or, put 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 interbeingness 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 dancings that comprise all physical forms, the meditator then begins to explore the mystery of mind. The sutra directs us to examine 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 mindstates, the huge array of emotions and flavours of knowing and attentiveness that so colour and sometimes dictate human experience. Finally, equipped with a bright, clear, appreciative awareness of body, feelings and mindstates, 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 easefully and alertly with whatever is arising, leads to realisation.

From the perspective of what could be called sectarian Buddhism, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is often seen as belonging to the *Theravādin*<sup>1</sup> tradition. Unfortunately, many so called *Vajrayāna*<sup>2</sup> 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* 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', but 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 studying and practising these two great treasures of awakening, it has become ever more apparent that the seeds of all the *Mahāyāna*<sup>3</sup> traditions are contained in this short sutra as simultaneously the essence or spirit of Satipaṭṭhāna lies at the heart of all *Mahāyāna* practice.

<sup>1</sup> 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 Buddhist tradition and has preserved the Pali sutras.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Mahāyāna => The Great Vehicle This is the form of Buddhism that is practised outside the Theravadin countries. It contains within it the Vajrayāna traditions.

## The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

In Buddhism, the *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'. In later meaning, "origin", starting point, cause; the title of the 7th book of the Abhidhamma.

Setting forth could indicate setting forth on a journey. It could also indicate setting forth in the sense of "laying out for examination". In the *Abhidhamma*, the seventh book, which is called '*Paṭṭhāna*', is a study of causal or conditional relations. It's a contemplation of all the causal factors, both physical and mental, that 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-membering) 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: *kaya* - body or forms of embodiment, *vedanā* - feeling/evaluation, *citta* - states of mind, and *dhamma* - objects of mind.

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 all the practices associated with Mahamudra, Dzogchen, and the yogas of skillful fabrication and effortless naturalness, and then throw in meditations arising in the traditions of Zen, Pure-land, T'ien T'ai and Avataṃsaka, 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.

A 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 sometimes 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:*

*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 themselves and for others.

At the time of the Buddha, entry into the *sangha*, the monastic order, 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 people are quite 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 our lives, we are not capable of investigating them as they simply don't exist for us. In this unconscious, unawareness, there is little or no freedom. Are you actually free to ask question? Are you genuinely interested in life, wanting 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 how they live vis a vis others and so a bhikkhu also refers to one who is consciously attending to or taking upon

themselves the practice, discipline, or training of *sila*. *Sila* refers to ethics and moral conduct. You might have the aspiration to practice mindfulness but if, at the same time, you show little respect for your own body, speech and mind or the body, speech and mind of others, you will not have much success. A bhikkhu would grow their mindfulness practice in the soil of respect for life, honesty, integrity, compassion and restraint from unnecessary consumption. Traditionally this training involved taking various vows to do with not killing, not stealing, speaking truthfully, not taking substances that cause intoxication, and attending to a healthy diet. As a 'lay bhikkhu', one might train oneself to live in accord with "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 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 inquiry is still alive in you, then you will be able to put this teaching to good use immediately. Whether you are male or female, whether you are ordained as a monk or nun, or not; 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 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 here 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 interbeing that we are, **this** multidimensional field of being and knowing is the direct path . . . *namely the four foundations of mindfulness.*



**direct path** *ekāyāna magga* – sometimes translated the one way, the only way, the sole way, the path that goes only one way – i.e. to Nibbāna  
*eka* => one; *yāna* => vehicle; *magga* => path

In some Tibetan teachings, *māgga* or 'path' is 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." – [p 37 Brunnholz, *Gone Beyond*, 2010]

**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 amounts of value judgement. To take it right out of these realms and 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; a tremendous degree of awakesness and 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.

### **pain and grief**

*dukkhadomanassa*, => an unpleasant state of mind and body

*dukkha* => PTS, [from *du* - bad and *kha* - space]; unpleasant, painful, causing misery; discomfort, suffering, ill, trouble, unsatisfactoriness. The term *dukkha* includes all manifest and latent 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; mental pain as opposed to physical pain, (*dukkha*)

Walshe translates *dukkhadomanassa* as pain and sadness



The Sanskrit term *duḥkha* [*dukkha* in Pali] is thought to derive from *dus* + *kha*. 'Dus' was a syllable used to invoke a sense of something bad or corrupted. 'Kha' referred to: a 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, *duḥkha* (Skt) or *dukkha* (Pali) 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 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 interbeingness 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 saying 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 want peace? Have you become tired of the suffering, the madness of a human world that dedicates 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.*

### **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 is not just referring to 'sitting' in one place but suggests that these meditations 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'. (The same formula is applied to feelings, states of mind and phenomena.) Essentially it is emphasising that one examines the body while dwelling in direct experience of the body rather than just thinking about it in a theoretical way as if one was a bystander. This is a visceral/tactile rather than intellectual approach. 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 be, but through experientially knowing and understanding how the myriad forms of ones' embodiment are arising and passing away right in this very moment of contemplating. 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.



