

Satipaṭṭhāna - the direct path to *Nibbāna*

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*Jhāyatha, mā pamādattha,
mā pacchā vip̐paṭisārino ahuvattha!*

Meditate, don't be negligent,
or else you will regret it later!

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3) Introduction

In the present work, which is the outcome of my Ph.D. research at the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka, I will explore the ‘direct path’ of *satipaṭṭhāna* according to its exposition in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, and set within its early Buddhist canonical and philosophical context. My major aim is to bring out the original instructions of the Buddha, as found in the discourses recorded in the four main *Nikāyas*.¹ The *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries will be considered only in a secondary manner.²

To ensure that my exploration has practical relevance, I have also consulted a selection of modern meditation manuals and related publications. The nature of this selection has been mainly a matter of availability, yet I hope to have included a fairly representative number of meditation teachers. Apart from these, I have also relied on various academic monographs and articles on early Buddhism in order to illustrate the philosophical framework and historical context within which the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is to be understood. These provide the background information for understanding particular passages or expressions in the discourse.

In order to maintain textual flow and readability, I have kept the main body of the text as free as possible from direct quotations and tangential observations. Instead, I have made extensive use of footnotes, which provide references of interest, quotations from *Pāli* sources, and discussions of additional information. The less scholarly inclined reader may prefer to focus on the body of the text during a first reading, and only during a second reading turn to the information in the footnotes.

My exposition follows the sequence of the passages in the discourse as closely as possible. At the same time, however, my treatment is not restricted to simple comments, but allows for minor digressions from the main topic in order to explore relevant points and to provide a background for better understanding the section under discussion.

The first chapter deals with general aspects and terminology in relation to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The next three chapters are concerned with the second paragraph in the discourse, the ‘definition’, especially with the implications of *sati* and the role of concentration. In chapter five I turn to a set of general instructions repeated throughout the discourse after each meditation exercise, the ‘refrain’. The subsequent chapters then treat each of the actual exercises described under contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and *dhammas*. After this survey of the individual meditation practices, I turn to the final paragraph of the discourse and to the implications of *Nibbāna*. By way of conclusion, I examine some key aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna* and evaluate its importance.

In general, my purpose in the present inquiry is less to prove and establish a particular point of view than to provide suggestions and reflections in the hope of stimulating further discussion and opening up new perspectives in regard to the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

¹ That is, the *Dīgha*, *Majjhima*, *Saṃyutta*, and *Aṅguttara Nikāyas*. In addition to these, I have also relied on the *Dhammapada*, *Udāna*, *Itivuttaka*, *Sutta Nipāta*, *Theragāthā*, and *Therīgāthā* as centrally important primary sources.

² With the term ‘*Abhidhamma*’ I refer not only to the seven standard *Abhidhamma* works (*Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, *Vibhaṅga*, *Dhātukathā*, *Puggalapaññatti*, *Kathāvatthu*, *Yamaka*, and *Paṭṭhāna*), but also the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, although this work is of a very late age. I use the expression ‘the commentaries’ as a shorthand way to refer to the *Vimuttimaggā*, the *Visuddhimaggā*, the *Aṭṭhakathās* and the *Ṭīkā*s. With this tripartite stratification of the *Pāli* materials into *Sutta*, *Abhidhamma*, and commentaries I follow to some extent the suggestions by Ñāṇāmoli: *Path of Purification*, p. XLI.

4.) Translation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*³

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 monks thus: 'Monks.' 'Venerable sir', they replied. The Blessed One said this:

direct path

"Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of *dukkha* and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realisation of *Nibbāna*, namely, the four *satipaṭṭhānas*."

definition

"What are the four?"

Here, monks, in regard to the body a monk abides contemplating the body, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to feelings he abides contemplating feelings, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to the mind he abides contemplating the mind, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas*, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world."

breathing

"And how, monks, does he in regard to the body abide contemplating the body? Here, gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut, he 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 knows: 'I breathe in long', breathing out long, he knows: 'I breathe out long.' Breathing in short, he knows: 'I breathe in short', breathing out short, he knows: 'I breathe out short.' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body', he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body.' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in calming the bodily formation', he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out calming the bodily formation.'

Just as a skilled turner or his apprentice, when making a long turn, knows: 'I make a long turn', or when making a short turn knows: 'I make a short turn' so too, breathing in long, he knows: 'I breathe in long' ..." (continue as above).

refrain

"In this way, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body internally, or he abides contemplating the body externally, or he abides contemplating the body both internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body."

postures

"Again, monks, when walking, he knows: 'I am walking'; when standing, he knows 'I am standing'; when sitting, he knows 'I am sitting'; when lying down, he knows: 'I am lying down'; or he knows accordingly however his body is disposed."

refrain

"In this way, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body internally ... externally ... both internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him to the extent

³ For this rendering of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, I have mostly adopted the translation given by Ñāṇamoli in: *Middle Length Discourses*, pp 145-155. In a few instances, however, I have ventured to introduce my own renderings, based on the understanding gained in the progress of my research. In order to facilitate referencing to particular passages of the discourse, I have inserted small boxes with short headlines above each paragraph.

necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That too is how in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body."

activities

"Again, monks, when going forward and returning he acts clearly knowing; when looking ahead and looking away he acts clearly knowing; when flexing and extending his limbs he acts clearly knowing; when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl he acts clearly knowing; when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting he acts clearly knowing; when defecating and urinating he acts clearly knowing; when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent he acts clearly knowing."

refrain

"In this way, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body internally ... externally ... both internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That too is how in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body."

anatomical parts

"Again, monks, he reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, enclosed by skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: 'in this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, bowels, mesentery, 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 he reviews this same body ..." (continue as above).

refrain

"In this way, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body internally ... externally ... both internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That too is how in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body."

elements

"Again, monks, he reviews this same body, however it is placed, however disposed, as consisting of elements thus: 'in this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.'

Just as though a skilled butcher or his apprentice had killed a cow and was seated at a crossroads with it cut up into pieces; so too he reviews this same body ..." (continue as above).

refrain

"In this way, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body internally ... externally ... both internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That too is how in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body."

corpse in decay

"Again, monks, 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 ... being devoured by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals, or various kinds of worms ... a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together with sinews ... a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together with sinews ... a skeleton without flesh and blood, held

together with sinews ... disconnected bones scattered in all directions ... bones bleached white, the colour of shells ... bones heaped up, more than a year old ... bones rotten and crumbling to dust - he 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.'⁴

refrain

"In this way, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body internally ... externally ... both internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That too is how in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body."

feelings

"And how, monks, does he in regard to feelings abide contemplating feelings?

Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel a pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unpleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel an unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a neutral feeling, he knows: 'I feel a neutral feeling.'

When feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel a worldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly pleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel an unworldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling a worldly unpleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel a worldly unpleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly unpleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel an unworldly unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a worldly neutral feeling, he knows: 'I feel a worldly neutral feeling'; when feeling an unworldly neutral feeling, he knows: 'I feel an unworldly neutral feeling.'"

refrain

"In this way, in regard to feelings he abides contemplating feelings internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in feelings. Mindfulness that 'there is feeling' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how in regard to feelings he abides contemplating feelings."

mind

"And how, monks, does he in regard to the mind abide contemplating the mind?

Here he knows a lustful mind to be 'lustful', and a mind without lust to be 'without lust'; he knows an angry mind to be 'angry', and a mind without anger to be 'without anger'; he knows a deluded mind to be 'deluded', and an undeluded mind to be 'undeluded'; he knows a contracted mind to be 'contracted', and a distracted mind to be 'distracted'; he knows a great mind to be 'great', and a narrow mind to be 'narrow'; he knows a surpassable mind to be 'surpassable', and an unsurpassable mind to be 'unsurpassable'; he knows a concentrated mind to be 'concentrated', and an unconcentrated mind to be 'unconcentrated'; he knows a liberated mind to be 'liberated', and an unliberated mind to be 'unliberated.'"

refrain

"In this way, in regard to the mind he abides contemplating the mind internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in mind. Mindfulness that 'there is a mind' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how in regard to the mind he abides contemplating the mind."

hindrances

"And how, monks, does he in regard to *dharmas* abide contemplating *dharmas*? Here in regard to *dharmas* he abides contemplating *dharmas* in terms of the five hindrances. And how does he in regard to *dharmas* abide contemplating *dharmas* in terms of the five hindrances?

⁴ In the actual discourse, each of the individual stages of the corpse in decay is followed by a full version of the 'refrain', which, for the sake of convenience, I have abbreviated here and in diagram 1.1 in the next chapter.

If sensual desire is present in him, he knows: 'there is sensual desire in me'; if sensual desire is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no sensual desire in me'; and he knows how unarisen sensual desire can arise, how arisen sensual desire can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed sensual desire can be prevented.

If aversion is present in him, he knows: 'there is aversion in me'; if aversion is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no aversion in me'; and he knows how unarisen aversion can arise, how arisen aversion can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed aversion can be prevented.

If sloth and torpor are present in him, he knows: 'there are sloth and torpor in me'; if sloth and torpor are not present in him, he knows: 'there are no sloth and torpor in me'; and he knows how unarisen sloth and torpor can arise, how arisen sloth and torpor can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed sloth and torpor can be prevented.

If restlessness and worry are present in him, he knows: 'there are restlessness and worry in me'; if restlessness and worry are not present in him, he knows: 'there are no restlessness and worry in me'; and he knows how unarisen restlessness and worry can arise, how arisen restlessness and worry can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed restlessness and worry can be prevented.

If doubt is present in him, he knows: 'there is doubt in me'; if doubt is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no doubt in me'; and he knows how unarisen doubt can arise, how arisen doubt can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed doubt can be prevented.

refrain

"In this way, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in *dhammas*. Mindfulness that 'there are *dhammas*' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the five hindrances."

aggregates

"Again, monks, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the five aggregates of clinging. And how does he in regard to *dhammas* abide contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the five aggregates of clinging?

Here he knows: 'such is material form, such its arising, such its passing away; such is feeling, such its arising, such its passing away; such is cognition, such its arising, such its passing away; such are volitions, such their arising, such their passing away; such is consciousness, such its arising, such its passing away.'

refrain

"In this way, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in *dhammas*. Mindfulness that 'there are *dhammas*' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the five aggregates of clinging."

sense-spheres

"Again, monks, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the six internal and external sense-spheres. And how does he in regard to *dhammas* abide contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the six internal and external sense-spheres?

Here he knows the eye, he knows forms, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented

He knows the ear, he knows sounds, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.

He knows the nose, he knows odours, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.

He knows the tongue, he knows flavours, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.

He knows the body, he knows tangibles, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.

He knows the mind, he knows mind-objects, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented."

refrain

"In this way, in regard to *dharmas* he abides contemplating *dharmas* internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in *dharmas*. Mindfulness that 'there are *dharmas*' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how in regard to *dharmas* he abides contemplating *dharmas* in terms of the six internal and external sense-spheres."

awakening factors

"Again, monks, in regard to *dharmas* he abides contemplating *dharmas* in terms of the seven awakening factors. And how does he in regard to *dharmas* abide contemplating *dharmas* in terms of the seven awakening factors?

Here, if the mindfulness awakening factor is present in him, he knows: 'there is the mindfulness awakening factor in me'; if the mindfulness awakening factor is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no mindfulness awakening factor in me'; and he also knows how the unarisen mindfulness awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen mindfulness awakening factor can be perfected by development.

If the investigation-of-*dharmas* awakening factor is present in him, he knows: 'there is the investigation-of-*dharmas* awakening factor in me'; if the investigation-of-*dharmas* awakening factor is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no investigation-of-*dharmas* awakening factor in me'; and he also knows how the unarisen investigation-of-*dharmas* awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen investigation-of-*dharmas* awakening factor can be perfected by development.

If the energy awakening factor is present in him, he knows: 'there is the energy awakening factor in me'; if the energy awakening factor is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no energy awakening factor in me'; and he also knows how the unarisen energy awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen energy awakening factor can be perfected by development.

If the joy awakening factor is present in him, he knows: 'there is the joy awakening factor in me'; if the joy awakening factor is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no joy awakening factor in me'; and he also knows how the unarisen joy awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen joy awakening factor can be perfected by development.

If the tranquility awakening factor is present in him, he knows: 'there is the tranquility awakening factor in me'; if the tranquility awakening factor is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no tranquility awakening factor in me'; and he also knows how the unarisen tranquility awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen tranquility awakening factor can be perfected by development.

If the concentration awakening factor is present in him, he knows: 'there is the concentration awakening factor in me'; if the concentration awakening factor is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no concentration awakening factor in me'; and he also knows how the unarisen concentration awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen concentration awakening factor can be perfected by development.

If the equanimity awakening factor is present in him, he knows: 'there is the equanimity awakening factor in me'; if the equanimity awakening factor is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no equanimity awakening factor in me'; and he also knows how the unarisen equanimity awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen equanimity awakening factor can be perfected by development."

refrain

"In this way, in regard to *dharmas* he abides contemplating *dharmas* internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in *dharmas*. Mindfulness that 'there are *dharmas*' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the seven awakening factors."

noble truths

"Again, monks, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the four noble truths. And how does he in regard to *dhammas* abide contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the four noble truths?

Here he knows as it really is: 'this is *dukkha*'; he knows as it really is: 'this is the arising of *dukkha*'; he knows as it really is: 'this is the cessation of *dukkha*'; he knows as it really is: 'this is the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.'"

refrain

"In this way, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in *dhammas*. Mindfulness that 'there are *dhammas*' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the four noble truths."

prediction

"Monks, if anyone should develop these four *satipaṭṭhānas* in such a way for seven years, one of 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 ... six years ... five years ... four years ... three years ... two years ... one year ... seven months ... six months ... five months ... four months ... three months ... two months ... one month ... half a month ... if anyone should develop these four *satipaṭṭhānas* in such a way for seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return. So it was with reference to this that it was said:"

direct path

"Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of *dukkha* and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realisation of *Nibbāna*, namely, the four *satipaṭṭhānas*."

That is what the Blessed One said. The monks were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

AA discourses in the *Samyutta Nikāya* and the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.⁵ Apart from the *Pāli* sources, expositions on *satipaṭṭhāna* are also preserved in Chinese and Sanskrit, with intriguing occasional variations from the *Pāli* presentations.⁶

Most of the discourses in the *Samyutta Nikāya* and the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* mention only the bare outline of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, without going into the details of their possible applications. This functional division into four *satipaṭṭhānas* seems to be a direct outcome of the Buddha's awakening,⁷ a central aspect of his rediscovery of an ancient path of practice.⁸ The de-

⁵ These are the *Satipaṇṇhāna Saṅgīyutta* at S V 141-192, and the *Satipaṇṇhāna Vagga* at A IV 457-462. In addition, there is also a *Sati Vagga* at A IV 336-347; a *Satipaṇṇhāna Vibhaṅga* at Vibh 193-207; and twice a *Satipaṇṇhāna Kathā* at Kv 155-159 and at Pañis II 232-235. Shorter discourses with similar titles are the three *Satipaṇṇhāna Suttas* at S IV 360, 363, and A III 142; the three *Sati Suttas* at S II 132, S IV 245, and A IV 336; and the three *Sato Suttas* at S V 142, 180, and 186.

⁶ According to Schmithausen: "Vier Konzentrationen", p 244, five additional versions are in existence: two complete versions in Chinese (in the *Madhyama āgama* and in the *Ekottara āgama*), and three fragmentary versions in Chinese and Sanskrit (these being the *Paṇḍarīyā-atisāhasrikā Prajāpāramitā*, the *ṣāriputrābhidharma* (Taisho 1548), and the *ṣṛāvaka-bhāmi*). An abridged translation of one of the complete Chinese versions, the 'Nien-ch'u-ching', being the ninety-eighth *sātra* in the Chinese *Madhyama āgama* (Taisho No 26) can be found in Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 87-95. A complete translation of this version and also of the other Chinese version from the *Ekottara āgama*, this being the first *sātra* in the twelfth chapter (Yi Ru Dao) of the *Ekottara āgama* (Taisho No 125), can be found in Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, pp 151-167, and pp 168-177. A comparison of the *Satipaṇṇhāna Saṅgīyutta* with its corresponding Chinese version can be found in Hurvitz: "Fa-Sheng's Observations", p 211-229, who also has translated several shorter *sātras* contained in this part of the *āgamas*.

⁷ S V 178: *ayaṃ kàye kàyaṇupassanā-ti me pubbe ananussetesu dhammesu cakkhūṃ udapādi, vāḍāṃ udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi ... vedanāsu ... citte ... dhammesu ...* Cf. also S V 167: *pañhamābhisambuddho ... Bhagavato rahogatassa pañisallānassa evaṃ cetaso parivitakko udapādi - ekāyano ayaṃ maggo ... yadidaṃ - cattāro satipaṇṇhānā; whereon Brahmā Sahampati came down to applaud (cf. also S V 185). Both cases give only the outline of the four *satipaṇṇhānas* and*

tailed instructions found in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, however, apparently belong to a later period, when the Buddha's teaching had spread from the Ganges valley to the far away *Kammāsadhamma* in the *Kuru* country, the location where both discourses were spoken.⁹

Diagram 1.1 (see below) offers an overview of the structure underlying the detailed exposition in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, with each of the sections of the discourse represented by a box. The starting and concluding section of the discourse is a passage which states that *satipaṭṭhāna* constitutes the **direct path** to *Nibbāna*. The next section of the discourse offers a short **definition** of the most essential aspects of this direct path. This 'definition' mentions four *satipaṭṭhānas* for contemplation: body, feelings, mind, and *dharmas*.¹⁰ The 'definition' also specifies the mental qualities that are instrumental for *satipaṭṭhāna*: one should be diligent (*ātāpī*), clearly knowing (*sampajāna*), mindful (*sati*), and free from desires and discontent (*vineyya abhijjhādomanassa*).

After this 'definition', the discourse describes the four *satipaṭṭhānas* of **body**, **feelings**, **mind**, and *dharmas* in detail. The range of the first *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of the body, proceeds from mindfulness of breathing, postures, and activities, via analysis of the body into its anatomical parts and elementary qualities, to contemplating a corpse in decay. The next two *satipaṭṭhānas* are concerned with contemplating feelings and mind. The fourth *satipaṭṭhāna* lists five types of *dharmas* for contemplation: the mental hindrances, the aggregates, the sense-spheres, the awakening factors, and the four noble truths. After the actual meditation practices, the discourse returns to the **direct path** statement via a **prediction** about the time period within which realisation can be expected.

Throughout the discourse, a particular formula follows each individual meditation practice. This *satipaṭṭhāna* 'refrain' completes each instruction by repeatedly emphasising the important aspects of the practice.¹¹ According to this 'refrain', *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation covers internal and external phenomena, and is concerned with their arising and passing away. The 'refrain' also points out that mindfulness should be established merely for the sake of developing bare knowledge and for achieving continuity of awareness. According to the same 'refrain', proper *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation takes place free from any dependency or clinging.¹²

The entire discourse is framed by an introduction, which conveys the occasion of its delivery, and a conclusion, which reports the delighted reaction of the monks after the Buddha's

do not contain the detailed practical examples given in the two (*Mahā-*) *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas*.

⁸ S II 105: *sammāsati ... ayaū kho so purāḍamaggo purāḍaḍjaso pubbakehi sammāsambuddhehi anuyāto, tam-anugacchii;* cf. also A II 29, which states that *sammāsati* is an ancient practice, *dharmapadaū aggaḍḍaū ratṭaḍḍaū vaūsaḍḍaū porānaū asaḍḍiḍḍaū asaḍḍiḍḍapubbaū*. *Satipaṭṭhāna* was already an ancient practice, since it was also undertaken by previous Buddhas (e.g. D II 35 reports *bodhisatta Vipassā* engaged in *dhammānupassanā* on the five aggregates), a practice which however must then have fallen into oblivion until its rediscovery by *Gotama Buddha*.

⁹ De Silva: *Mental Culture*, p 3, points out that the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* was only delivered once "the *Dhamma* (had) spread from its original seat of *Magadha* to the outskirts of the *Kuru* country". Other discourses spoken at *Kammāsadhamma* in the *Kuru* country (e.g. D II 55, M I 501, M II 261, S II 92, 107, and A V 29) support an association of this location with a relatively evolved stage of development of the early Buddhist community, since e.g. M I 502 speaks of many followers from various backgrounds. According to Ps I 227, a uniting feature among the discourses spoken at this particular location is their comparatively advanced nature, due to the capability of its inhabitants to receive deep teachings. The location of the *Kuru* country corresponds to the locality of modern Delhi (according to Law: *Geography*, p 18; Malalasekera: *Dictionary*, vol I p 642; and Rhys Davids: *Buddhist India*, p 27). This same part of India is also associated with the events in the *Bhagavadgāṭā* (Bhg I.1: *kuru-kṣetra*).

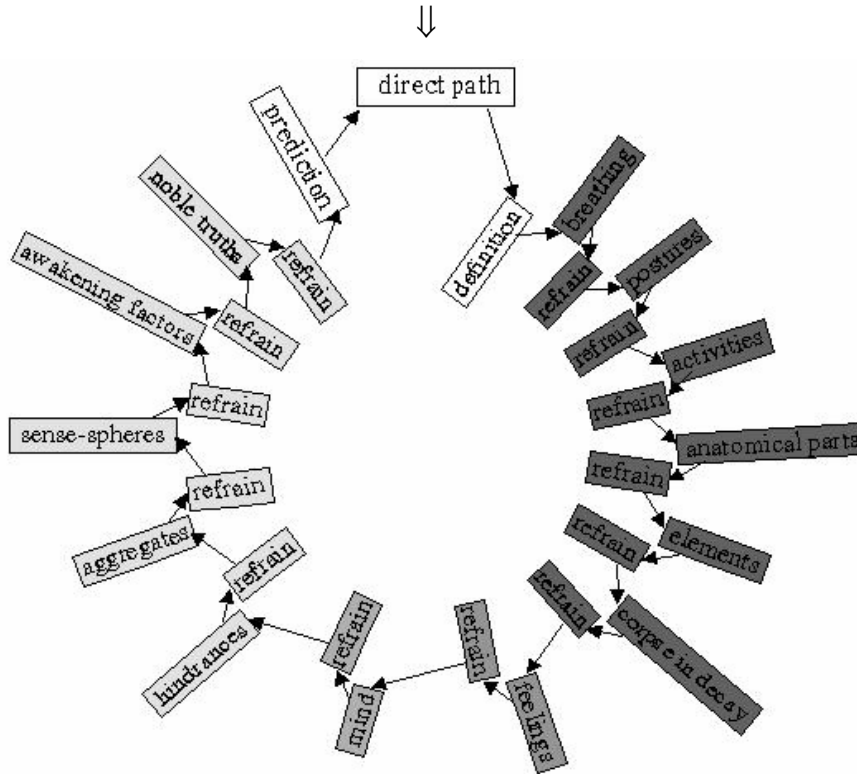
¹⁰ The implications of the term *dhamma*, which I have left untranslated, are discussed in chapter IX.1.

¹¹ The fact that this 'refrain' is indispensable to each meditation exercise is brought to light by the remark concluding each occurrence of the 'refrain': "that is how a monk in regard to the body (feelings, mind, *dharmas*) abides contemplating the body (feelings, mind, *dharmas*)", (M I 56: *evam-pi bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassā viharati*). This remark connects the exposition to the question asked at the outset of each *satipaṭṭhāna*: "how does a monk in regard to the body (etc.) abide contemplating the body (etc.)?" (M I 56: *kathaḍḍ-ca bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassā viharati?*).

¹² M I 56: *ajjhataū vā ... bahiddhā vā ... ajjhatabhiddhā vā ... samudayadhammānupassā vā ... vayadhammānupassā vā ... samudayavayadhammānupassā vā ... sati paccupaṭṭhitā hoti, yāvad-eva ḍḍāmatṭāya paṭṭissatimattāya, anissito ca viharati, na ca kiḍci loke upādiyati*.

exposition.¹³

Structure of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*:
(Diagram 1.1)



By placing the 'definition' and the 'refrain' at the centre of the above diagram, I intend to highlight their central role in the discourse. As the diagram shows, the discourse weaves a recurring pattern that systematically alternates between specific meditation instructions and the 'refrain'. Each time, the task of the 'refrain' is to direct attention to those aspects which are essential for proper practice. The same pattern also applies to the outset of the discourse, where a general introduction to the topic of *satipaṭṭhāna* through the 'direct path' statement is followed by the 'definition', which too has the role of pointing out its essential characteristics. In this way, both the 'definition' and the 'refrain' serve as pointers to the essential. Thus, for a proper understanding and implementation of *satipaṭṭhāna*, the information contained in the 'definition' and the 'refrain' is of particular importance.

1.2) The Four *Satipaṭṭhānas*

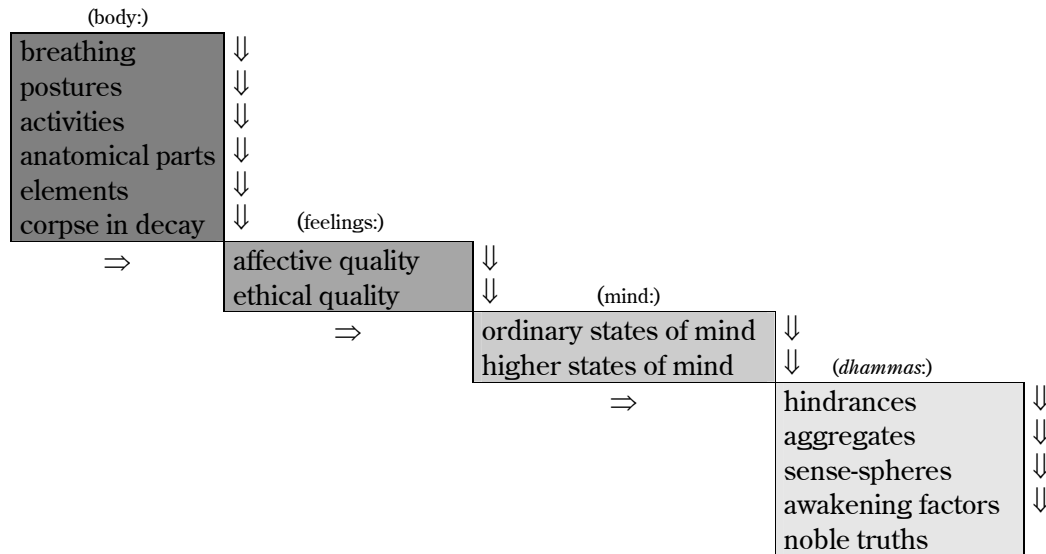
On closer inspection, the succession of the contemplations listed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* reveals a progressive pattern (see diagram 1.2 below). Contemplation of the body progresses from the rudimentary experience of bodily postures and activities to contemplating the body's anatomy. The increased sensitivity thereby developed forms the basis for contemplation of feelings, a shift of awareness from the immediately accessible physical aspects of experience to feelings as more refined and subtler objects of awareness.

Contemplation of feeling divides feelings not only according to their affective quality into pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral types, but also distinguishes these according to their worldly and unworldly nature. The later part of contemplation of feelings thus introduces an

¹³ These are the standard introduction and concluding sections in what Manné: "Categories of Sutta", p 33, classifies as a "sermon".

ethical distinction of feelings, which serves as a stepping stone for directing awareness to the ethical distinction between wholesome and unwholesome states of mind, mentioned at the outset of contemplation of the mind.

Progression of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* Contemplations:
(Diagram 1.2)



Contemplation of the mind proceeds from the presence or absence of four unwholesome states of mind (lust, anger, delusion, and distraction), to contemplating the presence or absence of four higher states of mind. The concern with higher states of mind in the latter part of contemplation of the mind naturally lends itself to a detailed investigation of those factors which particularly obstruct deeper levels of concentration. These are the hindrances, the first object of contemplation of *dhammas*.

After covering the hindrances to meditative practice, contemplation of *dhammas* progresses to two analyses of subjective experience: the five aggregates and the six sense-spheres. These analyses can conveniently be used as a basis for developing the awakening factors, the next topic of this *satipaṭṭhāna*. The culmination of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice is then reached with the contemplation of the four noble truths, whose full understanding coincides with realisation.

Considered in this way, the sequence of the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations leads progressively from grosser to more subtle levels.¹⁴ This linear progression is not without practical relevance, since the body contemplations recommend themselves as a foundational exercise for building up a basis of *sati*, while the final contemplation of the four noble truths covers the experience of *Nibbāna* (the third noble truth concerning the cessation of *dukkha*) and thus corresponds to the culmination of any successful implementation of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

At the same time, however, this progressive pattern does not prescribe the only possible way of practising *satipaṭṭhāna*. To take the progression of the meditation exercises in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as indicating a necessary sequence would severely limit the range of one's practice, since only those experiences or phenomena which fit into this pattern would be proper objects of awareness. Yet, a central characteristic of *satipaṭṭhāna* is awareness of phenomena as they are, and as they occur. Although such awareness will naturally proceed from the gross to

¹⁴ The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* offers the following explanation for this pattern: having investigated the body, the meditator searches for the cause of attachment to it, which is found to be pleasant feeling. Investigating feelings the question "who experiences feelings?" arises, leading to contemplation of the mind. This in turn forms a basis for an inquiry into the causes and conditions of mind, being the focus of contemplation of *dhammas* (in Lamotte: *Traité*, pp 1158, 1162, 1167). On the progressive pattern underlying the sequence of the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations cf. also Ariyadhamma: *Satipaṭṭhāna*, p 6; Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, p 47; Guenther: *Philosophy*, p 219; Khemacari: "Satipaṭṭhāna", p 38; King: *Theravāda Meditation*, p 67; and Meier: *Satipaṭṭhāna*, p 16.

the subtle, in actual practice it will quite probably vary from the sequence depicted in the discourse.

A flexible and comprehensive development of *satipaṭṭhāna* should encompass all aspects of experience, in whatever sequence they occur. All *satipaṭṭhānas* can be of continued relevance throughout one's progress along the path. The practice of contemplating the body, for example, is not something to be left behind and discarded at some point in one's progress, but is of relevance even for an *arahant*.¹⁵ Understood in this way, the meditation exercises listed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* can be seen as mutually supportive. The sequence in which they are practised may be altered in order to meet the needs of each individual meditator.

Not only do the four *satipaṭṭhānas* support each other, but they could even be integrated within a single meditation practice. This is documented in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, which describes how mindfulness of breathing can be developed in such a way that it encompasses all four *satipaṭṭhānas*.¹⁶ This exposition demonstrates the possibility of comprehensively combining all four *satipaṭṭhānas* within the practice of a single meditation exercise.

According to the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, it is possible to develop a variety of different aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation with a single meditation-object and in due course cover all four *satipaṭṭhānas*. This raises the question how far a single *satipaṭṭhāna*, or even a single meditation exercise, can be taken as a complete practice in its own right.

Several discourses relate the practice of a single *satipaṭṭhāna* directly to realisation.¹⁷ Similarly, the commentaries assign to each single *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation the capacity of leading to full awakening.¹⁸ This may well be the reason why a high percentage of present day meditation teachers focus on the use of a single meditation technique, on the ground that a single-minded and thorough perfection of one meditation technique can cover all aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna*, and thus be sufficient for gaining realisation.¹⁹

Indeed, the development of awareness with any particular meditation technique will automatically result in a marked increase in one's general level of awareness, thereby enhancing one's capacity to be mindful in regard to situations that do not form part of one's primary object of meditation. In this way, even those aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna* that have not deliberately been made the object of contemplation to some extent still receive mindful attention as a by-product of the primary practice.

Yet, the exposition in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* does not necessarily imply that by being aware of the breath, one automatically covers all aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna*. What the Buddha demonstrated here was how a thorough development of *sati* can lead from the breath to a broad range of objects, encompassing different aspects of subjective reality. But it goes without saying that such a broad range of aspects was the outcome of a deliberate development, otherwise the Buddha would not have needed to deliver a whole discourse on how to achieve this.

In fact, several meditation teachers and scholars place a strong emphasis on covering all four *satipaṭṭhānas* in one's practice.²⁰ According to them, although one particular meditation

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. S V 326, which reports that the Buddha himself, after his awakening, still continued to practise mindfulness of breathing.

¹⁶ M III 83.

¹⁷ S V 158: *idha bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassā viharati ... tassa ... viharato cittaū virajjati vimuccati anupādāya āsavehi*; S V 181: *tassa kāye kāyānupassino viharato ... chando so pahāyati. Chandassa pahānāya amataū sacchikataū hoti*; S V 182: *tassa kāye kāyānupassino viharato kāyo pariṅgāto hoti. Kāyassa pariṅgātattā amataū sacchikataū hoti*; S IV 363: *kāye kāyānupassā viharati ... ayaū vuccati asaikhatagāmi maggo*; (each passage repeats the same statement for feelings, mind, and dhammas).

¹⁸ Ps I 249 allows for full awakening based on breath-awareness, Ps I 252 based on awareness of the four postures, Ps I 270 based on clear comprehension of bodily activities, Ps I 274 based on the cemetery contemplations, Ps I 277 based on feeling contemplation, Ps I 280 based on contemplation of the mind, (etc.).

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. Dhammharo: *Skill of Release*, p 54, assembles all four *satipaṭṭhānas* under one single practice. Goenka: *Sensation*, p 2, proposes the same, explaining that as the body is to be experienced via feelings, which at the same time are related to the mind by being mental objects, therefore by observing bodily sensation one can cover all four *satipaṭṭhānas*. Sunlun: "Insight Meditation", p 110 takes a similar position regarding the touch-sensation. Taungpulu: "Methodical Practice", p 189, also includes all four *satipaṭṭhānas* under the single practice of body contemplation.

²⁰ E.g. Ñāḍaponika, *Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p 58, considers that only practice of all four *satipaṭṭhānas* constitutes the fulfilment of *satipaṭṭhāna*. He suggests focussing on a few selected contemplations, and to give attention to the other con-

practice can serve as the primary object of attention, the other aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna* should be deliberately contemplated too, even if only in a secondary manner. This approach can claim some support from the concluding part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the ‘prediction’ of realisation. This passage stipulates the development of all four *satipaṭṭhānas* for contemplation to lead to the realisation of non-return or *arahant*-ship.²¹ The fact that all four *satipaṭṭhānas* are mentioned suggests that it is the comprehensive practice of all four which is particularly capable of leading to high realisation. The same is also indicated by a statement in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta*, which relates the realisation of *arahant*-ship to ‘complete’ practice of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, while partial practice corresponds to lesser levels of realisation.²²

In a passage in the *Ānāpāna Saṃyutta*, the Buddha compared the four *satipaṭṭhānas* to chariots coming from four directions, each driving through and thereby scattering a heap of dust lying at the centre of a crossroads.²³ This simile suggests that each *satipaṭṭhāna* is in itself capable of overcoming unwholesome states, just as any of the chariots is able to scatter the heap of dust. At the same time, this simile also illustrates the co-operative effect of all four *satipaṭṭhānas*, since, with chariots coming from all directions, the heap of dust will get scattered even more.

Thus any single meditation practice from the *satipaṭṭhāna* scheme is capable of leading to deep insight, especially if developed according to the key instructions given in the ‘definition’ and ‘refrain’ of the discourse. Nevertheless, an attempt to cover all four *satipaṭṭhānas* in one’s practice does more justice to the distinct character of the various meditations described in the discourse and thereby ensures speedy progress and a balanced and comprehensive development.²⁴

The need for such comprehensive development is related to the fact that each *satipaṭṭhāna* has a different character and thereby can serve a slightly different purpose. This is documented in the *Nettipakaraṇa* and the commentaries, which illustrate the particular character of each *satipaṭṭhāna* with a set of correlations (see diagram 1.3 below).

According to the commentaries, each of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* corresponds to a particular aggregate: the aggregates of matter (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) match the first three *satipaṭṭhānas*, while the aggregates of cognition (*saññā*) and volition (*saṅkhārā*) correspond to the contemplation of *dhammas*.²⁵

Correlations for the Four *Satipaṭṭhānas*:
(Diagram 1.3)

	contemplation of body ↓	contemplation of feelings ↓	contemplation of mind ↓	contemplation of <i>dhammas</i> ↓
aggregate ⇒	body	feeling	consciousness	cognition + volition
recommended for ⇒	slow craver	quick craver	slow theoriser	quick theoriser
establishes ⇒	absence of beauty	unsatisfactoriness	impermanence	absence of self

On closer inspection, this correlation appears a little forced, since the third *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of the mind, corresponds to all mental aggregates and not only to consciousness. Moreover the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of *dhammas*, includes the entire set of the five

templations whenever an opportunity arises in the course of practice. Soma: *Mindfulness*, p XXII, takes a similar position.

²¹ M I 62: *yo hi koci ... ime cattāro satipaṇṇhāne evaṃ bhāveyya ... diṇṇhe va dhamme aṅgā, sati va upādisese anāgāmitā*. According to Pradhan: *Meditation*, p 340, the practice of all *satipaṇṇhānas* is required for being able to gain such high levels of realisation.

²² S V 175: *catunnaṃ satipaṇṇhānaṃ padesaṃ bhāvitattā sekho hoti ... samattaṃ bhāvitattā asekho hoti*.

²³ S V 325: *seyyathāpi catumahāpathe mahāpāṇṇasūjo. Puratthimāya ce pi disāya āgaccheyya sakaṇṇā va ratho va, upahānateva taṃ pāṇṇasūjā, pacchimāya ... uttarāya ... dakkhiṇāya ce pi disāya ... Evam-eva bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassā viharanto pi upahānateva pāpake akusale dhamme, vedanāsu ... citte ... dhammesu ...*

²⁴ Debes: "Satipaṇṇhāna", p 190, fittingly sums up: "It may be possible to gain realisation with one single exercise, but that one who has practised all of them, should still not realise awakening, would seem to be impossible" (my trsl.).

²⁵ Ps I 281.

aggregates as one of its meditations, and thus has a wider range than just the two aggregates of cognition (*saññā*) and volition (*saṅkhārā*).

Nevertheless, what the commentaries may be intending to illustrate is that all aspects of one's subjective experience are to be investigated with the aid of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. Understood in this way, the four *satipaṭṭhānas* represent an analytical approach similar to an analysis of subjective experience into aggregates. Both attempt to progressively dissolve the illusion of the observer's substantiality.²⁶ By turning awareness to different facets of one's subjective experience, they will be experienced simply as objects, and the notion of compactness, the sense of a solid 'I', will begin to disintegrate. In this way, the more subjective experience can be seen 'objectively' the more the 'I'-identification diminishes.²⁷ This correlates well with the Buddha's instruction to thoroughly investigate each aggregate to the point where no more 'I' can be found.²⁸

In addition to the aggregate correlation, the commentaries recommend each of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* for a specific type of character or inclination. According to them, body and feeling contemplation should be the main field of practice for those who tend more strongly towards craving, while meditators predominantly given to intellectual speculation should place more emphasis on contemplating mind or *dhammas*.²⁹ Understood in this way, practice of the first two *satipaṭṭhānas* suits those with a more affective inclination, while the latter two are particularly recommendable for those of a more cognitive orientation. In both cases, those whose character is to think and react quickly can profitably centre their practice on the respectively subtler contemplations of feelings or *dhammas*, while those whose mental faculties are more circumspect and measured will have better results if they base their practice on the respectively grosser objects of body or mind. Although these recommendations are expressed in terms of character type, they could also be applied to one's momentary disposition: one could choose that *satipaṭṭhāna* which corresponds best to one's present state of mind, so that when one feels sluggish and desirous, for example, contemplation of the body would be the appropriate type of practice to be undertaken.

The *Nettipakaraṇa* and the *Visuddhimagga* also set the four *satipaṭṭhānas* in opposition to the four distortions (*vipallāsas*), which are to 'mis'-take what is unattractive, unsatisfactory, impermanent, and not self, for being attractive, satisfactory, permanent, and a self.³⁰ Thus contemplation of the body reveals the absence of bodily beauty; observation of the true nature of feelings counters one's incessant search for fleeting pleasures; awareness of the succession of mental states discloses the impermanent nature of all subjective experience; and contemplation

²⁶ Fryba: *Art of Happiness*, p 258, proposes employing the four *satipaṭṭhānas* as labelling categories for such analytical dissolution of subjective experience, by classifying experiences of warmth, movement, trembling, itching, pressure, lightness (etc.) as: '*kāya*'; being pleased, amused, bored, sad (etc.) as: '*vedanā*'; being concentrated, scattered, tense, greedy, hate-filled (etc.) as: '*citta*'; and experiencing thinking, wishing, planning, intending (etc.) as *dhammas*.

²⁷ Yāōananda: *Calm and Insight*, p 48, aptly expresses this by speaking of *satipaṭṭhāna* as "an objective approach to understand the subjective in one's experience." Yāōapoōika: *Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p 75, comments: "The whole discourse on the foundations of mindfulness may be regarded as a comprehensive ... instruction for the realisation of ... *anattā*," of a similar opinion are also Sch"nwerth: "Los vom Selbst", p 193; and Story: "Introduction", p VIII.