Beyond simply being a collection of meditation instructions on mindfulness, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutra encourages an active life of 'sensitive, engaged, experiential, exploration-unfolding'. From an evolutionary perspective, you could say we were born to do this. Our ongoing experience is, and has always been, 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. You are 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 outside 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 in a dance of continual transformation. You're not composed of fundamentally separate bits with gaps between the bits. There are no 'gaps' between these things. The ongoing 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 explore this unfolding mystery.



**ardent**, i.e. with a 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 this is referring to the various expressions and flavours of desire together with the

wide spectrum of ambiguity and worry that so often colour our interactions with others.

Rephrasing the passage:

*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; over-all understandings or paradigms that *vasana* or perfume our entire field of experience – this field of body, feelings, mind and mind-objects interweaving as a seamless whole.

These four aspects or foundations: *kāya*, *vedanā*, *citta* and *dharma*, together comprise our lived experience and are continuously, mutually shaping and influencing each other. 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 our curiosity/interest about, and attentiveness to, this rich holomovement of life-unfolding that we are.

When we settle into mindfulness, we open to a continuously present(ing) now – an integrated field of experience made up of these four inter-weavings. Contemplating 'the body' (*kāya*), really means, I am contemplating the interbeingness of all four with emphasis or particular focus on body or form. The same can be applied to the other three. To intentionally cultivate our skills of clarity and understanding about the whole, about holistic flowing experience, we are encouraged to make each of these four the centre of our contemplative study for a time. Then with increased mastery and deepening familiarity, the four merge; a living understanding of being a life of unfolding wholeness.



## CONTEMPLATION OF THE BODY or AWARENESS OF THE BODY

### *Kāyānupassanā*

#### 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 tells us where 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 are not 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, and everyone ultimately energised by transformed sunlight; a vast interbeing 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 interbeingness of everything. This forest of knowing, or forest of mind, is a rich ecology of inter-responsive phenomena with 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 a city jungle, 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 here, at 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 but as a single 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 being a place that has 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 bringing peace to 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. 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 'spacious openness of interbeing' – 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

Having taken up a posture that supports a deep experiential investigation of the 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.

The rest of the section introduces the meditation on the body through investigating the process of breathing, *Ānāpānasati*.<sup>5</sup> 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 just 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/sense the textures and sensations of rhythmic physical movements that functioning all together, we call '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 both the inhalation and the 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 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– 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 practice 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.)

<sup>5</sup> Complete descriptions of 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*.

(4) increasing absorption, (less sense of separation between you the meditator and, in this case, the breathing, the object of meditation) (5) The rate of breathing will gradually slow down and settle.

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 directs us towards insight (*vipassana*). Today, many people are familiar with the term 'insight meditation' which they too often understand to be a practice of looking for, or trying to grasp, a special object or knowledge called an 'insight', that they could somehow possess, describe and share with others. In Satipaṭṭhāna, vipassana, essentially means looking deeply and discerningly into what is presently arising. You could think of 'in-sight' as the activity of 'sighting into', insight as process – a verb. Looking/experiencing more deeply into any object or phenomenon, will inevitably reveal that phenomenon/object to be composed of an inter-dependent relating of countless factors, including factors supporting our own perception and consciousness.

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

It is not necessary to work with every aspect of the paragraph at any one time. The text suggests you can 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-leveled experiential understanding of what is taking place.

### **Internally, Externally and Both:**

Most commentaries explain that to contemplate the body internally is to contemplate one's own body and 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 perhaps leaves out some of the more subtle levels of meditation experience, that are being pointed out here.

*Ajjhatta* is the word being translated as internally. => PTS, that which is personal, subjective, arises within (in contrast to anything outside, objective, or impersonal), interior, personal, inwardly.

To contemplate the body, or embodiment, 'internally' means to feel, experience or sense oneself as one's body. This is a subjective and personal experience, as if from the inside. One might describe it as being the body, rather than detachedly observing it, or 'being' the breathing rather than merely watching it from the position of a bystander.

*Bahiddhā*, is the word being translated as externally. => 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 paradox or contradiction.

Internally and externally could also be compared 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 is a 1st 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 3rd person perspective of life. She is. He is. It is. Extravert has an exterior feel. Everything seems external and 'out there'. We can even externalize our own processes and say things like; my thoughts, my stomach, and my feelings, as if they were somehow exterior to 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'. Internally and externally, is recognising the fact that a meditator can and will experience from different viewing points. If you look into your own experience you might realize 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 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."

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

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

*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, by societies, by thoughts and dreams.*

*It is moulded by sun and gravity and the whole of the ecosphere.*

*It is an interbeing of all these processes from micro to macro,*

*Wondrous, transient*

*May it teach me wisdom. (from Daily Puja – Wangapeka Books, and Green Dharma Treasury)*



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 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 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 relationships 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 seeing/understanding of particular forms or units, arising from this dancing non-abidingness. With deep pervasive looking, the world dissolves into unpindownable 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 and 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. 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, analysing 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', p76)



### **Bare Attention**

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

If the attention is not sufficiently engaged by the preceding themes of internal and external or the arising and passing away factors, then one can simply focus on the fact that: "there is a body" or "this is a body", to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness; in other words one abides in and as this just-as-it-is awareness without any elaboration or wandering.

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 interdependent. 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 p 45 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 taking the practice into 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.

The body 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 interbeing 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. You need to be able to see the ordinary – i.e. walking, standing and so forth – as extraordinary. Because the ordinary is so habitual and familiar, a lot of awake, sensitive, attention 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.*

### 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 life. 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 helps 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 pleurably 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 interbeingness of the activity. If you look deeply, whatever you're involved with will reveal itself to be an extraordinary inter-dancing of myriad levels of being. As your mindfulness practice matures, these two aspects (looking with eyes of interbeing 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 is traditionally referred to as the meditation on the foulness or repulsiveness of the body. Originally it was for counteracting 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 well educated, modern people often relate to their body in a very superficial way, as if it was only 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 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. p170 - 177. Here, the description of this meditation is very extensive. The essential method involves reciting the names of 32 parts of the body again and again to help the mind become one-pointedly focussed in awareness on these parts. One begins with what is 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 a lot of aversion, anger, hatred, and fear energy shaping their lives. They are frequently quite out of contact with their bodies and seem to spend much of their time 'in their heads'. This meditation in its classical form, emphasising foulness and repulsiveness, often doesn't help people who are coming from these backgrounds. For deep healing, people need to get into wholesome contact with the wondrous miracle which is their body. They need to cultivate lovingkindness, not a sense of foulness and repulsion. There is already too much of that in their being. With scientific medical knowledge and tools, 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. (from Daily Puja, Wangapeka Books)*

The classical form of meditating on the 32 parts of the body (outlined in 'The Visuddhimagga') is potentially a very wonderful and 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 *Natural Awakening* can

be very fruitful ways of working. Also, Feldenkrais, 'Awareness Through Movement' work 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.



When meditating on the parts, or the 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*<sup>6</sup> 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 multidimensional 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, how we lean on each other and support each other, how we gestate and nourish each other. We are all 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 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*

<sup>6</sup> *whakapapa* => Maori => genealogy, cultural identity, family tree

*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 XI, 27 – 117 One begins by recognising the attributes of the four elements and then applying this way of viewing to each of the 32 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 *puṭhu* 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

a – extension; dimension, thickness etc.

b – density; hardness, softness

These are the two relative conditions of this element.

**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. Its 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."

In the traditional meditation you could think of the elements as being inner qualities that together give shape and form to anything. These explorations require a very focussed and subtly discerning attentiveness otherwise they can drift into the realm of mere philosophical thinking and speculation.

Although it was 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 were 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 interbeing 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 to be 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. We are literally a weaving of sunlight, earth, water and air and the elements of these, the entire periodic table, have all been born in 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 the arising and vanishing factors it is common to begin by viewing the object or activity you are meditating on as a dancing of interdependent objects and activities; a whole lot of objects collaborating with each other to make a vibrant whole. This is probably the most common initial experience of interbeingness. With deepening contemplation however, we might begin to see the situation differently. Rather than an

interdependent weaving of separate objects, we may have moments of seeing it as a collaborative communion of sensitive, feeling, subjects. Contemplation comes alive when it feels juicy and personal – living relationships in action. The whole field of experience feels expansive and alive. By comparison, it contracts into mere mechanical technique when our analysis of arising and vanishing is detached and piecemeal with little sense of being in sensitive relationship with another being.



#### 6 - 14. 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.'*

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.*



See Appendix D, for further suggestions from the perspective of contemplative science, for exploring Kāyānupassanā.



## CONTEMPLATION OF FEELING

### *Vedanānupassanā*

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

i.e. "to weigh it up"

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*. (*See appendix 'C' for further comments on vedanā.*)

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. 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**

*āmisa* => PTS, *sa* + *āmisa*, *sa* = with; *āmisa* => 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

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

Traditionally, worldly feelings are described as 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 (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 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 discovering the truth of impermanence – *anicca*, suffering – *dukkha*, and non-abidingness – *anattā*, arising through any of the six sense doors. There is grief when experiencing the *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* through any of the six sense doors and then longing for liberation. The grief is actually in the longing. There is equanimity on seeing that all sense objects are impermanent; 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.*

## CONTEMPLATION OF MIND

### *Cittānupassanā*

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.*

**Citta** => PTS, from *cit, cinteti*, to think, perceive, appear.

=> PTS, the heart (psychologically) i.e. the centre and focus of man's emotional nature as well as that intellectual element which inheres in and accompanies its manifestations. In this way, citta denotes both the agent and that which is enacted.

=> PTS, 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 have not the heart to do it; blessed are the pure at heart; all of which emphasise the emotional and cognitive side of "thought" more than its mental and rational side. Citta may therefore be rendered by intention, impulse, design, mood, disposition, state of mind, reaction to impressions.

Citta is difficult to translate in one word while preserving its full meaning. The translation we have 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'. The state of mind roughly corresponds to what people consider their emotional state. Research into brain damaged people has shown that intellect without emotional content often loses its moral or value component. That's why the PTS dictionary speaks of "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 reflecting our current intention, mood, and disposition.

Imagine that you had a collection of different colour tinted sunglasses. 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. 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 and helps shape the sense of meaning arising in any given situation.