²⁸ S IV 197: *bhikkhu rāpaū samanēsati yāvata rāpassa gati, vedanaū ... sa□□aū ... saikhāre ... vi□□āōaū ... yam-pissa taū hoti ahan-ti vā mahan-ti vā asmāti vā tam-pi tassa na hoti.*

²⁹ Ps I 239: *mandassa taṅhācaritassa oḷārikam kāyānupassanāsatiṭṭhānaṃ visuddhimaggo, tikkhassa sukhumaṃ vedanānupassanāsatiṭṭhānaṃ. Dīṭṭhacaritassa pi mandassa nātipphadedagataṃ cittānupassanāsatiṭṭhānaṃ visuddhimaggo, tikkhassa atippabhedagataṃ dhammānupassanāsatiṭṭhānaṃ.*

³⁰ Nett 83: *kāye kāyānupassā viharanto 'asubhe subhan'-ti vipallāsāū pajahati ... vedanānupassā viharanto 'dukkhe sukhan'-ti ... cittānupassā viharanto 'anicce niccan'-ti ... dhammānupassā viharanto 'anattāni attā ti vipallāsāū pajahati* (cf. also Ps I 239). Vism 678: *subha-sukha-nicca-attasa□□ā-pahānakiccāsādhanavasena ... tasmā cattāro satipaṭṭhānā ti vuccanti.* Concerning these four *vipallāsas* it is noteworthy that they are listed only once in the four *Nikāyas*, at A II 52. The term as such occurs also at Vin III 7 in the sense of 'disturbance' and at Sn 299 in the sense of 'change'; and is referred to as *caubbipallāsā* at Th 1143. The four *vipallāsas* become prominent particularly in Pañis and the later *Pāli* literature. Nett 123 also relates each *satipaṭṭhāna* to a corresponding type of realisation: *tattha kāye kāyānupassitā satipaṭṭhāna□□ca vedanāsu vedanānupassitā satipaṭṭhāna□□ca appaōihitāū vimokkhamukhaū, citte cittānupassitā su□□atāū vimokkhamukhaū, dhammesu dhammānupassitā animittāū vimokkhamukhaū;* (one would have expected the last two to be in the opposite order).

of *dhammas* reveals that a permanent self cannot be found anywhere. This presentation brings to light the main theme that underlies each of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* and indicates which of them is particularly appropriate for dispelling the delusion of beauty, happiness, permanence, or self. Although the corresponding insights are certainly not restricted to one *satipaṭṭhāna* alone, nevertheless this particular correlation indicates which *satipaṭṭhāna* is particularly suitable in order to correct a specific distortion (*vipallāsa*). This correlation, too, may be fruitfully applied in accordance with one's general character disposition, or else can be used in order to counteract the momentary manifestation of any particular distortion.

In the end, however, all four *satipaṭṭhānas* partake of the same essence. Each of them leads to realisation, like different gateways leading to the same city.³¹ As the commentaries point out, the fourfold division is only functional and can be compared to a weaver splitting a piece of bamboo into four parts to weave a basket.³²

This completes my preliminary survey of the discourse and of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. By way of providing some background to the title of the present work, I will now examine the two key expressions 'direct path' and '*satipaṭṭhāna*'.

L3) The 'Direct Path'

The first section of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* proper introduces the four *satipaṭṭhānas* as the 'direct path' to the realisation of *Nibbāna*. The passage reads:

"Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of *dukkha* and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realisation of *Nibbāna*, namely, the four *satipaṭṭhānas*."³³

The expression 'direct path' is a translation of the *Pāli* expression *ekāyano maggo*, made up of the parts 'one' (*eka*), 'going' (*ayana*), and 'path' (*magga*).³⁴ The commentarial tradition explains this expression in five different ways: a 'direct' path leading straight to the goal; a path to be travelled by oneself in seclusion; a path taught by the 'One' (the Buddha); a path that is found 'only' in early Buddhism; and path which leads to 'one' goal (*Nibbāna*).³⁵

The fourth of these five explanations, 'the only way', is the most frequently used translation of the term. As the expression 'one-going' (*ekāyano*) is a specific attribute of *satipaṭṭhāna*, it does indeed convey a considerable degree of emphasis.³⁶ This emphasis becomes even more prominent in a set of verses in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta*, which speak of *satipaṭṭhāna* as the 'one-going path' (*ekāyano maggo*) for crossing the flood in past, present, and future times.³⁷

³¹ Ps I 239: *cattāro satipaṅṅhānā ti ca atthato ekaū, byājanam evettha nānau*. Ps I 240: *evaū saraḍavasena ceva ekatta samosaraḍavasena ca ekam-eva satipaṅṅhānau ārammaḍavasena cattāro*. Than Daing: *Cittānupassanā*, p 59, illustratively compares the similarity of all four *satipaṅṅhānas* in leading to the same goal to four staircases leading up to the platform of a pagoda.

³² Vibh-a 222: *evam-eva Bhagavā ... nayena ārammaḍavasena catudhā bhinditvā tato ekekaū satipaṅṅhānau gahetvā vibhajanto*. Bodhi: *Manual of Abhidhamma*, p 279, explains: "The four foundations of mindfulness have a single essence, which consists of mindful contemplation of phenomena. They are differentiated in so far as this mindful contemplation is to be applied to four objects."

³³ M I 55: *ekāyano ayaū, bhikkhave, maggo sattānau visuddhiyā sokapariddavānau samatikkamāya dukkhadomanassānau atthagamāya vāyassa adhigamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya, yadidaū cattāro satipaṅṅhānā*. On this passage cf. also Janakabhivāsa: *Vipassanā*, pp 37-44.

³⁴ This way of translating *ekāyano* is suggested by Yaḍatiloka: *Pāli Grammatik*, p 91 n 7 ("der direkte Weg"); cf. also Yaḍamolī: *Middle Length Discourses*, p 1188 n 135.

³⁵ Ps I 229: *ekamaggo na dvedhāpathabhūto ... ekena ayitabbo ... ekassa ayano ... ekasmiṃ ayano ... ekaṃ ayati*. These alternatives are discussed by Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, pp 60-63. He concludes (p 64): "What is basically being said is that the four *satipaṭṭhānas* represent a path that leads straight and directly all the way to the final goal."

³⁶ *Ekāyano* occurs in relation to *satipaṅṅhāna* at D II 290, M I 55, S V 141, 167, and 185. In contrast, at A III 314, a passage otherwise resembling the 'direct path' statement (*sattānau visuddhiyā ... nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*) occurs in relation to the six recollections (*anussatis*), but without the *ekāyana* specification; (same at A III 329 in relation to the practice of recollecting the Buddha). Khantipālo: *Calm and Insight*, p 29, and Yaḍaponika: *Kommentar*, p 12, draw attention to the emphatic implications of the term *ekāyano* in ancient India (various examples of which are discussed in Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, p 61).

³⁷ S V 167 and 186: *ekāyanaṃ jātikhayantadassī, maggaṃ pajānāti hitānukampī, etena maggena tarimsu phubbe, taris-*

Indeed, the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is a necessary requirement for liberation.³⁸ Yet, to translate the expression 'one-going path' as the 'only way' introduces an unwarranted dogmatic nuance to this expression.³⁹

The qualification 'one-going' occurs on one occasion outside of the *satipaṭṭhāna* context. This is in the *Mahāsīhanāda Sutta*, where it expresses straightness of direction rather than exclusion. It occurs in a simile describing a man walking along a 'one-going' road (*ekāyanena maggena*) leading to a pit, such that one can anticipate him falling into the pit.⁴⁰ To say that this is 'the only path' leading to the pit seems less appropriate than saying that this path leads 'directly' to the pit. Applying this nuance of 'one-going' (*ekāyano*) to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, this expression then describes the 'directness' of this path, emphasising the fact that it leads straight to the goal.

Another relevant passage in this context can be found in the *Tevijja Sutta*, which reports two Brahmin students arguing about whose teacher was taught the only correct path to union with Brahma. Although in this context an exclusive expression like 'the only way' might be expected, the qualification 'one-going' (*ekāyano*) is conspicuously absent.⁴¹ The same absence recurs in a verse from the *Dhammapada*, which presents the noble eightfold path as the 'only path'.⁴² These instances suggest that the discourses did not use the qualification 'one-going' (*ekāyano*) to convey exclusiveness.

Possibly, then, the qualification 'one-going' (*ekāyano*) points to the fact that *satipaṭṭhāna* is the aspect of the noble eightfold path most 'directly' responsible for uncovering a vision of things as they truly are. Understood in this way, *satipaṭṭhāna* is the 'direct path', because it leads 'directly' to the realisation of *Nibbāna*. This 'directness' of the *satipaṭṭhāna* approach may stem from the fact that it bypasses some aspects of the meditative path described in the standard expositions of the gradual path, such as the realisation of the first two of the three higher knowledges (*te-vijjā*).⁴³

This way of understanding finds support in the final passage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Having stated that *satipaṭṭhāna* practice can lead to the two higher stages of realisation within a maximum of seven years, the discourse closes with the declaration: 'because of this, it has been said - this is the 'one-going' path'.⁴⁴ This statement highlights the potential of *satipaṭṭhāna* to lead to the highest stages of realisation within a limited period of time.

I.4) *Satipaṭṭhāna*

The term *satipaṭṭhāna* can be explained as a compound of *sati*, 'mindfulness' or 'awareness', and *upaṭṭhāna*, with the *u* of the latter term being dropped due to vowel elision.⁴⁵ The *Pāli* term *upaṭṭhāna* literally means 'placing near',⁴⁶ and in the present context refers to a particular way of 'being present' and 'attending' to something with mindfulness. In the discourses, the corresponding verb *upaṭṭhahati* often denotes various nuances of 'being present',⁴⁷ or else

santi ye ca taranti ogham.

³⁸ Cf. A V 195: *ye kho keci lokamhā niyyiūsu vā niyyanti vā niyyissanti vā, sabbe te ... catusu satipaṭṭhānesu supatīṇhita citta ... lokamhā niyyiūsu vā niyyanti vā niyyissanti vā.*

³⁹ Cf. e.g. Conze: *Buddhist Thought*, p 51 n ++. Ps I 230 justifies this connotation by referring to D II 151, where the Buddha made a rather strong statement regarding other teachings. Yet, in this statement the Buddha did not use the term *ekāyano*.

⁴⁰ M I 75, the same is then repeated for a road leading to a tree, to a mansion, and to a pond. Ñānamoli based his rendering of *ekāyano* by "a path that goes in one way only" on this passage, cf. *Middle Length Discourses*, p 1188 n 135.

⁴¹ D I 235: *ayaṃ eva uju-maggo, ayaṃ añjasāyano niyyāniko niyyāti takkarassa Brahmaṣahavyatāya.*

⁴² Dh 274: *eveva maggo n'attha*. In fact, to speak of the 'only path' would be applicable only to the entire noble eightfold path, not to *satipaṭṭhāna*, which after all is just one of its factors, cf. also Yaōavāra: *Clearing the Path*, p 371. However, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*'s subcomy Ps-pñ I 330 argues that nevertheless referring to *satipaṭṭhāna* as the 'only path' is justified: *eko eva maggo, na hi nibbānagāma maggo aṭṭhaṭṭhi. Nanu satipaṭṭhānaū idha 'maggo' ti adhippetāū, tada ca bahā maggadhammā atthāti? Saccaū atthi, te pana satipaṭṭhānaggahaḍḍeṇeva gahitā tadavinābhāvato.*

⁴³ Cf. also Yaōamoli: *Middle Length Discourses*, p 1188 n 135.

⁴⁴ M I 63: *iti yan-taū vuttaū, idam-etaū pañicca vuttaū.*

⁴⁵ Bodhi: *Connected Discourses*, p 1504 and p 1915 n 122; and Yaōapoōika: *Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p 10.

⁴⁶ Walshe: *Thus Have I Heard*, p 589 n 629.

⁴⁷ Occurrences of *upaṭṭhahati* which correspond to 'being present' are, e.g.: a watchdog 'being present' at D I 166;

‘attending’.⁴⁸ Understood in this way, ‘*satipaṭṭhāna*’ means that *sati* ‘stands by’, in the sense of being ‘present’; *sati* is ‘ready at hand’, in the sense of ‘attending’ to the current situation. *Satipaṭṭhāna* can then be translated as ‘presence of mindfulness’ or as ‘attending with mindfulness’.⁴⁹

The commentaries, however, derive *satipaṭṭhāna* from the word ‘foundation’ or ‘cause’ (*paṭṭhāna*).⁵⁰ This seems unlikely, since in the discourses contained in the *Pāli* canon the corresponding verb *paṭṭhahati* never occurs together with *sati*. Moreover, the noun *paṭṭhāna* is not found at all in the early discourses, but comes into use only in the historically later *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries.⁵¹ In contrast, the discourses frequently relate *sati* to the verb *upaṭṭhahati*, indicating that ‘presence’ (*upaṭṭhāna*) is the etymologically correct derivation.⁵² In fact, the equivalent Sanskrit term is *smṛtyupasthāna*, which documents that *upasthāna*, or its *Pāli* equivalent *upaṭṭhāna*, is the correct choice for the compound.

The problem with the commentarial explanation is that, instead of understanding *satipaṭṭhāna* as a particular attitude of being aware, *satipaṭṭhāna* becomes a ‘foundation’ of mindfulness, the ‘cause’ for *sati* to be established. This moves emphasis from the activity to the object. Yet, these four *satipaṭṭhānas* are not the only possible ‘cause’ or ‘foundation’ for mindfulness, since in the *Salāyatanavibhaṅga Sutta* the Buddha spoke of three other *satipaṭṭhānas*, none of which corresponds to the four *satipaṭṭhānas* usually mentioned.⁵³ The three *satipaṭṭhānas* described by the Buddha on this occasion were concerned with his maintenance of mindfulness and equanimity as a teacher in regard to three different situations: none of the pupils paid attention, some paid attention and some not, and all paid attention. The fact that the Buddha nevertheless defined these three as *satipaṭṭhānas* documents that to speak of ‘*satipaṭṭhāna*’ is less a question of the object chosen, than of the appropriate attitude and mental qualities to be established.

Chapter II: The ‘Definition’ Part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*

In the present and the two following chapters I will examine the ‘definition’ part of the discourse. The passage in question reads:

"Here, monks, in regard to the body a monk abides contemplating the body, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world.
In regard to feelings he abides contemplating feelings, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world.
In regard to the mind he abides contemplating the mind, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world.

the messengers of death being ever present (in the sense of ‘being ready’) for someone of advanced age at Dh 235; meal time ‘has come’ at Sn 130; a seat being present (in the sense of being ‘put up’) under a tree at Sn 708. At It 36, *upaṭṭhahati* is related to mental factors, forming a close parallel to its use in the *satipaṭṭhāna* context as the ‘presence’ of shame and fear of wrong-doing: *yesā-ca hiri otaṭṭham, sadā sammā upaṭṭhiṭā*.

⁴⁸ *Upaṭṭhahati* in the sense of ‘attending’ can be found, e.g., at D II 271, where *devas* have to ‘attend on’ *Sakka*; or at D III 189 in the sense of ‘waiting on’ one’s teacher; or in the sense of ‘looking after’ one’s parents at A I 151 and Sn 262; or as ‘ministering’ to the monastic community at A I 279. The same nuance underlies also the often recurrent noun ‘attendant’, *upaṭṭhāka* (e.g. at S III 95).

⁴⁹ Rhys Davids: *Indian Psychology*, p 256 speaks of the "four presences of mindfulness."

⁵⁰ E.g. Ps I 238: *satiya paṭṭhānaṃ satipaṭṭhānan-ti*; Vism 678: *sati yeva paṭṭhānaṃ satipaṭṭhānaṃ*. However, in this case one would expect the resulting term to be *satiṭṭhāna*.

⁵¹ Cf. Rhys Davids: "Introduction", p XV.

⁵² E.g. at M III 23, where *upaññitasati* is contrasted to *muññhassati*; or at M III 85, where *upaññita sati* is the result of practising *satipaññhāna*; cf. also S IV 119: *upaññhitāya satiyā*; or A II 244: *sati sapaññhitā hoti*; or the causative form *satiū upaññhapessanti* at A IV 22. As a matter of fact, the *Satipaññhāna Sutta* itself speaks of: *satiū upaññhapetvā* and of *sati paccupaññhiṭā* (both at M I 56). Cf. also Pañis I 177: *kāyo upaññhānaū no sati, sati upaññhāna-cēva sati ca*.

⁵³ M III 221.

In regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas*, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world.⁵⁴

This 'definition' occurs also in several other discourses as the standard way of defining right mindfulness (*sammāsati*). In the present chapter, I will first take a look at 'contemplation' (*anupassanā*) and consider why the objects of this contemplation are mentioned twice (for example, in regard to the 'body', one is to contemplate the 'body'). Next, I will explore the significance of the first two qualities mentioned in the 'definition': diligent (*ātāpī*) and clearly knowing (*sampajāna*). The remaining qualities, mindfulness and the absence of desires and discontent, will be the subjects of chapters III and IV.

II.1) Contemplation (*anupassanā*)

The 'definition' of right mindfulness is concerned with contemplation, *anupassanā*. The corresponding verb *anupassati* can be derived from the verb to 'see', *passati*, and the emphatic prefix *anu*, so that *anupassati* means to 'repeatedly look at', that is, to 'contemplate' or to 'closely observe'.⁵⁵ The discourses often use *anupassanā* to describe a particular way of contemplation, an examination of the observed object from a particular viewpoint.⁵⁶ In the case of the body, for example, such observation can involve contemplating the body as impermanent (*aniccānupassī*, *vayānupassī*), and therefore as something which does not yield lasting satisfaction (*dukkhānupassī*); or as ugly (*asubhānupassī*) and not self (*anattānupassī*), and therefore as something to let go of (*paṇinissaggānupassī*).⁵⁷

These various forms of contemplation emphasise how the object is to be perceived. That is, as used in the discourses 'contemplation' (*anupassanā*) implies that particular features of the object are to be given prominence, such as its impermanence, or its selfless nature (etc.). In the present context, however, the feature to be contemplated appears to be the same as the object of contemplation. Literally translated, one 'contemplates body in body', or 'feelings in feelings', (etc.).⁵⁸ This slightly peculiar expression requires further consideration.

Taking the instruction in the first *satipaṭṭhāna* as an example: "in regard to the body one contemplates the body." Here, the first instance of 'body' can be understood in the light of the *satipaṭṭhāna* 'refrain'. The 'refrain' explains that to contemplate the body applies to internal and external bodies.⁵⁹ According to the commentaries, 'internal' and 'external' here represent one's own and another person's body.⁶⁰ Thus the first instance of 'body' (in the locative case) can be translated as 'where one's own or another's body is concerned', or 'in regard to one's own or another's body', delineating the compass of this *satipaṭṭhāna*.

For the second instance of 'body', the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* offers detailed specifications: To contemplate 'body' can be undertaken by contemplating the breath, or the postures of the body, or activities of the body, or the anatomical constitution of the body, or the four elementary qualities of the body, or the decomposition of the body after death. Thus the second occur-

⁵⁴ M I 56: *idha bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassā viharati, ātāpā sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassā; vedanāsu vedanānupassā viharati, ātāpā sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassā; citte cittānupassā viharati, ātāpā sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassā; dhammesu dhammānupassā viharati, ātāpā sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassā.*

⁵⁵ Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 38. Cf. also Karunaratna: "Dhammānupassanā", p 484, who renders *anupassanā* as "observing or seeing properly"; while Vajiraṅgāla: "Bodhipakkhiya", p 47, translates it as "analytical reflection." According to Sasaki: *Buddhist Thought*, p 16, '*anu*' has a particularly emphatic function in Pāli. According to Vism 642, '*anu*'-*passati* points to observing an object repeatedly and in diverse ways, that is, from different angles: *anupassatāti anu-anupassati, anekehi ākārehi punappunāni passatāti attho*

⁵⁶ Yaḍḍārāma: *Seven Contemplations*, p 11, speaks of "special modes of attention ... cognitive evaluations."

⁵⁷ S IV 211: *kāye ... aniccānupassā viharati, vayānupassā ... virāgānupassā ... nirodhānupassā ... paṇinissaggānupassā; A III 142: asubhānupassā kāye; A V 359: kāyasmīu aniccānupassā ... dukkhānupassā ... anattānupassā ... khayānupassā ... vayānupassā ... virāgānupassā ... nirodhānupassā ... paṇinissaggānupassā ...*

⁵⁸ Hamilton: *Identity and Experience*, p 173, translates: "body qua body"; Yaḍḍāmolī: *Middle Length Discourses*, p 145: "body as a body"; Thanissaro: *Fire Unbound*, p 97: "body in and of itself."

⁵⁹ M I 56: *ajjhataū vā kāye ... bahiddhā vā kāye ... ajjhatabahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassā viharati.* A more detailed discussion of this instruction can be found in chapter V.1.

⁶⁰ Ps I 249. A more detailed discussion of this commentarial explanation can be found in chapter V.1.

rence of ‘body’ stands for a particular aspect from the general area of contemplation, a ‘sub-body’ in the ‘overall body’, so to speak.⁶¹

The *satipaṭṭhāna* ‘refrain’ also contains additional information about the significance of ‘contemplation’ (*anupassanā*) in the present context. The same term is used, with the specification that the ‘arising’ and the ‘passing away’ of phenomena is the focus of contemplation.⁶² That is, to speak of ‘contemplation’ in the present context refers to directing awareness to the body (*kāyānupassanā*) and to its impermanent nature (*samudayavayadhammānupassanā*).

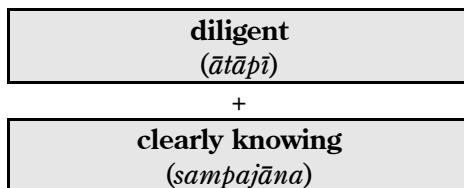
In drawing from other parts of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, one can thus expand the somewhat cryptic instruction: "in body contemplate body" to read: "In regard to your own body or the bodies of others, direct awareness to aspects of the body such as the process of breathing, or its postures and activities, or its anatomical constitution, or its elementary qualities, or its decay at death, in order to realise the impermanent nature of the body."

According to the commentaries, the repetition of the object of contemplation also indicates emphasis, implying that the object of contemplation should be considered simply as perceived by the senses, and in particular without taking it to be ‘I’ or ‘mine’.⁶³ In this way the repetition - body in body - underlines the importance of direct experience, as opposed to mere intellectual reflection.⁶⁴ One should let the body speak for itself, so to say, disclosing its true nature to the scrutiny of the meditator.

II.2) The Significance of Being Diligent (*ātāpi*)

According to the ‘definition’, the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* requires the establishment of four particular mental qualities (see diagram 2.1 below), which represent the mental faculties of energy, wisdom, mindfulness, and concentration.⁶⁵

Key Characteristics of *Satipaṭṭhāna*:
(Diagram 2.1)



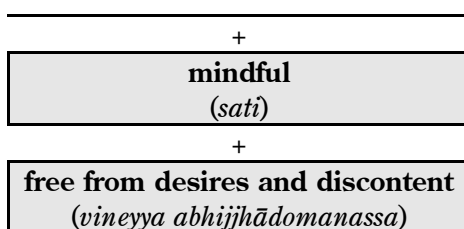
⁶¹ This suggestion can claim support from M III 83, where the Buddha spoke of the process of breathing as a ‘body among bodies’: *kāyesu kāyaṃatarāhaū ... vadāmi yadidaū assāsapassāsa*. A similar position is also taken by several modern meditation teachers; cf. e.g. Buddhadasā: *ānāpānasati*, p 64; Maha Boowa: *Kammaññhāna*, p 101; and Æāsaūvara: *Contemplation of the Body*, p 41.

⁶² M I 56: *samudayadhammānupassā ... veyadhammānupassā ... samudayavayadhammānupassā vā ... viharati*. Such contemplation of impermanence can then lead on to an understanding of the other two characteristics of conditioned existence, *dukkha* and *anattā*. Cf. Pañis II 232: *kathaū kāye kāyānupassā viharati? Idhekacco pañhavākāyāū aniccato anupassati no niccato, dukkhato anupassati no sukhato, anattato anupassati no attato, ...* (the same is then repeated for *āpokayāū ... kesakayāū ... sukha vedanā* etc.). Cf. also Ps I 243: *kāye kāyānupassanāpañipadaū pañipanno bhikkhu imaū kāyāū aniccānupassanādānaū sattannaū anupassanānaū vasena aniccato anupassati, no niccato*. Ps I 242 moreover speaks of overcoming the wrong notion of substantiality *ghanavinibbhogādassana*.

⁶³ Ps I 242; also Devedī: *Sammāsati*, p 23; and Æādamoli: *Path of Discrimination*, p 206 n 17. Here it needs to be pointed out that although the discourses do use repetition in order to express emphasis, this is usually done by repeating the same phrase without case variations. In contrast, in the present instance the repetition stands in a different case. Ps I 241 also offers another explanation, suggesting that the repetition implies that each area of contemplation should be kept separate from the other areas: *tena kāye na vedanānupassā na cittādhammānupassā vā* (cf. also Æāpoōika: *Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p 33; and Sālananda: *Four Foundations*, p 20). This commentarial suggestion is questionable, since in the *ānāpānasati Sutta* (M III 83) the Buddha clearly showed that an object of body contemplation, the breath, can be used to contemplate feelings, mind, and *dhammas*.

⁶⁴ De Silva: *Mental Culture*, p 6.

⁶⁵ Nett 82 correlates *ātāpā* with *virīya* (energy), *sampajāna* with *paññā* (wisdom), and *vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassa* with *samādhi* (concentration), which together with *sati* make up four factors. Pañis II 15 further expands the correlation with all five faculties: *satipaññhāne upaññhānādhipateyyaññhena satindriyāū daññhabbaū, satindriyassa vasena avikkhepaññhena samādhindriyāū daññhabbaū, dassanaññhena paññindriyāū daññhabbaū, adhimokkhaññhena saddhindriyāū daññhabbaū, paggahaññhena viriyindriyāū daññhabbaū*.



The first of these four is the quality of diligence. The term diligent (*ātāpi*) is related to the word *tapas*, which connotes self-mortification and ascetic practises. The use of such vocabulary is surprising, since the Buddha did not consider self-mortification to be conducive to the realisation of *Nibbāna*.⁶⁶ To better understand the Buddha's position, the historical context needs to be considered.

A substantial number of the wandering ascetics in ancient India regarded self-mortification as the model path to purification. The Jain and *Ājīvika* ascetics considered death by ritual suicide to be the ideal expression of successful realisation.⁶⁷ Commonly accepted means for spiritual development were prolonged fasting, exposure to extremes of temperature, and the adoption of particularly painful postures.⁶⁸ Although the Buddha did not categorically reject such practices in their entirety,⁶⁹ he openly criticised the belief that self-mortification was necessary or even helpful for realisation.⁷⁰

Before his awakening, the Buddha himself had been influenced by the belief that spiritual purification requires self-mortification.⁷¹ Based on this mistaken belief, he had pursued ascetic practices to considerable extremes, without however being able to realise awakening in this way.⁷² He ultimately found that awakening does not depend on mere asceticism, but requires mental development, in particular the development of *sati*.⁷³

Therefore, the form of 'asceticism' which the Buddha later taught was predominantly a mental one, characterised by firmly opposing unwholesome thoughts and tendencies.⁷⁴ In an intriguing statement found in the discourses, the cultivation of the awakening factors is referred to as the highest form of exertion.⁷⁵ Such subtler forms of 'austerity' did not easily receive recognition by contemporary ascetics, and on several occasions the Buddha and his followers were ridiculed for their seemingly easy-going attitude.⁷⁶

⁶⁶ S I 103: *anattasāhitaū* 𑀅𑀲𑀸𑀓𑀲𑀸, *yaū ki𑀲ci aparau tapau*; and S V 421: *na sevitaḅḅā ... yo cāyaū attakilamathānuyogo dukkho anariyo anattasāhito*.

⁶⁷ Basham: *Ājīvikas*, p 88.

⁶⁸ Bronkhorst: *Traditions of Meditation*, pp 31-36, and 51.

⁶⁹ At D I 161 and at S IV 330 the Buddha rejected the false report that he was categorically against all austerities. At A V 191 the Buddha explained that he was neither in favour nor against all types of austerities, since what really mattered was whether any particular austerity or practice led to an increase of either wholesome or unwholesome mental states.

⁷⁰ A II 200: *ye te samaḅḅabrāhmaḅḅā tapojjigucchāhetuvadā tapojjigucchāsārā tapojjigucchā-allānā viharanti abhabbā te oghassa nītharaḅḅāya*. At M I 81 the Buddha, after listing the ascetic practices he had performed previous to awakening, concluded that these had not led him to realisation due to the absence of wisdom: *tāya dukkarakārikāya nājjhagamau uttariū manussadhammā alamariyaḅḅāḅḅadassanavisesau, tau kissa hetu: imissā yeva ariyāya paḅḅāya anadhigamā*.

⁷¹ M II 93: *mayham-pi pubbe va sambodhā ... etad-ahosi: Na kho sukkena sukhaū adhigantabbau, dukkhena kho sukhaū adhigantabbau*.

⁷² The *bodhisatta's* ascetic practises are described in detail at M I 77-81 and at M I 242-246. Mil 285 explains that none of the previous Buddhas ever practised austerities, *Gotama* being the only case due to his at that time still immature knowledge.

⁷³ Cf. the Buddha's reflection after awakening, at S I 103: *mutto vatamhi tāya dukkarakārikāya, sādhu ṅhito sato bodhiū samajjhagau*.

⁷⁴ This can be gathered from his humorous reply to the accusation of being a *tapassā* himself at Vin I 235, Vin III 3, A IV 175, and 184: *tapanāyahaū pāpake akusale dhamme vadāmi, kāyaduccaritaū vacāduccaritaū manoduccaritaū ... ayau pariyāyo yena mau pariyāyena sammā vadamāno vadeyya: tapassā samaḅḅo Gotamo ti*. Cf. also Collins: *Selfless Persons*, p 235; and Horner: *Man Perfected*, p 97.

⁷⁵ D III 106: *sattime bojjaigā ... etad-anuttariyaū padhānesu*. The association of the awakening factors with *padhāna* (exertion) occurs also at D III 226, A II 16, and 74: *idha bhikkhu satisambojjaigau ... upekkhāsambojjaigau bhāveti ... idaū vuccati bhāvanappadhānaū*. S I 54 goes so far as to associate them with 'austerity': *bojjaigatapasā* (however Bodhi: *Connected Discourses*, p 390 n 168, suggests the reading *bojjhā tapasā* instead).

⁷⁶ D III 130 speaks of other ascetics accusing the Buddha's disciples of living a life devoted to indulgence in pleasure: *aḅḅatthiyā paribhājakā evau vadeyyū - 'sukhallikānuyogam-anuyuttā samaḅḅā sakyaputtiyā viharanti*. At M I 249 the Buddha faced criticism because he sometimes slept during the day: *abhijānāmahau gimhānaū pacchime māse pacchābhattau*

Another point worth considering is that in ancient India a variety of deterministic and fatalistic teachings had appeared.⁷⁷ In contrast, the Buddha emphasised commitment and effort as essential requirements for achieving realisation. According to him, only by way of desire, effort, and personal commitment can desirelessness be realised.⁷⁸ Effort, as an expression of wholesome desire, leads along the path until with full realisation all desire will be abandoned.⁷⁹ In this context, the Buddha at times re-interpreted expressions commonly used within ascetic circles to express his own position.⁸⁰ The quality of being diligent (*ātāpī*) in the *satipatthāna* context appears to be one such instance.

A different example of rather forceful vocabulary can be found in those passages which describe the Buddha's firm resolution prior to his awakening: 'let my flesh and blood dry up, I will not give up',⁸¹ or 'I will not change my posture unless realisation has been gained.'⁸² Concerning the resolve to refrain from changing posture, it needs to be kept in mind that the Buddha was able to achieve deep meditative absorption, so that he could sit for long periods of time in the same posture without experiencing pain.⁸³ Thus what these expressions point to is not so much the endurance of a painful sitting posture as a strong and unwavering commitment.⁸⁴ Similar expressions are also used by some of his disciples on the brink of realisation.⁸⁵ Since the breakthrough to realisation can only take place in a balanced state of mind, it may be best not to take these expressions too literally.

piḍḍapātaṭṭapaṇikkanto ... sato sampajāno niddaū okkamitāti. 'Etaū kho, bho Gotama, eke samaḍabrahmaḍā sammohavihārasmiū vadanti.' The same topic comes up again at S I 107, where *Māra* poked fun at the Buddha for being still asleep at sunrise (after a night spent in walking meditation), cf. also S I 110. At Vin IV 91, the Buddha was derisively called a 'shaven-headed householder' (*samaḍassa Gotamassa muḍḍogahapatikassa*) by an *ājāvika* ascetic, presumably because of the abundance of food received by the Buddhist monks. Cf. further Basham: *Ājāvikas*, p 137; and Chakravarti: *Social Dimensions*, p 51.

⁷⁷ Compare e.g. *Makkhali Gosāla's* view at D I 53 or at S III 210 that there is no power or energy (to take decisions or influence one's destiny in any way): *natthi balaū natthi viriyāū*, a view which the Buddha strongly censured (e.g. at A I 286); or *Pāraḍa Kassapa's* view at D I 52 that there is neither evil nor good: *natthi ... pāpāū ... natthi puṇṇāū*. (S III 69 seems to confuse these two teachers, putting *Gosāla's* view into *Kassapa's* mouth).

⁷⁸ M II 174: *no ce taṃ padaheyya, nayidaṃ saccam-anuḍāpūṇeyya; yasmā ca kho padahati, tasmā saccam-anuḍāpūṇāti, tasmā saccānupattiyā padhānaṃ bahukāraṃ*. Cf. also Dh 280: *paññāya maggaṃ alaso na vīdati*; It 27: *anāṭāpī anottaḍḍī abhabbo sambodhāya abhabbo nibbānāya abhabbo anuttarassa yogakkhemaṃsa adhiḡamāya*; and Th 1165: *nayidaṃ sithilam ārabha nayidaṃ appena thāmasā nibbānaṃ adhiḡantabbaṃ*. Cf. also Pande: *Origins of Buddhism*, p 519; and Rhys Davids: "Will in Buddhism", p 50.

⁷⁹ At S V 272, *ānanda* countered the proposal that to overcome desire using desire would be a task without end (*chandenā ca chandaū pajahissatā'ti netam nānāū vijjati*) with the argument that the desire for realisation will automatically subside once realisation is gained: *yo so bhikkhu arahaū khāḍāsavo ... tassa yo pubbe chando ahoṣi arahattapattiyā, arahatte patte yo tajo chando so pañḡpassaddho*. Similarly, according to A II 145, it is based on 'craving' (for the destruction of the influxes) that craving (in general) will be overcome: *taḍhaū nissāya taḍhā pahātabbā*. The importance of 'desire' as an aspect of the path leading to realisation is also exemplified in the canonical presentation of the four *iddhipādas* (roads to power), one of which is desire (*chanda*). Cf. also Burford: "Buddhist Soteriology", p 48; Katz: "Cessation of the World", p 58; and Matthews: "Concept of the Will", p 156. A helpful distinction between various types of desire in this context is given by Collins: *Nirvana*, pp 186-188.

⁸⁰ A typical instance of such reinterpretation is at Dh 184, where patience is identified as the highest austerity: *khanā paramaū tapo titikkhā*. Cf. also Kloppenborg: "Redefinition", p 53.

⁸¹ A I 50: *kāmaū taco ca nahāru ca aññhi ca avasissatu, sarāre upasussatu māūsaloḡhitāū, yan-taū purisathāmena purisaviriyena purisaparakkamena pattabbāū na taū apāpuḍitvā viriyassa saḍñhānaū bhavissati*.

⁸² M I 219: *na tāvāhaū imaū pallāikaū bhindissāmi yāva me nānupādāya āsavehi cittaū vimuccissati*.

⁸³ M I 94: *ahaū pahomi anīḡjamāno kāyena ... satta rattindivāni ekantasukhapañisaūvedā viharitūū*. This ability of the Buddha to sit without moving for seven days, experiencing the bliss (of liberation), is also documented at Vin I 1, Ud 1-3, 10, and 32: *Bhagavā sattāhaū ekapallāikena nisinna hoti vimuttisukhaū pañisaūvedā*. Thā 44 and 174 each report the same for a realised nun. It is telling if one contrasts the Buddha's experience of sitting without moving for seven days experiencing only bliss with a description of sitting 'with determination' in *Maha Boowa: Pañipadā*, p 256: "sitting ... for many hours ... the painful feelings quickly spread to all parts of the body ... even the backs of the hands and feet feel as if they are on fire ... inside the body it seems as if ... bones ... are about to break apart and separate ... the body ... as if it were burning in a mass of flames externally ... internally as if it was being beaten by hammers and stabbed with sharp steel daggers ... the whole body is in agony."

⁸⁴ In fact at M I 481 the Buddha used the 'let my blood dry up' expression in order to admonish monks who were unwilling to give up eating in the evening. As 146 glosses this expression with *thiraparakkamo* and *daēhāparakkamo*, 'firm and steadfast effort'.

⁸⁵ E.g. Th 223 and 313: *nāssisāū na pivissāmi, viharato na nikkhame; na pi passatū nipātesaū, taḍhāsalle anāhate*; Th 514: *tato me paḍidhā āsi, cetaso abhipathito; na nisāde muhuttam-pi, taḍhāsalle anāhate*.

In a similar way, the expression 'diligent' (*ātāpī*) may not have carried the same literal connotations for the Buddha as it did for his more ascetically inclined contemporaries. In fact, in the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* diligent (*ātāpī*) comes up in relation to the bliss of absorption.⁸⁶ Similarly, in a passage from the *Indriya Saṃyutta* the quality of diligence is combined with pleasant feelings, mental and physical.⁸⁷ In these instances, 'diligent' has clearly lost any relation to self-mortification and its concomitant physical pain.

The practical implications of being 'diligent' can best be illustrated with two maxims from the discourses, both of which use the word 'diligent' (*ātāpī*): 'right now is the time to diligently practise'; and: 'you yourself have to practise with diligence' (since no one else can do it for you).⁸⁸ Similar connotations also underlie the occurrence of 'diligence' in those passages which describe the serious commitment of a monk retiring into seclusion for intensive practice, after having received a brief instruction from the Buddha.⁸⁹

Since both deficiency of effort and excessive tension can obstruct one's progress,⁹⁰ the quality of 'diligence' is best understood as a balanced but sustained application of energy.⁹¹ Such balanced endeavour avoids, on the one hand, passive submission to 'destiny', a higher will, or personal idiosyncrasies, and, on the other, excessive effort, self-assertive striving, and self-inflicted suffering in the name of a higher goal.

The Buddha once compared the balanced effort needed for proper progress to the tuning of a lute, whose strings should be neither too tight nor too loose.⁹² This comparison of mental cultivation to the tuning of a musical instrument illustrates the well-adjusted effort and sensitivity required for developing the mind.⁹³ The notion of a 'middle path' of wise balance, avoiding the extremes of excessive and insufficient effort, has of course been one of the Buddha's central teachings since the time of his first discourse.⁹⁴ It was this balanced 'middle path' approach, avoiding the two extremes of stagnation and excessive striving, which had enabled him to gain awakening.⁹⁵

⁸⁶ M III 92: *bhikkhu ... pañhamā jhānā upasampajja viharati. So imam-eva kāyā vīvekajena pātisukhena abhisandeti parisandeti paripāreṭi parippharati, nassa kiṃci sabbāvato kāyassa vīvekajena pātisukhena apphutaṭi hoti ... tassa evaṭi appamattassa ātāpino pahitattassa viharato ...*

⁸⁷ *ātāpā* related to *dukkhindriya*, *domanassindriya*, *sukhindriya*, *somanassindriya* and *upekkhindriya* in turn at S V 213.

⁸⁸ M III 187: *ajjeva kiccaṭi ātappaṭi*; Dh 276: *tumhehi kiccaṭi ātappaṭi*; (Dh 165: *nāṃ aṃṃāṭi visodhaye*).

⁸⁹ E.g. at S II 21, S III 74-9, S IV 37, 64, 76, and A IV 299. Rhys Davids: *Buddhist India*, p 242, and Singh: *North-Eastern India*, p 127, relate *tapas* in a secondary sense to retirement into solitude in the forest, which parallels the use of *ātāpā* together with *eko vāpakaññho* (dwelling alone and secluded) in the standard description of such a monk's going into seclusion for intensive practice.

⁹⁰ Cf. e.g. M III 159, where both are listed as possible obstructions for developing a concentrated mind: *accāraddha viriyādhikarāḍa-ca pana me samādhi cavi ... atilāna viriyādhikarāḍa-ca pana me samādhi cavi*. The need for an intelligent maintenance of balance in meditation practice is also documented at M II 223, according to which the path to freedom from *dukkha* at times requires the application of effort, while at other times it rather requires just equanimous observation: *imassa kho me dukkhanidānassa saikhārāṭi padahato saikhārappadhānā virāgo hoti, imassa pana me dukkhanidānassa ajjhupekkhato upekkhāṭi bhāvayato virāgo hoti*.

⁹¹ Other translations of *ātāpā* reflect similar shades of meaning, it being variously rendered as "conscientious", as "active", or as the input of energy which "revives the decreasing morale" (Hamilton: *Identity and Experience*, p 173; Katz: *Human Perfection*, p 155; and Pandey: *Dhammānupassanā*, p 37). The nuance of continuity can be seen at A III 38 and A IV 266, which associate *ātāpā* with being continuously active: *niccaṭi ātāpā ussuko*. Another relevant instance is at M III 187, where *ātāpā* occurs in what may refer to spending a night in meditation: *evaṭi vihārim-ātāpīṭi ahorattam-atanditāṭi, taṭi ve bhaddekaratto ti* (following Āḍāponika: *Sutta Nipāta*, p 346, for *bhaddekaratta*). Similarly Dhāraṭi: *Dynamic Way*, p 97, understands *ātāpā* as "perseverance"; and Āḍāraṭi: *ānāpānasati*, p 3, as "unbroken continuity."

⁹² Vin I 182 and A III 375: *yadā pana te Soḍa vāḍāya tantiyo na accāyatā honti na atisithilā honti, same guḍe patiññhitā ... evam-eva accāraddhaviriyaṭi uddhaccāya saivattati, atilānaviriyaṭi kosajjāya saivattati. Tasmātiha tvaṭi, Soḍa, viriyasama-taṭi adhiññhaha*; (cf. also Th 638-639). The *Soḍa* story comes up also in the *satipaññhāna* subcomy, Ps-pñ I 384, illustrating the need for balanced energy. The need for balance is also stressed by Kor: *Self-Penetration*, p 23.

⁹³ Khantipālo: *Practical Advice*, p 28, and Vimalaraṭi: *ānāpānasati*, p 49, warn against the dangers of overstraining or forcing meditation and the possibly resulting emotional disturbances and hardening of the mind. Mann: *Character Analysis*, p 120, based on comparing the common character-type in ancient Indian and the typical modern 'western' mind, warns against indiscriminately applying to 'hate' type meditators instructions developed mainly for the 'craving' type. Cf. also Karunaratne: *Buddhism*, p 70.

⁹⁴ S V 421: *dve ... antā ... na sevitaḍā ... ete te ubho ante anupagamma majjhimā pañipadā Tathāgatena abhisambuddhā*.

⁹⁵ S I 1: *yadā svāhāṭi santiññhāmi tadāssu saūsādāmi, yadā svāhāṭi āyāhāmi tadāssu nibbuyhāmi. Evaṭi khvāhāṭi appatiññhāṭi anāyāhāṭi ogham-atariṭi*. Cf. also Sn 8-13: *yo naccasārā na paccasārā ... so bhikkhu jahāti oraparāṭi*.

Applying these nuance to *satipaṭṭhāna*, to be 'diligent' then amounts to keeping up one's contemplation with balanced but dedicated continuity, immediately returning to the object of meditation as soon as it is lost.⁹⁶

II.3) Clearly Knowing (*sampajāna*)

The second of the four particular mental qualities mentioned in the 'definition' is *sampajāna*, a present participle of the verb *sampajānāti*. *Sampajānāti* can be divided into *pañānāti* (he or she knows) and the prefix *saū* (together), which often serves an intensifying function in Pāli compounds.⁹⁷ Thus *sam-pajānāti* stands for an intensified form of knowing, for 'clearly' knowing.⁹⁸

The range of meaning of 'clearly knowing' (*sampajāna*) can be conveniently illustrated by briefly surveying some of its occurrences in the discourses: In a discourse found in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, 'clearly knowing' stands for consciously experiencing one's own life as an embryo in a womb, including the event of being born.⁹⁹ In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, 'clearly knowing' implies the presence of deliberateness, when one 'deliberately' speaks a falsehood.¹⁰⁰ In a passage from the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 'clearly knowing' refers to awareness of the impermanent nature of feelings and thoughts.¹⁰¹ A discourse in the *Ānguttara Nikāya* recommends 'clear knowledge' (*sampajāñña*) for overcoming unwholesomeness and establishing wholesomeness,¹⁰² while the *Itivuttaka* relates 'clearly knowing' to following the advice of a good friend.¹⁰³

A common denominator suggested by these selected examples from all five *Nikāyas* is the ability to fully grasp or comprehend what is taking place. Such clear knowledge can in turn lead to the development of wisdom (*paññā*). According to the *Abhidhamma*, clear knowledge does in fact already correspond to the presence of wisdom.¹⁰⁴ Considered from an etymological viewpoint, this suggestion is convincing, since *paññā* and (*sam-*)*pañānāti* are closely related. Yet, the above examples suggest that clearly knowing (*sampajāna*) does not necessarily imply the presence of wisdom (*paññā*). When one utters a falsehood, for example, one may clearly know one's speech to be a lie, but one does not speak the falsehood 'with wisdom'. Similarly, while it is remarkable enough to be clearly aware of one's embryonic development in the womb, to do so does not require wisdom. Thus, though clear knowing may lead to the development of wisdom, in itself it only connotes to 'clearly know' what is happening.

In the *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions, the presence of such clear knowledge is alluded to by the frequently recurring expression 'he knows' (*pañānāti*), which is found in most of the practical instructions. Similar to clearly knowing, the expression 'he knows' (*pañānāti*) at times refers to rather basic forms of knowing, while in other instances it connotes more sophisticated types of understanding. In the context of *satipaṭṭhāna*, the range of what a meditator 'knows' includes, for example, identifying a long breath as long, or recognising one's physical posture.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁶ Jotika: *Mahāsatipaññhāna*, p 29 n 15. This parallels the commentarial understanding of the related term *appamāda* as undistracted mindfulness, *satiyā avippavāso* (e.g. Sv I 104, Dh-a IV 26).

⁹⁷ Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, pp 655 and 690.

⁹⁸ The *satipaṭṭhāna* subcommentary explains *sampajāna* as 'knowing in every way and in detail', Ps-pñ I 354: *samantato pakārehi pakāññhaū vā savisesatī jānātāti sampajāno*. Guenther: *Philosophy*, p 85, speaks of "analytical appreciative understanding"; Æāḍāraṃa: *Ānāpānasatī*, p 4, of "investigative intelligence"; and van Zeyst: "Attention", p 331, of "deliberate, discriminative knowledge."

⁹⁹ D III 103 and 231.

¹⁰⁰ M I 286 and 414: *sampajānamusā bhāsītā hoti*. Furthermore A II 158 distinguishes between the threefold action being done either *sampajāna* or else *asampajāna*, a context which also merits to be rendered by 'deliberateness'.

¹⁰¹ S V 180: *katha-ca bhikkhu sampajāno hoti? Idha bhikkhuno vidiṭṭā vedanā ... vitakkā uppajjanti, vidiṭṭā upaññahanti, vidiṭṭā abbhathāū gacchanti*.

¹⁰² A I 13: *nāhaū aṅgāū ekadhammam-pi samanupassāmi yena anuppannā vā kusalā dhammā uppajjanti uppannā vā akusalā dhammā parihāyanti, yathayidaū sampajānaū*.

¹⁰³ It 10: *karaū mittānaū vacanaū, sampajāno patissato*.

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Dh 16: *katamaū tasmīū samaye sampajānaū hoti? Yā tasmīū samaye paṇḍā; Vibh 250: yā paṇḍā pajānanā ... vipassanā ... idaū vuccatī sampajānaū*. *Sampajāna* is also related to wisdom by Ayya Kheminda: *Balance*, p 30; Buddha-dāsa: *Mindfulness with Breathing*, p 98; Debvedi: *Sammāsati*, p 22; Dhammasudhi: *Insight Meditation*, p 67; Æāḍapoḍika: *Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p 46; and Swearer: *Knowledge as Salvation*, p 153.

¹⁰⁵ M I 56: *dāghaū vā assasanto 'dāghaū assasamā'-ti pajānāti*. M I 57: *yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paḍihito hoti tathā tathā naū pajānāti*.

Yet, with the later *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations, the meditator's task of knowing evolves until it comes to include the presence of discriminative understanding, such as when one is to understand the arising of a fetter in dependence on a sense-door and its respective object.¹⁰⁶ This evolution culminates in knowing the four noble truths 'as they actually are', a penetrative type of deep understanding for which again the expression 'he knows' is used.¹⁰⁷ Thus both the expression 'he knows' (*pajānāti*) and the quality of 'clearly knowing' (*sampajāna*) can refer to a broad variety of mental activities, ranging from basic forms of knowing to deep discriminative understanding.

Clearly knowing, apart from being listed in the 'definition' part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, is mentioned again under the first *satipaṭṭhāna*, in regard to a set of bodily activities.¹⁰⁸ Expositions of the gradual path of training usually refer to such clear knowing in regard to bodily activities with the compound *satisampajāna*, 'mindfulness and clear knowledge'.¹⁰⁹ On further perusing the discourses, one finds that the combination of mindfulness with clear knowledge (or clearly knowing) is employed in a wide variety of contexts, paralleling the above documented flexible usage of clearly knowing on its own.

The Buddha, for instance, taught his disciples, went to sleep, endured an illness, relinquished his life-principle, and prepared for death endowed with mindfulness and clear knowledge.¹¹⁰ Even in his previous life he was already in possession of mindfulness and clear knowledge when he arose in heaven, stayed there, passed away from there, and entered his mother's womb.¹¹¹

Mindfulness and clear knowledge also contribute towards improving one's ethical conduct and overcoming sensuality.¹¹² In the context of meditation, mindfulness and clear knowledge can refer to contemplating mental factors; they can mark a high level of equanimity in the context of perceptual training; or they can take part in overcoming sloth and torpor.¹¹³ Mindfulness and clear knowledge become particularly prominent during the third meditative absorption (*jhāna*), presumably because at this point both are required to avoid a relapse into the intense joy (*pīti*) experienced during the second absorption.¹¹⁴

This broad variety of occurrences demonstrates that the combination of mindfulness with clear knowledge is often used in a general manner to refer to awareness and knowledge, without being restricted to its specific use as clearly knowing bodily activities in the gradual path scheme or in the *satipaṭṭhāna* context. This combination of mindfulness with clear knowledge points to the need to combine mindful observation of phenomena with an intelligent processing of the observed data.¹¹⁵ Thus to 'clearly know' can be taken to represent the 'illumi-

¹⁰⁶ M I 61: *cakkhu*-ca pajānāti, rāpe ca pajānāti, ya-cā tad-ubhayaū pañicca uppajjati saīyojanaū ta-cā pajānāti.

¹⁰⁷ M I 62: 'idaū dukkhan'-ti ... 'ayaū dukkhasamudayo' ti ... 'ayaū dukkhanirodho' ti ... 'ayaū dukkhanirodhagāminā pañipadā'-ti yathābhūtaū pajānāti.

¹⁰⁸ M I 57: *abhikkante pañikkante sampajānakarā hoti, ālokite vilokite sampajānakarā hoti, samī*-jite pasārite sampajānakarā hoti, *saīghānipattacāvaradhāraḍe sampajānakarā hoti, asite pāte khāyite sāyite sampajānakarā hoti, uccārapassāvakkamme sampajānakarā hoti, gate nīhite nisinne sutte jāgarite bhāsīte tuḍhābhāve sampajānakarā hoti*. I will consider this exercise in more detail in chapter VI.4.

¹⁰⁹ E.g. at D I 70.

¹¹⁰ Maintaining equanimity towards attentive or non-attentive disciples at M III 221; going to sleep at M I 249; enduring illness and pain at D II 99, D II 128, S I 27, 110, and Ud 82; giving up his life principle at D II 106, S V 262, A IV 311, and Ud 64; lying down to die at D II 137. The presence of both at the time of death is recommended to the monks in general at S IV 211: *sato bhikkhu sampajāno kalam āgameyya*.

¹¹¹ M III 119: *sato sampajāno uppajjamāno bodhisatto Tusitaū kāyaū uppajji ... Tusite kāye aññhāsi ... Tusitā kāya cavitvā mātu kucchīū okkama ...*; (parts of this also at D II 108).

¹¹² A II 195: *sīlapārisuddhiṃ aṇariṇūraṃ vā pariṇūressāmi ... yo tattha ... sati ca sampajāna-cā, idam vuccati ... sīlapārisuddhipadhāniyaṅgam*. S I 31: *kāme pahāya satimā sampajāno*.

¹¹³ A IV 168: *viditā vedanā uppajjanti, viditā upaññahanti, viditā abbhataū gacchanti, viditā sa-cā ... vitakkā ... idaū ... satisampajāna-smiū hoti*; (cf. also A II 45). D III 250: *cakkhunā rāpaū disvā neva sumano hoti na dummano, upekkhako viharati sato sampajāno, sotena ...*; and D III 113: *pañikkāla-cā appañikkāla-cā tad-ubhayaū abhinivajjetvā upekkhako vihareyyaū sato sampajāno*. D I 71: *āloka sa-cā sato sampajāno thānamiddhā cittaū parisodheti*.

¹¹⁴ E.g. at D II 313: *pātiyā ca viragā upekkhako viharati, sato ca sampajāno ... tatiyajjhānaū upasampajja viharati*. Vism 163 comments: *idam tatiyajjhānasukhaū pātito apanātaū, taū satisampajāna-arakkhena arakkhiyamānaū punad-eva pātīū upagaccheyya*; cf. also Guenther: *Philosophy*, p 124; and Gunaratana: *Serenity and Insight*, p 92.

¹¹⁵ The interaction between *sati* and wisdom is described at Ps I 243: *ayaū pana yasmā satiyā ārammaḍaū pariggahetvā*

nating’ or ‘awakening’ aspect of contemplation. Understood in this way, clear knowledge has the task of processing the input received by mindful observation, and thereby leads to the arising of wisdom.

These qualities of clear knowledge and mindfulness can then be understood to parallel the development of ‘knowledge’ and ‘vision’ of reality (*yathābhūtañāṇadassana*). According to the Buddha, to both ‘know’ and ‘see’ are necessary conditions for the realisation of *Nibbāna*.¹¹⁶ It may not be too far fetched to relate such growth of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) to the quality of clearly knowing (*sampajāna*), and the accompanying aspect of ‘vision’ to the activity of watching represented by mindfulness (*sati*).

More is to be said about this quality of clear knowledge.¹¹⁷ In order to do this, however, some additional ground has to be covered first, such as examining in more detail the implications of *sati*, which I will do in the next chapter.

Chapter III: *Sati*

With the present chapter, I continue to investigate the ‘definition’ part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. As a way of providing some background for *sati*, the third quality mentioned in the ‘definition’, I will briefly survey the general approach to knowledge in early Buddhism. In order to evaluate *sati*, the main task of the present chapter, I will then explore its typical characteristics from different angles, and also contrast it with concentration (*samādhi*).

III.1) The Early Buddhist Approach to Knowledge

The philosophical setting of ancient Indian was dominated by three main approaches to the acquisition of knowledge.¹¹⁸ The brahmins relied mainly on ancient sayings, handed down by oral transmission, as authoritative sources of knowledge. Others, as documented in the *Upaniṣads*, used philosophical reasoning as the main tool for developing knowledge. A substantial number of the wandering ascetics and contemplatives of that time also considered extrasensory perception and intuitive knowledge, gained through meditative experiences, important means for the acquisition of knowledge. These three approaches can be summarised as: oral tradition, logical reasoning, and direct intuition.

When questioned on his own epistemological position, the Buddha placed himself in the third category, i.e. among those who emphasized the development of direct, personal knowledge.¹¹⁹ Although he did not completely reject oral tradition or logical reasoning as ways of acquiring knowledge, he was keenly aware of their limitations. The problem with oral tradition is that material committed to memory might be wrongly remembered. Moreover, even material that has been well remembered may be false and misleading. Similarly, logical reasoning may seem convincing, but then turn out to be unsound. Moreover, even sound reasoning may prove false and misleading, if it is based on false premises. In contrast, what has not been well remembered or what does not appear to be perfectly well reasoned may turn out to be true.¹²⁰

paṇḍitya anupassati. Cf. also Vibh-a 311, which distinguishes between *sati* with and without wisdom: *sati hi paṇḍitya saddhim-pi uppajjati vināpi*, showing that wisdom is not an automatic result of the presence of *sati*, but needs to be deliberately developed. On the importance of combining *sati* with *sampajaṇṇa* cf. Chah: [Meditation](#), p 6; and Mahasi: [Wheel of Dhamma](#), p 94.

¹¹⁶ S III 152 and S V 434: *janatohaṭṭi ... passato āsavānaṭṭi khayāṭṭi vadāmi, no ajānato apassato*.

¹¹⁷ I will consider *sampajaṇṇa* again in the course of my investigation, in particular when discussing the practice of mental labelling (chapter V.4), and when investigating clearly knowing in regard to bodily activities as one of the body contemplations (chapter VI.4).

¹¹⁸ Following Jayatilleke: [Theory of Knowledge](#), p 63.

¹¹⁹ M II 211: *ye te samaḍḍā brāhmaḍḍā pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu sāmāṭṭi yeva dhammaṭṭi abhiṇṇāya diññhadham-mābhiṇṇāvosānapāramippattā ādibrahmacariyaṭṭi pañijānanti, tesāham asmi*.

¹²⁰ M I 520: *idhekacco satthā anussaviko hoti anussavasacco ... suttutam-pi hoti dussuttam-pi hoti tathā pi hoti aṭṭathā pi hoti ... idhekacco satthā takkā hoti vāmaṭṭi ... sutakkitam-pi hoti duttakkitam-pi hoti tathā pi hoti aṭṭathā pi hoti*. M II 171: *svānussutaṭṭi ... suparivittakkaṭṭi yeva hoti, taṭṭi-ca hoti rittāṭṭi tucchāṭṭi musā, no ce pi svānussutaṭṭi ... suparivittakkaṭṭi hoti, taṭṭi-ca hoti bhātaṭṭi tacchāṭṭi anaṭṭathā*.

The same reservation also holds true for direct knowledge gained in meditation. In fact, according to the Buddha's penetrating analysis in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, sole reliance on direct extrasensory knowledge had caused a considerable number of mistaken views among contemporary practitioners.¹²¹

Once the Buddha illustrated the dangers of relying entirely on one's own direct experience with the help of a parable.¹²² In this parable, a king had several blind men each touch a different part of an elephant. When questioned on the nature of the elephant, each blind man gave an entirely different account as the only right and true description of an elephant. Although what was experienced by each of the blind men was empirically true, yet their personal direct experience had revealed only part of the picture. The mistake each made was to wrongly conclude that his personal experience was the only truth, so that anyone disagreeing must be mistaken.¹²³

This parable goes to show that even direct personal experience may reveal only a part of the picture and therefore should not be grasped dogmatically as an absolute ground for knowledge. That is, emphasis on direct experience need not entail a complete rejection of oral tradition and reasoning as auxiliary sources of knowledge.

Nevertheless, direct experience constitutes the central epistemological tool in early Buddhism. According to a passage in the *Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta*, it is in particular the practice of *satiṭṭhāna* which can lead to an undistorted direct experience of things as they truly are, independent of oral tradition and reasoning.¹²⁴ Thus, clearly, *satiṭṭhāna* is an empirical tool of central importance in the pragmatic theory of knowledge in early Buddhism.

Applying the epistemological position of early Buddhism to actual practice, oral tradition and reasoning, in the sense of some degree of knowledge and reflection about the *Dhamma*, form the supporting conditions for a direct experience of reality through the practice of *satiṭṭhāna*.¹²⁵

III.2) *Sati*

The noun *sati* is related to the verb *sarati*, to remember.¹²⁶ *Sati* in the sense of 'memory' occurs on several occasions in the discourses,¹²⁷ and also in the standard definitions of *sati* given in the *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries.¹²⁸ This remembrance aspect of *sati* is personified by the Buddha's disciple most eminent in *sati*, *Ānanda*, who performed the almost incredible feat of recalling all the discourses spoken by the Buddha, thereby preserving them for pos-

¹²¹ A survey of the sixty-two grounds for formulating views, presented in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (D I 12-39), reveals that 'direct' meditative experiences are the most frequent cause for formulating a view, while speculative thought assumes only a subordinate role: forty-nine instances appear to be based purely or at least in part on meditative experiences [nos 1-3, 5-7, 9-11, 17, 19-22, 23-25, 27, 29-38, 39-41, 43-49, 51-57, 59-62]; against only thirteen instances based on pure reasoning [nos 4, 8, 12-16, 18, 26, 28, 42, 50, 58], (correlations done with the help of the comy). Cf. also Bodhi: *Net of Views*, p 6.

¹²² Ud 68.

¹²³ Ud 67: *idaū-eva saccaū, mogham-aṅgaū*. Cf. also D II 282: *yaū yad-eva sattā dhātūū abhinivisanti taū tad-eva thāmasā parāmassa abhinivissa voharanti: Idam-eva saccaū mogham-aṅgan-ti*. Another illustration of such a wrong conclusion can be found at M III 210, where direct supernormal knowledge led to various wrong assumptions about the working mechanism of karma.

¹²⁴ At S IV 139, the Buddha proposed contemplation of the mind in relation to sense experience (*cakkhunā rāpaū disvā santāū vā ajjhattāū rāgadosamohaū, 'atthi me ... ti pajānāti* etc.) as a method of arriving at final knowledge, independent of faith, personal preferences, oral tradition, reason, and acceptance of a view: *ayaū pariyāyo yaū pariyāyaū āgamma bhikkhu aṅgatreva saddhāya, aṅgatra ruciya, aṅgatra anussava, aṅgatra ākāravarivittakkā, aṅgatra dīṇṇhinijjhānakkhantiya aṅgaū vyākaraoti*.

¹²⁵ This brings to mind the threefold distinction between wisdom based on reflecting, based on learning, and based on mental development: *cintāmayā paṇḍā, sutamayā paṇḍā, and bhāvanāmayā paṇḍā*. (It is noteworthy that in the discourses this threefold presentation occurs only at D III 219).

¹²⁶ Cf. also Bodhi: *Manual of Abhidhamma*, p 86; Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, p 36; Guenther: *Philosophy*, p 67; and Yaōa-moli: *Middle Length Discourses*, p 1188 n 136. The Sanskrit equivalent of *sati* is *smṛti*, also connoting memory and mental retention, cf. Monier-Williams: *Dictionary*, p 1271; and Rhys Davids: *Indian Psychology*, p 80.

¹²⁷ E.g. '*sati pamuññhā*' at M I 329 meaning 'forgotten'; or '*sati udapādi*' at D I 180 as 'remembering'; cf. also A IV 192, where a monk, reproved for an offence, pretended to not remember it: '*na sarāmi na sarāmā'ti asatiya 'va nibbeñheti*'.

¹²⁸ Dhs 11: *anussati pañissati sati saraḍatā dhāraḍatā* (same at Pp 25 and Vibh 250); As 121: *saranti tāya sayāū vā sarati, saraḍamattam-eva vā esāti sati*; Mil 77: *kena atātaū cirakataū saratāti? Satiya*; Vism 162: *saraḍalakkhaḍā sati*.

terity.¹²⁹

The connotation of *sati* as memory becomes particularly prominent with the recollections (*anussati*). The discourses often list a set of six recollections (*anussati*): recollection of the Buddha, of the *Dhamma*, of the *Saṅgha*, of one's ethical conduct, of one's liberality, and of heavenly beings (*deva*).¹³⁰ Another kind of recollection, usually occurring in the context of the 'higher knowledges' gained through deep concentration, is the recollection of one's past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati*). In regard to all these, it is *sati* which fulfils the function of recollecting.¹³¹ This recollective function of *sati* can even lead to awakening, documented in the *Theragāthā* with the case of a monk who gained realisation based on recollecting the qualities of the Buddha.¹³²

This connotation of *sati* as memory appears also in its formal definition in the discourses, which relates *sati* to the ability of calling to mind what has been done or said long ago.¹³³ A closer examination of this definition, however, reveals that *sati* is not really defined as memory, but as that which facilitates and enables memory. What this definition of *sati* points to is that, if *sati* is present, memory will be able to function well.¹³⁴

Understanding *sati* in this way facilitates relating it to the context of *satipaṭṭhāna*, where it is not related to recalling past events, but rather functions as awareness of the present moment.¹³⁵ *Sati* as present moment awareness is similarly reflected in the presentations of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and the *Visuddhimagga*, according to which the characteristic quality of *sati* is 'presence' (*upaṭṭhāna*), whether as a faculty (*indriya*), as an awakening factor (*bojjhaṅga*), as a factor of the noble eightfold path, or at the moment of realisation.¹³⁶

Thus mindfulness being present (*upaṭṭhitasati*) can be understood to imply 'presence of mind', in so far as it is directly opposed to 'absent-mindedness' (*mutṭhassati*). 'Presence of mind' in the sense that, endowed with *sati*, one is wide awake in regard to the present moment.¹³⁷ Due to such presence of mind, whatever one does or says will be clearly apprehended by the mind, and thus can be more easily remembered later on.¹³⁸

Sati is required not only to fully take in the moment to be remembered, but also to bring this moment back to mind at a later time. To 're-collect', then, becomes just a particular instance of a state of mind characterised by 'collectedness' and the absence of distraction.¹³⁹

The kind of mental state in which memory functions well can be characterised by a

¹²⁹ *ānanda's* recital of the discourses is documented at Vin II 287; while his eminence in *sati* is stated at A I 24: *etad-aggāi mama sāvakānaū bhikkhānaū satimantānaū, yadidaū ānando*. Nevertheless, according to Vin I 298 he also had lapses of *sati*, such as when he once set out to collect alms without putting on all his robes.

¹³⁰ E.g. at A III 284: *Buddhānussati, dhammānussati, saighānussati, sālānussati, cāgānussati, devatānussati*. On the six recollections cf. also Vism 197-228; and Devendra: *Sati*, pp 25-45.

¹³¹ A II 183: *pubbenivāso satiya sacchikaraḍḍayo*. A V 336 (in relation to *Buddhānussati*) speaks of: *Tathāgataū ārabha aijhataū sati upaṅṅhapetabbā*. Nid II 262 clearly understands all *anussatis* as activities of *sati*: *Buddhānussatiya sato, dhammānussatiya sato, saighānussatiya sato, sālānussatiya sato, cāgānussatiya sato, devatānussatiya sato*. Vism 197 sums up: *sati yeva anussati*.

¹³² Th 217-218: *ekāū buddhagataū saṅgāū alabhitaū patissato ... tassā saṅgāya vāhasā, patto me āsavakkhayo*. Th-a II 82 explains that based on recollecting the Buddha the monk then developed deep concentration which enabled him to recall past Buddhas, with the result that he realised that even Buddhas are impermanent. This in turn led to his awakening: *yaū yā buddhānaū aniccataū disvā tad-anusārena sabbā saikhāresu tadā aniccasaṅgāū alabhiū*.

¹³³ M I 356: *satimā hoti, paramena satinepakkena samannāgato, cirakatam-pi cirabhāsitam-pi saritā anussaritā*.

¹³⁴ The passage at M I 356 could then be rendered as: 'He is mindful, being endowed with highest discriminative mindfulness (so that) things said or done long ago are recalled and remembered.' *Āḍānanda*: Middle Length Discourses, p 1252 n 560, explains: "keen attentiveness to the present forms the basis for an accurate memory of the past." *Āḍānanda*: *Ideal Solitude*, p 28, points out: "mindfulness and memory ... the keenness of the one naturally leads to the clarity of the other."

¹³⁵ *Āḍānanda*: *Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p 9; *Āḍāvāra*: *Clearing the Path*, p 382; and Rhys Davids: *Dialogues*, vol II, p 322. Griffith: "Memory", p 111, explains: "the basic meaning of *smṛti* and derivatives in Buddhist technical discourse ... has to do with observation and attention, not with awareness of past objects."

¹³⁶ Pañis I 16: *satindriyassa upaṅṅhānañño ... satsaūbojjhaṅgassa upaṅṅhānañño ... sammāsatiya upaṅṅhānañño*; Pañis I 116: *sotāpattimagakkhaḍḍe ... arahattaphalakkhaḍḍe ... satindriyaū upaṅṅhānaparivāraū*; Vism 510: *sammāsati ... upaṅṅhānalakkhaḍḍa*.

¹³⁷ Cf. S I 44, where *sati* is related to wakefulness: *sati lokasmīū jāgaro*. A related nuance occurs at Vism 464, which relates *sati* to *thirasaṅgā*, strong cognition

¹³⁸ The opposite case is documented at Vin II 261, where a nun fails to memorize the training rules due to lack of *sati*.

¹³⁹ *Āḍānanda*: *Calm and Insight*, p 47.

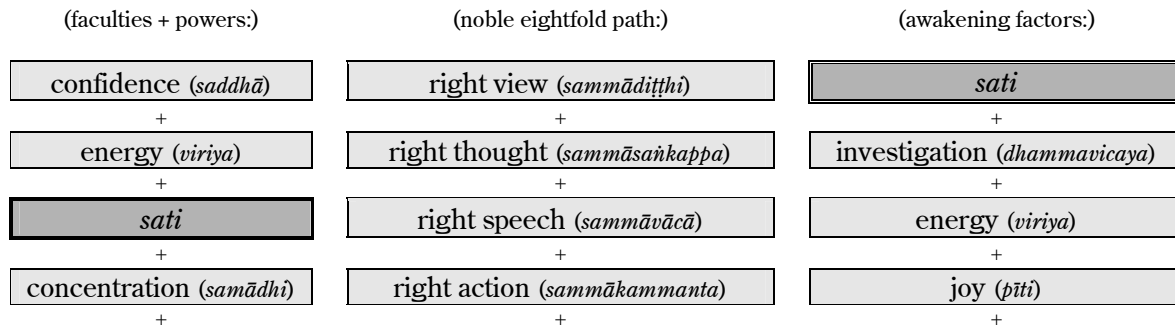
certain degree of breadth, in contrast to a narrow focus. It is this breadth that enables the mind to make the necessary connections between information received in the present moment and information stored from the past. This quality becomes evident on those occasions when one tries to remember a particular instance or fact but where, the more one applies one's mind, the less one is able to recall. Yet, if the issue in question is laid aside for a while and the mind is in a state of relaxed receptivity, the information one was trying to remember may suddenly spring to mind.

The suggestion that the mental state in which *sati* is well established can be characterised as having 'breadth' instead of a narrow focus finds support in some discourses, which relate the absence of *sati* to a narrow state of mind (*parittacetasa*), while its presence leads to a broad and 'boundless' state of mind (*appamāṇacetasa*).¹⁴⁰

Based on this nuance of 'breadth of mind', *sati* could represent the ability to simultaneously maintain in one's mind the various elements and facets of a particular situation.¹⁴¹ This can be applied to both the faculty of memory and to awareness of the present moment. In effect, some verses in the *Sutta Nipāta* instruct the listener to 'set out' with *sati*, subsequent to an instruction given by the Buddha. In these instances, *sati* seems to combine both present moment awareness and remembering what the Buddha had taught.¹⁴²

More information about *sati* can be gained by considering its role and position among some of the central categories of early Buddhism (cf. diagram 3.1 below). *Sati* not only forms part of the noble eightfold path - as right mindfulness (*sammāsati*) - but also occupies a central position among the faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*), and constitutes the first member of the awakening factors (*bojjhaṅga*). In these contexts, the functions of *sati* cover both present moment awareness and memory.¹⁴³

The Position of *Sati* among Important Categories:
(Diagram 3.1)

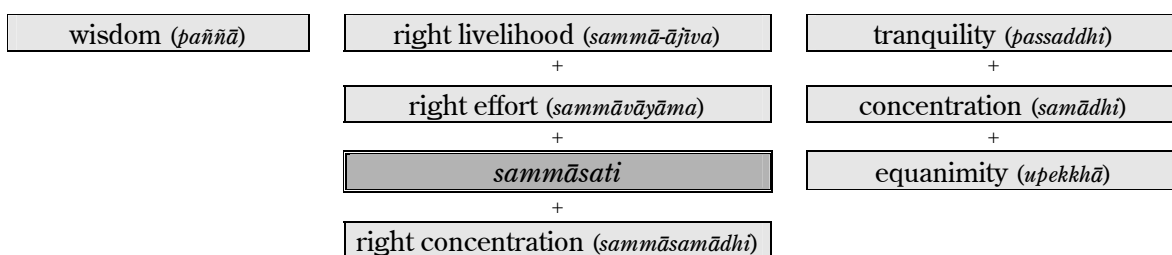


¹⁴⁰ S IV 119: *cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā ... anupaṭṭhitāya satiyā ca viharati parittacetaso*, but S IV 120: *cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā ... upaṭṭhitāya satiyā ca viharati appamāṇacetaso*, (M I 266, S IV 186, 189, and 199 make the same statement in relation to *kāyasati*). Similarly, Sn 150-151 refers to the practice of radiating *mettā* in all directions as a form of *sati*, so that here too *sati* represents an 'immeasurable' state of mind: *mettañ-ca sabbalokasmiṃ ... aparimānaṃ ... etaṃ satim adhiṭṭheyya*.

¹⁴¹ Piatigorski: *Buddhist Philosophy*, p 150. Cf. also Newman: *Disciplines of Attention*, p 28, who distinguishes between two levels of attention, primary and secondary: "I may be thinking about tomorrow and still be aware that now I am thinking about tomorrow ... my first level awareness is on tomorrow but my second level awareness is on what is happening now (I.e. that now I am thinking about tomorrow)."

¹⁴² Sn 1053: *kiṭṭayissāmi te dhammā ... yaū viditvā sato carāū, tare loka visattikaū*; also at Sn 1066 and 1085.

¹⁴³ Definitions of *sati* as a faculty mention both the practice of *satipaññhāna* and memory (S V 196: *catusu satipaññhānesu, ettha satindriyaū daññhabbaū*; or S V 200: *cattāro satipaññhāne ārabha satiū pañilabhati idaū vuccati satindriyaū*; but then S V 198: *satimā hoti, paramena satinepakkena samannāgato, cirakatam-pi cirabhāsitaṃ-pi saritā anussaritā. ... idaū vuccati satindriyaū*), the latter being also the definition of *sati* as a power (A III 11: *satimā hoti, paramena satinepakkena samannāgato, cirakatam-pi cirabhāsitaṃ-pi saritā anussaritā ... idaū vuccati satibalaū*). As an awakening factor, *sati* again covers both aspects, since at M III 85 the presence of undistracted mindfulness as the outcome of *satipaññhāna* practice forms *sati* as an awakening factor: *yasmīū samaye bhikkhuno upaññhitā sati hoti asammūñhā, satisambojjaṅgo tasmīū samaye ... bhāveti*; (same definition also several times at S V 331-339); in contrast at S V 67, *sati* as an awakening factor functions as memory, since here it is concerned with recollecting and considering the teaching: *dhammāū anussarati anuvitakketi satisambojjaṅgo tasmīū samaye ... hoti*.



Among the faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*), *sati* occupies the middle position. Here *sati* has the function of balancing and monitoring the other faculties and powers, by becoming aware of excesses or deficiencies. A monitoring function similar to its position among the faculties and powers can be found in the noble eightfold path, where *sati* occupies the middle position in the three factored path-section directly concerned with mental training. The monitoring quality of *sati* is however not restricted to right effort and right concentration only, since according to the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* the presence of right mindfulness is also a requirement for the other path-factors.¹⁴⁴

In regard to its two neighbours in the eightfold noble path, *sati* performs additional functions. In relation to right effort, *sati* has a protective role, preventing the arising of unwholesome states of mind in the context of sense-restraint, which constitutes an aspect of right effort. In relation to right concentration, well-established *sati* is an important foundation for the development of deeper levels of mental tranquility, a topic to which I will return later on.

The neighbourly position of *sati* between the mental qualities of energy (or effort) and concentration recurs also among the faculties and powers. The ‘definition’ part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* also combines *sati* with these two qualities, which are here represented by being diligent (*ātāpī*) and by the absence of desires and discontent (*abhijjhādomanassa*). The placement of *sati* between energy and concentration in all these contexts mirrors a natural progression in the development of *sati*, since in the early stages of practice a considerable degree of energy is required to counter distraction, while well established *sati* in turn leads to an increasingly concentrated and calm state of mind.

In contrast to its middle position among the faculties and powers, and in the final section of the noble eightfold path, in the list of the awakening factors *sati* assumes the starting position. Here *sati* constitutes the foundation for those factors that bring about realisation.

Since in relation to the faculties, powers, and factors of the noble eightfold path *sati* is clearly distinguished from associated factors like energy, wisdom, and concentration, *sati* has to be something clearly different from them in order to merit separate listing.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, since *sati* is differentiated from the awakening factor ‘investigation-of-*dhammas*’, the task of investigating *dhammas* cannot be identical with the activity of awareness, otherwise there would have been no need to introduce it as a separate term. In this case, however, the activity of *sati* is closely related to investigation-of-*dhammas*, since according to the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* the awakening factors arise sequentially, with ‘investigation-of-*dhammas*’ arising consequent on the presence of *sati*.¹⁴⁶

Coming back to right mindfulness as a factor of the noble eightfold path, it is noteworthy

¹⁴⁴ M III 73 defines right mindfulness as the presence of awareness when overcoming wrong thought, wrong speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood, and when establishing their counterparts: *so sato micchāsaikappaū ... micchāvācaū ... micchākammantaū ... micchā-ājīvaū pajahati, sato sammāsaikappaū ... sammāvācaū ... sammākammantaū ... sammā-ājīvaū upasampajja viharati. Sāssa hoti sammāsati.*

¹⁴⁵ This is highlighted in the *Paṭisambhidhāmagga*, according to which a clear appreciation of this difference constitutes ‘discriminative understanding’ (*dhammapaṭisambhidaññā*), cf. Paṭis I 88: *añño viriyindriyaṃ dhammo, añño satindriyaṃ dhammo, añño samādhindriyaṃ dhammo, añño paññindriyaṃ dhammo*; Paṭis I 89: *añño satisambojjhaṅgo dhammo, añño dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo dhammo ...* (etc.); and Paṭis I 90: *añño sammāvāyāmo dhammo, añño sammāsati dhammo, añño sammāsamādhi dhammo.*

¹⁴⁶ M III 85: *upaññhitā sati hoti ... tathā sato viharanto taū dhammaū paṇḍāya pavicinati pavicarati parivāmaṁsai āpajjati ... dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo tasmīi samaye bhikkhu bhāveti.* Same at S V 68.

thy that the term *sati* is repeated within the definition of right mindfulness (*sammāsati*).¹⁴⁷ This repetition is not merely accidental, but rather points to a qualitative distinction between ‘right’ mindfulness (*sammāsati*) as a path factor and mindfulness as a general mental factor. In fact, numerous discourses mention ‘wrong’ mindfulness (*micchā sati*), which suggests that certain forms of *sati* can be quite different from ‘right’ mindfulness.¹⁴⁸ According to this definition, *sati* requires the support of being diligent (*ātāpī*) and of clearly knowing (*sampajāna*). It is this combination of mental qualities, supported by a state of mind free from desires and discontent, and directed towards the body, feelings, mind, or *dhammas*, which becomes the path factor of right mindfulness.

In the *Mañibhadda Sutta* the Buddha pointed out that *sati* on its own, despite its manifold advantages, may not suffice for overcoming arisen ill will.¹⁴⁹ This passage indicates that additional factors are needed in combination with *sati*, such as being diligent and clearly knowing (in the case of developing *satipaṭṭhāna*) or the practice of loving kindness (when having to counter arisen ill will).

Thus, in order to constitute ‘right mindfulness’, *sati* has to cooperate with various other mental qualities. However, for the purpose of clearly defining *sati*, which is my present task, I will consider *sati* in isolation from these other mental factors, in order to discern its most essential features.

III.3) *Sati* Imagery

The significance and various nuances of the term *sati* are illustrated by a considerable number of images and similes in the discourses. By examining these images and similes and by drawing out their implications, it is possible to gain additional insights into how the Buddha and his contemporaries understood the term *sati*.

A simile in the *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta* describes a cowherd who had to closely watch over his cows to prevent them from straying into the fields where the crop was ripe. But once the crop was harvested, he was able to relax, sit under a tree, and watch over them from a distance. To express this comparatively relaxed and distant manner of observation, *sati* is used.¹⁵⁰ The disposition suggested by this simile is a calm and detached type of observation.

Another simile supporting this quality of detached observation occurs in a verse in the *Theragāthā*, which compares the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* to climbing onto an elevated platform

¹⁴⁷ D II 313: *kāye kāyānupassā... dhammesu dhammānupassā viharati, àtāpā sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassā. Ayaū vuccati sammāsati*. An alternative definition of ‘right mindfulness’ can be found in the *Atthasālinā*, which simply speaks of remembering properly, As 124: *sammā sarati sammā vā tāya sarantāti sammāsati*. The definition of right mindfulness in the Chinese *āgamas* also does not mention the four *satipaṭṭhānas*: “he is mindful, widely mindful, keeping in mind, not forgetful, this is called right mindfulness”, (trsl. by Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 97).

¹⁴⁸ ‘*Micchā sati*’ at D II 353, D III 254, 287, 290, 291, M I 42, 118, M III 77, 140, S II 168, S III 109, S V 1, 12, 13, 16, 18-20, 23, 383, A II 220-229, A III 141, A IV 237, and A V 212-248; (A III 328 has also a wrong form of *anussati*). This substantial number of references to ‘wrong’ types of *sati* to some extent disagrees with the commentarial presentation of *sati* as an exclusively wholesome mental factor, (e.g. As 250). This presentation of the commentaries causes in fact a practical difficulty: how to reconcile *sati* as a wholesome factor with *satipaṭṭhāna* in relation to the hindrances, since wholesome and unwholesome mental qualities cannot coexist in the same state of mind? The commentaries attempt to solve this contradiction by presenting *satipaṭṭhāna* of a defiled state of mind as a quick alternation between mind-moments associated with *sati* and those under the influence of defilements (e.g. at Ps-pñ I 373). Cf. furthermore Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, pp 40-43; and ¥āḍapoḍika: *Abhidhamma Studies*, pp 68-72. According to the *Sarvāstivāda* tradition, *sati* is an indeterminate mental factor, cf. Stcherbatsky: *Central Conception*, p 101.

¹⁴⁹ At S I 208: *satimato sadā bhaddaū, satimā sukham-edhati, satimato su ve seyyo, verā na parimuccati, yassa sabbam-ahorattam, ahiūsāya rato mano, mettaū so sabbabhātesu, veraū tassa na kenaci*, (this forms part of a dialogue in which the Buddha corrected a statement made in similar terms, however with the decisive difference that: *verā na parimuccati*, i.e. the central point in the Buddha’s answer was to emphasise that *sati* alone may not suffice for overcoming ill will). This does, however, not mean that *sati* is incapable of preventing the arising of ill will, since its presence goes a long way in helping one to remain calm, when confronted with the anger of others, as documented at S I 162, 221, 222, and 223: *paraū saikupitāū □atvā, yo sato upasammati*.