The text gives only a very generalized 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, hate 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 absorption through the development of absorption 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 (*kāmavacara*) 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*)<sup>7</sup>. 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 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.*

<sup>7</sup> There are four *arūpa jhānas*: boundless space, boundless light or consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception

When you are exploring *cittānupassanā*, you begin to note the arising of mental states, or emotional states. You explore what factors contribute to their arising and what factors contribute to their passing. You investigate the entire interbeingness of arising mind states; seeing and knowing that they are transient, and that they arise dependent on many different factors. Your body and feeling function are some of these factors, along with outer circumstances and situations. Through dwelling in a continuum of awareness of the arising and passing of states of mind, you will experience a greater and greater freedom from being blindly caught up in reaction, and unconsciously projecting onto the object you are involved with.

## CONTEMPLATION OF MIND-OBJECTS

### *Dhammānupassanā*

*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 psycho-physical 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 Suttas. That which the Buddha preached, the Dhamma was the order of law of the universe, immanent, eternal, uncreated, not as interpreted by him only, 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 logicality i.e. natural law.

*Dhamma* in Pali is the same as Skt. *dharma*. This fourth foundation of mindfulness which has been translated here as awareness of 'mind-objects' could be thought of as awareness of phenomena. In a sense, anything that is not covered by *kāya*, *vedanā* and *citta* would come in this category. In this sutta however, *dhammānupassanā* particularly refers to the dharmas of awakening, *buddhadhamma*.

For most beings beginning to explore meditation, the difficulties or negativities are more obvious and more demanding; more in-your-face than the positive dharmas. For this reason the section on *dhammānupassanā* begins with an investigation of the five gross 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 *dhammānupassanā*, one comes to know directly the Four Noble Truths, the culmination of the path.



*Dhammānupassanā* could be considered from a slightly different angle. In this section, dharmas could be thought of as matrices or mandalas of being through which we understand the world of our experience. Each section points out 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 two sections of *dhammānupassanā* are somewhat about 'me' as something separate from the environment. The world of my difficulties and struggles. 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.



#### 1. 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 one's daily life. 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 abandon a hindrance, – essentially through friendly non-clinging awareness. 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 51.)

The five hindrances are often taught as if they were five 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 happening. A yearning or reaching out takes place through one or more of the six sense doors. We want to see, or taste or touch or know. 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 vital energy 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. For a much more detailed description of the cycle of the five hindrances along with some hints at how to dissolve them; see (*Breathing: The Natural Way to Meditate* – p 56).

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.

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 of gone astray. Hence the sense that ill-will is an expression of energy fields 'gone astray'.

3. *thīna-middha* => sloth and torpor; essentially a state of tiredness, dullness, 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 called *citta gellāññam*, sickness of mind, depression and is the opposite of *cittakammaññatā* 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*, 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 in 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.*

## 2. 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.'*

***Pañc'upādānakhandha*** => five aggregates of clinging

*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. They are called 'aggregates of clinging' because each one can be a focus for clinging to the 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.

***Rūpa*** => form, material form This includes the physical body with its sense faculties as well as external material objects. *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 28 species of *rūpa* dealt with in terms of how they arise, persist and perish.

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

In the texts 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.

T-Abd notes – *Rūpa* actually means, that which changes its colour due to elemental shifts. All form perceived by mind has 28 textures. *Rūpa* is that which manifests itself through

different colours *vaṇṇā*, wavelengths, 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*. Rūpa perception 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.

*Vedanā* => feeling/evaluation (See p 36.)

*Sañña* => perception, PTS, from *saṃ* (together, with, containing) + *jñā* (knowing, recognising, having insight)

*sañña* => PTS, 1. sense, consciousness, perception, being the third khandha 2. sense, perception, 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.

*Saṅkhāra* => PTS, from *saṃ* (together) + *kr* (to work); a related word is *sankhata* => put together, compound; 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.

PTS says of *saṅkāra*: "One of the most difficult terms in Buddhist metaphysics, in which the blending of the subjective-objective view of the world and of happening, 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. *Saṅkhāra* tend to take on the implication of synergies, of purposive intellection; a purposive aspiring state of mind to induce a specific rebirth."

In a simple way, *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 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 *sankhāras* 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 50 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	- phassa
Volition	- cetana
One-pointedness	- ekaggatā
Vital energy	- jvitindriyaṃ
Attention	- manasikāra

*(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 so there are only 50 *cetasika* listed in the category of *saṅkhāra*.)*

#### **Variables - *Pakiṇṇakā***

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

#### **Unwholesome - *Akusala***

Delusion	- moha
Shamelessness	- ahirikaṃ
Fearlessness	- anottappaṃ
Restlessness	- uddhaccaṃ
Desire-clinging	- lobha
View	- diṭṭhi
Conceit	- māna
Hatred	- dosa
Envy	- issā
Avarice	- macchariyaṃ
Worry	- kukkuccaṃ
Energyless-mind	- thunaṃ

Energyless-body - middham  
Sceptical doubt - vicikicchā

### **Common to the Beautiful - Sobhanasādhāraṇa**

Confidence - saddhā  
Mindfulness - sati  
Moral shame - hiri  
Moral caution - ottappaṃ  
Generosity - alobha  
Lovingkindness - adosa  
Equanimity - tatramajjhataṭṭā

Tranquillity of (mental) body - kāyapassaddhi  
Tranquillity of mind (citta) - cittapassadhi  
Lightness of (mental) body - kāyalahutā,  
Lightness of mind - cittalahutā  
Pliancy of body - kāyamudutā  
Pliancy of mind - cittamudutā  
Adaptability of body - kāyakammaññatā  
Adaptability of mind - cittakammaññatā  
Proficiency of body - kāyapaguññatā  
Proficiency of mind - cittapaguññatā  
Straightforwardness of body - kāyajjukatā  
Straightforwardness of mind - cittajjukatā

### **Abstinences - Viratiyo**

Right Speech - sammāvāca  
Right Action - sammākammanto  
Right Livelihood - sammā-ājīvo

### **Illimitable - Appamañña**

1 Compassion - karuṇā  
2 Sympathetic Joy - muditā

**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 it 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.*

As part of 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.