¹⁵⁰ M I 117 ‘*satikarāḍāyaū*’, while earlier he had to become active: ‘*rakkheyya*’ (M I 115). This however does not imply that *sati* can not also take part in holding back a cow about to stray into ripe crops, which in fact it does at Th 446, but only that the more relaxed observation described above brings out a characteristic feature of bare and receptive *sati*.

or tower.¹⁵¹ Connotations of aloofness and uninvolved detachment are confirmed by the context of this passage, which contrasts the tower image to being carried away by the stream of desire. Detachment comes up again in the *Dantabhūmi Sutta*, which compares *satipaṭṭhāna* to the taming of a wild elephant. Just as a freshly caught elephant has to be gradually weaned of his forest habits, so too *satipaṭṭhāna* can gradually wean a monk from memories and intentions related to the household life.¹⁵²

Another simile compares *sati* to the probe of a surgeon.¹⁵³ Like the surgeon's probe, whose function is to provide information about the wound for subsequent treatment, so too the 'probe' *sati* can be used to carefully gather information, thereby preparing the ground for subsequent action. This ground-preparing quality is conveyed again by another simile, relating *sati* to the goad and the ploughshare of a farmer.¹⁵⁴ Just as a farmer has to first plough the ground in order to be able to sow, so too *sati* fulfils an important preparatory role for the arising of wisdom.¹⁵⁵

This role of *sati* in support of the arising of wisdom occurs again in another simile, which associates the parts of an elephant's body with mental qualities and factors. Here *sati* is compared to the elephant's neck, the natural support for its head, which in the simile represents wisdom.¹⁵⁶ The choice of the elephant's neck is of additional significance, since it is a characteristic of both elephants and Buddhas to look around by turning with the whole body instead of only with the head.¹⁵⁷ The elephant's neck, then, represents the quality of giving full attention to a matter at hand as a feature of *sati*.

Although the 'elephant look' is a specific characteristic of the Buddha, to give continuous and full attention to a matter at hand is a characteristic common to all *arahants*.¹⁵⁸ This is illustrated in another simile, which compares *sati* to the single spoke of a chariot.¹⁵⁹ In this simile, the rolling chariot represents the bodily activities of an *arahant*, all of which take place with the support of a single spoke - *sati*.

The supportive role of *sati* in the development of wisdom comes up again in a verse from the *Sutta Nipāta*, where *sati* keeps the 'streams in this world' in check, so that the faculty of wisdom can cut them off.¹⁶⁰ This verse points in particular to the role of *sati* in relation to restraint at the sense doors (*indriya saṃvara*) as a basis for the development of wisdom.

What the similes of the 'surgeon's probe', the 'ploughshare', the 'elephant's neck', and 'keeping the streams in check' have in common is that they illustrate the preparatory role of *sati* for insight. According to these similes, *sati* is the mental quality that enables wisdom to arise.¹⁶¹

Another simile, found in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, compares *sati* to a careful charioteer.¹⁶² This brings to mind the monitoring and steering quality of *sati* in relation to other mental factors, such as the faculties and the powers. The qualities evoked by this simile are careful and

¹⁵¹ Th 765: *satipaṅṅhānapāsādaū āruyha*.

¹⁵² M III 136: *seyyathāpi hatthidamako ... āraakassa nāgassa ... āraakāna-ceva sarasaikappānaū abhinimmanāya ... evam-eva ... ime cattāro satipaṅṅhānā cetaso ... gehasitāna-ceva sarasaikappānaū ... abhinimmanāya*.

¹⁵³ M II 260: *esanāti ... satiyāyetaū adhivacanaū*.

¹⁵⁴ S I 172 and Sn 77: *sati me phālapācanaū*.

¹⁵⁵ Spk I 253 and Pj II 147 explain: *satiparicite hi dhamme paā pajānāti, no sammūñhe*.

¹⁵⁶ A III 346: *sati gāvā, siro paā*. Mp III 371 explains: *yathā nāgassa aīgapaccaīgasmīū sirājālanāū gāvā patiññhā, evaū buddhanāgassa soraccādānaū dhammānaū sati, tena vuttaū 'sati gāvāti*. The same imagery occurs again at Th 695; and is at Th 1090 even transferred from an elephant to the Buddha himself: *satipaṅṅhānagāvo ... mahāmuni paāsāso*.

¹⁵⁷ M II 137 depicts the Buddha turning his whole body whenever looking back: *avalokento kho pana so bhavaū Gotamo sabbakāyeneva avaloketi*. This 'elephant-look' (*nāgāpalokita*) of the Buddha is again documented at D II 122; while M I 337 reports the same for the Buddha *Kakusandha*.

¹⁵⁸ According to Mil 266, *arahants* never lose their *sati*: *natthi arahantānaū satisammoso*.

¹⁵⁹ S IV 292: *ekāro satiyā etaū adhivacanaū*. The whole simile originally comes up at Ud 76, where it is only the comy, Ud-a 370, which relates the single spoke to *sati*: *eko satisaikhāto aro etassāti ekāro*.

¹⁶⁰ Sn 1035: *yāni sotāni lokasmīū, sati tesaū nivāraḍaū ... paāyete pithiyyare*; on this verse cf. also Yaḍānanda: *Ideal Solitude*, p 29.

¹⁶¹ The relation of *sati* to wisdom is also alluded to in the commentaries, according to whom the characteristic function of *sati* is absence of confusion, *asammoharasa* (Vism 464).

¹⁶² S V 6: *sati arakkhasārathi*. A variation on the same imagery occurs at S I 33, where the *Dhamma* itself becomes the charioteer, with the consequence that *sati* is relegated to being the chariot's upholstery (*parivāraḍa*).

balanced supervision. A similar nuance can be found in another simile, which compares mindfulness in relation to the body to carrying a bowl full of oil on one's head, vividly illustrating the balancing quality of *sati*.¹⁶³

Careful supervision in combination with *sati*'s connotation of memory occurs again in yet another simile, in which *sati* is personified by the gatekeeper of a town.¹⁶⁴ The simile portrays messengers arriving at the town gate with an urgent message to be delivered to the king. The function of the gatekeeper is to inform them of the shortest way to gain access to the king. The gatekeeper image occurs again elsewhere in relation to the defence of a town. This town has energy (*virīya*) as its troops and wisdom (*paññā*) as its fortification, while the function of the gatekeeper *sati* is to recognise the genuine citizens of the town and to allow them to enter the gates.¹⁶⁵ Both of these similes associate *sati* with having a clear overview of a situation.¹⁶⁶

The second simile moreover brings out the restraining function of bare *sati*, a function which is of particular relevance in relation to 'restraint at the sense doors' (*indriya saṃvara*).¹⁶⁷ This brings to mind the above-mentioned passage where *sati* was to 'keep the streams in this world in check.' Just as the presence of the gate-keeper prevents those not entitled from entering the town, so too the presence of well established *sati* prevents the arising of unwholesome associations and reactions at the sense doors. The same protective role of *sati* underlies also other passages, which introduce *sati* as 'the one' factor that guards the mind,¹⁶⁸ or as a mental quality able to exert a controlling influence on thoughts and intentions.¹⁶⁹

A discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* compares the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* to a cow-herd's skill in knowing the proper pasture for his cows.¹⁷⁰ The image of a proper pasture occurs again in the *Mahāgopālaka Sutta*, throwing into relief the importance of *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation for growth and development on the path to deliverance.¹⁷¹ Another discourse describes the situation of a monkey who has to avoid straying into regions visited by hunters.¹⁷² Just as the monkey, wishing to be safe, has to keep to its 'proper pasture', so too a practitioner of the path should keep to his 'proper pasture', which is *satipaṭṭhāna*. This set of images depicting *satipaṭṭhāna* as 'proper pasture' points to the restraining role of bare awareness in regard to sense-input, since in one of the above passages 'improper pasture' refers to sensual pleasures.¹⁷³

This stabilizing function of established mindfulness in regard to distraction by way of the six sense doors is exemplified in another simile with a strong post, to which six different wild animals are bound.¹⁷⁴ No matter how much each animal may struggle to get off on its own, the 'strong post' *sati* will remain stable and unshaken. Such a stabilizing function of *sati* is of particular relevance during the initial stages of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, given that without a firm foundation in balanced awareness one only too easily succumbs to sensual distraction. This is

¹⁶³ S V 170: *samatittiko 'telopatto' ti ... kāyagatāya etaū satiyā adhivacanaū*. I will turn to this simile in more detail in chapter VI.1.

¹⁶⁴ S IV 194: *dovāriko ti satiyā etam-adhivacanaū*.

¹⁶⁵ A IV 110: *seyyathā pi raṅṅo paccantime nagare dovāriko hoti paḍōito vyatto medhāvā aṅṅātānaū nivāretā ṅātānaū paveseṭā abhantarānaū guttiyā bāhirānaū paññhātāya, evam-eva ariyasāvako satimā hoti paramena satinepakkena samanāgato cirakatam-pi cirabhāsitam-pi saritā anussaritā*.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. also Chah: *Taste of Freedom*, p 10: "that which 'looks over' the various factors which arise in meditation is 'sati.'"

¹⁶⁷ Cf. e.g. Vism 464: *sati ārakkhapaccupaññhāna ... cakkhudvārādirakkaḍāto dovāriko viya ca daññhabbā*.

¹⁶⁸ D III 269 and A V 30: *bhikkhu satārakkhena cetasā samannāgato hoti. Evaū kho bhikkhu ekārakkho hoti*.

¹⁶⁹ A IV 385: *saikappavitakkā ... satādhipeyyā*; the same is stated for *sabbe dhammā* at A IV 339 and A V 107.

¹⁷⁰ A V 352: *bhikkhu cattāro satipaññhāne yathābhātāū pajānāti. Evaū ... gocarakusalo hoti*.

¹⁷¹ M I 221: *katha-ca bhikkhu na gocarakusalo hoti? Idha bhikkhu cattāro satipaññhāne yathābhātāū nappajānāti*, with the result that: *abhabbo imasmīū dhammavinaye vuddhiū virāḍhiū vepullaū āpajjitūū*.

¹⁷² S V 148, where the Buddha related a parable in which a monkey was caught by a hunter because he had left the jungle (his 'pasture') and entered a region visited by men. In conclusion, the Buddha admonished his monks to 'keep to their own pasture', which he explained to be *satipaññhāna*: *ko ca bhikkhuno gocaro ...? Yadiḍaū cattāro satipaññhāna*. The need to keep to one's 'proper pasture' comes up again at S V 146 in a parallel simile depicting a quail, which in this way can avoid getting caught by a falcon.

¹⁷³ S V 149: *ko ca bhikkhuno agocararo paravisayo? Yadiḍaū paṅca kāmāgūḍā*. However the comys to M I 221 and A V 352 (Ps II 262 and Mp V 95) explain *na gocarakusalo* with: *cattāro satipaññhāne, 'ime lokiyā ime lokuttarāti yathābhātāū na pajānāti*.

¹⁷⁴ S IV 198. Since this simile is concerned with mindfulness of the body in particular, I will discuss it in more detail in chapter VI.1.

illustrated in the *Cātumā Sutta*, which describes a monk who goes begging alms without having established *sati* and therefore without restraint at the sense doors. Encountering a scantily clad woman on his tour causes sensual desire to arise in his mind, so that eventually he decides to give up his practice and to disrobe.¹⁷⁵ Such are the pitfalls of neglecting *sati*.

III.4) Characteristics and Functions of *Sati*

A close examination of the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* reveals that nowhere is the meditator instructed to actively interfere with what happens in the mind. If, for example, a mental hindrance arises, the task of *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation is to know that the hindrance is present, to know what has led to its arising, and to know what will lead to its disappearance. A more active intervention is no longer the domain of *satipaṭṭhāna*, but rather belongs to the province of right effort (*sammāvāyāma*).

The need to clearly distinguish between a first stage of observation and a second stage of taking action is, according to the Buddha, an essential feature of his way of teaching.¹⁷⁶ The simple reason for this approach is that only the preliminary step of clearly observing a situation enables one to subsequently undertake the appropriate action.

Thus, although *sati* furnishes the necessary information for a wise deployment of right effort and will monitor the countermeasures by noting excess or deficiency of measure, nevertheless *sati* remains an aloof quality of uninvolved detached observation. *Sati* can interact with other, much more active, factors of the mind, yet by itself it does not interfere.¹⁷⁷

Such uninvolved and detached receptivity as one of the crucial characteristics of *sati* forms an important aspect in the teachings of several modern meditation teachers and scholars.¹⁷⁸ According to them, the purpose of *sati* is solely to make things conscious, not to eliminate them. *Sati* silently observes, like a spectator at a play, without in any way interfering.¹⁷⁹ Such silent observation is often sufficient to curb unwholesomeness, so that an application of *sati* can have quite active consequences.¹⁸⁰ Yet, *sati's* activity is confined to detached observation. That is, *sati* does not change experience, rather, it deepens it.

This non-interfering quality of *sati* is required to enable one to clearly observe the building up of reactions and their underlying motives. As soon as one becomes in any way involved in a reaction, the detached observational vantage point is immediately lost. The detached receptivity of *sati* enables one to step back from the situation at hand and thereby to become an unbiased observer of one's subjective involvement and of the entire situation.¹⁸¹ This detached distance allows for a more objective perspective, a characteristic illustrated in the above-mentioned simile of climbing on a tower.

This detached but receptive stance of *satipaṭṭhāna* constitutes a 'middle path', since it avoids the two extremes of repression and reaction.¹⁸² The receptivity of *sati*, in the absence of both repression and reaction, allows personal shortcomings and unjustified reactions to unfold in front of the watchful stance of the meditator, without being suppressed by the affective in-

¹⁷⁵ M I 462: *piḍḍāya pavisati ... anupaññhitāya satiyā asaivutehi indriyehi. So tattha passati mātugāmaū dunnivatthāū ... rāgo cittaū anuddhaūseti ... sikkhāū paccakkhāya hānāvattati.* In fact at D II 141 the Buddha particularly emphasised the need to keep to *sati* for monks who were coming in contact with ladies.

¹⁷⁶ It 33: *dve dhammadesanā pariyāyena bhavanti ... Pāpaṃ pāpakato passathāti, ayaṃ paṭhamā dhammadesanā. Pāpaṃ pāpakato disvā tattha nibbindatha virajatha vimuccathāti, ayaṃ dutiyā dhammadesanā.*

¹⁷⁷ An example for the coexistence of *sati* with intense effort is furnished by the *bodhisatta's* ascetic practices, (at M I 242), where despite excessive striving, he was able to maintain '*upaññhitā sati asammūñhā*'.

¹⁷⁸ De Silva: *Mental Culture*, p 5; Fraile: *Meditación Budista*, p 99; Naeb "Development of Insight", p 158; Swearer: *Secrets of the Lotus*, p 107; and Van Zeyst: *Awareness*, pp 9, and 12.

¹⁷⁹ This receptive and not interfering quality of *sati* is also echoed at Nid II 262, where *sati* is related to peacefulness: *catāhi kāraḍehi sato - satattā sato, santattā sato, samitattā sato, santadhammā samannāgattatā sato.*

¹⁸⁰ Such may be the reason why *sati* is said to 'bind' and 'hold in check' the mind at Th 359 and 446.

¹⁸¹ Dhāramvaśa: *Middle Path*, p 31.

¹⁸² This is to some extent paralleled at A I 295, which presents *satipaññhāna* as the middle path, aloof from both indulgence in sensuality and self-mortification: *tisso imā pañipadā ... kāmesu pātavyatāū āpajjati, ayaū vuccati āgāḍhā pañipadā ... kāyassa ātāpanaparitāpanānuyogam-anuyutto viharati, ayaū vuccati nijjhāma pañipadā ... kāye kāyānupassā ... dhammānupassā viharati ātāpā sampajāno satimā vineyya loke ... ayaū vuccati majjhimā pañipadā.*

vestment inherent in one's self-image. Maintaining the presence of *sati* in this way is closely related to the ability to tolerate a high degree of 'cognitive dissonance', since the witnessing of one's own shortcomings ordinarily leads to unconscious attempts at reducing the resulting feeling of discomfort by avoiding or even altering the perceived information.¹⁸³

This shift towards a more objective and uninvolved perspective introduces an important element of sobriety into self-observation. The element of 'sobriety' inherent in the presence of *sati* comes up in an entertaining canonical description of a particular celestial realm, whose divine inhabitants get so 'intoxicated' with sensual indulgence that they lose all *sati*. As a consequence of being without *sati*, they fall from their elevated celestial position and are reborn in a lower realm.¹⁸⁴ The reverse case is also documented in another discourse, where negligent monks, reborn in an inferior celestial realm, on regaining their *sati* are at once able to ascend to a higher realm.¹⁸⁵ Both these instances illustrate the edifying power of *sati* and its wholesome repercussions.

Sati as a mental quality is closely related to attention (*manasikāra*), a basic function which, according to the *Abhidhammic* analysis, is present in any kind of mental state.¹⁸⁶ This basic faculty of ordinary attention characterises the initial split seconds of bare cognising of an object, before one begins to recognise, identify, and conceptualise. *Sati* can be understood as a further development and temporal extension of this type of attention, thereby adding clarity and depth to the usually much too short fraction of time occupied by bare attention in the perceptual process.¹⁸⁷ The resemblance in function between *sati* and attention is also reflected in the fact that wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) parallels several aspects of *satipatthāna* contemplation, such as directing attention to antidotes for the hindrances, becoming aware of the impermanent nature of the aggregates or of the sense-spheres, bringing about an establishment of the awakening factors, and contemplating the four noble truths.¹⁸⁸

This 'bare attention' aspect of *sati* has an intriguing potential, since it is capable of leading to a de-automatisation of mental mechanisms.¹⁸⁹ Through bare *sati* one is able to see things just as they are, unadulterated by habitual reactions and projections. By bringing the perceptual process into the full light of awareness, one becomes conscious of the automatic and habitual responses to perceptual data. Full awareness of these automatic responses is the necessary preliminary step to changing detrimental mental habits.

Sati as bare attention is particularly relevant to restraint at the sense doors (*indriya samvara*). In this aspect of the gradual path, the practitioner is encouraged to retain bare *sati* in regard to all sense-input. Through the simple presence of undisrupted and bare mindfulness, the mind is 'restrained' from amplifying and proliferating the received information in various ways.¹⁹⁰ This guardianship role of *sati* in relation to sense-input is alluded to in those similes which declare *satipatthāna* to be the 'proper pasture' for a meditator and which compare *sati* to the 'gate-keeper' of a town.

According to the discourses, the purpose of restraining the senses is to avoid the arising

¹⁸³ Cf. Festinger: *Cognitive Dissonance*, p 134.

¹⁸⁴ These are the *khióóāpadosikā nāma devā* at D I 19 and D III 31.

¹⁸⁵ D II 272.

¹⁸⁶ *Abhidh-s 7: manasikāro ... sabbacittasādhāraṇā*. The discourses assign a similar role of importance to *manasikāra*, since it is included in the definition of *nāma* (M I 53). On the relation of *sati* to attention comment Bullen: *Buddhism*, p 17; Gunaratana: *Mindfulness*, p 150; and *Yāōāpoōika*: "Botschaft an den Westen", p 3.

¹⁸⁷ *Yāōāpoōika*: *Power of Mindfulness*, p 2. This 'bare' quality of *sati* is alluded to in the commentaries, which consider directly being face-to-face with an object as a characteristic manifestation of *sati*, cf. *Vism 464: sati visayābhimukhabhāvapaccupaññhāna*. *Vism-mhī* II 142 explains: *cittavisaye abhimukho bhavati etāyāti visayābhimukhabhāvo*.

¹⁸⁸ *Yoniso manasikāra* is applied to antidotes for the hindrances at S V 105, can lead to realisation by giving attention to the impermanent nature of the aggregates at S III 52 and of the sense-spheres at S IV 142, establishes the awakening factors at S V 94, and consists in contemplating the four noble truths at M I 9. Cf. also A V 115, where *yoniso manasikāra* is said to be *āhāra* (nutriment) for *satisampajaṇṇa*, which in turn become nutriment for *satipaññhāna*.

¹⁸⁹ Deikman: "De-automatization", p 329; Engler: "Vicissitudes of the Self", p 59; Goleman: *Buddha on Meditation*, p 27, and "Meditation and Consciousness", p 46; and Van Nuys: "Studying Attention", p 127.

¹⁹⁰ E.g. at M I 273: *indriyesu guttadvārā ... na nimittaggāhā nānubyañjanaggāhā. Yatvādhikarāḍam ... asaivutau viharantaū abhijjhādomanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāssaveyyuū*. Cf. also Debvedi: *Helping yourself*, p 18; and chapter XI.2.

of desires (*abhijjhā*) and discontent (*domanassa*). Such freedom from desires and discontent is also an aspect of *satipatthāna* contemplation, mentioned in the 'definition' part of the discourse.¹⁹¹ Thus the absence of reactions under the influence of desires and discontent is a common feature of both *satipatthāna* and sense-restraint. This goes to show that there is a considerable degree of overlap between these two activities.

This impartial or unbiased feature of *sati* is at times expressed by the expression 'choiceless' awareness.¹⁹² Awareness is said to be 'choiceless' in the sense that *sati* remains impartially aware, without reacting with likes or dislikes. Such choiceless or equanimous observation is illustrated in yet another simile in the discourses, where the Buddha compared awareness of mental states to a mirror used to see the reflection of one's own face.¹⁹³ Just as a mirror simply reflects whatever is presented to it, in the same way meditators should try to maintain choiceless and equanimous awareness of the present condition of their mind without allowing likes or dislikes to arise.

To sum up, an establishment of *sati* entails alert but receptive observation, equanimous and bare awareness.¹⁹⁴ Viewed from the context of actual practice, a predominantly receptive *sati* is then enlivened by the quality of being diligent (*ātāpī*), and supported by a foundation in concentration (*samādhi*). To the interrelation of *sati* with concentration I will now turn in more detail.

III.5) *Sati* and Concentration (*samādhi*)

The continuous presence of well-established *sati* is a requirement for absorption (*jhāna*).¹⁹⁵ As the *Visuddhimagga* points out, without the support of *sati* concentration cannot reach the level of absorption.¹⁹⁶ Even on emerging from an experience of deep concentration *sati* is required when one reviews the constituent factors of one's experience.¹⁹⁷ Thus *sati* is relevant for attaining, for remaining in, and for emerging from deep concentration.¹⁹⁸

Sati becomes particularly prominent when the third level of absorption (*jhāna*) is reached.¹⁹⁹ With the attainment of the fourth absorption, when the mind has reached such a degree of proficiency that it can be directed towards the development of supernormal powers, *sati* also reaches a high degree of purity, due to its association with deep equanimity.²⁰⁰ This

¹⁹¹ M I 56: *vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassā*.

¹⁹² The expression 'choiceless awareness' is used by Brown: "Stages of Mindfulness", p 167; Engler: "Vicissitudes of the Self", p 32; Epstein: "Evenly Suspended Attention", p 196; Goldstein: *Experience of Insight*, p 19; Kornfield: *Psychology of Mindfulness*, p 12; Levine: *Gradual Awakening*, p 28; and Sujāva: *Insight*, p 102.

¹⁹³ A V 92: *seyyathāpi itthā vā puriso vā ... ādāse vā parisuddhe pariyodāte ... evam-eva bhikkhuno paccavekkhāā bahukārā hoti kusalesu dhammesu - abhijjhālu nu kho bahulāū viharāmi, anabhijjhālu ... vyāpānaccitto ... avyāpānaccitto* (same simile also at D I 80 and M I 100). Cf. also Samaratane: "Watching Thoughts", p 141, who recommends maintaining a "mirror-like mind", especially in regard to unpleasant emotions.

¹⁹⁴ Modern scholars and meditation teachers offer several alternative summaries of the essential aspects of *sati*. Ayya Khema: *Buddhism for the West*, p 182, distinguishes two applications of *sati*: the mundane application, helping one to be aware of what one is doing, and the supramundane application of penetrating to the real nature of things. Dhammasudhi: *Real Way to Awakening*, p 77, describes four aspects of *sati*: awareness of surroundings, of one's reactions to these surroundings, of one's own conditioning, and awareness of stillness ("pure awareness"). Hecker: "Achtsamkeit", p 11, mentions vigilance, self-control, depth, and steadiness. Ādāpoōika: *Power of Mindfulness*, p 5, enumerates four "sources of power" in *sati*: tidying up by naming, non-coercive procedure, stopping and slowing down, and directness of vision.

¹⁹⁵ M III 25-28 documents that this need applies to each stage in the ascending series of meditative absorptions, since it lists *sati* among the mental factors of the four absorptions of the form sphere and of the first three immaterial attainments. Neither cognition-nor-non-cognition and cessation, both being states of mind not amenable to factor analysis, are still related to *sati* on emergence (M III 28: *so tāya samāpattiyā sato vuññhahati*). Presence of *sati* in all *jhānas* is also documented at Dhs 55, and at Pañis I 35.

¹⁹⁶ Vism 514: *samādhi attano dhammatāya ārammaā-ekaggabhāvena appetuū na sakkoti ... satiyā ca apilāpanakiccāū sādhentiyā laddhupakāro hutvā sakkoti*.

¹⁹⁷ M III 25: *so evaū pajānāti: 'evaū kira me dhammā ahutvā sambhonti, hutvā pañiventāti*.

¹⁹⁸ D III 279: *so kho panāhāū imaū samādhiū sato va samāpajjāmi, sato vuññhahāmi*. Pañis II 16: *catāsu jhānesu ... upaññhānāñhena satindriyāū daññhabbāū*; cf. also Vism 129.

¹⁹⁹ D II 313: *sato ca sampajāno ... tatiyāū jhānāū upasampajja viharati*.

²⁰⁰ D II 313: *upekkhāsati-parisuddhiū catutthāū jhānāū upasampajja viharati*; M I 357: *imaū yeva anuttarāū upekkhā-sati-parisuddhiū āgamma anekavhitāū pubbenivāsāū anussarati*. That here *sati* is indeed purified by the presence of *upekkhā* is supported by M III 26: *sati-parisuddhi*; and Vibh 261: *Ayāū sati imāya upekkhāya vivañā hoti parisuddhā pariyodātā, tena*

qualification echoes the ‘choiceless’ characteristic of *sati*, since here an increase in equanimity enhances the quality of *sati*.

Several discourses document that the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* acts as a basis for the development of absorption and for the subsequent attainment of supernormal powers.²⁰¹ The role of *satipaṭṭhāna* in supporting the development of concentration is also reflected in the standard expositions of the gradual path, where the preliminary steps that lead up to the attainment of absorption include mindfulness and clear knowledge (*satisampajañña*) in relation to bodily activities, and the task of recognising the hindrances and supervising their removal, an aspect of the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of *dhammas*.

The progression from *satipaṭṭhāna* to absorption is described in detail in the *Danta-bhūmi Sutta* with an intermediate step. In this intermediate step, contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and *dhammas* continues, however with the specific qualification to avoid any thoughts.²⁰² In the instruction for this transitional stage, the mental qualities of diligence and clear knowledge are conspicuously absent. Their absence suggests that at this point the contemplation is no longer *satipaṭṭhāna* proper, but rather a transitional stage. This thought-free transitional stage still partakes of the same receptive observational quality and of the same object as *satipaṭṭhāna*, but at the same time it marks a clear shift from insight to tranquility. It is subsequent to this shift of emphasis from *satipaṭṭhāna* proper to a state of calm awareness that the development of absorption can take place.

On considering these instances it is indubitably clear that *sati* has an important role to fulfil in the realm of tranquility. This may be the reason why the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta* speaks of the four *satipaṭṭhanas* as the ‘causes’ of concentration (*samādhinimitta*).²⁰³ The relation between *satipaṭṭhāna* and the development of deep concentration is exemplified by the monk *Anuruddha*, foremost among the Buddha’s disciples in the supernormal ability of seeing beings in other realms of existence, an ability based on a high degree of concentrative proficiency.²⁰⁴ Whenever asked about his abilities, *Anuruddha* invariably explained that his skills were the outcome of his practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*.²⁰⁵

On the other hand, however, to consider *satipaṭṭhāna* as a pure concentration exercise goes too far and misses the important difference between what can become a basis for the development of concentration and what belongs to the realm of tranquility meditation proper.²⁰⁶ In fact, the individual characteristic functions of *sati* and concentration (*samādhi*) are quite distinct. While concentration corresponds to an enhancement of the selective function of the

vuccati upekkhāsatisiparisuddhin-ti; cf. also As 178, and Vism 167.

²⁰¹ The concentrative attainments possible through *satipaṭṭhāna* practice are documented on several occasions, such as D II 216: *kāye kāyānupassā viharanto tattha sammāsamādhīyati ... so tattha sammāsamāhito ... bahiddhā parakāye ṛāḍadassanāū abhinibbatteti*. S V 151: *kāye kāyānupassino ... dhammesu dhammānupassino viharato cittaū samādhīyati upakkilesā pahāyanti*. S V 299 and 303: *catunnaū khvāhaū satipaṭṭhānānāū bhāvitattā bahulākatattā mahābhiṃṣātāū patto ... iddhiividhaū ... dibbāya sotadhātuyā ... ceto paricca pajānāmi ... pubbenivāsāū anussarāmi ... dibbena cakkhunā ... āsavānāū khayā*. A IV 300: *kāye kāyānupassā ... dhammesu dhammānupassā ... yato kho te ayaū samādhi evaū bhāvito hoti ... tato tvaū imāū samādhiū savitakkam-pi savicāraū ... avitakkam-pi vicāramattam-pi ... upekkhāsahagatam-pi bhāveyyāsi*. According to Ledi: [Eightfold Path](#), p 59, one should embark on the development of absorption only when one is able to maintain *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation uninterruptedly for one or two hours daily.

²⁰² M III 136: *ehi tvaū, bhikkhu, kāye kāyānupassā viharāhi, mā ca kāyāpasāūhitaū vitakkaū vitakkesi, vedanāsu ... citte ... dhammesu ... so vitakkavicāranāū vāpasamā ajjhataū sampasādanāū ... dutiyajjhānāū upasampajja viharati*. The Burm. and the Sinh. ed. have ‘*kāmāpasāūhitaū vitakkaū*’ instead. Judging from the dynamics of the discourse, this seems to be the less probable reading, since this passage follows on the removal of the five hindrances and leads on to absorption, and that straightaway into the second *jhāna*. The corresponding Chinese version (T’iao Y, Ti Ching, Madhyama āgama No 198), however, supports the reading of the Burm. + Sinh. editions. In addition, it also mentions the attainment of the first *jhāna*, which in all the Pāli editions is missing.

²⁰³ M I 301: *cittassa ekaggatā ayaū samādhi, cattāro satipaṭṭhānā samādhinimittā ... yā tesāū yeva dhammānāū āsevanā bhāvanā bahulākammaū, ayaū tattha samādhībhāvanā*. Ps II 363 explains: *tassa vissajjane cattāro satipaṭṭhānā maggakkhaḍe catukiccasāghanavasena uppannā sati, sā samādhissa paccayatthena nimittāū*, which however, as the commentary admits, is difficult to reconcile with *bhāvanā bahulākammaū*. The supportive role of *satipaṭṭhāna* for the development of right concentration is also echoed at A V 212: *sammāsatisa sammāsamādhī pahoti*.

²⁰⁴ A I 23.

²⁰⁵ S V 294-306; cf. also Malalasekera: [Dictionary](#), vol I p 88.

²⁰⁶ Cf. e.g. Schmithausen: “Spirituelle Praxis”, p 179, who suggests that *satipaṭṭhāna* was originally a pure concentration exercise.

mind, by way of restricting the breadth of attention, *sati* on its own represents an enhancement of the recollective function, by way of expanding the breadth of attention.²⁰⁷ These two different modes of mental functioning correspond to two different cortical control mechanisms in the brain.²⁰⁸ This difference, however, does not imply that the two are incompatible, since during absorption attainment both are present. Yet, during absorption *sati* becomes mainly presence of the mind, when it to some extent loses its natural breadth due to the strong focussing power of concentration.

The difference between these two becomes evident from the vocabulary employed in a passage from the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta*. Here, if one is distracted or sluggish while practising *satipaṭṭhāna*, the Buddha recommended that one should temporarily change one's practice and develop a tranquility (*samatha*) object of meditation, in order to cultivate internal joy and serenity. This he termed a 'directed' form of meditation (*paṇidhāya bhāvanā*). Once, however, the mind has been calmed, one can return to an 'undirected' mode of meditation (*appaṇidhāya bhāvanā*), namely the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*.²⁰⁹ The distinction drawn in this discourse between 'directed' and 'undirected' meditation suggests that, considered on their own, these two modes of meditation are clearly different. At the same time, however, the whole discourse is concerned with their skilful interrelation, clearly demonstrating that whatever degree of difference, the two can be interrelated and support each other.²¹⁰

The characteristic quality of concentration is to 'direct' and apply the mind, focussing on a single object to the exclusion of everything else. Thus the development concentration promotes a shift from the common structure of experience as a subject-object duality towards an experience of unity.²¹¹ Concentration, however, thereby excludes a broader awareness of circumstances and of their interrelations.²¹² Yet, this awareness of circumstances and interrelations is essential in order to become aware of those characteristics of experience whose understanding leads to awakening. In this context, the receptive quality of *sati* is particularly important.

These two rather distinct qualities of concentration and mindfulness are combined to some extent in the descriptions of insight meditation by those meditation teachers who emphasise the 'dry insight' approach, dispensing with the formal development of mental tranquility. They sometimes describe *sati* as 'attacking' its object, comparable to a stone hitting a wall.²¹³ These quite forceful terms probably represent the need for a considerable degree of

²⁰⁷ Cf. also Bullen: *Technique of Living*, p 44; Delmonte: "Meditation", pp 48-50; Goleman: "Attention in Meditation", p 298; Shapiro: *Meditation: Self Regulation*, pp 15-19; and Speeth: "Psychotherapeutic Attention", pp 146, and 151. Guna-ratana: *Mindfulness*, p 165, aptly sums up: "Concentration is exclusive. It settles down on one item and ignores everything else. Mindfulness is inclusive. It stands back from the focus of attention and watches with a broad focus."

²⁰⁸ Brown: "Model for the Levels", p 243: "Two major cortical control mechanisms ... involved in selecting and processing information ... a frontal system associated with restrictive processing and a posterior-temporal system associated with more wide-range processing of information. The brain may be likened to a camera that can use either a wide-angle lens or a zoom lens. Or, in cognitive terms, attention can be directed to the more dominant details in a stimulus field or to the entire field."

²⁰⁹ S V 156: *kāye kāyānupassā ... dhammesu dhammānupassā viharato dhammārammaḍo vā uppajjati kāyasmīi pariēāho, cetaso vā lānattaii, bahiddhā vā cittaū vikkhipati. Tena ... bhikkhunā kismi-cid-eva pasādanāye nimitte cittaū paḍidāhitabbaii. Tassa ... pāmojjaū jhāyati ... sukhino cittaū samādhīyati. ... Evaū ... paḍidhāya bhāvanā hoti.* This passage is then followed by: *bahiddhā ... bhikkhu cittaū appaḍidhāya ... 'asaikhittaii vimuttaii appaḍihitan'-ti pajānāti. Atha ca pana 'kāye kāyānupassā ... dhammesu dhammānupassā viharāmi ātāpā sampajāno satimā sukham-asmā'-ti pajānāti. Evaū ... appaḍidhāya bhāvanā hoti.*

²¹⁰ At the outset of the above passage the Buddha spoke in praise of being well established in the four *satipaṇṇhānas*. Thus the reason for his exposition about 'directed' and 'undirected' modes of meditation appears to be that he wanted to show how *samatha* can act as a support for the practice of *satipaṇṇhāna*.

²¹¹ Kamalashila: *Meditation*, p 96; Kyaw Min: *Abhidhamma*, p 96; and Walsh: "Buddhist Meditation", p 104. Cf. also chapter XIV.4.

²¹² Cf. Brown: "Stages of Mindfulness", p 180, who in a comparison of Rorschach tests done with meditators, describes in his conclusion the "unproductivity and relative paucity of associative process which characterises the *samādhi* state", while "the Rorschachs of the insight group ... are primarily characterised by increased productivity and richness of associative elaborations."

²¹³ Mahasi: *Satipaṇṇhāna Vipassanā*, p 23: "the knowing mind ... as in the case of a stone hitting a wall"; which Sālananda: *Four Foundations*, p 21, identifies: "like the stone hitting the wall ... that hitting of the object is mindfulness." Paḍōita: *Satipaṇṇhāna*, p 6, goes further, when he describes *satipaṇṇhāna* as implying to "attack the object without hesitation ... with violence, speed or great force ... with excessive haste or hurry", which he then compares to soldiers defeating an enemy troop

effort during contemplation. Such prodigious effort is required to compensate for the comparatively low degree of concentration developed in this particular approach to awakening. In fact, some of these same meditation teachers consider the bare and choiceless qualities of *sati* as a more evolved stage of practice, presumably when the more forceful stage of ‘attacking’ an object has fulfilled its role and has provided a basis of mental stability.²¹⁴

The above way of considering *sati* may be related to the commentarial definition of *sati* as ‘non-floating’ and therefore as ‘plunging into its object.’²¹⁵ Certainly the absence of ‘floating’, in the sense of distraction, is a characteristic of *sati*. However, to ‘plunge’ into an object appears to be more characteristic of concentration, particularly during the progress towards absorption. According to modern scholarship, it seems that this aspect of the commentarial understanding of *sati* was due to a misreading or misinterpretation of a particular term.²¹⁶ In fact, ‘attacking’ an object or ‘plunging into’ an object do not correspond to the characteristic features of *sati* in itself, but rather represent *sati* in a secondary role, acting in combination with effort or concentration.

Thus, although it plays an important part in the development of absorption, considered on its own *sati* is a mental quality distinct from concentration. Indeed, the reason why even the attainment of high levels of absorption by itself is insufficient for liberating insight is quite probably related to the inhibition of the passive observational qualities of awareness by the strong focussing power of absorption concentration. This, however, does not detract from the fact that the development of concentration fulfils an important role in the context of insight meditation, a topic which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter IV: The Relevance of Concentration

In this chapter I turn to the expression ‘free from desires and discontent in regard to the world’ (*vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam*). Since this final part of the ‘definition’ represents mental composure, it provides me with an opportunity to investigate the role of concentration in the context of insight meditation, and to try to ascertain the degree of concentration needed for realisation. Thereafter I will turn to the general contribution of concentration to the development of insight and to their interrelationship.

IV.1) Free from Desires and Discontent

The ‘definition’ part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* concludes with the expression ‘free from desires and discontent in regard to the world’.²¹⁷ According to the *Nettipakaraṇa*, to be ‘free from desires and discontent’ represents the faculty of concentration.²¹⁸ This suggestion finds support in some discourses, which slightly vary the ‘definition’, replacing ‘free from desires and discontent’ with references to a concentrated mind or to experiencing happiness.²¹⁹ These pas-

in a sudden attack.

²¹⁴ These are the so-called ‘*vipassanā jhānas*’, an expression which seems to be a recent innovation unknown to the discourses or the commentaries. To be found in Mahasi: *Wheel of Dhamma*, p 98; and a detailed exposition in Paḍōita: *Very Life*, pp 180-205, cf. esp. p 199: “non-thinking, bare attention is called the second *vipassanā jhāna*.”

²¹⁵ ‘*Apilāpanatā*’ at: Dhs 11 (detailed expo at As 147), Vibh 250, Pp 25, Nett 54, Mil 37, and Vism 464. On the term comment also Guenther: *Philosophy*, p 68 n 2; Horner: *Milinda's Question*, p 50 n 5; Æāmolli: *Guide*, p 28 n 83/3; and Rhys Davids: *Psychological Ethics*, p 14 n 3.

²¹⁶ Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, pp 38-40, suggests that the commentarial reading of *apilāpeti* should rather be *apilāpati* (or *abhilāpati*), which instead of describing *sati* as ‘plunging into’, would come to mean: “reminding someone of something.” Cf. also Cox: “Mindfulness”, pp 79-82.

²¹⁷ M I 56: *vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassā*. A IV 430 explains ‘world’ (*loka*) as a referent to the pleasures of the five senses: *paṅcime ... kāmaguḍā ariyassa vinaye loko ti vuccati*. This squares well with A IV 458, where *satipaṭṭhāna* leads to their abandoning: *paṅcannaṁ kāmaguḍānaṁ pahānāya ... cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvetabbā*. Vibh 195 takes *loka* in the *satipaṭṭhāna* context to represent the five aggregates.

²¹⁸ Nett 82: *vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassan-ti samādhindriyā*.

²¹⁹ S V 144: *kāye kāyānupassino viharatha ātāpino sampajānā ekadibhātā vipassannacittā samāhitā ekaggacittā*; S V 157: ‘*kāye kāyānupassā ... dhammesu dhammānupassā viharāmi ātāpā sampajāno satimā sukham asmāti pajānāti*.’

sages indicate that ‘freedom from desires and discontent’ represents mental tranquility and contentment. The commentaries go further by identifying this part of the ‘definition’ with the removal of the five hindrances.²²⁰ This is sometimes understood to imply that the five hindrances have to be removed prior to embarking on *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation.²²¹ Therefore this expression requires a detailed examination, in order to see how far such a stipulation is justified.

The *Pāli* term rendered as ‘free’ is *vineyya*, from the verb *vineti* (to remove). Although *vineyya* is best translated as ‘having removed’, this does not necessarily imply that desires and discontent must be removed before undertaking the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, but can also mean that this activity takes place simultaneously with the practice.²²²

This way of understanding concurs with the general picture provided in the discourses. In a passage from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, for example, the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* does not require, but rather results in overcoming the hindrances.²²³ Similarly, according to a discourse in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta*, lack of skill in the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* prevents the practitioner from developing concentration and overcoming mental defilements.²²⁴ This statement would be meaningless if the development of concentration and the absence of mental defilements were prerequisites for the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

Desires (*abhijjhā*) and discontent (*domanassa*), the two mental states whose removal is stipulated in the ‘definition’, occur again in relation to the last four steps in the sixteen-step scheme for mindfulness of breathing, described in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*. According to the Buddha’s explanation, by this stage of practice freedom from desires and discontent has been achieved.²²⁵ Apparently the same was not yet the case for the previous twelve steps, which the

²²⁰ Ps I 244: *abhijjhāgahaḍena kāmaccando, domanassagahaḍena vyāpādo saigahaḍi gacchati, tasmā nāvaraḍāpariyāpanna ... nāvaraḍāppahānāni vuttāni hoti.*

²²¹ E.g. by Kheminda: *Satipaṅṅhāna*, p 109.

²²² Generally speaking, the form *vineyya* can be either a gerund: ‘having removed’ (this is the way how the comy understands it, cf. Ps I 244: *vinayitvā*), or else 3rd sg. potential: ‘he/she should remove’ (as e.g. at Sn 590; cf. also Woodward: *Kindred Sayings*, vol IV, p 142 n 3). However, in the present context to take *vineyya* as a potential form is not acceptable, as then the sentence would have two finite verbs in different moods (*viharati* + *vineyya*). Usually the gerund form does imply an action preceding the action of the main verb, which in the present case would mean that the removal has to be completed prior to the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. However, in some cases the gerund can also represent an action occurring concurrently with the action denoted by the main verb. An example of a concurrent action expressed by the gerund is the standard description of the practice of *mettā* in the discourses (e.g. at M I 38): *mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati*, where the ‘abiding’ (*viharati*) and the ‘pervading’ (*pharitvā*) are contemporaneous activities, together describing the act of radiating *mettā*. The same type of construction occurs in relation to the attainment of absorption, as *jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati* (e.g. at D I 37), where also the ‘abiding’ (*viharati*) and the ‘attaining’ (*upasampajja*) take place simultaneously. Thus it is possible to presume that the ‘abiding in contemplation’ (*anupassī viharati*) and the ‘removing’ (*vineyya*) mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* may also be activities that are undertaken contemporaneously. In fact, several translators have rendered *vineyya* in such a way that it represents the outcome of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice. Cf. e.g. Dhammiko: "Pfeilern der Einsicht", p 182: "um weltliches Begehren und Bekümmern zu überwinden"; Gethin: *Path to Awakening*: "he ... overcomes both desire for and discontent with the world"; Hamilton: *Identity and Experience*, p 173: "in order to remove [himself] from the covetousness and misery in the world"; Hare: *Gradual Sayings*, vol IV, p 199: "overcoming the hankering and dejection common in this world"; Hurvitz: "Fa-Sheng's Observations", p 212: "putting off envy and ill disposition toward the world"; Jotika: *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna*, p 1: "keeping away covetousness and mental pain"; Lamotte: *Traité*, p 112: "au point de contrôler dans le monde la convoitise et la tristesse"; Lin Li Kouang: *L'Aide Mémoire*, p 119: "qu'il surmonte le déplaisir que la convoitise cause dans le monde"; Rhys Davids: *Indian Psychology*, p 257: "overcoming both the hankering and the dejection common in the world"; Schmidt: *Buddhas Reden*, p 38: "alle weltlichen Wünsche und Sorgen vergessend"; Silananda: *Four Foundations*, p 177: "Removing covetousness and grief in the world"; Solé-Leris: *Majjhima Nikāya*, p 116: "desechando la codicia y la aflicción de lo mundano"; Talamo: *Samyutta Nikāya*, p 556: "rimovendo bramosia e malcontento riguardo al mondo"; Thanissaro: *Wings to Awakening*, p 83: "putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world"; Woodward: *Kindred Sayings*, vol V, p 261: "restraining the dejection in the world that arises from coveting."

²²³ A IV 458: *paṅcannāni nāvaraḍānāni pahānāya ime cattāro satipaṅṅhāna bhāvetabbā.*

²²⁴ S V 150: *bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassā viharati, àtāpā sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassāni. Tassa kāye kāyānupassino viharato cittaṅi na samādhīyati, upakkilesā na pahāyanti.* (Same statement for feelings, mind, and *dhammas*)

²²⁵ M III 84: *so yaṅi tāni abhijjhādomanassānāni pahānāni tāni paṅcāya disvā sādhuḍkāni ajjupekkhitāni hoti.*

Buddha nevertheless described as corresponding to the first three *satipaṭṭhānas*.²²⁶ The disappearance of discontent on its own occurs also in the ‘direct path’ passage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, where its removal is a goal of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice.²²⁷ All these passages clearly demonstrate that a complete ‘removal’ of desires and discontent is not a prerequisite for *satipaṭṭhāna*, but rather comes as a result of successful practice.

The mental states to be put away are desires (*abhijjhā*) and discontent (*domanassa*). It is a little puzzling that the commentaries should straightaway identify them with the entire set of the five hindrances. As a matter of fact, in several discourses desires (*abhijjhā*) does replace the more usual sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*) as the first of the hindrances.²²⁸ It is difficult to understand, however, why discontent (*domanassa*) should correspond to the hindrance of aversion (*byāpāda*). In the discourses, discontent (*domanassa*) stands for any kind of mental dejection, which would not necessarily be related to aversion, and certainly not be synonymous with it.²²⁹ Besides, even if one were to accept the questionable equation of discontent with aversion, one would still have to account for the remaining three hindrances.²³⁰

Another point worth considering is that, if it really were essential to remove the five hindrances before undertaking the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, several of the meditation practices described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* would be rendered superfluous. These are the contemplation of unwholesome feelings and of unwholesome mental states (worldly feelings, mind affected by lust or anger), and in particular awareness of the presence of just these five hindrances as the first contemplation of *dharmas*. These *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions clearly document that unwholesome mental states, whether they be desires, discontent, or any of the hindrances, can profitably be turned into objects of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

From these considerations, it seems quite probable that the Buddha did not envisage the removal of the five hindrances as a necessary precondition for the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. In fact, if he intended to stipulate their removal as a requirement that needs to be fulfilled before undertaking *satipaṭṭhāna*, one might wonder why he did not explicitly mention the hindrances, as he invariably did when describing the development of absorption (*jhāna*).

The two mental states of desires and discontent, which the Buddha did mention in the *satipaṭṭhāna* ‘definition’, often occur in the discourses in relation to sense-restraint, a stage in the gradual path scheme prior to formal meditation.²³¹ At this stage, the meditator guards the sense doors in order to prevent sense impressions from leading to desires and discontent. Judging from these contexts, ‘desires and discontent’ refer in a general manner to ‘likes’ or ‘dislikes’ in regard to what has been perceived.

According to the presentation in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, the absence of such desires and discontent constitutes an important factor for carrying out the comparatively subtle and so-

²²⁶ This would however only apply for the preliminary stages of practice, since for the first three *satipaṭṭhānas* to lead to awakening, freedom from desire and discontent is a requirement, indicated at M III 86 by qualifying the arising of the awakening factor of equanimity in relation to each of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* with the above quoted expression *sādhukāṃ ajjhupekkhitā hoti*.

²²⁷ M I 55: *ekāyano ayaṃ maggo ... domanassānaṃ atthagamāya ... yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*. Compare also Ps I 244: *abhijjhādomanassavinayena bhāvanāphalāṃ vuttan-ti vedittabbāṃ*. Cf. also Debvedi: *Sammāsati*, p 22; Khemacari: "Satipaṭṭhāna", p 18; Āḍasaṅgā: *Guide to Awareness*, p 8; Nāḍuttara: *Satipaṭṭhāna*, p 280; and Yubodh: "Sati", p 9.

²²⁸ At D I 72, 207, D III 49, M I 181, 269, 274, 347, M II 162, 226, M III 3, 35, 135, A II 210, A III 92, 100, A IV 437, A V 207, and It 118. In its general usage in the discourses, *abhijjhā* represents one of the ten unwholesome ways of acting (*akusalakammamāṭhā*, e.g. at D III 269). In this context it means covetousness, in the sense of the wish to own the possessions of others (e.g. at M I 287: *aho vata yaṃ parassa taṃ mama assāti*). Cf. also van Zeyst: "Abhijjhā", p 91.

²²⁹ D II 306: *katamaṃ-ca domanassāṃ? Yaṃ kho cetasikāṃ dukkhāṃ cetasikāṃ asātaṃ manosamphassajāṃ dukkhāṃ asātaṃ vedayitāṃ, idaṃ vuccati domanassāṃ*; or in more detail at M III 218: *cha gehasitāni domanassāni ... iññhānaṃ kantānaṃ manāpānaṃ manoramānaṃ lokāmisapaṇṇisāyuttānaṃ appaṇṇilābhāṃ vā appaṇṇilābhato ... uppajjati domanassāṃ ... cha nekkhammasitāni domanassāni ... anuttareṣu vimokkhesu piḥāṃ upaṇṇhāpeti ... uppajjati piḥapaccayā domanassāṃ*. In fact, according to M I 304 certain types of *domanassa* are not at all related to the underlying tendency to irritation.

²³⁰ It is a typical tendency of the commentaries to associate a key term (in the present context *abhijjhā*) with a whole set or standard category, as part of their attempt to clarify the teachings. Yet, at times this is done without sufficiently considering the context.

²³¹ M I 273: *indriyesu guttadvārā bhavissāma ... yatvādhikaraḍam-enaṃ ... asaṅvutāṃ viharantaṃ abhijjhādomanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāssaveyyuṃ, tassa saṅvārāya paṇipajjissāma*.

phisticated meditations listed for contemplation of *dhammas*. This relates the absence of ‘desires’ and ‘discontent’ to an advanced stage of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Thus, *vineyya* as a completed action, ‘having removed’ desires and discontent, represents more advanced levels of *satipaṭṭhāna*. The discourses often refer to such advanced stages of contemplation as ‘well established’ (*supatitṭhita*) *satipaṭṭhāna*.²³² At these more advanced stages of *satipaṭṭhāna*, impartial awareness has reached such a level of firm establishment (*supatitṭhita*) that one is able to effortlessly maintain dispassionate observation, without reacting with desires and discontent.

Conversely, *vineyya* as a simultaneous action, as the act of ‘removing’ taking place in the present, indicates a purpose of the initial stages of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice. During these initial stages the task is to develop and maintain such a degree of inner equipoise that desires and discontent are being removed and held at bay. These initial stages of *satipaṭṭhāna* parallel sense-restraint, which combines bare *sati* with some effort to avoid or counterbalance desires and discontent. Although sense-restraint precedes proper meditation practice in the gradual path scheme, this does not imply that sense-restraint is completed at an exact point in time, only after which one moves on to formal practice.²³³ To some extent the two overlap, so that sense-restraint can be considered part of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, particularly at those stages when desires and discontent have not yet been completely removed.

Although the initial stages of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice may not require the prior establishment of a high level of concentration, or the complete removal of unwholesome states of mind, the same is a necessity for the advanced stages of the practice that lead up to realisation. This necessity will occupy me for most of the remainder of this chapter, in which I will investigate in more detail the relationship of concentration to the progress towards realisation. As a preparation for this investigation, I will first attempt to clarify the implications of the relevant terms: concentration (*samādhi*), right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*), and absorption (*jhāna*).

IV.2) Concentration, Right Concentration, and Absorption

The noun *samādhi* is related to the verb *samādahati*, to ‘put together’ or to ‘collect’, such as when one collects wood to kindle a fire.²³⁴ *Samādhi* thus stands for ‘collecting’ oneself, in the sense of composure or unification of the mind.²³⁵

The discourses use ‘concentration’ (*samādhi*) in a surprisingly broad manner, relating it to walking meditation, for example, or to observing the arising and passing away of feelings and cognitions, or to contemplating the arising and passing away of the five aggregates.²³⁶ In a passage from the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, even the four *satipaṭṭhānas* are treated as a form of ‘concentration’.²³⁷ These occurrences demonstrate that, as used in the discourses, ‘concentration’ (*samādhi*) also covers the realm of insight meditation.

Turning to ‘right concentration’ (*sammāsamādhi*), here one finds time and again that

²³² *Catāsu satipaṇṇhānesu suppatiṇṇhitacittā*, cf. D II 83, D III 101, M I 339, S III 93, S V 154, 160, 184, 301, 302, A III 155, A III 386, and A V 195. Of particular interest in this context is S III 93, which documents that during this advanced level of well established *satipaṇṇhāna* practice unwholesome thoughts will no longer have scope to arise: *tayo akusalavitakkā kva aparisesā nirujjhanti? Catāsu vā satipaṇṇhānesu suppatiṇṇhita cittassa viharato*.

²³³ Cf. e.g. A V 114, where *satipaṇṇhāna* depends on sense-restraint, which however in turn depends on *satisampajaṃṇa*, one of the body contemplations. This suggests some degree of interrelation between sense-restraint and *satipaṇṇhāna* in actual practice, rather than a one-sided dependency of the former on the latter.

²³⁴ E.g. at Vin IV 115: *bhikkhā hemantike kāle aṃṇatarau mahantaū susirakaṇṇhaū jotii samādahitvā visibbesuī*.

²³⁵ At M I 301, *samādhi* is defined as unification of the mind: *cittassa ekaggatā ayaū samādhi*.

²³⁶ A III 30: *caīkamādhigato samādhi* (although walking meditation can be employed to develop mental tranquility, it would however not be the appropriate posture for deeper states of concentration). A II 45: *viditā vedanā ... saṃṇā ... vitakkā uppajjanti ... upaṇṇahanti ... abbatthaū gacchanti ... ayaū vuccati samādhibhāvanā*; and: *Idha ... paṃcē-upādānakkhandhesu udayavayānupassā viharati: iti rāpaū iti rāpassa samudayo ... iti viṃṇāḍassa atthagamo ... ayaū vuccati samādhibhāvanā*. This breadth of meaning of *samādhi* is also documented at D III 222, which speaks of four different ways of developing *samādhi*, distinguished according to their respective result: *samādhi* leading to pleasant abiding (the *jhānas*), to knowledge and vision (through development of cognition of light), to *sati* and *sampajaṃṇa* (by contemplating the arising and passing away of feelings, cognitions, and thoughts), and to the destruction of the influxes (by contemplating the arising and passing away of the five aggregates).

²³⁷ A IV 300: *kāye kāyānupassā ... dhammesu dhammānupassā ... ayaū samādhi evaū bhāvito...*

the discourses equate right concentration with the four absorptions (*jhānas*).²³⁸ This is of considerable importance, since 'right concentration' is a prerequisite for awakening. Taking this definition literally, the development of 'right' concentration requires the ability to attain all four absorptions. However, several discourses allow for full awakening based 'only' on the ability to attain the first absorption.²³⁹ This suggests that even the first absorption may be sufficient in terms of concentrative ability for enabling the breakthrough to full awakening.²⁴⁰

In the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* and in several other discourses another definition of right concentration can be found, a definition which does not mention the absorptions at all.²⁴¹ The importance of the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* for the present discussion is further highlighted in the preamble to the discourse, which states the topic to be a teaching on right concentration.²⁴² The definition of right concentration given here speaks of unification of the mind (*cittassekaggatā*) in interdependence with the other seven path-factors.²⁴³ That is, in order for unification of the mind to become 'right' concentration it needs to be contextualised within the noble eightfold path scheme.²⁴⁴ Definitions of right concentration that do not mention absorption attainment can also be found in the *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries.²⁴⁵

Thus the decisive factor that qualifies concentration as 'right' is not just a question of the depth of concentration achieved, but is concerned with the purpose for which concentration is employed. In particular, the presence of the path-factor right view is indispensable.²⁴⁶ By way of contrast, the Buddha's former teachers, *Ālāra Kālāma* and *Udaka Rāmaputta*, despite their deep concentration attainments, were not endowed with 'right concentration' due to the absence of right view. This goes to show that the ability to attain absorption in itself does not yet constitute the fulfillment of the path factor of right concentration.

A similar nuance underlies the qualification *sammā*, which literally means 'togetherness', or to be 'connected in one'.²⁴⁷ Thus to speak of the four absorptions or of unification of the mind as 'right concentration' does not simply mean that these are 'right' and all else is 'wrong', but rather points to the need of incorporating the development of concentration into the noble eightfold path. This refers in particular to the understanding that clinging to, craving for, and

²³⁸ D II 313: *pañhamāṃ jhānaṃ ... catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ayaṃ vuccati sammāsamādhī.*

²³⁹ A IV 422: *paṭhamam paṭhamam jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmi*; cf. also M I 350, M I 435, and A V 343.

²⁴⁰ All four *jhānas* are needed only for the *tevijjā* (threefold higher knowledge) approach to realisation, cf. e.g. M I 357. In fact S I 191 reports that, of a substantial congregation of *arahants*, two out of each three had neither *tevijjā*, nor *abhiññā* (supernormal knowledge) nor immaterial attainments. If all *arahants* possessed the fourth *jhāna*, one would expect a much higher percentage of them to have used this in order to develop one or the other of these attainments. However Perera: "Stages of Purity", p 210, considers attainment of all four *jhānas* a necessary condition for awakening.

²⁴¹ D II 217, M III 71, S V 21, cf. also D III 252 and A IV 40.

²⁴² M III 71: *ariyāṃ vo, bhikkhave, sammāsamādhīṃ desissāmi.*

²⁴³ M III 71: *sammādiññhi sammāsaikkappo sammāvācā sammākammanto sammā-ājāvo sammāvāyāmo sammāsati ... imehi satta aṅgehi cittassekaggatā parikkhatā, ayaṃ vuccati ... ariyo sammāsamādhī sa-upaniso iti pi saporikkhāro iti pi.* Judging from other discourses, to speak of 'unification of the mind' need not necessarily imply absorption attainment, cf. e.g. A II 14, which relates unification of the mind to walking and standing: *carato ... ñhitassa ... cittaṃ ekaggāṃ*, or A III 174, where unification of the mind occurs while listening to the *Dhamma*: *avikkhittacitto dhammāṃ sūḍāti ekaggacitto yoniso ca manasikaroti*. Other ways of defining 'right concentration' can also be found at e.g. M III 289, where rightly understanding the six senses leads to: *yo yathābhātassa samādhī, svāssa hoti sammāsamādhī*; or at S I 48 where 'rightly concentrating' is presented as a result of establishing *sati*: *ye satiṃ paccalathāṃsu, sammā te susamāhita*; and at A III 27: *paccavekkhāḍā-nimittāṃ sugghatāṃ hoti ... suppaññiddhāṃ paṃcāya. Ariyassa paṃcāgikassa sammāsamādhissa ayaṃ paṃcamā bhāvanā.*

²⁴⁴ Cf. also Ba Khin: [View to Nibbāna](#), p 69: "right concentration cannot be achieved unless there is right effort and right mindfulness"; Buddhadasa: [Ānāpānasati](#), p 36: "'a wholesome mind steadily fixed on an object' ... the term 'wholesome' is much more important than 'steadily fixed'... the motives for practising concentration must be pure ... must be based on insight and right view"; and Weeraratne: "Eight-fold-Path", p 45: "right concentration ... is the one pointedness of mind achieved through cultivating the preceding seven stages of the path" (as a trsl. of M III 71).

²⁴⁵ Vibh 107 defines right concentration simply as *cittassa ñhiti*, steadfastness of the mind (in the *Abhidhammabhājanāya*; the *Suttantabhājanāya* at Vibh 106, however, enumerates the four *jhānas*). Vism 510 also speaks only of unification of the mind: *cittekaggatā sammāsamādhī nāma.*

²⁴⁶ A III 423: *sammādiññhiṃ aparipāretvā sammāsamādhīṃ paripāressatī, netāṃ ñhānaṃ vijjati.*

²⁴⁷ Cf. Monier-Williams: [Dictionary](#), p 1181, who translates the corresponding Sanskrit term *samyak* with "complete", "entire", and "whole." Rhys Davids: [Dictionary](#), p 655, has "towards one point." On the inappropriateness of translating *sammā* as 'right' comments Gruber: [Vipassanā](#), p 190.

developing views about absorption attainment will lead to the arising of *dukkha*.

Such a stipulation is not without practical relevance, since although the experience of absorption is a powerful tool to diminish craving and attachment in regard to the five senses, it all too easily lends itself to stimulating craving and attachment to these sublime mind-door experiences. Yet, only concentration untainted by craving contributes towards the eradication of *dukkha*. It is this quality, and not just the depth of concentration achieved, that turns a concentrative attainment into right concentration.

To sum up: to speak of 'right concentration' is not only a question of being able to attain absorption, since the decisive criterion for describing concentration as 'right' is whether it is developed in conjunction with the other factors of the noble eightfold path.

The word '*jhāna*' (absorption) is derived from the verb *jhāyati* 'to meditate'.²⁴⁸ Although *jhāna* usually refers to the attainment of deep absorption, the word occasionally retains its original meaning of 'meditation'. The *Gopakamoggallāna Sutta*, for example, mentions a form of *jhāna* in which the hindrances still obsess the mind.²⁴⁹ Such '*jhāna*' does not qualify as a meditative absorption, since it is the absence of the hindrances that characterises true absorption.

To bring out the practical implications of such a true state of absorption, I will now briefly examine the first absorption.

Two of the mental factors characteristic of the first absorption, initial mental application (*vitakka*) and sustained mental application (*vicāra*),²⁵⁰ have been differently interpreted. As '*vitakka*', initial mental application, is etymologically related to '*takka*', which denotes thought and logical reasoning, several scholars conclude that conceptual thought continues in the first stage of absorption.²⁵¹ Some discourses appear to support this, since they refer to the second absorption as the 'cessation of wholesome intentions', or as a state of 'noble silence'.²⁵²

This point is of considerable relevance for an understanding of absorption. The issue at stake, simply stated, is whether the first absorption is a deep state of concentration, achieved only after a prolonged period of practice and seclusion, or a stage of relaxed happy reflection within easy reach of anyone and without much need for meditative proficiency.

The latter assumption stands in contradiction to the commentarial presentation, which describe in detail the stages of development prior to absorption. These sources indicate that to attain the first absorption a considerable amount of meditative development is required.²⁵³ Although references to this preliminary development appear only obliquely in the discourses, in

²⁴⁸ The relation between the two appears on several occasions, e.g. at D II 239: *jhānaū jhāyī*; D II 265 and Sn 1009: *jhāyā jhānaratā*; M I 243: *jhānaū jhāyeyyāū*; Dh 372: *natthi jhānaū apaṇṇassa, paṇṇā natthi ajhāyato*; Thā 401: *jhānājjhāyanaratāyo*.

²⁴⁹ M III 14: *idha ekacco kāmāragapariyuññhitena cetasā viharati ... so kāmāragāū yeva antaraū karitvā jhāyati pajjhāyati nijjhāyati apajjhāyati ... byāpādaū ... thānamiddhaū ... uddhaccakukkuccaū ... vicikicchāū ... evarāpaū Bhagavā jhānaū na vaḍḍesi*. Another example is the injunction *anirākatājjhāna*, to 'not neglect *jhāna*', which at M I 33 and It 39 occurs together with *cetosamatham-anuyuttā* (devoted to mental tranquility) and *vipassanāya samannāgatā* (endowed with insight), probably including both in the general sense of 'meditation'. Similarly the frequent exhortation *jhāyatha bhikkhave* (e.g. at M I 46), which is better rendered 'meditate monks', than 'attain absorption monks'. Or else the expression *arittājjhāno*, 'not lacking *jhāna*', which at A I 39-43 is combined with several meditation practices that do not in themselves yield absorption attainment, such as *satipaññhāna*, *aniccasaṇṇā* (cognition of impermanence), or the six recollections. The most common use of *jhāna* in the discourses, however, refers to absorption, this kind of usage being easily recognisable by the circumstance that absorption *jhāna* is usually classified as 'first', 'second', etc. (except for A V 133, where *jhāna* is at first used unspecified, but at the conclusion of the discourse this *jhāna* is shown to be the first level of absorption).

²⁵⁰ E.g. D I 73: *savitakkaū savicāraū vivekajaū pātisukhaū paññamaū jhānaū*. Several discourses also mention a level of absorption without *vitakka* but with *vicāra* (D III 219, 274, M III 162, S IV 360, 363, and A IV 300). The resulting fivefold form of presenting the *jhānas* became more prominent in the *Abhidhamma* (explained in detail at As 179). Stuart-Fox: "Jhāna", p 92, points out that some of the above quoted occurrences are missing from the corresponding Chinese editions.

²⁵¹ Barnes: "Deliverance", p 257; Bucknell: "Reinterpreting the Jhānas", p 397; Kalupahana: *Buddhist Philosophy*, p 35; Ott: "Satipaññhāna", p 348; and Stuart-Fox: "Jhāna", p 94.

²⁵² M II 28: *dutiyaññhānaū ... kusalā saikappā aparisesā nirujjhanti*; S II 273: *dutiyaū jhānaū upasampajja viharati, ayāū vuccati ariyo tuḍḍhābhāvo*; compare also Th 650 and 999: *avitakkaū samāpanno ... ariyena tuḍḍhābhāvena* (comy Th-a II 274 identifies this as second *jhāna*, but Th-a III 102 speaks of the fourth *jhāna*).

²⁵³ Cf. e.g. Vism 125 on the development of the *paññbhāganimitta*; and Vism 285 on the development of absorption based on the *ānāpānasatinimitta*.

one instance at least, the *Upakkilesa Sutta*, the Buddha gave a detailed account of his own struggle to attain the first absorption.²⁵⁴ This passage leaves no doubt that the Buddha himself encountered considerable difficulty when he attempted to attain the first absorption, even though in his early youth he had already once experienced absorption.²⁵⁵

The *Upakkilesa Sutta* is addressed to *Anuruddha* and a group of monks who evidently were in similar difficulties. On another occasion the Buddha had to assist *Moggallāna* to attain the first absorption.²⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that *Anuruddha* and *Moggallāna*, who both later excelled all other disciples with their concentrative powers,²⁵⁷ needed the Buddha's personal intervention to attain 'merely' the first absorption. These examples suggest that the attainment of the first absorption requires a considerable degree of meditative proficiency.

According to the discourses, one who has entered the first absorption is no longer able to speak.²⁵⁸ This would not apply if the first absorption were merely a state of calm mental reflection. Not only speech, but also hearing does not occur during the deeper stages of absorption, in fact sound is a major obstacle for attaining the first absorption.²⁵⁹ The experience of the first absorption is an 'unworldly' experience,²⁶⁰ it constitutes another world in the psychological and the cosmological sense.²⁶¹ To attain the first absorption is to reach a 'superbly extraordinary state'.²⁶² Already the first absorption 'blindfolds' *Māra*, since on entering this state one goes beyond the range of *Māra*'s vision.²⁶³

These passages support an understanding of the first absorption as a deeply absorbed state of mind, beyond mere reflection and conceptual thought. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that, as absorption-factors, initial mental application (*vitakka*) and sustained mental application (*vicāra*) do not imply full-fledged thinking activity. Rather, they refer to the initial and sustained application of attention. Such application of attention can also take place in the domain of thought or verbal communication, when initial mental application directs the mind towards what is to be thought or said, while sustained mental application maintains the coherence of a particular sequence of thoughts or words. In the context of absorption, however, this same activity is nothing more than an intentional deployment of attention, directed towards the object

²⁵⁴ M III 162, where only after having consecutively overcome a whole series of *upakkilesas* (quoted in chapter IX footnote 73) he was able to attain the first *jhāna*: *so ... ahañ savitakkam-pi savicārañ samādhiñ bhāvesiñ*. Cf. also A IV 439, which reports his struggle to overcome sensuality in order to be able to develop *jhāna*.

²⁵⁵ M I 246. One could presume that this experience was due to *samatha* practice in a previous life, but that his ability to attain the first *jhāna* was then lost during his adolescence and later sensual indulgence as a prince, so that he had to develop it anew.

²⁵⁶ S IV 263.

²⁵⁷ A I 23: *etad-aggāñ mama sāvakañāñ bhikkhāñāñ iddhimantāñāñ yadidañ Mahā Moggallāno ... dibbacakkhukāñāñ yadidañ Anuruddho*.

²⁵⁸ S IV 217: *pañhamāñ jhāñāñ samāpānassa vacā vāpasantā hoti*; (same at S IV 220-3). Kv 200 uses this passage to oppose the (wrong) view that the *jhāna*-factors *vitakka* and *vicāra* refer to vocal activity. This view arose because of their definition as *vacāsaikhāra* (verbal formation) at M I 301.

²⁵⁹ A V 135: *pañhamassa jhānassa saddo kaññako*. According to Brahmavaṛṣo: *Basic Method*, p 29, "while in any *jhāna* it is impossible to ... hear a sound from outside or produce any thought." Kv 572 also refutes the view that it is possible to hear sound during *jhāna* attainment. At Vin III 109, some monks accused *Moggallāna* to have falsely claimed attainment, because he had stated that while being in the 'imperturbable concentration' (i.e. fourth *jhāna* or an immaterial attainment) he had heard sounds. The fact that this led the monks to accuse him of false claims shows that the impossibility of hearing sound during deep absorption was generally accepted among the monks. However, the Buddha exonerated *Moggallāna*, explaining that it was possible to hear sound even during such a deep level of *jhāna*, if the attainment was impure (*aparissuddho*). Sp II 513 explains that due to not having fully overcome the obstructions to absorption, *Moggallāna*'s attainment was not stable and thus the hearing took place in a moment of instability of the concentration.

²⁶⁰ A IV 430: *pañhamāñ jhāñāñ upasampajja viharatī, ayañ vuccatī 'bhikkhu lokassa antam-āgamma, lokassa ante viharatī'* (*loka* being identified with the five *kāmaguḍas* in the same discourse). Another example of the distinct character of the *jhānic* experience is the kind of cognition operating during the first *jhāna*, which D I 182 calls a 'subtle but real' cognition: *sukhumasaccasaññā*. This expression indicates the attenuated form of cognition that takes place during absorption, different from the way how the ordinary world is cognised.

²⁶¹ These are the elements of materiality and immateriality (*rāpadhātu* and *arāpadhātu* at D III 215), corresponding to the material and immaterial realms of existence (*rāpabhava* and *arāpabhava* at S V 56), and different from the element of sensuality or the sensual realm (*kāmadhātu* and *kāma bhava*, *ibid.*).

²⁶² M I 521: *pañhamāñ jhāñāñ ... evarāpañ uēārāñ visesañ adhicchatī*.

²⁶³ M I 159 and 174: *bhikkhu ... pañhamāñ jhāñāñ upasampajja viharatī. Ayañ vuccatī bhikkhu: andhañ akāsi Mārāñ, apadañ vadhitvā Māraccakhuñ, adassanañ gato pāpimato*.

of concentration.

To translate *vitakka* as 'initial mental application' finds support in the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*, which includes 'directing of the mind' (*cetaso abhiniropānā*) in a list of synonyms for 'right thought', along with *vitakka*.²⁶⁴ To understand *vitakka* as application of the mind can also claim support from the *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries, and from numerous modern meditation teachers and scholars.²⁶⁵

This way of understanding can also be applied to the above-mentioned 'cessation of wholesome intentions' on attaining the second absorption, a state of 'noble silence'. Although initial mental application as a factor of the first absorption is different from discursive thought, nonetheless initial mental application is in this context a kind of 'intention' and thereby involves some subtle degree of deliberate mental activity. Only on entering the second absorption, when this last vestige of mental activity is abandoned and concentration has become fully stable,²⁶⁶ does the mind reach a state of complete inner stillness ('noble silence') and absence of wholesome 'intentions'. Based on the passages considered so far, it seems reasonable to suppose that 'absorption' (*jhāna*) refers to profound experiences of deep concentration, achieved after having developed a considerable degree of meditative proficiency.

IV.3) Absorption and Realisation

Countless discourses recommend the development of concentration as an essential factor for 'knowing things as they really are'.²⁶⁷ Concentration is a requirement for full awakening,²⁶⁸ and this concentration has to be 'right concentration'.²⁶⁹ These specifications recommend absorption concentration as a requisite for full awakening. However, the question may be asked if the same is also required for stream-entry. Although due to the powerful impact of experiencing *Nibbāna* at stream-entry the concentrative unification of one's mind (*cittassekaggatā*) will momentarily reach a level comparable to absorption, how far does this require the previous development of absorption with a tranquility object of meditation?²⁷⁰

The qualities listed in the discourses as essential for the realisation of stream-entry do not stipulate the ability to attain absorption.²⁷¹ Nor are such abilities mentioned in the descriptions of the qualities that are characteristic of a stream-enterer subsequent to realisation.²⁷²

²⁶⁴ M III 73: *takko vitakko saikappo appanāvayappanā cetaso abhiniropānā vācāsaikhāro, ayaū sammāsaikappo*.

²⁶⁵ *Cetaso abhiniropānā* occurs at Vibh 257 in a definition of *vitakka*; similarly at Vism 142: *vitakko ... cittassa abhiniropānalakkhaḍo*. Similar understandings of *vitakka* can be found in Ayya Khema: *Buddhism for the West*, p 115; Bodhi: *Connected Discourses*, p 52, and *Manual of Abhidhamma*, p 82; Chah: *Food for the Heart*, p 53; Cousins: "Stages of Samādhi", p 153; Eden: "Jhānās", p 89; Goenka: *Satipaṇṇhāna*, p 93; Ledi: *Philosophy of Relations*, p 52; Pa Auk: *Knowing and Seeing*, p 17; Rhys Davids: *Psychological Ethics*, p 8 n 1; Shwe: *Controversy*, p 238 n 1; Stcherbatsky: *Central Conception*, p 104; and Sujāva: "Access & Fixed Concentration", p 10.

²⁶⁶ Indicated in the standard descriptions of the second *jhāna* by qualifying the *pātisukha* experienced to be *samādhija*, born of concentration, and by the expression *cetasa ekodibhāva*, singleness of mind (e.g. at D I 74).

²⁶⁷ E.g. at S IV 80: *samāhito bhikkhu yathābhātaū pajānāti*.

²⁶⁸ A III 426: *so vata bhikkhu na santena samādhinā na ... ekodibhāvadhigatena ... āsavānāū khayā ... sacchikatvā upasampajja viharissatīti, netaū ñhānāū vijjati*.

²⁶⁹ A III 19, 200, 360, A IV 99, 336, A V 4-6, and 314: *sammāsamādhimhi asati sammāsamādhivipannassa hatuṇisam hoti yathābhūtañāḍassanaṃ ... hatuṇisam hoti vimuttiñāḍassanaṃ*; and A III 423: *'sammāsamādhim apanipūretvā saṃyojanāni pajahissatīti, netam ṭhānaṃ vijjati; saṃyojanāni appahāya nibbānaṃ sacchikarissatīti, netam ṭhānaṃ vijjati*. It is interesting to note that in most of these cases the absence of *sammāsamādhī* is related to a lack of *sīla* (ethical conduct), so that in the reverse case one gets (e.g. A III 20): *sīla sati sīlasampannassa upanisasampanno hoti sammāsamādhī*, i.e. the 'rightness' of concentration is the outcome of ethical conduct (viz. factors three, four, and five of the noble eightfold path). This brings to mind the alternative definition discussed above of *sammāsamādhī* as unification of the mind in interrelation with the other path-factors, (this is further supported by the use of 'upanisā' here, which echoes the 'sa-upanisā' used in the definition of right concentration as unification of the mind).

²⁷⁰ The distinction drawn here is concerned with what the commentaries refer to as 'supramundane' (*lokuttara*) and as 'mundane' (*lokiya*) concentration; cf. the definition given at Vism 85: *tāsu bhāmasu kusalacittekaggatā lokiyo samādhī. Ariyamaggasampayuttā ekaggatā lokuttaro samādhī*.

²⁷¹ S V 410: *cattāro dhammā bhāvītā bahulākatā sotāpattiphalasacchikiriyāya saūvattanti ... sappurisasāūsevo, saddhammasavanaū, yonisomanasikāro, dhammānudhammapañipatti*. (S II 18 explains the last: *avijjāya ce bhikkhu nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya pañipanno hoti, 'dhammānudhammapañipanno bhikkhā'-ti*); cf. also M I 323.

²⁷² One would expect this ability to be mentioned among the *cattāri sotāpattiyaigāni*, representing four characteristic qualities of a stream-enterer, which however are confined to *aveccapāsāda* (perfect confidence) in the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and

What, according to the discourses, is a necessary condition for being able to gain stream-entry is a state of mind completely free from the five hindrances.²⁷³ Although a convenient way for removing the hindrances is the development of absorption, yet this is not the only way to remove them. According to a discourse in the *Itivuttaka*, the hindrances can also be removed and the mind become concentrated even during walking meditation, a posture not suitable for attaining absorption.²⁷⁴ The hindrances can also be temporarily absent while one is listening to the *Dhamma*.²⁷⁵

This alternative is corroborated by a fair number of the reports of the stream-entry attainments recorded in the discourses, where the person in question may not have meditated at all in this life, much less be able to attain absorption.²⁷⁶ Yet, these reports invariably mention the removal of the hindrances previous to the arising of insight.²⁷⁷ In all these instances, the hindrances are removed as a result of attentively listening to the gradual instructions given by the Buddha.

In fact, a substantial number of well-known modern meditation teachers base their teachings on the dispensability of absorption abilities for the realisation of stream-entry.²⁷⁸ Thus it seems as if for the mind to become momentarily 'absorbed' in the experience of *Nibbāna* at stream-entry, the ability to attain mundane absorption may not be a necessary requirement.

This situation becomes even clearer when the next stage of awakening is considered, the once-returned. Once-returneds are so called because they will be reborn once again in 'this world' (i.e. the *kāmaloka*).²⁷⁹ On the other hand, those who have developed the ability of attaining absorption at will, and have not lost this ability, are not going to return to 'this world' in their next life.²⁸⁰ They will be reborn in a higher heavenly sphere (i.e. the *rūpaloka* or the *arūpaloka*). This certainly does not imply that a stream-enterer or a once-returned cannot have absorption attainments. But if they were all absorption attainers, the very concept of a 'once-returned'

Saigha, together with firm ethical conduct. At S V 357 the Buddha mentioned these four as: *dhammādāso dhammapariyāyo, yena samannāgato ariyasāvako ākaikhamāno attanā va attānāū vyākareyya ... sotāpannoham-asmi*.

²⁷³ A III 63: *so vata bhikkhu ime paṅca ... nāvāraḍe ... appahāya ... uttariū vā manussadhammā alam-ariyaḍāḍadassanavisesaū sacchikarissatāti, netaū ṅhāḍaū vijjati*. Cf. also M I 323, which mentions several qualities needed for stream-entry, among them not being 'obsessed by the hindrances'.

²⁷⁴ It 118: *carato bhikkhuno abhijjhā vigatā hoti, vyāpādo vigato hoti, thānamiddhaū vigataū hoti, uddhaccakukkuccaū vīgataū hoti, vicikicchā pahānā hoti ... samāhitaū cittaū ekaggāū*.

²⁷⁵ S V 95: *yasmīū samaye ariyasāvako aṅṅhiū katvā manasikatvā sabbacetaso samannāharitvā ohitasoto dhammaū suḍāti, imassa paṅca nāvāraḍā tasmīū samaye na honti*.

²⁷⁶ D I 110 and 148 feature rich Brahmins, whose busy life-style as administrators of a royal domain would not be particularly conducive to the development of *jhāna*, yet each of them realised stream-entry while hearing a discourse of the Buddha. M I 380 and A IV 186 report the stream-entries of stout followers of the Jains during a discourse of the Buddha (considering that the leader of the Jains, according to S IV 298, even doubted the existence of the second *jhāna*, one may well suppose that *jhānic* abilities are improbable in the case of his followers; this impression is born out by the account given in Tatia: *Jaina Philosophy*, pp 281-293). At A IV 213 a drunken layman, sobered up through the impact of meeting the Buddha for the first time, realised stream-entry during a gradual discourse given at that same first meeting. Ud 49 has a leper, described as a poor, pitiable, and wretched person, similarly realising stream-entry during a discourse of the Buddha. This leper had actually mistaken the crowd listening to the Buddha for being assembled for a free food distribution and had only approached it in the hope of getting a meal. Finally, according to Vin II 192, several hired killers, one of whom even had the mission of killing the Buddha himself, all became stream-enterers instead of completing their mission, after hearing a gradual discourse by the Buddha. In all these cases it is not very probable that the persons realising stream-entry were involved in the regular practice of meditation and in the possession of *jhānic* attainments.

²⁷⁷ All above quoted instances mention the '*vināvāraḍacitta*'.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Visuddhacara: "Vipassanā & Jhāna", who gives a convenient overview of statements by several well-known meditation teachers on the issue.

²⁷⁹ M I 226: *sakadāgāmino sakid-eva imaū lokaū āgantvā dukkhassantaū karissati*. The fact that once-returneds do return to 'this world' is documented e.g. at A III 348 and A V 138, where once-returneds are reborn in the *Tusita* heaven, a lower celestial realm far inferior to those planes of existence corresponding to absorption attainment. Similarly, according to A IV 380, the more advanced types of stream-enterers, the *eka-bājiū* and the *kolaikola*, will be reborn as human beings, a level of rebirth even further removed from the planes of existence to be gained through absorption abilities.