### 3. 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 . . . He understands the nose, he understands odours . . . He understands the tongue, he understands flavours . . . He understands the body, he understands tangibles . . . 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 *āyatana* are sometimes referred to as the twelve sense spheres *dvādasāyatana*.

**āyatana** => PTS, sphere of perception or sense in general, object of thought, sense organ and object. The six bases refer to the six senses and their six objects hence 'twelve'. The mind is considered the sixth sense which has concepts, feelings, memories and so forth as its objects.

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

<i>kāmarāga</i>	attachment to sensuality <i>kāmaovacara</i>
<i>rūparāga</i>	attachment to the realm of form <i>rupāvacara</i>
<i>ārūparāga</i>	attachment to the formless realms <i>ārūpavacara</i>
<i>paṭigha</i>	hatred
<i>māna</i>	conceit
<i>diṭṭhi</i>	partial view
<i>silabbataparāmāssa</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.

**Kāmavacara** is the realm of the five senses.

**Rūpavacara** is the realm of 'fine material form'. This refers to the subtle levels of meditative absorption on form.

**Ārūpavacara** 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 the path.

### Stage of Path

*Sotāpanna* 'Stream entry'

### Fetters Dropping 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.

3. *silabbataparāmāssa*, the belief that blind adherence to rule and ritual and to mere good works will be sufficient to bring awakening.

*Sakadāgāmi* 'Once returner'

halving the fetters of *kāmarāga* (attachment to the realm of sensing) and *paṭigha* (hatred)

*Anāgāmi* 'Non returner'

elimination of *kāmarāga* and *paṭigha*

*Arahat* 'Fully purified'

elimination of *Rūparāga*, *arūparāga*, *māna*, *uddhacca* and *avijjā*

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.*

#### 4. 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.*

*There being the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor in him . . . There being the energy enlightenment factor in him . . . There being the rapture enlightenment factor in him . . . There being the tranquillity enlightenment factor*

*in him . . . There being the concentration enlightenment factor in him . . . There being the equanimity enlightenment factor in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is the equanimity enlightenment factor in me'; or there being no equanimity enlightenment factor in him, he understands: 'There is no equanimity enlightenment factor in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen equanimity enlightenment factor, and how the arisen equanimity enlightenment factor comes to fulfilment by development.*

**Sattasambojjhaṅga;** *satta* seven + *sam* good, complete + *bodhi* enlightenment + *anga* factors  
These seven factors will all be present and harmoniously functioning together in a well integrated, fully matured human being. They reach their fullest flowering of expression in what is called the state of liberation or 'enlightenment'. Number one is considered to be neutral. Numbers two, three and four are considered to be active. Five, six and seven are considered to be passive.

1. **Mindfulness** *satisambojjhaṅgo* (see p 9 and appendices A and C)

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



The Buddha constantly urged his followers to cultivate *sati*. Today, *sati* is most commonly translated into English as 'mindfulness'. Given the fact that western educated people tend to see 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 intended when he used the word 'sati'.

As recently as the 1950s, the idea of psychosomatic was a radical and challenging concept. Bodies were quite separate from minds. If you were physically ill you would go to a medical doctor but if you were mentally ill you would visit a psychiatrist. Today it is increasingly 'mainstream' to assume your physical functioning intimately affects your mind and mental processes, while simultaneously your mental functioning is affecting your physiology. Many people are comfortable with the compounded idea of 'body/mind' and yet those same people can still make a fundamental distinction between the brain and the body. It's common to speak of consciousness occurring through brain functioning as if the body serves merely as a support to keep the brain alive and to walk it around. With only a little investigation it becomes obvious that the functioning of the brain is utterly embedded in the functioning of the body and vice-versa. To remedy this artificial split and to remind ourselves of the innate unity of our organism, perhaps it would help to expand 'body/mind' to 'body/brain/mind'. But even this is not inclusive enough because of the tendency to think

of ourselves as single autonomous units. I feel like a 'me' – not a 'we'. And yet revelations about the micro-biome are demonstrating that it would be more accurate to think of ourselves as complex evolving ecosystems. Perhaps it is time to expand the concept of body/brain/mind and begin to think of ourselves as body/brain/mind/communities!

So here is the question. 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 a richer understanding of *sati*. The acronym is EMAP. It stands for embodied/mindfulness/awareness/in-placeness.

*Sati* (mindfulness) always arises in a particular living body. At the same time, the integrated functioning of that body/brain/mind/community determines the arising richness and expression of *sati*. Mindfulness doesn't float around in space. It is always an expression of embodiment. To remind us of this we have the first letter 'E' – embodied.

*Sati* involves an aspect of conscious attentiveness. One chooses to be mindful of something. For example, I am being mindful of my breathing. The body/brain/mind/community that is me is actively and consciously engaged in cultivating more and more refined powers of attentiveness and discrimination, using breathing as a support. To remind us of the wilful, choiceful, directed, aspect of *sati* we now have 'EM' – embodied/mindfulness.

Considering the inconceivable sum total 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. 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, *sati* could be rendered 'EMA' – embodied/mindfulness/awareness.

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



## 2. Investigation of dhamma *dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo*

*vicaya* => PTS, (from *vi* + *ci* to think) search, investigation, examination:

*dhammavicaya* => investigation of dhamma insight, direct 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 in your being.

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 degree 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 go beyond mere verbal question. It needs to sink into the bones of your being so that your very existence is an expression of inquiry in action. It 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."*  
(from Daily Puja Wangapeka Books)

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. methodical.

*vi* => is a prefix denoting expansion, intensification or thorough i.e. completely

*vīra* => manly, mighty heroic

*virīya* => 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 unwholesome 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 un-arisen 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* is 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 thrill or 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.

1. *Kuddaka Pīti* – slight joy causing the flesh to creep

2. *Khaṇika Pīti* – instantaneous joy, like a flash of lightning
3. *Okkantika Pīti* – floods of joy, like waves on a beach
4. *Ubbega Pīti* – transporting joy, floating like a dandelion seed in space
5. *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 a passive factor, as it can sometimes feel like a great effort to throw your attention onto 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; con-CEN-tration in other words *con* (with) *centrate* (centre). We are concentrated when we are effortlessly centred in whatever we are doing or experiencing; not dispersed, not scattered, not having our attention darting all over the lot. Well developed concentration is inevitably 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 or 'as it really is'. Equanimity or true seeing is a balanced state of mind that embraces all opposite pairs. It is the 'middle-way' between subject and object; a completely balanced state of mind, not grasping after this or that. Without taking sides there is a continuum of calm clear seeing discernment. *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 a situation.

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.*

## 5. 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 of the origin of suffering
3. *Dukkhanirodha ariyasaccaṃ* – the noble truth of the cessation of suffering
4. *Dukkhanirodhagāminīpatipadā ariyasaccaṃ* – the noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering

The term 'four noble truths' is sometimes translated as four holy truths or four realities of the noble ones or paraphrasing, four realities faced by courageous contemplative investigators of life. Entering the first reality involves 'stopping'. It requires us to stop running away from suffering, stop reacting to it or avoiding it and instead we willingly taste it fully with deepening understanding. Engaging 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 act of investigating with openness and interest is a positive non-suffering state of mind and so this second truth gradually leads to a recognition/experience of the third reality – the cessation of suffering. Cultivating the third noble truth involves acclimatizing to, or familiarizing with, a state of spacious, open, calm, clear, present, wide open, accepting awareness, resting in itself. 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 *Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta* (the longer version of the *Satipatṭhāna* 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.

Below is a translation from the *Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta* 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** => 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.*

**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 – extend life. Essentially, this is craving for 'more'.

**craving for non-existence** *vibhāvaṇaṇhā* => T-Abd-notes; craving for not being, (*ārūpa*). This is security oriented. It betrays a kind of narcissism, conceit (belief that one has something) and defence (wanting to protect the wealth one thinks one can lose.)

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. Spontaneity is the name of their game and they value space and a sense of freedom. In extreme cases they can be very narcissistic.

*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.*

**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 to an object.

**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 the details of the object without departing from the object. In this way it is sustained application and perhaps pondering, though 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, and vice-versa. Peace or *nibbāna* comes with the deep knowing of 'all inclusive completeness'; the experiential knowing that this moment is not lacking in any way, that it is a dynamic interbeing of everyone and everything. Peace is the fading away of craving, *taṇhā*. *Taṇhā* is rooted in ignorance, *avijjā*. 'A' at the beginning of a Pali or Sanskrit word indicates negation. *Vijjā* denotes seeing so *avijjā* means not seeing or not understanding. Ignorance of, or not seeing/understanding the interdependent nature of everything, 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."<sup>8</sup> In other words, in the experiential knowing of interdependence, 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 inherently complete. It's not going anywhere. It rests in itself. With this understanding, the cessation of suffering becomes realizable in any situation without necessarily changing a thing. It is closer than hands and feet. All that's needed is a profound degree of 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 Mahamudra/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 self-liberates. No one else needs 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.*" Each of the following pleasurable or agreeable dharmas are like pictures drawn in water. If you look into them with careful discernment, you will see that they spontaneously vanish as soon as they appear.

<sup>8</sup> *Mūlamadhyamakakārika* of Nāgārjuna translated by David Kalupahana p 168

*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-atthangika-magga*

*magga* => avenue, path, way

*atthangika* => eight

1 Right View	<i>sammā-ditṭhi</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-ditṭhi*

*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.*

Translating *sammā* as 'right' in the context of the Eightfold Noble Path 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.