²⁸⁰ A II 126: *pañhamajjhānāū ... tabbahulavihārā aparihāno kālaū kurumāno brahmakāyikānāū devānāū saavyataū upapajjati*; with the only distinction that a *puthujjana* (worldling) will after some time be reborn in lower realms again, while an *ariya* (noble one) will proceed from there to final *Nibbāna*. (This passage does not only refer to someone who is in the actual attainment at the time of death, but to anyone who possesses the ability to attain *jhāna*). A similar passage can be found at A I 267 concerning *arāpa* (immaterial) attainments and rebirth and at A II 129 regarding the *brahmavihāras* (divine abodes) and rebirth.

would be superfluous, since not a single once-returner would ever return ‘to this world’.

According to the discourses, the difference between the realisations of once-return and non-return is related to differing levels of concentrative ability. Several passages point out that the once-returner, in contrast to the non-returner, has not yet fulfilled the development of concentration.²⁸¹ Judging from this, the attainment of absorption might be of relevance for the realisation of non-return. In fact, several discourses relate the progress towards the higher two stages of the path, non-return and *arahant*-ship, to having had the experience of the first or higher absorptions.²⁸² The reason for this could be that the insightful contemplation of meditative absorption fulfils an important role in overcoming and completely eradicating the last traces of desire, and thereby facilitates the breakthrough to non-return or full awakening.²⁸³

The concluding passage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the ‘prediction’, appears at first sight to contradict this, since it predicts the realisation of full awakening or non-return for successful *satipaṭṭhāna* practice.²⁸⁴ This could be taken to imply that absorption abilities can be dispensed with even for the higher stages of awakening. However, such assumptions need to be weighed against other evidence in the discourses, where the need for at least the first absorption is clearly and explicitly stated.²⁸⁵ Although absorption abilities are not directly mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the general picture provided by the discourses suggests that the ability to attain at least the first absorption is required for the higher two stages of awakening. Otherwise it would be difficult to understand why the Buddha mentioned absorption as part of the noble eightfold part leading to full awakening.

Concerning the concluding passage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, it needs to be taken into consideration that it is concerned with the fruits of the practice, not with the need for a particular level of concentration as a prerequisite for realisation. The fact that it mentions only the higher two fruits of realisation highlights the potential of proper practice. The same holds true for a group of twenty discourses in the *Bojjaṅga Saṃyutta*, which relate a broad variety of meditation practices to these two higher realisations.²⁸⁶ These instances, too, do not bear any relation to the presence or absence of absorption abilities, but rather call attention to the potential of the respective meditation practices. Moreover, the Chinese versions in the *Madhyama Āgama* and the *Ekottara Āgama* both mention absorption attainment as part of their expositions on *satipaṭṭhāna*.²⁸⁷ This suggests that for *satipaṭṭhāna* to unfold its full potential of leading to non-return or full awakening the development of absorption seems to be required.

Another term relevant to the present topic is ‘purification of mind’ (*cittavisuddhi*). This

²⁸¹ According to A IV 380 the once-returner, in contrast to the non-returner, has not perfected/completed *samādhi*: *ekacco puggalo sālesu paripārakārā hoti samādhismīū paripārakārā, paṅāya na paripārakārā. So paṅcannaū orambhāgiyānaū saīyojanānaū parikkhayā antarāparinibbāyā hoti ... ekacco puggalo sālesu paripārakārā hoti samādhismīū na paripārakārā, paṅāya na paripārakārā. So tiḍḍaū saīyojanānaū parikkhayā rāgadosamohānaū tanuttā sakadāgāmā hoti. A similar passage can be found at A I 232 and 233: idha bhikkhu sālesu paripārakārā hoti samādhismīū mattaso kārā paṅāya mattaso kārā ... so sakadāgāmā hoti ... idha bhikkhu sālesu paripārakārā hoti samādhismīū paripārakārā paṅāya mattaso kārā ... so paṅcannaū orambhāgiyānaū saīyojanānaū parikkhayā ... (The expression *adhicittasikkhā*, used in the introductory passage to A I 232 and in the above quote referred to with *samādhi* is explained at A I 235 as *jhāna* attainment). Cf. also Dhammavuddho: *Samatha and Vipassanā*, p 29; and Æāāvāra: *Clearing the Path*, p 372.*

²⁸² E.g. M I 350 and A V 343: *idha bhikkhu ... pañhamāū jhānaū upasampajja viharati ... tatha ñhito āsavānaū khayāū pāpuḍāti ... no ce āsavānaū khayāū pāpuḍāti ... paṅcannaū orambhāgiyānaū saīyojanānaū parikkhayā opapātiko hoti tatha parinibbāyā* (the same is then repeated for the higher *jhānas* and the practice of the *brahmavihāras*). More explicit is M I 434-435 (full quote in footnote 69 below) which clearly stipulates the attainment of *jhāna* as a necessity for the two higher stages of awakening. Similarly A IV 422: *pañhamam pāhaū jhānaū nissāya āsavānaū khayāū vadāmi ... paṅcannaū orambhāgiyānaū saīyojanānaū parikkhayā* (same repeated for the other *jhānas*).

²⁸³ At A II 128 the insightful contemplation of absorption leads to non-return (rebirth in *Suddhāvāsa*). Compare also M I 91 where *Mahānāma*, who according to the comy (Ps II 61) was a once-returner, was advised by the Buddha to develop *jhāna* for further progress on the path.

²⁸⁴ M I 62: *yo hi koci ... ime cattāro satipaṅñhāne evaū bhāveyya ... tassa dvinnaū phalānaū aṅcātaraū phalaū pañnikaikhaū - diññhe va dhamme aṅcā, sati va upādisese anāgāmitā.*

²⁸⁵ M I 434: *yo maggo yā pañipadā paṅcannaū orambhāgiyānaū saīyojanānaū pahānāya taū maggaū taū pañipadaū anāgāmma paṅcorambhāgiyāni saīyojanāni ... pajahissati - netāū ñhānaū vijjati, M I 435: katamo maggo katamā pañipadā paṅcannaū orambhāgiyānaū saīyojanānaū pahānāya?... pañhamāū jhānaū upasampajja ...*

²⁸⁶ S V 129-133.

²⁸⁷ In the *Madhyama āgama* as part of the body contemplations, and in the *Ekottara āgama* as part of the contemplations of *dhammas* (in Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, pp 89, and 90; and Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, pp 154, and 176).

expression occurs in the *Rathavinīta Sutta*, which enumerates a series of seven successive stages of purification.²⁸⁸ The discourse compares each stage of purification to a single chariot in a relay of chariots connecting two locations. In this sequence, purification of mind occupies the second position between the preceding purification of ethical conduct and the subsequent purification of view. The fact that purification of mind precedes purification of view is sometimes taken to imply that absorption is a necessary basis for realisation.²⁸⁹

On considering this passage, however, it needs to be pointed out that the question leading to the chariot simile was not at all concerned with necessary conditions for realisation. Rather, the topic discussed in the *Rathavinīta Sutta* was the aim of living the life of a monk or nun in the early Buddhist monastic community. The point was that each purification, though a necessary step on the path, falls short of the final goal. To illustrate this, the chariot simile was introduced. The need to move beyond different stages of purification in order to reach the final goal is in fact a recurrent theme in the discourses.²⁹⁰

Although the chariot simile in the *Rathavinīta Sutta* does imply a conditional relationship between the various stages mentioned, to take this as stipulating that absorption must be attained before turning to the development of insight pushes this simile too far. Such a literal interpretation needs to regard the establishment of ethical conduct, concentration, and wisdom as a matter of strict linear sequence, whereas in practical reality these three have a symbiotic character, each enhancing and supporting the other. This is illustrated in the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*, which compares the mutual interrelatedness of ethics and wisdom to two hands washing each other.²⁹¹

Besides, according to a discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* it is impossible to purify concentration (viz. 'purification of the mind') without having first purified right view (viz. 'purification of view').²⁹² This statement proposes exactly the reverse sequence to the *Rathavinīta Sutta*, where purification of the mind preceded purification of view.

In fact, the discourses depict a variety of approaches to final realisation. A passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, for example, describes a practitioner who is able to gain deep wisdom, though lacking proficiency in concentration.²⁹³ Another discourse in the same *Nikāya* speaks of two alternative approaches to full realisation: the pleasant approach by way of absorption, and the much less pleasant approach by way of contemplating the repulsiveness of the body.²⁹⁴ In addition, the *Yuganaddha Sutta* (in the same *Aṅguttara Nikāya*) documents that realisation can be gained by developing either concentration or insight first and then practising the other, or else both can be developed together.²⁹⁵ This discourse clearly shows that, although some practitio-

²⁸⁸ M I 149: *sālavissuddhi yāvada-eva cittavisuddhatthā ... diññhivissuddhatthā ... kaikkhāvitarāḍḍavisuddhatthā ... maggāmagga-āḍḍadassanavisuddhatthā ... pañipadā-āḍḍadassanavisuddhatthā ... āḍḍadassanavisuddhatthā ... anupāḍā parinibbānatthā ... Bhagavati brahmacariyā vussati*. This particular 'path'-scheme forms the underlying structure of the *Visuddhimagga*. It has also been compared to other religious traditions by Brown: "Meditation in Cross-Cultural Perspective", who relates it to path descriptions in the *Mahāmudra* and the *Yoga-Sātras*, and by Cousins: "Buddhist Purification", who compares it to St. Teresa's 'Interior Castle'.

²⁸⁹ Possibly based on A II 195, where *cittapārisuddhi* (purity of mind) is related to attaining the four *jhānas*. The need for absorption abilities as a necessary basis for realisation is maintained by Kheminda: *Buddhist Meditation*, p 14.

²⁹⁰ Cf. e.g. M I 197 and 204: *nayidāi brahmacariyā ... sālasampadānisaṁsāi, na samādhisampadānisaṁsāi, na āḍḍadassanānisaṁsāi. Ya ca kho ayaṁ akuppā cetovimutti - etad-attham ... brahmacariyā, etaṁ sārāṁ etaṁ pariyosānan-ti*.

²⁹¹ D I 124: *seyyathāpi hatthena vā hatthāi dhopeyya, pādena vā pādāi dhopeyya, evam-eva ... sālaparidhotā paḍḍā, paḍḍāparidhotāi sālaū, yattha sālaū tattha paḍḍā, yattha paḍḍā tattha sālaū, sālavato paḍḍā, paḍḍavato sālaū*. Cf. also Chah: *Key to Liberation*, p 9; and Goleman: *Buddha on Meditation*, p 6.

²⁹² A III 15 and 423: *sammādiññhiṁ aparipāretvā sammāsamādhīṁ paripāressatī, netāi nḥānāi vijjati*.

²⁹³ A II 92-4, and A V 99: *puggalo lābhā adhipa-ādhammavipassanāya na lābhā ajjhataṁ cetosamathassa*.

²⁹⁴ A II 150: *dukkhā pañipadā ... bhikkhu asubhānupassā kāye viharati ... so pāpuḍḍatī āsavānāi khayāya ... sukhā pañipadā ... bhikkhu ... pañhamāi jhānāi upasampajja viharati ... so pāpuḍḍatī āsavānāi khayāya*.

²⁹⁵ A II 157: *yo hi koci ... arahatta pattīṁ vyākroti, sabbo so catuhi āgehi etesaṁ vā ācātarena ... Idha bhikkhu samathapubbaigamaṁ vipassanāṁ bhāveti, tassa samathapubbaigamaṁ vipassanāṁ bhāvayato maggo saṁjāyati ... anusayā vyantāhonti ... bhikkhu vipassanāpubbaigamaṁ samathāṁ bhāveti ... anusayā vyantāhonti. ... bhikkhu samathavipassanāṁ yuganaddhāṁ bhāveti ... anusayā vyantāhonti ... bhikkhuo dhammuddhaccaviggahātamanā hoti, so ... samayo yan-taṁ cittaṁ ajjhataṁ yeva santiññhati sammisādati ekodihoti samādhīyati, tassa maggo saṁjāyati. So taṁ maggaṁ āsevati bhāveti bahulākaroti. Tassa taṁ maggaṁ āsevato bhāvayato bahulākaroto saṁojanāni pahāyanti, anusayā vyantāhonti*. Cf. also Tatia: "Samatha and Vipassanā", p 89.

ners will build up concentration first and then turn to insight, others can follow the reverse procedure. It would do little justice to these passages if one were to limit the approach to realisation to only one of these sequences, presuming that the development of concentration invariably has to precede the development of wisdom.

IV.4) The Contribution of Absorption to the Progress of Insight

In many discourses the Buddha pointed out that the cultivation of absorption is particularly conducive to realisation.²⁹⁶ The development of deep concentration leads to a high degree of mastery over the mind.²⁹⁷ Not only does absorption attainment entail the temporary removal of the hindrances, but it also makes it much more difficult for them to invade the mind on later occasions.²⁹⁸ On emerging from deep concentration the mind is 'malleable', 'workable' and 'steady',²⁹⁹ so that one can easily direct it to seeing things 'as they truly are'. Not only that, but when things are seen as they truly are by a calm and malleable mind, this vision affects the deeper layers of the mind. Such a vision goes far beyond a superficial intellectual appreciation, because, due to the receptivity and malleability of the mind, insights will be able to penetrate into the deeper regions of the mind and thereby bring about inner change.

The advantages of developing absorption concentration are not confined to providing a stable and receptive state of mind for the practice of insight meditation. The experience of absorption is one of intense pleasure and happiness, brought about by purely mental means, which thereby automatically eclipses any pleasure arising in dependence on material objects. Thus absorption functions as a powerful antidote for sensual desires, by divesting them of their former attraction.³⁰⁰ In fact, according to the *Cūladukkhakkhandha Sutta* wisdom alone does not suffice to overcome sensuality, but needs the powerful support available through the experience of absorption.³⁰¹ The Buddha himself, during his own quest for awakening, overcame the obstruction caused by sensual desires only by developing absorption.³⁰²

²⁹⁶ E.g. D III 131: *cattāro me sukhallikānuyogā ekantanibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya ... nibbānāya saivattanti ... Idha bhikkhu ... pañhamajjhānā ... catutthajjhānā upasampajja viharati*, followed by D III 132: *ime cattāro sukhallikānuyoge anuyuttānā viharatā cātāri phalāni ... pāñikaikhā ... sotāpanno ... sakadāgāmā ... opapātiko hoti tattha parinibbāyi ... āsavānā khayā*. M I 454: *bhikkhu viviceva kāmehi ... pañhamā ... catutthā jhānā upasampajja viharati, idā vuccati ... sambodhasukhā ... bhāvetabbā bahulākātabbā*. S V 308: *cattāro jhāne bhāvento ... bahulākaronto nibbānaninno hoti nibbānapoḍo nibbānapabbhāro*. The importance given to *jhāna* in early Buddhism is documented by Griffith: "Jhāna", p 57, and Rhys Davids: "Dhyāna", p 696, both giving an estimate/ overview of occurrences of the term *jhāna* in the *Pāli Nikāyas*.

²⁹⁷ A IV 34: *sattahi dhammehi samānāgato bhikkhu cittaṃ vāse vatteti, no ca bhikkhu cittaṃ vāsenā vattati. Idha bhikkhu samādhikusalo hoti, samādhissa samāpattikusalo ... samādhissa nīhikusalo ... samādhissa vuññhānakusalo ... samādhissa kallitakusalo ... samādhissa gocarakusalo ... samādhissa abhinīhānakusalo*.

²⁹⁸ M I 463: *vivekā kāmehi vivekā akusalehi dhammehi pātisukhā nādhigacchati ... tassa abhijjhā pi cittaṃ pariyādāya tiññhati, byāpādo pi ... thānamiddham-pi ... uddhaccakukkuccam-pi ... vicikicchā pi*. On the other hand, however, it needs to be pointed out that if sensual desire or aversion should nevertheless manage to invade the mind, they may then manifest with surprising vehemence, due to the increased ability of the mind to remain undistracted with a single object, even an unwholesome one. Illustrative examples of this can be found in several *Jātaka* tales (e.g. No 66 at Ja I 305, No 251 at Ja II 271, and No 431 at Ja III 496) which report previous lives of the *bodhisatta* as an ascetic who, in spite of being able to attain deep levels concentration and possessed of supernormal powers, was nevertheless completely overwhelmed by sensual desire on unexpectedly seeing a sparsely dressed woman.

²⁹⁹ This is the standard description of the mental condition on emerging from the attainment of the fourth *jhāna*, e.g. D I 75: *mudubhāte kammaniye nīhite*.

³⁰⁰ At M I 504 the Buddha explained his lack of interest in sensual pleasures: *yā hayaṃ rati aññatrevā kāmehi aññātra akusalehi dhammehi, aṃ dībbaṃ sukhaṃ samādhiggyāya tiññhati, tāya ratiyā ramamāno hīnassa na piheṃi, na tattha abhiraṃmāmi*. Cf. also A IV 411: *bhikkhu viviceva kāmehi ... pañhamā jhānā upasampajja viharati, ettha kāmā nirujjhanti, te ca kāme nirodhetvā nirodhetvā viharanti*; and A III 207: *yasmiṃ samaye ariyasāvako pavivekaṃ pītiṃ upasampajja viharati ... yam piṣsa kāmūpasamhitā dukkhaṃ domanassaṃ ... yam piṣsa kāmūpasamhitā sukhaṃ somanassaṃ, tam piṣsa tasmīṃ samaye na hoti*. In short: A I 61: *samatho ... bhāvito kam-attham anubhoti? ... Yo rāgo so pahiyati*. Conze: *Buddhism*, p 100: "It is the inevitable result of the habitual practice of trance that the things of our common-sense world appear delusive, deceptive, remote and dreamlike." Cf. also Debes: "Satipaṭṭhāna", pp 164-168, and van Zeyst: "Concentration and Meditation", p 39.

³⁰¹ M I 91: *appassāda kāmā bahudukkhā ... ariyasāvakaṃ yathābhātaṃ sammappañāya sudiññhā hoti, so ca aṃatrevā kāmehi aṃatra akusalehi dhammehi pātisukhā nādhigacchati, aṃatvā va tato santatarā, atha kho so neva tāva anāvaññā kāmesu hoti*. Ps II 62 identifies *pañāya* as *vipassanāpañāya* and *pātisukha* as attainment of the first or second *jhāna*.

³⁰² M I 92: *pubbe va sambodhā ... appassāda kāmā bahudukkhā ... evam-etaṃ yathābhātaṃ sammappañāya sudiññhā ahoṣi, so ca aṃatrevā kāmehi aṃatra akusalehi dhammehi pātisukhā nājjhagamaṃ ... atha kvāhā neva tāva anāvaññā*

Deep concentration also promotes inner stability and integration.³⁰³ In this way, the experience of deep concentration fulfils an important role in fortifying the ability to withstand the destabilising effect of those experiences that may be encountered during advanced stages of insight meditation.³⁰⁴ Without a calm and integrated mind, able to withstand the impact of such experiences, a practitioner might lose the balanced stance of observation and become overwhelmed by fear, anxiety, or depression. The development of mental tranquility thus builds up a healthy degree of self-integration as a supportive basis for the development of insight.³⁰⁵

Clearly, there are substantial advantages to be gained when the development of insight is supported and counterbalanced by the development of tranquility. The experience of higher forms of happiness and the concomitant degree of personal integration are benefits which document that the development of tranquility offers its own substantial contribution to progress along the path. This importance is expressed quite vividly in the discourses with the statement that one who has respect for the Buddha and his teaching will automatically hold concentration in high regard.³⁰⁶ On the other hand, one who looks down on the development of concentration thereby only approves of those who have an unsteady mind.³⁰⁷

Nevertheless, it needs to be said that the Buddha was also keenly aware of potential shortcomings of deep states of concentration. The attainment of absorption can turn into an obstacle for the path to realisation, if such attainment becomes a cause for pride or an object of attachment.³⁰⁸ The satisfaction and pleasure experienced during absorption, though facilitating the giving up of worldly pleasures, tends to make it more difficult to arouse the dissatisfaction and disenchantment required for the complete giving up of everything that leads up to realisation.³⁰⁹ The *Māra Saṃyutta* even reports a casualty of concentration meditation: a monk com-

kāmesu paccāśiī. Cf. also S IV 97 and A IV 439. A IV 56 stresses the importance of overcoming sensual desires for his realisation: *yāvakaṅva-cāhaī ... methunasāyiyogaī attani appahānaī samanupassī, neva tāvahaī ... anuttaraī sammāsambodhī abhisambuddho paccāśiī*. The Buddha's attainment of absorption took place based on mindfulness of breathing (S V 317). His gradual progress through the various levels of absorption is described at M III 162 and A IV 440, clearly documenting that by then he no longer had access to the *jhānic* experience of his early youth. His encounter with *ālāra Kālāma* and *Udaka Rāmaputta* would have to be placed after this gradual progress, since without having developed the four *jhānas* he would not have been able to reach any of the immaterial attainments (this need is documented at D III 265, where the four *jhānas* precede the immaterial attainments in a sequence of successive (*anupubba*) stages of development). Ps IV 209, however, assumes that the Buddha developed the four *jhānas* only during the first watch of the night of his awakening. This makes little sense in view of the different passages documenting his *samatha* practice, all of which (including his meetings with *ālāra Kālāma* and *Udaka Rāmaputta*) do not fit well into a single night. Other discourses documenting the Buddha's *samatha* practice before his awakening are: A III 82 (development of the *iddhipādas*), and A IV 302 (developing the concentrative ability to know various aspects of the *deva* realms). Moreover, according to A IV 448, the Buddha also attained *nirodhasamāpatti* (cessation) as part of his awakening, a statement which is a little difficult to reconcile with the standard accounts of the night of his awakening (cf. M I 22, 248, A IV 176).

³⁰³ According to Alexander: "Buddhist Training", p 139, "the absorption scale corresponds to the chronological path of a well-conducted analysis." Cf. also Conze: *Buddhist Meditation*, p 20.

³⁰⁴ Ayya Khema: *Buddhism for the West*, p 140; and Epstein: "Transformations of Narcissism", pp 150-155.

³⁰⁵ Engler: "Therapeutic Aims", p 17, aptly sums up the need for a well integrated personality as a basis for developing insight meditation: "You have to be somebody before you can be nobody." Epstein: *Thoughts without a Thinker*, p 133, (commenting on the insight knowledges) explains: "experiences such as these require an ego, in the psychoanalytic sense, that is capable of holding and integrating what would ordinarily be violently destabilizing. One is challenged to experience terror without fear and delight without attachment. The work of meditation, in one sense, is the work of developing an ego that is flexible, clear and balanced enough to enable one to have such experiences." The supportive role of non-sensual inner happiness in case of hardship is documented at Th 351 and 436: *pātisukhena vipulena, pharivāna samussayaī, lākham-pi abhisambhonto, viharissāmi kānane*.

³⁰⁶ A IV 123: *so vata bhikkhu sathari sagāro dhamme sagāro saīghe sagāro ... samādhimī agāro bhavissatī, netaī nānaī vijjati; yo so bhikkhu sathari sagāro dhamme sagāro ... samādhimim-pi so sagāro*.

³⁰⁷ A II 31: *sammāsamādhī-ce bhavaī garahati pañikkosati ye ca hi asamāhīta vibhantacīta samaābrāhmaōa te bhoto pujjā te bhoto pāsāisā*. Cf. also S II 225, where lack of respect for the development of concentration constitutes one of the reasons that lead to the disappearance of the true *Dhamma*. According to Thate: *Meditation*, p 93: "those who think that *samādhī* is not necessary are the ones who have not yet reached *samādhī*. That's why they cannot see the merit of *samādhī*. Those who have attained *samādhī* will never speak against it."

³⁰⁸ At M I 194 the Buddha illustrated such pride and attachment to concentration attainments with the example of someone who, in search of heartwood, took only the inner bark of a tree, mistaking it to be the heartwood he was looking for.

³⁰⁹ At A II 165 the Buddha compared attachment to the gratification and bliss experienced during absorption to grasping a branch full of resin, because due to such attachment one will lose the inspiration to continue practising for the complete giving up of all aspects of one's personality and experience: *idha bhikkhu aātaraī santaī cetovimuttī upasampajja viharati ... tassa ... sakkāyānirodhe cittaī nappakkhandati nappasādati na santiññhati na vimuccati*. M III 226 refers to

mitted suicide, because he had several times failed to stabilise his concentrative attainment.³¹⁰ On another occasion, when a monk was mourning his loss of concentration due to physical illness, the Buddha dryly commented that such a reaction is characteristic of those who consider concentration the essence of their life and practice. He then instructed the monk to contemplate the impermanent nature of the five aggregates.³¹¹

IV.5) Tranquility and Insight

The central point that emerges, when considering the relationship between tranquility and insight, is the need for 'balance'. In fact, from a practical viewpoint the two cannot really be separated, since a concentrated mind supports the development of insight and the presence of wisdom in turn facilitates the development of tranquility. Tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) are at their best when developed in skilful co-operation.³¹²

Considered from this perspective, the controversy over the necessity or dispensability of absorption abilities for gaining a particular level or realisation is to some extent based on a misleading premise. This controversy takes for granted that the whole purpose of tranquility meditation is to gain the ability to enter absorption as a stepping stone for the development of insight, a sort of preliminary duty that either needs or does not need to be fulfilled. The discourses offer a different perspective. Here tranquility and insight are two complementary aspects of mental development. The question of practising only insight meditation does not arise, since the important function of tranquility meditation, as a practice in its own right, is never reduced to its auxiliary role in the context of insight meditation.

This need for both tranquility and insight on the path to realisation leads me on to another issue. Some scholars have understood these two aspects of meditation to represent two different paths, possibly even leading to two different goals. They assume that the path of tranquility proceeds via the ascending series of absorption to the attainment of cessation of cognition and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*) and therewith to the cessation of passion. In contrast to this, the path of insight, often mistaken to be a process of pure intellectual reflection, supposedly leads to a qualitatively different goal, the cessation of ignorance.³¹³

A passage from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* does indeed relate the practice of tranquility to the destruction of passion, and the practice of *vipassanā* to the destruction of ignorance.³¹⁴ The distinction between the two is expressed by the expressions 'freedom of the mind' (*cetovimutti*) and 'freedom by wisdom' (*paññāvimutti*) respectively. However, in this passage, these two expressions are not simply equivalent in value relative to realisation. While 'freedom by wisdom' (*paññāvimutti*) refers to the realisation of *Nibbāna*, 'freedom of the mind' (*cetovimutti*), unless further specified as '*akuppa*' (unshakeable), does not imply the same. 'Freedom of the mind',

such attachment to *jhāna* experience as 'getting stuck internally': *vivekajapātisukhassādagathitāū vivekajapātisukhassādaviniḍḍhatū vivekajapātisukhassādasaiyujanasaiyuttaū ajjhataū cittaū saññhitā-ti vuccati*. Buddhādāsa: "Insight", p 121, even goes so far as to suggest that "deep concentration is a major obstacle to insight practice."

³¹⁰ According to S I 120 the monk *Godhika* committed suicide, because on six successive occasions he had attained and again lost '*samāyikaū cetovimuttiū*', temporary liberation of the mind, which according to Spk I 182 refers to a 'mundane' attainment, i.e. some concentrative attainment. The commentary explains that his repeated loss of the attainment was due to illness. According to a statement made by the Buddha after the event, *Godhika* died as an arahant. The commentary suggests that his realisation took place at the moment of death (cf. also the similar commentarial explanations of the suicide cases of *Channa* at M III 266 or S IV 59, and of *Vakkali* at S III 123).

³¹¹ S III 125: *ye te, Assaji, samaḍabrāhmaḍā samādhisarākā samādhisāma tesāū taū samādhii appaṇṇilabhataū evaū hoti - 'no cassu mayāū parihāyāma-ti. Taū kii maasi rāpaū ... vipassādaū niccaū vā aniccaū vā?*

³¹² A I 61: *dve ... dhammā vijjābhāgiyā. Katame dve? Samatho ca vipassanā ca; A I 100: rāgassa ... dosassa ... mohassa pahānāya dve dhammā bhāvetabbā. Katame dve? Samatho ca vipassanā ca; Dh 372: yamhi jhāna-ca pa ca, sa ve nibbānasantike; Th 584: samathāū anuyujeyya kālena ca vipassanāū. On the need of balancing both cf. Cousins: "Samathayāna and Vipassanā-yāna", p 65; Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, p 345; and Maha Boowa: *Kammaṇṇhāna*, p 86.*

³¹³ Cf. de la Vallée Poussin: "Musāla et Nārada", p 193; Gombrich: *Buddhism*, p 110; Griffith: "Concentration or Insight", p 618, and *Being Mindless*, p 14; Pande: *Origins of Buddhism*, p 538; Schmithausen: "Liberating Insight", pp 214-217; and Vetter: *Meditative Practises*, p XXI. Kv 225 confutes a somewhat similar 'wrong view', involving two types of *nirodha* (cessation).

³¹⁴ A I 61: *samatho bhāvito ... cittaū bhāvayati, cittaū bhāvitaū ... yo rāgo so pahāyati. Vipassanā bhāvita ... pa bhāvayati, pa bhāvita ... yā avijjā sā pahāyati ... imā rāgavirāgā cetovimutti, avijjāvirāgā pa vimutti.*

without such qualification, connotes temporary experiences of mental freedom, such as the attainment of the fourth absorption, or developing the divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*).³¹⁵ Thus the above passage is presenting not two different approaches to realisation but two aspects of the meditative path, one of which is by itself not sufficient to bring realisation.³¹⁶

Another relevant discourse is the *Susīma Sutta*, which reports various monks declaring realisation.³¹⁷ Since these monks also denied having attained supernatural powers, this passage has sometimes been understood to imply that full awakening can be attained merely by intellectual reflection.³¹⁸ In reality, however, the monks' declaration that they were only 'freed by wisdom' indicates that they were bereft of the immaterial meditative attainments. It does not entail that they had gained realisation without meditating at all, by a purely intellectual approach.³¹⁹

A similar problem is sometimes seen in regard to the *Kosambi Sutta*, where a monk declared that he had personal realisation of dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*), although he was not an *arahant*.³²⁰ This passage becomes intelligible if one follows the commentarial explanation, according to which the monk in question was 'only' a once-returner.³²¹ The point here is that personal realisation of the principle of *paṭicca samuppāda* is not a characteristic of full awakening only, but is already a feature of stream-entry.

Instead of perceiving these passages as expressing an 'underlying tension' between two different paths to realisation, they simply describe different aspects of what is basically one approach.³²² As a matter of fact, full awakening requires a purification of both the cognitive and the affective aspect of the mind. Although on theoretical examination these two aspects of the path may appear different, in actual practice they tend to converge and supplement each other.

This is neatly summarised in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, which emphasises the importance of appreciating the essential similarity between tranquility and insight meditation in terms of their function.³²³ A practitioner may develop one or the other aspect to a higher degree at different times, but in the final stages of practice both tranquility and insight need to be combined in order to reach the final aim - full awakening - the destruction of both passion and ignorance.

Chapter V: The *Satipaṭṭhāna* 'Refrain'

With the present chapter, I turn to a part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* which could be called

³¹⁵ Cf. e.g. M I 296; see further De Silva: "Cetovimutti", p 120.

³¹⁶ In fact, Vism 702 explains that the attainment of *saṃvādayitanirodha* cannot be reached by *samatha* only, but requires insight of the non-returner's level at least. Although this is not directly stated in the discourses, yet at M III 44, after all preceding eight concentrative attainments have been distinguished according to whether they are attained by the *asappurisa* (unworthy person) or by the *sappurisa* (worthy person), once the attainment of *saṃvādayitanirodha* comes up the *asappurisa* is no longer mentioned, thereby indicating that this attainment is the sole domain of the *sappurisa* (a term which on other occasions is used on a par with *ariya*, e.g. M I 300: *assutava puthujjano ariyānaṃ adassāvā ... sappurisaṃ adassāvā*). This clearly shows that the attainment of *saṃvādayitanirodha* is not merely the outcome of concentrative mastery, but moreover requires the development of insight, a fact which is hinted at in the standard descriptions with the expression *paṇāsa cassa disvā āsavā parikkhāḍā honti*, 'having seen with wisdom, the influxes are destroyed' (e.g. at M I 160). Cf. also A III 194, which relates *saṃvādayitanirodha* to *arahantship* and non-return in particular.

³¹⁷ S II 121.

³¹⁸ Gombrich: *Buddhism*, p 126.

³¹⁹ In this context it is telling to turn to A IV 452, which lists different types of *paṇāvimutti*, all of them however able to attain *jhāna*.

³²⁰ S II 115. Cf. de la Vallee Poussin: "Musāla et Nārada", p 218, and Gombrich: *Buddhism*, p 128.

³²¹ Spk II 122.

³²² Cf. Nett 43: *yena taḍhānusayaṃ samāhanati ayaṃ samatho. Yena taḍhānusayassa paccayaṃ avijjāṃ vārayati, ayaṃ vipassanā. Ime dve dhammā bhāvanāpāripārītū gacchanti samatho ca vipassanā ca. Tattha samathassa phalaṃ rāgavirāga cetovimutti, vipassanāya phalaṃ avijjāvirāga paṇāvimutti*. Critical assessments of the 'two paths theory' can be found in Gethin: "Wrong View", p 221; Keown: *Buddhist Ethics*, pp 77-79, who concludes (p 82): "two types of meditation technique ... exist precisely because final perfection can only be achieved when both dimensions of psychic functioning, the emotional and the intellectual, are purified"; and Swearer: *Saving Knowledge*, pp 369-371.

³²³ Pañis I 21: *ekarasaññhena samathavipassanā abhiṇṇeyyā*. On the interrelation of both in the *Sarvāstivāda* tradition comments Cox: "Attainment", p 83.

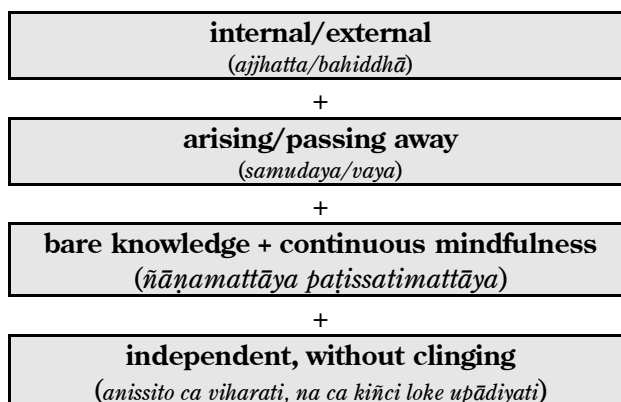
the ‘modus operandi’ of *satipaṭṭhāna*.³²⁴ This is the ‘refrain’, which occurs after each of the meditation exercises described in the discourse and presents four key aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna* (see diagram 5.1 below).³²⁵ In the case of the first *satipaṭṭhāna*, the ‘refrain’ reads:

"In this way, in regard to the body³²⁶ he abides contemplating the body internally, or he abides contemplating the body externally, or he abides contemplating the body both internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that ‘there is body’ is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world."³²⁷

The ‘refrain’ indicates that the scope of *satipaṭṭhāna* includes internal and external phenomena, and that it is in particular their nature to arise and pass away which should be given attention. With these instructions, the ‘refrain’, in a way, expands the contemplative experience along its spatial and temporal axes. By including both internal and external phenomena, the ‘refrain’ broadens the perspective on the spatial level; and by mentioning contemplation of their impermanent nature it directs awareness to the temporal axis of experience, that is, to the passage of time. As the discourses explicitly point out, these two aspects are required for a proper undertaking of *satipaṭṭhāna*.³²⁸ The ‘refrain’ also describes the proper attitude to be adopted during contemplation: observation should be undertaken merely for the purpose of establishing awareness and understanding, and should remain free from clinging.

Key Aspects of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* Refrain:

(Diagram 5.1)



With the ‘refrain’, the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* turns towards the general characteristics of phenomena.³²⁹ At this stage of practice, awareness of the specific content of experience gives way to an understanding of the general nature and character of the *satipaṭṭhāna* under contem-

³²⁴ This expression is suggested by Karunaratne: "Change", p 117.

³²⁵ Thanissaro: *Wings to Awakening*, p 79, alternatively speaks of a basic pattern of three stages underlying the ‘refrain’.

³²⁶ For the other *satipaṭṭhānas*, each instance of ‘body’ in the above instruction should be replaced with ‘feelings’, ‘mind’, or ‘*dhammas*’.

³²⁷ M I 56: *iti ajjhataū vā kāye kāyānupassā viharati, bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassā viharati, ajjhatabhiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassā viharati, samudayadhammānupassā vā kāyasmīū viharati, vayadhammānupassā vā kāyasmīū viharati, samudayavayadhammānupassā vā kāyasmīū viharati. ‘Atthi kāyo’ ti vā panassa sati paccupaññhitā hoti, yāvad-eva cā-ḍamattāya paṭissatimattāya, anissito ca viharati, na ca kiñci loke upādiyati.*

³²⁸ Cf. S V 294: *ajjhataū kāye samudayadhammānupassā viharati, ajjhataū kāye vayadhammānupassā viharati, ajjhataū kāye samudayavayadhammānupassā viharati, bahiddhā kāye samudayadhammānupassā viharati, ... (etc., i.e. the same for bahiddhā, ajjhatabhiddhā, and applied to vedanā, citta, dhamma qualifies for:) ettāvata bhikkhuno cattāro satipaṭṭhāna āradhā honti.*

³²⁹ This can to some extent be inferred from the way the ‘refrain’ is worded, since now attention shifts from a particular instance (such as, for example, ‘the breath’ or ‘a pleasant feeling’) back to the general area (such as ‘the body’ or ‘feeling’).

plation.

This shift of awareness from the individual content of a particular experience to its general features is of central importance for the development of insight.³³⁰ Here the task of *sati* is to penetrate beyond the surface appearance of the object under observation and to lay bare the characteristics that it shares with all conditioned phenomena. This move of *sati* towards the more general characteristics of experience brings about insight into the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and selfless nature of reality. Such a more panoramic kind of awareness emerges at an advanced stage of *satipaṭṭhāna*, when the meditator is able to maintain awareness. At this stage, when *sati* has become well established, whatever occurs at any sense-door automatically becomes part of the contemplation.³³¹

It is noteworthy that the two most popular contemporary *vipassanā* schools of the *Theravāda* tradition both recognise the importance of developing such bare awareness of whatever arises at any sense door at an advanced stage of insight meditation. The respective teachers, Mahasi Sayadaw and U Ba Khin, apparently consider their particular meditation techniques as expedient means to help meditators learn to practice bare awareness at all sense-doors.³³²

Through this shift in perspective, meditators learn to relate to changing experience with an increasingly balanced awareness. In this way they can proceed, as stipulated in the 'refrain', in the quest for understanding without giving rise to clinging and dependencies.

V.1) Internal and External Contemplation

The two expressions used in the first part of the 'refrain' are 'internal' (*ajjhatta*) and its complementary opposite 'external' (*bahiddhā*). The significance of these two terms is not further explained in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries associate internal with the personal, and external with corresponding phenomena in other human beings.³³³ Modern meditation teachers propose several alternative interpretations. In order to comprehensively explore the implications of 'internal' and 'external' *satipaṭṭhāna*, I will at first consider the *Abhidhammic* and commentarial interpretation. Then I will survey some alternative interpretations.

³³⁰ On the importance of shifting from content to general process cf. Brown: "Meditation in Cross-Cultural Perspective", p 233; Goldstein: *Insight Meditation*, p 50; and Kornfield: *Psychology of Mindfulness*, p 19. According to Engler: "Therapeutic Aims", p 28, one of the reasons why western meditators tend to progress slower than their eastern counterparts is "the tendency to become absorbed in the content of awareness rather than continuing to attend to its process ... become preoccupied with individual thoughts, images, memories, sensations etc., rather than keeping their attention focused on the essential characteristics of all psycho-physical events, whatever the content ... a tendency to confuse meditation with psychotherapy and to analyse mental content instead of simply observing it." On the same problem comments also Walsh: "Western Minds", p 76. The need to contemplate the general characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* as part of a cultivation of *satipaṭṭhāna* is also noted in the *Abhidharmako-ābhāṭṭyāyama* (in Pruden, p 925).

³³¹ Jummien: "Recollections", p 279, aptly describes this stage of practice: "at some point the mind becomes so clear and balanced that whatever arises is seen and left untouched with no interference. One ceases to focus on any particular content and all is seen as simply mind and matter, an empty process arising and passing away of its own ... a perfect balance of mind with no reactions ... there is no longer any doing ..."

³³² Cf. Ba Khin: *Buddha-Dhamma*, p 94: "In fact one can develop the understanding of *anicca* through any of the six organs of sense. In practice, however, we have found that ... the feeling by contact of touch ... is more tangible than other types of feeling and therefore a beginner in *Vipassanā* meditation can come to the understanding of *anicca* more easily through bodily feelings ... This is the main reason why we have chosen the body feelings as a medium for the quick understanding of *anicca*. It is open to anyone to try other means, but my suggestion is, that one should have oneself well established in the understanding of *anicca* through bodily feelings, before an attempt is made through other types of feeling." Mahasi: *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* pp 17 and 21: "the actual method of practice in *vipassanā* meditation is to ... observe ... the successive occurrences of seeing, hearing, and so on, at the six sense doors. However, it will not be possible for a beginner to follow these on all successive incidents as they occur, because his mindfulness, concentration and knowledge are still very weak ... A simpler and easier form of the exercise for a beginner is this: With every breath there occurs in the abdomen a rising-falling movement. A beginner should start with the exercise of noting this movement"; Mahasi: *Mālukyaputta*, p 75: "We used to instruct the yogi whose powers of concentration have strengthened to extend this method of meditation to noting all that happens at his six sense doors."