As Namgyal Rinpoché often pointed out, *sammā* derives from *sam* which has the sense of 'complete' or 'total' as in the English phrases, 'doing your sums', or 'summing up'. (see *Body, Speech and Mind*, Bodhi Publishing, p29.) *Ditṭhi* means view, though when used alone it usually implies partial view. As part of the eight fold noble path, it would be more helpful to think of *ditṭhi* as a verb, the activity of viewing, rather than as a noun, a static view. Instead of 'right view' as opposed to 'wrong view', *sammā-ditṭhi* points to complete, or total, or thorough, or all embracing, viewing – seeing/understanding all contributing aspects of an arising rather than falling into bias based on conditioned hopes, fears and fantasies. A positive expression of this would be total lovingkindness; completely engaged, responsive, presence – however it is appearing.

Another way of contemplating *sammā* that can be applied to each section of the Eightfold Noble Path is suggested by the following question. What is it that is doing the viewing, doing the understanding or doing the knowing? Since everything is interdependent with everything else, (ultimately 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 thinking. Totality is speaking. Totality is acting, and so forth. Every moment of experience reveals itself to be spacious, open and fundamentally un-pin-downable. Contemplating '*sammā*' in these different ways, reveals the Eightfold Noble Path as a means for directly realising *śūnyatā*; the heart understanding of Mahamudra.

*śūnyatā* => 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, 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 and descriptive phrase might be 'the spacious openness of interbeing'. If you look deeply and discerningly into anything you will see that it is composed of a vast array of transient factors. Everything reveals itself to be spacious and open. On one hand it is there, it appears; on the other hand when we examine it analytically, it vanishes into a matrix of contributing factors.

## 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 thinking. Total thinking/intending, complete thinking/intending. One might even consider 'total aspiration' or totality aspiring – the whole of one's mental processes leaning in the direction of awakening. This is the essence of Bodhicitta. I'm reminded of a prayer in the Meditation of Guru Rinpoché:

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

May the Dharmakaya bring blessings.

One's thoughts are in tune with every situation (*sammā-sankappa*)

May the Sambhogakaya bring blessings.

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

May the Nirmanakaya 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 practice than simply avoiding certain activities.

1. *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.*
2. *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.*
3. *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.*
4. *I will train myself to listen deeply and speak truthfully;  
to commune with others in a skilful and compassionate manner.*

5. *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 and it was understood that their livelihood was already one of living lightly on the earth; living with minimal needs and appetites and avoiding the harming of others. For a lay person living in today's very busy, consumption driven, globalized society, there probably needs to be a bit more guidance.

Complete or total livelihood: a livelihood or way of earning a living that supports all of life. It is complete or total in the sense that it is a way 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 involves living in a way that values and supports the entire living matrix that is this planet.

Wrong livelihood is any form of livelihood that disrupts life, causing harm to oneself or others. 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.55) It is often taught separately as a complete path of practice in itself 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 is a recapitulation of the entire Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

## 8. Right Concentration *sammā-samādhi*

*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.*

This section speaks of total concentration in terms of the factors of absorption or *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 its widest sense *jhāna* means absorption including even very momentary experiences of one-pointedness.

*Jhānas* are often seen by inexperienced meditators as exotic states of concentration where there are no thoughts and no mental activity. This is a rather static view. It would probably be more helpful to think of *jhānas* in terms of increasing degrees of peace. When the mind is well concentrated, when it is wholly absorbed to a point where there is no sense of separation between the subject and object, in this moment of absorption, the five hindrances, will not be active. If you examine this peaceful mind, you will find five main positive factors: *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha* and *ekaggatā* or *upekkhā*.

The stages of jhāna are differentiated by the presence of these factors. In the first jhāna all five are present. The mind is focussed and investigating or scanning the object. There is some degree of pīti. Sukha, the sense of mental well being is present and there is an overarching presence of equanimity or oneness. As the meditator acclimatizes to this peaceful, yet engaged state, the vitakka and vicāra can begin to feel a bit gross and unnecessary and they begin to drop away. Without needing to emphasise vitakka or vicāra, the mind, goes quickly to 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 just upekkhā.

Another way of understanding the stages of jhāna is as a process of intensifying absorption. Deepening *vitakka* (initial thought or mere thought) leads to *vicāra* (reflection, scanning, sometimes thinking with rich associating). As this deepens there is increasing *pīti* (full body involvement; embodied knowing) which, becoming more and more subtle, moves one towards *sukha* (pleasure of approaching oneness; softening of distinction of self/other, subject/object). With further intensification, one's experience relaxes into complete *ekaggatā* or *upekkhā* (oneness/equanimity; confidence/trust/knowing that it takes a whole universe to give rise to this moment). Moving from vitakka to ekaggata is to move in a direction of enriched knowing; enriched interbeingness 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. A very important state to develop 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 state where one has almost entered into a state of complete absorption but there is still a sense of being the meditator meditating on an object. However 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.



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. However, we might have the courage to explore the states of suffering that arise in the course of our lives rather than running from them. We might meet them with wide open curiosity and interest instead of being afraid of them, trying to ignore them, and generally becoming lost in all the other common reactions of irritation, anger, and avoidance coupled with feelings of victimization and helplessness. This gentle grappling with suffering will gradually lead to a flowering of many qualities such as patience, love, forgiveness,

understanding, discrimination, compassion, and empathy. In this way the experience of suffering can ennoble 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 actual experience, qualities such as openness, presence, awakeness, and responsiveness — a sense of profound unavoidable engagement in the creative weaving that is the 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 is the second great ennobling of our being.