³³³ Dhs 187: *ye dhammā tesāṃ tesāṃ parasattānaṃ parapuggalānaṃ ajjhattaṃ paccattaṃ nīyatā pañipuggalikā upādiḍḍā rāpā vedanā saṃkāsaikharā viḥāḍā - ime dhammā bahiddhā*; same at Vibh 2-10 for each aggregate. Vism 473: *parapuggalikam-pi ca bahiddhāti veditabbā*.

According to the *Abhidhamma* and the commentarial interpretation, 'internal' and 'external' *satipaṭṭhāna* encompasses phenomena arising in oneself and in others. In this way, proper practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* would also include awareness of the subjective experience of others. Although this may be quite feasible in the case of observing another person's body, to directly experience another's feelings or mental states seems to require psychic powers.³³⁴ This would, of course, significantly limit the possibilities of carrying out 'external' *satipaṭṭhāna*.

Yet, in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta* the Buddha introduced these three modes of attention - internal, external, and both - separately as a 'threefold way of developing *satipaṭṭhāna*.'³³⁵ This passage documents that each of the three constitutes a relevant aspect of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice. The same can be inferred from the fact that the *Vibhaṅga*, a comparatively early part of the *Pāli Abhidhamma*, shifts the distinction between internal and external from the 'refrain' to the 'definition' part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.³³⁶ This thereby incorporates internal (*ajjhata*) and external (*bahiddhā*) contemplation into what constitutes the definition of right mindfulness. Both this *Abhidhammic* modification and the above quoted discourse point to the importance of applying *sati* both internally and externally. In fact, the *Vibhaṅga* makes a special point of stating that an external application of *sati*, just as much as an internal application, can lead to realisation.³³⁷ Similarly, a discourse in the *Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta* points out that both internal and external *sati* can act as an awakening factor.³³⁸

In order to do justice to this apparent importance, possibly a practicable solution is to develop awareness of another's feelings and mental condition by carefully observing their outer manifestations. Feelings and mental states do affect the outer appearance of a person by influencing the facial expression, the tone of voice, and the physical posture.³³⁹

This suggestion finds support in the discourses, which list four means of knowing another person's mental state: based on what one sees, based on what one hears, by considering and further reflecting on what one has heard, and lastly with the help of mind reading.³⁴⁰ Apart from mind reading, these means do not require psychic powers, but only a certain degree of

³³⁴ This is, in fact, implied by the presentation at D II 216: *ajjhataū kāye ... vedanāsu ... citte ... dhammesu dhammānupassā viharanto tatha sammā samāhiyati, sammā vipassādati. So tatha sammā samāhito sammā vipassanno bahiddhā parakāye ... paradharme vādaḍḍassanāū abhinibbatteti*. Similarly at S II 127, contemplation of other's mind forms part of a list of deep concentrative attainments. Cf. also Thanissaro: *Wings to Awakening*, p 76.

³³⁵ S V 143: *cattāro satipaṇṇhāne tividhena bhāveyyāsi: ... ajjhataū vā kāye ... vedanāsu ... citte ... dhammesu ... bahiddhā vā kāye ... dhammesu ... ajjhatabahiddhā vā kāye ... dhammesu*. Similarly S V 294, 297, and A III 450 treat these three modes as distinct contemplations. In fact, several discourses apply the distinction between *ajjhata* and *bahiddhā* individually to feelings, to the hindrances, to the awakening factors, and to the aggregates: S IV 205: *ajjhata-ca bahiddhā ca, yaū kiṃci atthi veditāū*; Sn 1111: *ajjhata-ca bahiddhā ca vedanāū nābhinandato*; S V 110: *yad-api ajjhataū kāmaccando ... yad-api bahiddhā kāmaccando tad-api nāvaranāū ... Yad-api ajjhataū dhammesu sati ... yad-api bahiddhā dhammesu sati tad-api satisambojjhaigo*; M III 16: *yaū kiṃci rāpaū ... ajjhataū vā bahiddhā vā ... yā kāci vedanā ... saṃvā ... saikkhārā ... vīcādaū ...* These passages suggest that the application of *ajjhata* and *bahiddhā* to all *satipaṇṇhānas* in the 'refrain' is not merely a case of meaningless repetition, but has to have some significance in each case. Cf. also Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, p 54.

³³⁶ Vibh 193: *cattāro satipaṇṇhānā - idha bhikkhu ajjhataū kāye ... vedanāsu ... citte ... dhamme, bahiddhā kāye ... dhammesu, ajjhatabahiddhā kāye kāyānupassā ... dhammesu dhammānupassā viharati ātāpā sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassatū* (this quote is from the *Suttantabhājanīya*). On the dating of Vibh cf. Frauwallner: "Abhidharma Studien", vol 15, p 106; and Warder: "Introduction", p XXX.

³³⁷ Vibh 228: *atthi ajjhataū dhammesu sati, atthi bahiddhā dhammesu sati. Yadā pi ajjhataū dhammesu sati, tadā pi satisambojjhaigo abhiṃvāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saivattati. Yadā pi bahiddhā dhammesu sati, tadā pi satisambojjhaigo abhiṃvāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saivattati*. In fact, the *satipaṇṇhāna* comy explicitly applies *bahiddhā* to each *satipaṇṇhāna* technique, to the breath at Ps I 249, to the postures at Ps I 252, to bodily activities at Ps I 270, to the bodily parts at Ps I 271, to the elements at Ps I 272, to the cemetery contemplations at Ps I 273, to feelings at Ps I 279, to the mind at Ps I 280, to the hindrances at Ps I 286, to the aggregates at Ps I 287, to the sense-spheres at Ps I 289, to the awakening factors at Ps I 300, and to the four noble truths at Ps I 301.

³³⁸ S V 110: *yadā pi ajjhataū dhammesu sati ... yadā pi bahiddhā dhammesu sati tadā pi satisambojjhaigo*.

³³⁹ Khemacari: "Satipaṇṇhāḍa", p 26.

³⁴⁰ D III 103 and A I 171: *catasso ādesanavidhā. Idhekacco nimittena ādisati - evam-pi te mano, ittham-pi te mano, iti pi te cittan-ti ... saddatū sutvā ādisati -- evam-pi te mano ... vitakkayato vicārayato vitakkavipphāra-saddatū sutvā ādisati -- evam-pi te mano ... samādhīū samāpannassa cetasā ceto paricca pajānāti*. Cf. also M I 318, which recommends investigating by way of seeing and hearing for monks without telepathic powers in order to be able to assess the Buddha's mental purity; or else M II 172, where observing the bodily and verbal conduct of a monk forms the basis for assessing whether his mind is under the influence of greed, anger, or delusion.

common sense. Understood in this way, an ‘external’ application of awareness in relation to the various practices detailed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* becomes a practicable possibility.

Thus ‘external’ *satipaṭṭhāna* can be undertaken by turning awareness to another person’s posture, facial expression, and tone of voice, as indicators of their feelings or state of mind. This way of contemplating can be applied to the arising of particular feelings or mental states in the present moment, and also to the long-term character traits of a person. For the latter, the commentarial literature offers helpful descriptions of different human character-types and their corresponding behaviour patterns.³⁴¹ According to these descriptions, characteristic mental dispositions of anger or greed can be inferred by observing, for example, a particular monk’s eating habits and way of wearing his robes. Differences in character even show up in the different ways a simple task like sweeping is performed.

Undertaking ‘external’ awareness of another in this way to some extent resembles the way a psychoanalyst observes a patient, closely examining behaviour and related symptoms in order to assess the state of mind or character disposition of the observed person. This suggests that an ‘external’ application of awareness is a practice particularly suitable for daily life situations, since most of the phenomena to be observed will probably not occur while one is seated in formal meditation.

Following the pattern of the instruction in the ‘refrain’, the first step of ‘internal’ contemplation serves as a basis for understanding similar phenomena in others during the second step, ‘external’ contemplation. Indeed, to be aware of one’s own feelings and reactions enables one to understand the feelings and reactions of others more easily.³⁴² For a balanced development of awareness, this shift towards the ‘external’ is of considerable importance. Awareness applied only internally can lead to self-centredness. One may become excessively concerned with what happens with and within oneself, while at the same time remaining unaware of how one’s action and behaviour affect others. By practising both internal and external *satipaṭṭhāna* one can prevent such lopsidedness and achieve a skilful balance between introversion and extroversion.³⁴³

The third step of this aspect in the ‘refrain’ instructs the meditator to observe ‘both internally and externally’. The commentaries explain that, since one cannot contemplate an object both internally and externally simultaneously, the instruction implies that one should alternate between these two modes.³⁴⁴ Yet, this commentarial presentation does not really add anything new to the previous two stages of practice, since to contemplate either internally or externally already entails alternating between these two modes.

The *Vibhaṅga* offers a more convincing perspective, since here the combination of both internal and external observation seems to imply an understanding of the contemplated object as such, without considering it as part of one’s own subjective experience, or that of others.³⁴⁵ Practised in this way, *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation shifts towards an increasingly ‘objective’ and detached stance of observation, from which the observed phenomena are experienced as they are in themselves, independent of whether they occur in oneself or in others.

The *Abhidhammic* and commentarial interpretation of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ tallies also with several other passages in the early discourses. In the *Sāmagāma Sutta*, for example, the

³⁴¹ Ehara: *Vimuttimaggā*, p 58-61; and *Vism* 101-110. Cf. also Mann: *Character Analysis*, pp 19-51.

³⁴² Mann: *Character Analysis*, p 112, speaks of realising "that the forces at work within other people are the same as the forces that motivate our own behaviour." Similarly, insights gained during ‘external’ contemplation will in turn also support ‘internal’ contemplation. For example, it is comparatively easy to uncover the underlying motives of the feelings and reactions of someone else, while the same motives might pass undetected if oneself is the actor. Cf. also Bullen: *Technique of Living*, p 32; Khemacari: "Satipaṅṅhāna", p 23; and Yaḍapoḍika: *Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p 58, who explains that "many things permit of better understanding when observed in others, or in external objects, than in oneself."

³⁴³ Cf. also Yaḍapoḍika: "Weg der Charakter Harmonisierung", p 35.

³⁴⁴ Ps I 249.

³⁴⁵ This is implicit in the way how the respective contemplations are expressed, cf. *Vibh* 195: *ajjhatai ... sukhaū vedanaū vediyāmāti pajānāti*, then: *bahiddhā ... sukhaū vedanaū vedayāmāti pajānāti*, but then *ajjhatabahiddhā ... sukhaū vedanaū pajānāti*, i.e. internally one understands: ‘I feel a pleasant feeling’, externally one understands: ‘he or she feels a pleasant feeling’, internally and externally one understands: ‘a pleasant feeling’; same at *Vibh* 197 for mind and at *Vibh* 199-201 for *dhammas*.

two terms are used when countering various unwholesome qualities and unskillful forms of behaviour, whether these occur in oneself (*ajjhatta*) or in others (*bahiddhā*).³⁴⁶ And in the *Janavasabha Sutta*, in a context directly related to *satipaṭṭhāna*, 'external' explicitly refers to the bodies, feelings (etc.) of others.³⁴⁷ This passage carries a considerable degree of weight in relation to the present discussion, since it is the only discourse to provide additional information on the nature of 'external' *satipaṭṭhāna*.

In addition to this way of understanding, modern meditation teachers have proposed various alternative interpretations of 'internal' and 'external' *satipaṭṭhāna*. Some take 'internal' and 'external' to mean quite literally what is spatially internal and external. They suggest that 'external' bodily feelings, for example, are those observed at skin level (*bahiddhā*), while 'internal' bodily feelings are those occurring deeper within the body (*ajjhatta*).³⁴⁸

'Internal' (*ajjhatta*) occurs in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* itself in a clearly spatial sense, referring to the six internal senses in contrast to their external objects. However, the *Pāli* term used in this context for the 'external' sense-objects is not *bahiddhā*, but *bāhira*.³⁴⁹ In contrast, 'internal' (*ajjhatta*) and 'external' (*bahiddhā*) as qualities mentioned in the 'refrain' do not seem to convey such a spatial distinction. In the case of contemplating the sense-spheres, for example, such a spatial understanding of 'internal' and 'external' does not yield a meaningful way of practice, since according to the 'refrain' the entire sense-sphere, consisting of internal sense and external object, has to be contemplated internally and also externally. The difficulty involved in taking 'internal' and 'external' as representing a spatial distinction extends to most of the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations, since neither mental states nor such *dhammas* as the hindrances or the awakening factors fit easily into a distinction between spatially internal and external occurrences.

Other teachers suggest that the distinction between 'internal' and 'external' contemplations hints at the difference between apparent and ultimate truth.³⁵⁰ It is certainly true that as practice progresses one comes to see phenomena more and more in their true nature. Yet, it is highly improbable that a distinction between apparent and ultimate truth corresponds to the original sense of 'internal' and 'external' in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, first because neither of the two terms ever has this implication in the discourses, and second simply because the distinction between the two levels of truth is a late development, belonging to the post-canonical period.³⁵¹

Another interpretation proposes to distinguish between 'internal' mental and 'external' physical objects, so that in the case of feelings, for example, one distinguishes mental feelings (*ajjhatta*) from physical feelings (*bahiddhā*), and in the case of mind one differentiates between purely mental experience (*ajjhatta*) and mental states related to sensory experiences (*bahiddhā*).³⁵²

³⁴⁶ M II 246.

³⁴⁷ D II 216: *bahiddhā parakāye ... bahiddhā paravedanāsu ... bahiddhā paracitte ... bahiddhā paradhammesu ...*

³⁴⁸ Goenka: *Satipaṇṇhāna*, p 54; Solé-Leris: *Tranquility & Insight*, p 82; and Thate: *Meditation*, p 44. This way of understanding 'internal' and 'external' could be supported with Th 172, where *ajjhatta* and *bahiddhā* are both used in regard to the speaker's own body, so that here too they seem to be referring to the inner and outer parts of the same body: *paccavekkhī imau kāyau, sabbaū santarabāhiraū, ajjhatta-ca bahiddhā ca, tuccho kāyo adissatha*.

³⁴⁹ M I 61: *bhikkhu dhammesu dhammānupassā viharati chasu ajjhattikabāhiresu āyatanesu*.

³⁵⁰ Dhammadharo: "Insight Practice", pp 263-266; and Ñāṇasāvara: *Guide to Awareness*, p 27.

³⁵¹ Cf. Jayatilleke: *Theory of Knowledge*, pp 361-368; Karunadasa: *Dhamma*, p 35; and Karunaratne: *Buddhism*, p 90. The term *paramattha* occurs at Sn 68, 219, and Th 748. Elsewhere related terms occur like *paramācāḍā* at A III 354, *paramapaḍā* and *parama ariyasacca* at M III 245, *paramasacca* at M I 480, M II 173 and A II 115, and *uttamattha* at Dh 403. All these instances are references only to *Nibbāna*. The presumption that the one-hundred-and-twenty-one types of *citta*, fifty-two types of *cetasika*, and twenty-eight types of *rāpa* listed in the *Abhidh-s* can be considered 'paramattha', in the sense of being ultimately real, is a late development not found in the early discourses. For an exposition of this later conception of *paramattha* cf. Bodhi: *Manual of Abhidhamma*, pp 6 and 25; and Ledi: "Manual of Law", p 99.

³⁵² Dhammadharo: *Frames of Reference*, pp 20, 25, and Maha Boowa: *Kammaṇṇhāna*, p 101, relate the distinction between internal and external to mental and physical feelings respectively, and to mind only (internal) and mind with an external object in the case of mind. Fessel: *Ein bung von Gegenw.rtigkeit*, p 105, understands *ajjhatta* to refer to internal mental experience and introversion, while *bahiddhā* represents external influences and object-directed activities. Tiwary: "Vedanānupassanā", p 82, also relates 'internal' to mental and 'external' to physical feelings. Similarly, the

This way of understanding ‘internal’ and ‘external’ can claim for support a passage in the *Iddhipādasamyutta*, which relates ‘internal’ contraction to sloth and torpor, while its ‘externally’ distracted counterpart is sensual distraction by way of the five senses.³⁵³ In addition, a passage from the *Bojjhaṅga Samyutta* differentiates the hindrances sensual desire, aversion, and doubt into ‘internal’ and ‘external’ occurrences.³⁵⁴ This passage could refer to the arising of these hindrances due to mind-door events (*ajjhata*), or else due to a sense-door input (*bahiddhā*). On the other hand, the qualification ‘internal’ occurs in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* also as part of the main instruction for contemplating the hindrances and the awakening factors. This usage does not seem to be related to the distinction between mind-door and five sense-door experience, but rather appears to emphasize: a hindrance is present ‘within me’, paralleling the commentarial understanding of ‘internal’ as a referent to oneself.³⁵⁵

Elsewhere in the discourses, *ajjhata* on its own occurs in relation to what is ‘internal’ in the sense of being a predominantly mental type of experience. A typical example of such usage is the second *jhāna*, which the standard descriptions qualify as a state of ‘internal’ serenity.³⁵⁶ ‘Internal’ in the sense of ‘mental’ occurs also in the *Uddesavibhaṅga Sutta*, which contrasts an ‘internally stuck’ state of mind with consciousness being ‘externally distracted’. Yet in this discourse ‘external’, which according to the above interpretation should stand only for the five physical senses, refers to all six senses.³⁵⁷ Similarly, in other discourses ‘internal’ stands not only for pure mind-door events, but is at times related to all six senses.³⁵⁸

These passages show that to understand ‘internal’ and ‘external’ as respective references to mind door and five sense-door events is not always appropriate. The same holds true in relation to several of the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations. The six sense-spheres, for example, easily fall into a distinction between mind-door and physical sense-doors, yet it is difficult to conceive of a meaningful contemplation that treats the entire set of six sense-spheres first internally, from a purely mental viewpoint, and then externally, from the perspective of the five sense-doors.

In sum, although alternative ways of understanding ‘internal’ and ‘external’ have their practical value, yet to understand ‘internal’ as referring to oneself and ‘external’ as referring to others offers a practicable form of contemplation, which can moreover claim support from the discourses, the *Abhidhamma*, and the commentaries.

In the end, whichever interpretation one may adopt, once contemplation is practised both internally and externally, it entails a shift towards a comprehensive view of phenomena.³⁵⁹

Mahāprajñāpāramitā-āstra considers *manovijñānasāyuprayuktavedanā* and *manovijñāna* to be ‘internal’ feelings and mental states, while *paṭṭhaviññānasāyuprayuktavedanā* and *paṭṭhaviññāna* are the corresponding external counterparts (in Lamotte: *Traité*, pp 1173-1175). Nāḍasaūvara: *Contemplation of the Body*, pp 28, 71 applies this way of understanding to mindfulness of breathing, in the sense that the breath is ‘external’, while awareness of the breath is ‘internal’. This, however, does not yield meaningful alternative forms of practice, since the presence of both breath and awareness of it are required for either ‘internal’ or ‘external’ contemplation.

³⁵³ S V 279: *cittaū thānamiddhasahagataū thānamiddhasampayuttaū, idaū vuccati ajjhataū saikhittaū cittaū ... cittaū bahiddhā paṭṭhaviññānaṃ ārabha anuvikkhitaū anuvissataū, idaū vuccati bahiddhā vikkhitaū cittaū* (the same statement is applied to the other three *iddhipādas*, *chanda*, *virīya*, and *vāmaīsā*).

³⁵⁴ S V 110: *yad-api ajjhataū kāmaccando tad-api nāvaraḍāū, yad-api bahiddhā kāmaccando tad-api nāvaraḍāū ... yad-api ajjhataū byāpādo tad-api nāvaraḍāū, yad-api bahiddhā byāpādo tad-api nāvaraḍāū ... yad-api ajjhataū dhammesu vicikicchā tad-api nāvaraḍāū, yad-api bahiddhā dhammesu vicikicchā tad-api nāvaraḍāū*. (However it needs to be noted that this distinction is not applied to *thānamiddha* and to *uddhaccakukkucca*, although both these hindrances could also be related to either mind-door or five sense-door experiences).

³⁵⁵ M I 60: ‘*atthi me ajjhataū kāmaccando ti pajānāti*; or M I 61: ‘*atthi me ajjhataū satisambojjhaigo ti pajānāti*. These instructions do not seem to aim only at hindrances or awakening factors arising due to mind-door events.

³⁵⁶ D I 74: *ajjhataū sampasādanaū*. Other examples are *ajjhataū cetosamathaū* at M I 213, or *ajjhataū sukhaū* (referring to *jhāna*) at M III 233.

³⁵⁷ M III 225: *cakkhunā rāpaū disvā ... manasā dhammaū viññāya ... dhammanimittasādasāyujjanasāyuttaū bahiddhā viññādaū vikkhitaū visañan-ti vuccati*; (while the phrase *ajjhataū cittaū saññhitaū* indeed implies mental experience, namely attachment to the pleasure of *jhāna*).

³⁵⁸ E.g. at M I 346 *ajjhataū abyāsekhasukhaū* is related to all six senses; or S IV 139 speaks of *ajjhataū rāgadosamohaū* in relation to all six senses, as does S V 74 for *cittaū ajjhataū susaññhitaū*.

³⁵⁹ This is suggested by several verses in the *Sutta Nipāta*, where *ajjhata* and *bahiddhā* occur together in the sense of ‘whatever there is’, expressing a sense of comprehensiveness, cf. Sn 738: *ajjhata-ca bahiddhā ca, yaū kiñci atthi*; or Sn 516, 521, and 527: *ajjhataū bahiddhā ca sabbaloke*. The need for such comprehensiveness is not only a characteristic of

At this stage of practice even the boundary between 'I' and 'other' or 'internal' and 'external' is left behind, leading to a comprehensive vision of phenomena as such, independent of any sense of ownership. This more comprehensive view involves either a contemplation of oneself and others, or a contemplation of any 'internal' phenomenon together with its 'external' counterpart. Thus each of the above discussed ways of understanding 'internal' and 'external' ultimately leads to a more comprehensive appreciation of the phenomena under observation.³⁶⁰ Based on such a comprehensive view of phenomena, *satipaṭṭhāna* practice then proceeds to the next aspect mentioned in the 'refrain', awareness of their impermanent nature.

V.2) Impermanence

The 'refrain' instructs the meditator to contemplate 'the nature of arising', 'the nature of passing away' and 'the nature of both arising and passing away'.³⁶¹ Paralleling the instruction on internal and external contemplation, these three parts of the instruction represent a temporal progression, which leads from observing the arising aspect of phenomena to emphasis on their disappearance, and culminates in a comprehensive vision of impermanence as such.

As the first of the three characteristics of existence, the direct experience of impermanence represents the 'power' aspect of meditative wisdom.³⁶² According to the discourses, not seeing the arising and passing away of phenomena is simply ignorance, while to regard all phenomena as impermanent leads to the arising of knowledge.³⁶³ The same is also reflected in the commentarial scheme of the insight knowledges, which detail key-experiences to be encountered during the path to realisation, where the stage of apprehending the arising and passing away of phenomena is of central importance.³⁶⁴

Awareness of impermanence, even if practised for only a split second, is more fruitful than offering food and lodging to the entire monastic community with the Buddha at its head.³⁶⁵ Insight into the impermanence of the five aggregates or of the six sense-spheres is 'right view', and thereby leads directly on to realisation.³⁶⁶

Often in the discourses the other two characteristic of conditioned existence - *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness) and *anattā* (absence of a self) - become evident as a consequence of having realised impermanence.³⁶⁷ This sequence features prominently in the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*,

satipaṭṭhāna practice, but also features in a contemplation of emptiness described at M III 112, which similarly proceeds from 'internal' to 'external' and culminates in 'internal and external' contemplation.

³⁶⁰ A similar shift towards comprehensiveness features in the standard descriptions for developing insight in regard to the five aggregates, where after a detailed examination of an aggregate, the conclusion is applied to all possible instances, cf. e.g. M I 138: *yaū kiṃci rāpaū ... viṃṣāḍaū atītānāgatapaccuppannāū, ajiḥṭṭaū vā bahiddhā vā, oēārikaū vā sukhumaū vā, hānaū vā paḍātaū vā, yaū dāre santike vā, sabbāū rāpaū ... viṃṣāḍaū ...*

³⁶¹ This way of translating the compound is supported by its use at S III 171: *idha ... samudayavayadhammaū rāpaū 'samudayavayadhammaū rāpan'-ti ... pajānāti*; where it clearly refers to the 'nature of arising and passing away'. Cf. also Yaḍatiloka: *Pāli Grammatik*, p 95 n 1, who translates *samudayadhamma* as "the law of arising" ("das Entstehungsgesetz"); and Yaḍamolī: *Pāli-English Glossary*, p 53, who translates *vayadhamma* with: "having the nature of fall."

³⁶² A III 2: *katama-ca paṃṣābalaū? Idha ariyasāvako paṃṣavā hoti udayatthagāminiyā paṃṣāya samannāgato*. Impermanence is considered to be the key aspect of insight also by Fleischman: *Therapeutic Action*, p 11; Ledi: "Manual of Four Noble Truths", p 151; Yaḍapoḍika: *Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p 60; Solé-Leris: *Tranquility & Insight*, p 82; and Than Daing: *Cittānupassanā*, p 62.

³⁶³ S III 171: '*katamā avijjā, kittāvatā ca avijjāgato hoti?*' '*Idha ... samudayavayadhammaū rāpaū ... viṃṣāḍaū ... yathābhātaū na pajānāti ...*' '*Katamā vijjā, kittāvatā ca vijjāgato hoti?*' '*Idha ... samudayavayadhammaū rāpaū ... viṃṣāḍaū ... yathābhātaū pajānāti.*' S IV 50: *cakkhuū ... mano aniccato jānato passato bhikkhuno avijjā pahāyati, vijjā uppajjati.*

³⁶⁴ According to Ledi: *Treatise on Meditation*, p 233, *udayabbayaḍāḍa* is the key aspect of the insight knowledges and relevant for the progress to all four stages of awakening. Excellent expositions on the insight knowledges can be found in Mahasi: *Progress of Insight*, pp 8-36; and Yaḍārāma: *Stages of Purification*, pp 19-62.

³⁶⁵ A IV 395: *yo ca Buddhapamukhaū bhikkhusaighaū bhojeyya yo ca cātuddisaū saighaū uddissa vihāraū kārāpeyya ... yo ca accharāsaighātamattam-pi aniccasaḍḍaū bhāveyya, idaū tato mahapphalatarāū.*

³⁶⁶ S III 51: *rāpaū ... viṃṣāḍaū aniccanti passati, yāyaū hoti sammādiññhi sammāpassaū nibbindati ... cittaū suvimuttan-ti vuccati.* S IV 142: *cakkhuū ... rāpe ... aniccā ti passati, sāyaū hoti sammādiññhi, sammāpassaū nibbindati ... cittaū suvimuttan-ti vuccati.*

³⁶⁷ This progressive pattern is documented in the sequence *aniccasāññā, anicce dukkhasāññā, dukkhe anattasāññā* at D III 243, 251, 290, 291, S V 132, 345, A I 41, A III 85, 277, 334, 452, A IV 46, 52, 148, 387, 465, A V 105 and 309. The same is also reflected in the statement *yad-aniccaṃ taṃ dukkaṃ, yaṃ dukkaṃ tad-anattā* at S III 22, 45, 82, S IV 1, and 153. Cf. also Bodhi: *Connected Discourses*, p 844.

where the Buddha instructed his first disciples to consider the impermanent nature of each aspect of subjective experience, expounded in terms of the five aggregates. He thereby led them to the conclusion that whatever is impermanent cannot yield lasting satisfaction and therefore does not qualify for being considered as 'I', 'mine', or 'my self'.³⁶⁸ This consideration, after being applied to all possible instances of each aggregate, was powerful enough to result in the full awakening of the first five monk disciples of the Buddha.

The underlying pattern of the Buddha's instruction in this discourse suggests that insight into impermanence serves as a necessary foundation for realising *dukkha* and *anattā*. The inner dynamic of this pattern proceeds from clear awareness of impermanence to a growing degree of disenchantment (which corresponds to *dukkhasaññā*).³⁶⁹ Disenchantment in turn leads to a state of mind free from 'I' making and 'my' making (as an equivalent to *anattasaññā*), ready for awakening.³⁷⁰

The importance of developing insight into the arising and passing away of phenomena is highlighted in the *Vibhaṅga Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, according to which this insight marks the distinction between mere establishment of *satipaṭṭhāna* and its proper complete 'development'.³⁷¹ This passage underlines the importance of the 'refrain' for a full and proper development of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Mere awareness of the various objects listed under the four *satipaṭṭhānas* may not suffice for the task of developing penetrative insight. What is additionally required is to move on to a comprehensive and equanimous vision of impermanence.³⁷²

The direct experience of the fact that everything changes, if applied to all aspects of one's personality, can powerfully alter the habit patterns of one's mind.³⁷³ This may well be the reason why awareness of impermanence assumes a particularly prominent role in regard to the contemplation of the five aggregates, expressed by the fact that here it has become part of the main instruction, in addition to being anyway mentioned in the 'refrain'.³⁷⁴

In order to really affect one's mental condition, awareness of impermanence must be practised with continuity.³⁷⁵ Sustained contemplation of impermanence leads to a shift in one's normal way of experiencing reality, which has hitherto implicitly assumed the temporal stability of the perceiver and the perceived objects. Once both are experienced as changing processes, all notions of stable existence and substantiality vanish, thereby radically reshaping one's paradigm of experience.

Contemplation of impermanence has to be comprehensive, for if any aspect of experience is still taken to be permanent, awakening will be impossible.³⁷⁶ A comprehensive realisa-

³⁶⁸ S III 67: *yam paṇāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vā taṃ sukhaṃ vā? ... Yam paṇāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariḍāmadhammaṃ kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassitūṃ 'etaṃ mama esoham-asmi eso me attāti?'*

³⁶⁹ A III 443: *sabbaloke ca me mano nābhiramissati ... aniccaṃ upaṇṇhāpetuṃ*; and A III 447: *assādadīṇṇhiyā paḥāṇāya aniccaṃ bhāvetabbā*; A IV 51: *aniccaṃ paricītena bhikkhuno cetasaḥ bahulaṃ viharato lābhasakkārasiloke cittaṃ pañūlāyati pañūkuṇāti pañivañṇāti na sampasāraṇyati*.

³⁷⁰ A IV 53: *dukkhe anattasaḥ paricītena bhikkhuno cetasaḥ bahulaṃ viharato imasmiṃ-ca saviḍḍāḍake kāye bahiddhā ca sabbhanimittesu ahaṃkāramamaṃkāramānāpagataṃ mānasaṃ hoti*. Cf. also A IV 353, 358, and Ud 37: *aniccaṃ bhikkhuno anattasaḥ saḍḍhāti, anattasaḥ asmimānasamuggahātaṃ paṇuḍāti diṇṇhe va dhamme nibbānaṃ*.

³⁷¹ S V 183: *katamaṃ-ca satipaṇṇhānaṃ? Idha bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassā viharati ... Katamaṃ ca satipaṇṇhānabhāvanā? Idha bhikkhu samudayadhammānupassā ... vāyadhammānupassā ... samudayavāyadhammānupassā kāyasmīṃ ... vedānāsu ... citte ... dhammesu viharati*. This discourse is, however, missing from the Chinese *āgamas*, cf. Akanuma: *Catalogue*, p 247.

³⁷² In fact, M I 62 speaks of the need to 'develop' *satipaṇṇhāna* in order for it to lead to highest realisation: *yo hi koci ime cattāro satipaṇṇhāne evaṃ bhāveyya ... tassa dvinnatū phalānaṃ aṃataratū phalaṃ pañikaikhaṃ - diṇṇhe va dhamme aṃā, sati va upādisese anāgāmitā*; an expression which reminds of the reference to 'development' (*bhāvanā*) at S V 183. It is worthy of note that, in contrast to the emphasis the *Pāli* texts place on contemplation of impermanence, the Chinese *āgama* versions of the *satipaṇṇhāna* 'refrain' do not mention it at all (cf. Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 88; and Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, pp 152, and 170).

³⁷³ Goenka: "Buddha's Path", p 112.

³⁷⁴ M I 61: *iti rāpaṃ, iti rāpassa samudayo, iti rāpassa atthagamo ... (etc.)*. Cf. further chapter X.4.

³⁷⁵ Continuity in contemplating impermanence is mentioned at A IV 13 and 145: *idha ekacco puggalo sabbasaikhāresu aniccānupassā viharati aniccaṃ aniccapañisaivedā satatāṃ samitāṃ abbokiḍḍāṃ cetasaḥ adhimuccamaṇo paṇāyā pariyoḡāhamāno. So āsavānaṃ khāvā ...* Similarly Th 111: *yuttāṃ cintetūṃ satatam-aniccataṃ*.

³⁷⁶ A III 441: *so vata bhikkhu kiṃci saikhāraṃ niccato samanupassanto ... sotāpattiphalāṃ vā ... arahattāṃ vā sacchikarissatīti, netāṃ ṇhānaṃ vijjati*.

tion of impermanence is a distinct feature of stream-entry. This is the case to such an extent that the stream-enterer is incapable of believing any phenomenon to be permanent.³⁷⁷ Understanding of impermanence reaches perfection with the realisation of full awakening.³⁷⁸ For *arahaṅts*, awareness of the impermanent nature of all sensory input is a natural feature of their experience.³⁷⁹

Apart from encouraging awareness of impermanence, this part of the 'refrain' can also, according to the commentarial view, be taken to refer to the factors (*dhammas*) that condition the arising and the disappearance of the observed phenomena.³⁸⁰ These factors are treated in the *Samudaya Sutta*, which relates the 'arising' and 'disappearing' of each *satipaṭṭhāna* to its respective conditions, these being nutriment in the case of body, contact for feelings, name-and-form for mind, and attention for *dhammas*.³⁸¹

Considered within the framework of early Buddhist philosophy, both impermanence and conditionality are of considerable importance. In the course of the Buddha's own approach to awakening, recollecting his past lives and seeing other beings passing away and being re-born vividly brought home to him the truths of impermanence and conditionality on a personal and universal scale.³⁸² The same two aspects contributed to the realisation of the previous Buddha *Vipassī*, where after a detailed examination of dependent origination, *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation of the impermanent nature of the five aggregates led to his awakening.³⁸³ I will therefore turn to this additional aspect by surveying the Buddha's teaching on conditionality within its philosophical and historical context.

V.3) Dependent Origination (*Paṭicca Samuppāda*)

At the time of the Buddha, a variety of philosophical positions on causality were in existence.³⁸⁴ Some teachings claimed that the universe was controlled by an external power, either an omnipotent god or a principle inherent in nature. Some took man to be the independent doer and enjoyer of action. Others favoured determinism, while still others completely rejected any kind of causality.³⁸⁵ Despite their differences, all these positions concurred in recognising an absolute principle, formulated in terms of the existence (or absence) of a single or first cause.

The Buddha, on the other hand, proposed dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*)

³⁷⁷ A III 439: *abhabbo diṅṅhisampanno puggalo kiṅci saikhāraū niccato upagantuū*.

³⁷⁸ A IV 224 and A V 174: *khāḍāsavassa bhikkhuno aniccato sabbe saikhāra yathābhātaū sammappaṅgāya sudiṅṅhā honti*.

³⁷⁹ A III 377 and A IV 404: *sammāvimuttacittassa bhikkhuno bhusa ce pi cakkhuvīṅgāya rāpa cakkhussa āpāthāū āgacchanti, nevassa cittaū pariyādiyanti ... vayaṅcassānupassati ... manovīṅgāya dhammā ...*; A III 379 and Th 643: *rāpa rasā saddā, gandhā phassa ca kevalā ... ṅhitāū cittaū visaṅguttaū, vayaṅcassānupassati*.

³⁸⁰ Ps I 249.

³⁸¹ S V 184: *catunnaū satipaṅṅhānaū samudayaṅca atthaīgamaṅca desessāmi ... āhārasamudaya kāyassa samudayo, āhāranirodhā kāyassa atthagamo. Phassasamudaya vedānaū samudayo ... nāmarāpasamudaya cittassa samudayo ... manasikārasamudaya dhammānaū samudayo*. (This passage does, however, not fully fit with the 'refrain', since the term used here is 'disappearing', *atthaīgama*, not 'passing away', *vaya*, as in the *Satipaṅṅhāna Sutta*).

³⁸² M I 22, 248, and A IV 176. S II 10 and 104 document his realisation of *paṭicca samuppāda*. The importance of the first two *vijjā* (higher knowledges) as exemplifications of impermanence and causality is noted by Demieville: "Mémoire", p 294; and Werner: "Enlightenment", p 13; cf. also Lopez: "Memories", p 35. In addition to the above passages, the discourses document the growth of the Buddha's wisdom from a variety of angles, involving a contemplation of the enjoyment, the inherent danger, and the escape in relation to the elements (S II 170), the aggregates (S III 27, 29, 59), the sense-spheres (S IV 7-10, S V 206), feeling (S IV 233), the faculties (S V 204), the 'world' (A I 258), and the four noble truths (S V 423). Each of these discourses directly relates the respective insight to the Buddha's attainment of full awakening, which suggests that each of these insights can be considered as a particular aspect of his comprehensive realisation.

³⁸³ D II 31-5, where a detailed investigation of the conditional links leading from ignorance up to the reciprocal relationship between consciousness and name-and-form led on to his practice of the *satipaṅṅhāna* contemplation of the five aggregates, with the result that: *tassa paṅcasupādānkhandhesu udayabbayānupassino viharato na cirasseva anupādāya āsavehi cittaū vimucci*. A practical example for interrelating impermanence and conditionality in the context of contemplation can also be found at S IV 211: *so evaū pajānāti: 'uppannā kho me ayaū sukkhā ... dukkhā ... adukkhamasukkhā vedanā, sā ca kho paṅicca no apaṅicca. Kiū paṅicca? Imaū eva kāyaū paṅicca ... aniccaū kho pana saikhātaū paṅicca samuppannaū kāyaū paṅicca uppannā ... vedanā kuto niccā bhavissatāti? So kāye ca ... vedānya aniccānupassā viharati ...* (same at S IV 215 in regard to *phassa*).

³⁸⁴ Cf. Kalupahana: *Causality*, p 125.

³⁸⁵ See esp. *Pāraḍa Kassapa* and *Makkhali Gosāla* at D I 52. Cf. also Bodhi: *Fruits of Recluseship*, p 7.

as his ‘middle way’ explanation of causality. His conception of dependent origination was a decisive departure from the then existing conceptions of causality, so much so that he came to reject all of the four prevalent ways of formulating causality.³⁸⁶

The discourses often describe dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*) with the help of a sequence of twelve links (hereafter referred to as ‘the twelve links’). This sequence traces the conditioned arising of *dukkha* back to ignorance (*avijjā*). According to the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, these ‘twelve links’ extend over three consecutive individual lifetimes.³⁸⁷ ‘The twelve links’ applied to three lifetimes probably assumed increasing importance in the historical development of Buddhist thought, as a way of explaining rebirth without an eternally surviving agent.³⁸⁸ Although the sequence of ‘the twelve links’ occurs frequently in the discourses, at times substantial variants can be found. Some of these start off only with the third link, consciousness, which moreover stands in reciprocal relationship with the next link, name-and-form.³⁸⁹ These and other variations suggest that the mode of explanation based on three lifetimes is not the only possible way of approaching an understanding of dependent origination.

In fact, ‘the twelve links’ are but a particularly frequent application of the general structural principle of dependent origination.³⁹⁰ In the *Paccaya Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha introduced this important distinction between the general principle and its application. This discourse speaks of ‘the twelve links’ as dependently originated phenomena, while ‘*paṭicca samuppāda*’ refers to the relation between them, that is, to the principle.³⁹¹

This distinction between the principle and ‘the twelve links’ as one of its applications is of considerable practical relevance, since a full understanding of causality is to be gained with stream-entry.³⁹² The distinction drawn above between principle and application suggests that such an understanding of causality may not necessarily require a personal experience of ‘the twelve links’.³⁹³ That is, even without developing the ability to recollect past lives and thereby directly experience those factors of ‘the twelve links’ that pertain to a past life, once can still

³⁸⁶ A typical example can be found at S II 19, where the Buddha was asked whether *dukkha* was caused by oneself, by others, by both, or by neither (i.e. arisen by chance): *kiū nu kho, bho Gotama, sayāukataū ... paraūketaū ... sayāukata-ca paraūketa-ca ... asayāukāraū aparāukāraū adhicca samuppannāū dukkhaū?* After the Buddha had denied all four alternatives his interlocutor, somewhat taken aback by the fact that all four ways of stating the causality of *dukkha* had been rejected, wondered whether the Buddha was simply unable to see or admit the existence of *dukkha*: *kiū nu kho, bho Gotama, natthi dukkhaū? ... Tena hi bhavaū Gotamo dukkhaū na jānāti na passati!* (S II 22 has the same dialogue for *sukha dukkha*). The novelty of the Buddha’s position can also be seen in the fact that the term *paṭicca samuppāda* apparently was invented by him in order to express his understanding of causality, cf. Kalupahana: “Language”, p 283. However Rhys Davids, in one of her imaginative interpretations of the *Pāli* canon, suggests that it was not the Buddha, but rather *Assaji*, who was responsible for the early Buddhist theory of causation (in: “Co-Founders”, p 202).