Our active investigation of the first two noble truths will support a deepening sense of engagement and profound connectedness. Becoming more familiar with this, our capacity for empathy and appreciative understanding increasingly nourishes 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 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 in order to deepen and enrich our own living experience and, it gives us knowledge to be able to meaningfully help 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 rather bare-bones expression was elaborated into the vast, universal vision you find in Chapter 8 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.



## Returning to 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 preserve the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta; if we then 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 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 to realize 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, I hope these notes will enrich your contemplations.

with best 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.

*sarvamaṅgalam*

## Appendices:

### Appendix – A

A FRESH APPROACH TO MIND AND MINDFULNESS.

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 respect 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.  
In mindfulness we don't hurt this object in the act  
of touching it. In other words,  
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 and then,  
a sixteen year old olympic gymnast poised on the balance beam,  
vibrantly alert and focussing.

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

Mindfulness/carefulness/caring, 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.

To cultivate mindfulness is  
to consciously grow,  
maturing in the direction of  
a smooth functional integration of  
embodied, languaging, integrative experience.  
An opposite direction leads towards frustration,  
pain, agitation, fragmentation and suspicion.

Mindfulness arises in this inter-dancing.  
Body, speech and mind,  
the entire field of interbeing/interknowing,  
all events and meanings:  
self and other,  
individual and groups,  
universes of intelligence unfolding.

What mystery  
this body — physically growing into an increased capacity for  
delicacy, harmony, grace, flexibility, and co-ordination.

What mystery  
this speech — skilfully growing in the direction of,  
kind, uplifting, supportive and inspiring communication.

What mystery  
this mind — a field of knowing; growing towards attentive inclusiveness,  
translucency and multi-leveled acceptance/understanding.

This minding mindful mind is  
the universe in process.  
Experience is not a subjective representation.  
It is not a personal re-presentation of some mysterious otherness.  
It is a presentation – always present,  
a mutually transforming  
interaction of mingling 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,  
engages with the dynamic unfolding of so called 'other' in  
this combined whirling of ever-fresh transformation  
which is your knowing now.

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

Fully flowered mindfulness is a perfume  
that flavours everything,  
a quality of being  
that transforms everything – even mundane ordinary living;  
this satipaṭṭhāna  
this setting up of mindfulness,  
an always available profound way  
of blessing  
and of peace.

Mindfulness is the flavour of a healthy mind 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 craftsman  
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 – B

### 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 – 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.*

The phrase "awareness of body" most commonly invokes a sense of intently investigating one's body or one's experience of embodiment. We could however understand it in quite a different way. If I were to speak of the 'activity of Tarchin' we might take this to mean the activity or activities that compose Tarchin, or the activity that belongs to Tarchin, or the activity that Tarchin does. Now, consider the myriad moments of awareness/responsiveness that collectively weave together, giving rise to a living body/form/shape in action. This multi-levelled 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 responsiveness that together are your body in the act of living. How do these continuously interweaving responsive knowings: sub-atomic, atomic, molecular, cellular, metabolic, social, interspecies, 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. Equating awareness and responsiveness, we could identify many dimensions of awareness. Electrons and protons respond to each other's presence in the process of bringing forth an atom. This might be called a type of 'sub-atomic' or 'quantum' awareness. Atoms respond to other atoms in the process of forming molecules. We could think of this as 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 of 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, and 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 and good functioning and an 'aversion' to what threatens that. What we call liking, disliking and being neutral, are rooted in our biological functioning 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 as states of mind and with *dhammānupassanā* we explore the vast field or community of awareness/responsiveness in action that gives rise to the complex phenomena of living in relation with others.

*Kāya*: How does this ongoing 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 flavours 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 identifiable global understandings and involvements?

Putting this all together – this precious teaching of Satipaṭṭhāna – 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

AN OUTLINE OF CONTEMPLATIVE ENQUIRY FOR ENTERING THE HOLOVERSE

### Preparation

- physical exercise to make you feel energized and loose
- smiling, breathing present, settle an EMAP of easeful presence
- in this calm clear state, begin to explore

1) - Visualize the Anatomical Body

- a gross detail
- b finer detail
- c cells
- d molecules
- e atoms
- f quanta
- g altogether

2) - Visualize the body as a process within itself

- circulation
- respiration
- digestion
- metabolism (catabolism - anabolism)
- growth
- maintenance
- decay

With each of these in (2) apply 1a to g. Each step carries awareness of previous steps or at least the feelings of the awareness of the previous steps.

3) - Body process relating to the outer

Apply the foregoing (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) - Body as a process in time

See the body as it was as an egg through fertilization, => 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 (1) (2) and (3) to this.

(5) – Put 1, 2, 3, and 4, all together and see the now-body ('nobody') as a processing of time/space/known unfolding at multiple levels

(6) - Go through the whole process in terms of feelings

(7) - Go through the whole process in terms of Mind and Thought

(8) - Totality

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