³⁸⁷ Pañis I 52. Bodhi: Connected Discourses, p 741 n 50, points out that the scheme of four temporal modes (past cause, present result, present cause, future result) underlying the three life time presentation has a predecessor at S II 24.

³⁸⁸ Jayatilleke: Theory of Knowledge, p 450.

³⁸⁹ At D II 57, the first two links *avijjā* (ignorance) and *saikhāra* (formations) as well as the *saēāyatana* (six sense-spheres) link are missing and *viññāḍā* (consciousness) is presented in reciprocal relationship with *nāmarāpa* (name-and-form). The same reciprocal relationship between consciousness and name-and-form occurs also at D II 32, S II 104, and S II 113. Sn 724-765 relates each of the links separately and independently to *dukkha*. (On these variations of the standard twelve link formula cf. also Bucknell: “Conditioned Arising”, pp 314-341). S II 31 leads from ignorance to birth but then on to joy, concentration and realisation. A different course from craving onwards is also taken at S II 108. Furthermore at D II 63 *viññāḍā* (consciousness) is shown to condition *nāmarāpa* (name-and-form) at conception, during the embryonic stage, and also during life, a presentation which does not seem to be confined to rebirth within the context of the three-life application only. Or else at S III 96 *saikhāras*, as a result of *avijjā*, are not a past experience, but arise in the present moment.

³⁹⁰ Collins: Selfless Persons, p 106: “it is crucially important to distinguish between the general idea of conditionality and the twelve-fold series.” Cf. also Karunaratne: Causality, p 33; and Yaōavāra: Clearing the Path, p 31. Reat: Buddhist Psychology, p 21: explains “*paṭicca samuppāda* ... the term may properly be applied to any set of results dependent upon necessary and sufficient conditions.”

³⁹¹ S II 26: *yā tatra tathatā avitathatā ana-cathatā idappaccayatā, ayāū vuccati pañiccasamuppādo*, i.e. the principle, while ‘the twelve links’ are referred to as: *ime vuccanti pañiccasamuppannā dhammā*. This same distinction can also be deduced from the standard way in which ‘the twelve link’ application of *paṭicca samuppāda* is often introduced in the discourses, where after a formulation of the principle (‘when this is that comes to be ...’) ‘the twelve links’ are introduced with the *Pāli* expression *yadidaū* (that is to say), showing that ‘the twelve links’ are an exemplification of the principle just stated, cf. e.g. S II 28: *iti imasmīū sati idaū hoti ... imassa nirodhā idaū nirujjhati. Yadidaū avijjāpaccayā saikhāra, saikhārapaccayā ...*

³⁹² A III 439: *diññhisampannassa puggalassa hetu ca sudiññho hetusamuppannā ca dhammā*.

³⁹³ Karunaratne: Causality, p 30

personally realise the principle of dependent origination.

Compared to the entire set of 'the twelve links', the basic principle of dependent origination is more easily amenable to direct contemplation. A discourse in the *Nidānasamyutta*, for example, applies 'dependent origination' to the conditioned relation between contact and feeling.³⁹⁴ Such direct application of the principle to subjective experience occurs also in the *Vibhaṅga*, which relates dependent origination to single mind-moments.³⁹⁵

Another example for such direct use of the principle of conditionality can be found in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*, which qualifies pleasure and displeasure arising at any of the six sense-doors as dependently originated (*paṭicca samuppanna*), a usage which is not related to past or future lives.³⁹⁶ The same holds true for the *Madhuṅgīka Sutta*'s detailed analysis of the perceptual process. This discourse depicts the 'arising' (*uppāda*) of consciousness 'in dependence' (*paṭicca*) on sense organ and sense object, with contact being the coming 'together' (*saṃ*) of the three.³⁹⁷ This passage reveals a deeper significance of each part of the term *paṭicca samuppāda*, without any need for different life times or for the whole set of twelve links. Thus a realisation of dependent origination can take place simply by witnessing the operation of conditionality in the present moment, within one's own subjective experience.

To speak of dependent origination is to speak of specific conditions, related to specific events. Such specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) can be illustrated in the following manner:

When A is \Rightarrow B comes to be. With the arising of A \Rightarrow B arises.

When A is not \Rightarrow B does not come to be. With the cessation of A \Rightarrow B ceases.³⁹⁸

The operation of dependent origination is not confined to a strictly linear sequence of events in time. Rather, dependent origination stands for the conditional interrelation of phenomena, constituting a three dimensional web of interwoven events, where each event is related to other events by way of both cause and effect.³⁹⁹ Since each conditioning factor is at the same time itself conditioned, this thereby excludes the possibility of a transcendent, independent cause.⁴⁰⁰

Within these interwoven patterns, the centrally important specific condition, from the

³⁹⁴ S II 96: *ariyasāvako pañicasamuppādaū yeva sādhuṅkā yoniso manasi karoti: Iti imasmīū sati idaū hoti ... sukha-vedaniyaū phassaū pañicca uppajjati sukha vedanā ... dukkhavedaniyaū phassaū ... adukkhamasukhavedaniyaū phassaū ...* a contemplation which then leads to realisation. Similarly at S II 92 the Buddha illustrated the depth and importance of *pañicca samuppāda* with the help of only the final five links (from craving onwards), a way of presentation more easily amenable to direct experience than the complete set of 'the twelve links'. That the entire set of 'the twelve links' is not necessarily intended for contemplation is also suggested by S II 81, where the Buddha recommended 'thinking over' (*parivā-māṣati*) 'the twelve links', using a type of terminology which points to a form of intellectual consideration: *idha bhikkhu parivāmaṣamāno parivāmaṣati ... kismiū sati jarāmaraḍaū hoti, kismiū asati jarāmaraḍaū na hoti?* This suggests that a direct experience of the principle, gained through meditation, can then be applied to 'the twelve links' by way of intellectual reflection, inferring that the same principle operated in the past and will operate in the future, without however needing to directly experience those past or future operations.

³⁹⁵ Vibh 164-192. On this passage cf. also Bodhi: "Critical Examination" p 46 n 4; and Gethin: "Cosmology", p 195. According to Buddhādāsa: Dependent Origination, p 98, "the entire series of Dependent Origination operates ... in a flash ... the ... twelve conditions ... may all arise, exercise their function and pass away, so fast that we are completely unaware of it."

³⁹⁶ M III 299: *cakkhunā rāpaū disvā ... manasā dhammaū viṅṅāya uppajjati manāpaū ... amanāpaū ... ta-ca kho saikhataū ... pañicca samuppannaū.*

³⁹⁷ M I 111: *cakkhu-ca pañicca rāpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīṅṅādaū tiḍḍaū saigati phasso.* (Same for the other senses).

³⁹⁸ E.g. at M III 63: *imasmīū sati idaū hoti, imassuppādā idaū uppajjati. Imasmīū asati idaū na hoti, imassa nirodhā idaū nirujjhati.* On specific conditionality cf. also Bodhi: Discourse on Causation, pp 2 and 9; and Ñāṇamoli: Thinker's Note Book, p 161.

³⁹⁹ The complexity of the conditional interrelation of phenomena is described in the *Paññhāna* of the Pāli *Abhidhamma* from a variety of angles with altogether twenty-four types of conditions. Thus, for example, the conditioning influence exercised by A on B ($A \Rightarrow B$) could, from a temporal perspective, take place not only with A arising earlier than B (*purejātapaccaya*), but also if both arise simultaneously (*sahajātapaccaya*), or even when A arises later than B (*pacchajātapaccaya*). It could be the presence of A (*atthipaccaya*), but also its absence (*natthipaccaya*), which conditions B. Moreover A could be the active cause (*kammappaccaya*), or it could exert its conditioning influence while being itself a resultant effect (*vipākappaccaya*), or else A could be both cause and effect, when A and B are related to each other by way of mutuality condition (*aṅgamaṅgapaccaya*).

⁴⁰⁰ Tilakaratne: Nirvana and Ineffability, p 41.

viewpoint of subjective experience, is volition. It is the mental volition of the present moment that decisively influences future activities and events.⁴⁰¹ Volition itself is under the influence of other conditions such as one's habits, character traits, and past experiences. Nevertheless, in as much as each volition involves a decision between alternatives, one's volitional decision in the present moment is to a considerable degree amenable to personal intervention and control. Each decision taken in turn shapes the habits, character traits, experiences, and perceptual mechanisms that form the context for future decisions. It is precisely for this reason that systematic training of the mind becomes imperative.

In the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, a more specific application of conditionality to the practice of meditation becomes apparent during most of the contemplations of *dhammas*. In relation to the five hindrances, the meditator's task is to observe the conditions for the arising and removal of a hindrance.⁴⁰² Regarding the six sense-spheres, contemplation discloses how the process of perception can cause the arising of mental fetters at the sense doors.⁴⁰³ In the case of the awakening factors, here the task is to recognise the conditions for their arising and further development.⁴⁰⁴ Coming to the four noble truths, this last contemplation of *dhammas* is in itself a statement of conditionality, namely of the conditions for *dukkha* and its eradication. In this way, the principle of dependent origination underlies a whole range of applications in the fourth *satipatthāna*.⁴⁰⁵

The development of a meditative realisation of dependent origination could be alluded to in the 'direct path' passage of the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, since it lists the acquiring of 'method' (*ñāya*) as one of the goals of *satipatthāna*.⁴⁰⁶ 'Method' occurs often in the discourses as a quality of those who have realised stream-entry or higher stages of awakening.⁴⁰⁷ Several instances speak of 'noble method' as an outcome of the realisation of stream-entry.⁴⁰⁸ In these contexts, 'noble method' implies the realisation of dependent origination.⁴⁰⁹ The relevance of dependent origination for the progress to realisation is confirmed in several other passages, according to which one who knows dependent origination is standing at the threshold of the deathless.⁴¹⁰ Although 'method' is not further specified as 'noble' in the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, it does not seem too far fetched to presume that one of the purposes of *satipatthāna* practice is a direct realisation of the principle or 'method' of dependent origination.

⁴⁰¹ A III 415: *cetanāhaū kammaū vadāmi; cetayitvā kammaū karoti - kāyena vācāya manasā.*

⁴⁰² M I 60: *yathā ca anuppannassa kāmacchandassa uppādo hoti ta[□]-ca pajānāti, yathā ca uppannassa kāmacchandassa pahānāū hoti ta[□]-ca pajānāti.*

⁴⁰³ M I 61: *cakkhu[□]-ca pajānāti, rāpe ca pajānāti, ya[□]-ca tad-ubhayaū pañicca uppajjati saūyojanaū ta[□]-ca pajānāti, yathā ca anuppannassa saūyojanassa uppādo hoti ... uppannassa saūyojanassa pahānāū hoti.*

⁴⁰⁴ M I 62: *yathā ca anuppannassa satisambojjhaīgassa uppādo hoti ta[□]-ca pajānāti, yathā ca uppannassa satisambojjhaīgassa bhāvanāya pāripārā hoti ta[□]-ca pajānāti.*

⁴⁰⁵ According to the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-āstra*, conditionality is indeed the distinctive characteristic of contemplation of *dhammas*, cf. Lamotte: *Traité*, p 1169: "le yogin considère que les *dharma* sont issus de causes et conditions complexes, qu'il n'y a pas de *dharma* véritables, munis d'*ātman*. Voilà ce qu'on appelle la fixation-de-l'attention sur les *dharma* (*dharma-smṛtyupasthāna*)."

⁴⁰⁶ M I 55: *ekāyano ayaū maggo ... vāyassa adhiḡamāya ... yadidaū cattāro satipaññhānā.*

⁴⁰⁷ E.g. A II 56: *vāyapañipanno Bhagavato sāvakaṣaīgho ... yadidaū cattāri purisayugāni ...*

⁴⁰⁸ At S II 68, 71, S V 389, and A V 184 mention *ariyo vāyo* as a quality of stream-entry, a *sotāpattiyaīga*.

⁴⁰⁹ S V 388: *pañiccasamuppādaū yeva sādhuḡkaū yoniso manasīkaroti: Iti imasmīū sati ... Ayam-assa ariyo vāyo pa[□]vāya sudiññho hoti;* (the same identification of *ariyo vāyo* with *pañiccasamuppāda* occurs at A V 184). *Ariyo vāyo* comes up also at A II 36, where it is further explained to be *kalyāḡadhammatā* and *kusaladhammatā*, a reference which could also be alluding to *pañiccasamuppāda* (the comy Mp III 74 speaks of *sahavipassanake magge*). Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 394, confirms that *pañicca samuppāda* is referred to as *ariya vāya*. However, when the term *vāya* is related to *dhammaū kusalaū* it assumes different implications, since at M I 522 it comes to include attainment of the four *jhānas* and the three *vijjas* (higher knowledges), while at M II 182 it is related to overcoming the ten unwholesome paths of action (cf. also M II 197, where it is not further specified but distinguished according to whether it is being developed by a householder or by a monk).

⁴¹⁰ S II 43, 45, 59, 79, and 80, each relating an understanding of dependent origination to 'standing at the threshold of the deathless', *amatadvārāū āhacca tiññhati*. A temporal succession with understanding of dependent origination preceding realisation of *Nibbāna* seems also to be implied by the Buddha's statement at S II 124: *pubbe dhammaññhiti[□]vāḡāū pacchā nibbāne vāḡāū*, since at S II 60 *dhammaññhiti[□]vāḡā* refers to *pañicca samuppāda* (cf. also S II 25, which identifies *idappaccayatā* as *dhammaññhitatā*; and Choong: *Emptiness in Early Buddhism*, p 50).

V.4) Mere Awareness and Clinging to Nothing

As the 'refrain' stipulates, awareness of the body, feelings, mind, and *dhammas* should take place merely for the sake of knowledge and continued mindfulness.⁴¹¹ This instruction points to the need to observe objectively, without getting lost in associations and reactions. According to the commentaries, this refers in particular to avoiding any form of identification.⁴¹² Freedom from identification then enables one to regard any aspect of one's subjective experience as a mere phenomenon, free from any type of self-image or attachment.

The way this instruction is phrased suggests the use of mental labelling. Mindfulness is established that 'there is body' (feelings, mind, *dhammas*). The *Pāli* particle *iti* used here indicates direct speech, which in the present context suggests a form of mental noting. This is in fact not the only instance of this kind of recommendation in the discourse. Most of the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* use direct speech to formulate what is to be known.⁴¹³

This way of presentation shows that concepts, especially when used as tools for the purpose of mental noting, can be skilfully employed within the context of *satipaṭṭhāna*.⁴¹⁴ Thus the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* does not require a complete relinquishment of all forms of verbal knowledge.⁴¹⁵ In fact, concepts are intrinsically related to cognition (*saññā*), since the ability to recognise and understand relies on a subtle level of mental verbalisation and thereby on the use of concepts. The skilful use of labelling during *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation can help to strengthen clear recognition and understanding. At the same time, labelling introduces a healthy degree of inner detachment, since the act of apostrophising one's moods and emotions diminishes one's identification with them.

In this context, it is noteworthy that, according to the Buddha's survey of wrong views in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, the main causes for a misinterpretation of reality are meditative experiences, not excessive theoretical speculation.⁴¹⁶ To prevent such misinterpretations, a firm theoretical acquaintance with the *Dhamma* is an important basis for progress along the path. In one instance, the Buddha illustratively compared such sound theoretical knowledge of the *Dhamma* to the armoury of swords and spears used to defend a fortress.⁴¹⁷ Clearly, for the Buddha the mere absence of concepts does not constitute the final goal of meditation practice.⁴¹⁸ Concepts per se are not the problem, the problem is how concepts are used. An *arahant* still employs concepts, but without being bound by them.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹¹ M I 56: 'atthi kāyo' ti vā pan'assa sati pacupaññhitā hoti, yāvad-eva ñādamattāya pañissatimattāya. I take the prefix *pañi* added to *sati* in the present context in its temporal nuance of 'again' or 're-', in the sense of pointing to the absence of lapses in the presence of *sati*, viz. its continuity.

⁴¹² Ps I 250: *atthi kāyo ... na satto na puggalo na ithā na puriso na attā na attaniyaū nāhaū na mama na koci na kassacāti evam-assa sati pacupaññhitā hoti*. Cf. also Ariyadhamma: *ānāpānasati*, p 5; Debes: "Satipaṭṭhāna", p 130; Dhammiko: "Pfeilem der Einsicht", p 189; and Thanissaro: *Fire Unbound*, p 101.

⁴¹³ E.g. M I 56: 'dāghaū assasāmāti pajānāti'; M I 56: 'gacchāmāti pajānāti'; M I 59: 'sukhaū vedanaū vediyāmāti pajānāti'; M I 59: 'sarāgaū cītan-ti pajānāti'; M I 60: 'atthi me ajjhataū kāmaccando ti pajānāti'; M I 61: 'atthi me ajjhataū satisambojjhaigo ti pajānāti'; M I 62: 'idaū dukkhan-ti yathābhātaū pajānāti.

⁴¹⁴ On labelling cf. Fryba: *Art of Happiness*, pp 130-132; Mangalo: "Recollection", p 34; and Æāḍapoōika: *Power of Mindfulness*, p 13.

⁴¹⁵ Earle: "Meditation", p 398; and Tilakaratne: *Nirvana and Ineffability*, p 103. Epstein: *Thoughts without a Thinker*, p 94, explains: "casting off the mental activity and thinking ... people with this misconception abandon the ego skills necessary for successful meditation", p 99: "those with this misunderstanding ... tend to overvalue the idea of the 'empty mind' free of thoughts. In this case, thought itself is identified with ego, and such persons seem to be cultivating a kind of intellectual vacuity, in which the absence of critical thought is seen as an ultimate achievement." Æāḍananda: *Magic of the Mind*, p 60, speaks of "rallying the concepts for the higher purpose of developing wisdom whereby concepts themselves are transcended."

⁴¹⁶ D I 12-39, cf. in detail chapter III, footnote 4 and chapter VIII, footnote 36.

⁴¹⁷ At A IV 110, because: *sutāvudho ariyasāvako akusalaū pajahati, kusalaū bhāveti*. Similarly Th 1027 recommends: *bahussutaū upāseyya suta-ca na vināsaya, taū mālaū brahmacariyassa, tasmā dhammadharo siyā*.

⁴¹⁸ In fact, even the fourth immaterial attainment (*nevasa-ānāsa-āyatana*), a deep meditative experience as far removed from concepts as possible within the realm of mundane experience, still falls short of realisation. Cf. Hamilton: *Identity and Experience*, p 60.

⁴¹⁹ It 53: *akkheyya-ca pari-āya akkhātaraū na ma-ati, phuñño vimokkho manasā, santipadam anuttaraū. Sa ve akkheyyasampanno, santo santipade rato, saikhāya sevā dhammañño, saikhaū nopeti vedagā*. Cf. also Æāḍananda: *Concept and Reality*, p 103: "to believe that by merely demolishing concepts or theories one can rise above them is to stop at the fringe of the problem."

On the other hand, *satipaṭṭhāna* has to be clearly distinguished from intellectual reflection. What this part of the ‘refrain’ indicates is the extent to which concepts and labels are appropriate within the context of insight meditation. This should be kept to an absolute minimum, only to the extent necessary for furthering continuity of awareness and the presence of knowledge.⁴²⁰ Labelling is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end. Once knowledge and awareness are well established, labelling can be dispensed with.

The inability of a purely theoretical approach to result in awakening is a recurrent theme in the discourses.⁴²¹ To spend one’s time in intellectually considering the *Dhamma* and thereby neglecting the actual practice meets with the Buddha’s clear disapproval. According to him, one who acts thus cannot be considered a practitioner of the *Dhamma*, but merely counts as someone who is caught up in thinking.⁴²²

Sati as such is mere awareness of phenomena, without letting the mind stray into thoughts and associations.⁴²³ According to the *satipaṭṭhāna* ‘definition’, *sati* operates in combination with clearly knowing (*sampajāna*). The same presence of knowledge also underlies the expression ‘he knows’ (*pañānāti*), which occurs frequently in the individual *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations. Thus to ‘know’ or to contemplate ‘clearly knowing’ can be taken to represent the conceptual input needed for taking clear cognisance of the observed phenomena, based on mindful observation.⁴²⁴

This (re-)cognising aspect inherent in ‘clearly knowing’ or ‘he knows’ can be further developed and strengthened through the practice of mental noting. It is this ‘knowing’ quality of the mind which brings about understanding. Thus, while *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation takes place in a silently watchful state of mind, free from intellectualisation, it can nevertheless make appropriate use of concepts to the extent needed for furthering knowledge and awareness.

The fact that contemplation undertaken in this manner has the sole purpose of enhancing mindfulness and understanding points to an important shift away from goal-oriented practice. At this comparatively advanced stage, *satipaṭṭhāna* is practised for its own sake. With this shift in attitude, the goal and the act of meditation begin to merge into one, since awareness and understanding are cultivated for the sake of developing ever more awareness and understanding. At this point, the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* becomes an ‘effortless effort’, so to say, divested from goal-orientation and expectation. It is precisely this way of contemplating which in turn enables one to proceed independently, ‘without clinging to anything in the world’ of experience, as stipulated in the final part of the ‘refrain’.⁴²⁵ According to the commentaries, ‘to abide independently’ refers to the absence of dependency through craving and speculative views, while to avoid ‘clinging to anything in the world’ stands for not identifying with the five aggregates.⁴²⁶

This state of independence and equipoise, alluded to in the ‘refrain’ and characterised by the absence of craving, intellectual speculation, and the sense of ‘I’ or ‘mine’, is of crucial importance. In this balanced state of mind the realisation of *Nibbāna* can take place. Throughout the discourses the same expression ‘to abide independently’ often occurs immediately be-

⁴²⁰ M I 56: *yāvad-eva* □āḍamattāya pañissatimattāya.

⁴²¹ At S I 136 the Buddha described his realisation to be beyond the reach of mere theoretical inquiry: *adhigato kho myāyāi dhammo gambhāro ... atakkāvacaro*. Cf. also Dh 19, 20, 258, and 259, which emphasize that what really matters is the practice of the *Dhamma*. At A V 162, excessive emphasis on a theoretical understanding of the *Dhamma* even led some monks to mistakenly claim realisation. Cf. also Karunaratne: *Buddhism*, p 83.

⁴²² A III 87: *bhikkhu yathāsutaū yathāpariyattaū dhammaū cetasā anuvitakketi anuvicāreti manasānupekkhati. So tehi dhammavitakkehi divasāū atināmeti, rīvacati pañisallānāū, nānuyuṅjati ajjhattaū cetosamathaū. Ayaū vuccati bhikkhu vitakkabahulo, no dhammavihārā*. (The same terms however come up at A III 178 in a recommendation of reflecting on the *Dhamma*, demonstrating that the Buddha did not categorically reject such theoretical inquiry, but that his criticism was directed against neglecting the practice).

⁴²³ Cf. chapter III.

⁴²⁴ This suggestion is supported to some extent by the *comy*, which indeed relates this part of the ‘refrain’ to *sati* and *sampaja*□□a, Ps I 250: *yāvad-eva* □āḍamattāya ... *satisampaja*□□ānāū vuóóhatthāyāti attho.

⁴²⁵ M I 56: *anissito ca viharati, na ca kiṅci loke upādiyati*.

⁴²⁶ Ps I 250: *anissito ca viharatīti taṅhānissayadīṭṭhinissayānaṃ vasena anissito ca viharati ... Na ca kiṅci loke upādiyati lokasmiṃ kiṅci rūpaṃ vā ... viññānaṃ vā ayaṃ me attā vā attaniyaṃ vā ti na gaṇhāti*.

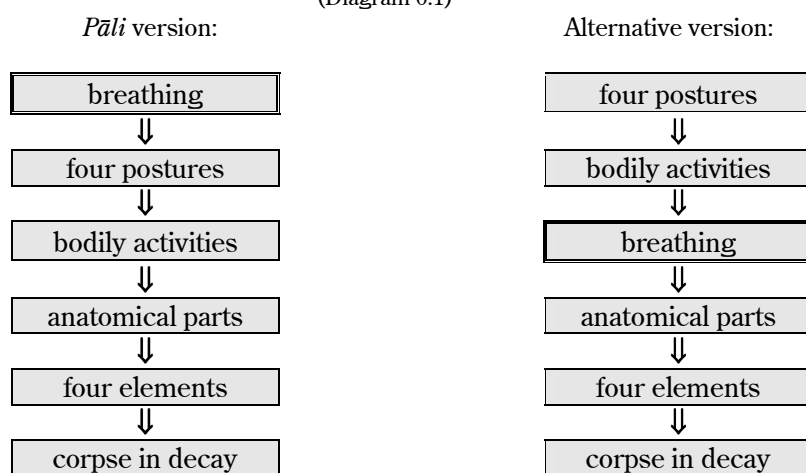
fore realisation takes place.⁴²⁷ This suggests that with this part of the 'refrain', *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation gradually builds up to the constellation of mental qualities required for the event of awakening.

Chapter VI: The Body

VI.1) Contemplation of the Body

With the present chapter, I turn to the actual meditation practices described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The meditation practices listed under body contemplation are: awareness of breathing, awareness of bodily postures, clear knowledge in regard to bodily activities, analysis of the body into its anatomical parts, analysis of the body into its elementary qualities, and contemplation of a dead body in nine consecutive stages of decay. I will examine each of these meditation practices in turn, after an introductory assessment of body contemplation in general.

The Body-Contemplations:
(Diagram 6.1)



The sequence of the body contemplations follows a progressive pattern, beginning with the more obvious and basic aspects of the body and continuing towards a more detailed and analytical understanding of the nature of the body. This pattern becomes all the more evident if one transposes mindfulness of breathing from the first position to the third, after awareness of postures and clear knowledge in regard to bodily activities, a position it assumes in the Chinese *Madhyama Āgama* and in two Sanskrit versions of *satipaṭṭhāna* (compare diagram 6.1 above).⁴²⁸ Through this shift in position, awareness of the body's postures and clear knowledge of activities leads to mindfulness of breathing, which in turn leads to contemplating the body's nature from its anatomical and elementary perspective.

Awareness of the four postures and clear knowledge of activities can indeed be characterised as simpler and more rudimentary forms of contemplation than the other body contemplations. Taking into consideration their more elementary character, it seems reasonable to place them at the beginning of a cultivation of *satipaṭṭhāna*, as convenient ways of building up a foundation in *sati*. This, however, does not imply that in actual practice mindfulness of breathing always needs to be preceded by awareness of postures and clear knowledge of activities, since successfully established mindfulness on the breath process can also lead to mindfulness in regard to one's postures and

⁴²⁷ D II 68, M I 251, M III 244, S II 82, S IV 23, 24, 65, 67, 168, and A IV 88: *na kiñci loke upādiyati, anupādiyāyī na paritassati, aparitassāyī paccattāyī yeva parinibbāyati*. Cf. also M III 266: *anissitassa calitāyī natthi, calite asati passaddhi ...* leading up to: *esevanto dukkhassa*.

⁴²⁸ For the *Madhyama āgama* version cf. Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 88; and Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 138. The Sanskrit versions are (according to Schmithausen: "Vier Konzentrationen", p 250) the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* and the *ṣāriputrābhidharma*. In contrast, the two *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas* (D II 291 and M I 56) and the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* (M III 89) place mindfulness of breathing at the outset of the body contemplations.

activities.

Awareness of postures and clear knowledge of activities are predominantly concerned with the body in action. In comparison, the remaining exercises examine the body in a more static manner, analysing it into its constituent components from anatomical, material, and temporal perspectives (by focussing on its disintegration after death). In this context, mindfulness of breathing has a transitional role, since although it is traditionally carried out in the stable sitting posture, it is still concerned with active aspects of the body, namely the process of breathing. Thus, by being shifted to the third position, mindfulness of breathing becomes the first in a series of practices conducted mainly in the sitting posture. In fact, the proper sitting posture is described in detail only in the instructions for mindfulness of breathing. Since awareness of the four postures and clear knowledge in regard to bodily activities are forms of contemplation that take place in different postures, it makes sense to introduce the sitting posture only when it becomes relevant, which is the case for mindfulness of breathing and the remaining exercises, whose comparative subtlety requires a fairly stable posture, facilitating deeper degrees of concentration. By shifting mindfulness of breathing to third position, the description of the sitting posture also moves to the most convenient position within the body contemplations.

Except for awareness of the four postures and clear knowledge in regard to activities, the other body contemplations are each illustrated by a simile. These similes compare mindfulness of breathing to a turner at his lathe; contemplation of the anatomical parts to examining a bag full of grains; and contemplation of the four elements to cutting up a slaughtered cow. The last exercise employs mental images of a body in various stages of decay. Although these stages of decay cannot be reckoned as similes, the use of mental imagery here parallels the similes given in the other three exercises. These similes and mental images reveal an additional degree of affinity between mindfulness of breathing and the latter three body contemplations and thereby further support the idea of presenting them together, by shifting mindfulness of breathing to the third position in the sequence of the body contemplations.

The body contemplations begin with an emphasis on ‘knowing’ (*pañānāti*, *sampajāna-kāri*) in the first two exercises (bodily postures and activities) and the first two steps of mindfulness of breathing. Subsequent exercises introduce slightly different methods of contemplation. The latter two steps of mindfulness of breathing are concerned with ‘training’ (*sikkhati*), the two bodily analyses with ‘considering’ (*paccavekkhati*),⁴²⁹ and the contemplation of a corpse in decay with ‘comparing’ (*upasaṃharati*). This change in the choice of verbs underscores a progression from comparatively simple acts of observation to more sophisticated forms of analysis. Here again, mindfulness of breathing assumes a transitional role, with its first steps partaking of the character of the two contemplations of postures and of activities, while its latter steps can be grouped together with the latter three contemplations. This then comes as an additional and concluding point in the list of arguments in support of shifting mindfulness of breathing to the third position.

The instruction for contemplating the anatomical parts employs the word ‘impure’ (*asuci*), which betrays a certain degree of evaluation inherent in this type of practice.⁴³⁰ In a passage from the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, contemplation of the anatomical parts and of a corpse in decay come under the ‘recollection’ (*anussati*) category.⁴³¹ This evokes the memory connotations of *sati* and also documents that these two contemplations to some extent differ from bare awareness directed solely to the present moment.

The breadth of ‘body contemplation’ as a *satipaṭṭhāna* becomes even more extensive in the Chinese version in the *Madhyama Āgama*, which adds several other meditations to the body contemplations described in the *Pāli* discourses. At first sight surprising, the *Madhyama Āgama* counts the development of the four absorptions as body contemplations.⁴³² Yet, the

⁴²⁹ Ps-pñ I 365 explains *paccavekkhati*: *pati pati avekkhati*, *ṛāḍacakkhunā vinibbhujitvā visuū visuū passati*.

⁴³⁰ M I 57: *bhikkhu imam-eva kāyāū uddhaū pādatalā, adho kesamathakā ... asucino paccavekkhati ...*

⁴³¹ A III 323: *bhikkhu imam-eva kāyāū ... asucino paccavekkhati ... kesā ... muttan-ti. Idaū anussatiññhānaū; and: sey-yathāpi passeyya sarāraū sāvathikāya chaóóitaū ... Idaū anussatiññhānaū ...*

⁴³² Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 89; and Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 154. These are the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth of the body contemplations in this version, which describe the four *jhānas* and also illustrate the physical effect of each *jhāna* with the help of similes (kneading soap powder into lump, lake fed by water from within, lotuses submerged in water,

positioning of the four absorptions under body contemplation has a parallel in the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* of the *Pāli* canon, which directs awareness to the effect that these absorptions have on the physical body.⁴³³ Thus it is not too far-fetched to take the physical bliss experienced during absorption as an object of contemplation of the body. Nevertheless, several of the additional contemplations found in the *Madhyama Āgama* do not fit well into 'body contemplation', but rather seem to be the outcome of a progressive assimilation of other practices under this heading.⁴³⁴

The Chinese *Ekottara Āgama* version, on the other hand, has only four body contemplations altogether: awareness of the anatomical parts, of the four elements, of a rotting corpse, and a contemplation of the various bodily orifices together with the impure liquids discharged by them.⁴³⁵ An even more abridged version can be found in the *Pāli Vibhaṅga*, which lists only contemplating the anatomical constitution under this *satipaṭṭhāna*.⁴³⁶ The reasons for these omissions being open to conjecture, yet, what remains as the unanimously accepted core of contemplating the body in all the different versions is a thorough investigation of its anatomical constitution. This gives a considerable degree of emphasis to this exercise,⁴³⁷ even though it does involve some degree of evaluation and therefore seems different from the typical *satipaṭṭhāna* approach to contemplation.

Although contemplating the nature of the body highlights its less attractive features, its purpose is not to demonise the body. While it is certainly true that at times the discourses describe the body in rather negative terms,⁴³⁸ some of these instances occur in a particular context, where the point being made is that the speakers in question have overcome all attachment to their body.⁴³⁹ In contrast, other discourses explicitly associated the practice of body-awareness with the development of joy.⁴⁴⁰ As mentioned above, the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* even takes the physical bliss of absorption attainment as an object for body contemplation. These passages clearly demonstrate that contemplation of the body is not necessarily linked to repugnance and loathing.

man dressed all white).

⁴³³ M III 92: *imam-eva kāyāṃ vivekajena pātisukhena abhisandeti parisandeti paripāreti parippharati, nassa kiñci sabbāvato kāyassa vivekajena pātisukhena apphutaṃ hoti ... Evam-pi bhikkhu kāyagataṃ satiṃ bhāveti.*

⁴³⁴ E.g. various ways of dealing with unwholesome thoughts are listed as the third and the fourth of the body contemplations in this version; (a *Pāli* parallel to these exercises are the first and the last of the antidotes to unwholesome thoughts mentioned in the *Vitakkasañhāna Sutta*, M I 120). Or else the tenth and the eleventh of the Chinese body-contemplations are concerned with developing a "brilliant perception" and with "well remembering the contemplating image" (these could correspond to cognition of light (*āloka-sañhā*) and the sign of concentration (*samādhi-nimitta*), mentioned in the *Pāli* discourses). Cf. Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 88-90; and Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 153-6.

⁴³⁵ Nhat Than: *Transformation*, p 169.

⁴³⁶ Vibh 193. The comy Vibh-a 252 further expands this to some extent by interrelating the anatomical parts with the four elements. Bronkhorst: "Dharma", p 311, based on this passage from the *Vibhaṅga* suggests that possibly the analysis into anatomical parts may constitute the most ancient and original approach for contemplating the body. Cf. also Lin Li-Kouang: *L'Aide Mémoire*, pp 122-127, who takes the entire *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* to be an elaboration of the more original *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*. A similar suggestion can be found in Schmidt: *Buddhas Reden*, p 41 n 3.

⁴³⁷ In fact in the commentaries, *kāyagatāsati*, which in *sutta* usage is synonymous with *kāyānupassanā* (contemplation of the body), came to connote only the contemplation of the anatomical parts; cf. also Bodhi: *Connected Discourses*, p 1453 n 366; and Karunaratne: "Kāyagatāsati", p 168. This shift in meaning underlines the importance of this particular practice.

⁴³⁸ Cf. e.g. M I 500, 510, S I 131, A IV 377, 386, Sn 197-199, 205, Th 279, 453, 567-569, 1150-1153, Thā 19, 82-83, 140, and 466-471. These passages indicate that a somewhat negative attitude towards the body is not only a product of the commentarial writings (as suggested by Hamilton: "Body in Theravada", p 61). Conversely however Heiler: *Buddhistische Versenkung*, p 18, who speaks of a 'vehement loathing of the body' ("ungest,mer Ekel an allem Leiblichen") as the aim of *kāyagatāsati*, goes too far.

⁴³⁹ E.g. *Vijaya* at S I 131, *Sāriputta* at A IV 377, and *Khemā* at Thā 140, state that they feel ashamed and disgusted by their own body: *iminā pātikāyena aññiyāmi harāyāmi*. However, this particular expression is due to the circumstances of each situation in question, since *Sāriputta* is defending himself against the wrong accusation of having physically shown lack of respect to another monk (cf. Mp IV 171), while the nuns *Vijaya* and *Khemā* are trying to discourage someone who is attempting to seduce them. In fact, the same terms occur again at Vin III 68 and S V 320, where a number of monks engaged in contemplating the *asubha* (ugly) nature of the body with such fervour that they committed suicide: *iminā kāyena aññiyamānā harāyamānā jigucchamānā satthaharakāṃ pariyesanti*, which is certainly not the appropriate way of carrying out this practice.

⁴⁴⁰ D III 272: *kāyagatā sati sātasaḥagatā. Ayaṃ eko dhammo bhāvetabbo*; S II 220: *sātasaḥagatā ca me kāyagatā sati na vijhissati*; A I 43: *ekadhammo bhāvito bahulākato diññhadhammasukhavihārāya saivattati ... kāyagatā sati*.

The purpose of contemplating the nature of the body is to bring its unattractive aspects to the forefront of one's attention, thereby placing the previously emphasised attractive aspects in a more balanced context. The aim is a balanced and detached attitude towards the body. With such a balanced attitude, one sees the body merely as a product of conditions, something which one need not identify with.⁴⁴¹

The discourses illustrate the practice and benefits of contemplating the body with a variety of similes. One of these similes depicts a man carrying a bowl brimful of oil on his head through a crowd watching a beautiful girl singing and dancing.⁴⁴² He is followed by another man with a drawn sword, ready to cut off his head if even one drop of the oil is spilled. To preserve his life, the man carrying the oil has to apply his full attention to each step and movement, without allowing the commotion around the girl to distract him. This simile illustrates how *sati*, applied to the movements and posture of the body, can become quite literally a matter of balance. It moreover relates sustained awareness of the body's activities to sense-restraint.

Sense-restraint comes up again in another simile, which compares mindfulness of the body to a strong post, to which six different wild animals are bound.⁴⁴³ Since the animals are firmly bound to the post, however much they may struggle to escape, sooner or later they have to give up and sit or lie down next to the post. In a similar way, mindfulness of the body can become a 'strong post' for 'taming' the six senses. This simile illustratively compares the mental agitation of searching for sensual gratification to wild animals struggling to go off into different directions. Yet, once the post of body mindfulness is firmly established, invariably the senses will have to calm down, just as the animals will come to lie down next to the post to which they are bound. This simile points to the particular benefit of being well 'anchored' or grounded in the experience of the present moment through mindfulness of the body.⁴⁴⁴ Lacking such grounding in body awareness, attachment and clinging can easily find an opportunity to arise.⁴⁴⁵

A similar connotation underlies a set of similes in the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, which present mindfulness of the body as a crucial factor for withstanding *Māra*, the personification of mental defilements.⁴⁴⁶ Just as a heavy stone ball can penetrate a mound of wet clay, or just as fire can be produced from dry wood, or just as an empty jug can easily be filled with water, so too *Māra* will find an opportunity to overpower those who are not well established in mindfulness of the body. But just as a light ball of string cannot penetrate a door-panel made of heartwood, or just as fire cannot be produced from wet wood, or just as a full jug cannot take in more water, so too *Māra* will not be able to overpower those who develop and cultivate mindfulness of the body.

The *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* contains the same sequence of contemplations as the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. There is, however, a noteworthy difference. In the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* the respective 'refrain' mentions the overcoming of worldly thoughts as a preliminary condition for the development of concentration.⁴⁴⁷ This points to another important benefit of body-con-

⁴⁴¹ S II 64: *nāyaū, bhikkhave, kāyo tumhākaū na pi aṅgesaū. Purādam idaū kammaū abhisaikhataū abhisaṅcetaṅgitaū vedaniyaū daññhabbaū.*

⁴⁴² S V 170. The bowl full of oil mentioned in this simile can be taken to represent whatever activity one is about to do. The act of balancing this bowl on one's head then illustrates the need for balance of mind in regard to any activity, in order to avoid the arising of defilements, that is, in order not to spill the oil. The watching crowd then corresponds to the scene of activity, while the singing and dancing stands for alluring sense stimuli and related desires. The person with a drawn sword could be identified with *Māra*, both in the sense of the ever present certainty of death, and also as the tempter, who will catch hold of one as soon as one succumbs to sensual distraction. Thus the careful behaviour of the person carrying the oil vividly illustrates the circumspect behaviour of a practitioner well established in present moment awareness of the body. It also underlines the importance of developing awareness grounded in the body, since in this simile such body awareness constitutes the means to preserve one's life in the midst of commotion, distraction, and danger.

⁴⁴³ S IV 198.

⁴⁴⁴ Fryba: *Art of Happiness*, p 111, fittingly speaks of "strategies of reality anchoring." Tart: *Mindful Life*, p 44, explains: "instead of every thought carrying you away, you have an anchor in the here and now through your body." Cf. also Nett 13: *kāyagatāya satiyā bhāvitāya bahulākatāya cakkhu nāvīṅchati manāpiyesu rāpesu, amanāpiyesu na pañihaṅgati ... kena kāraḍeṇa? Sāivutanivāritattā indriyānaū. Kena te sāivutanivāritā? Sati-āraḍkhena.*

⁴⁴⁵ M I 266: *anupaññhitakāyasati ca viharati ... yaū kaṅci vedanaū vedeti ... taū vedanaū abhinandati ... yaḍ vedanaṅsu nandā tad-upāḍanaū ...*

⁴⁴⁶ M III 95.

⁴⁴⁷ M III 89: *tassa evaū ... viharato ye te gehasitā sarasaikkappā te pahāyanti, tesā pahānā ajjhattam-eva cittaū santiññhati*

temptation: overcoming sensual infatuation through a proper assessment of the nature of the body. Such waning of sensual infatuation facilitates the development of concentration unhindered by sensual distractions. The *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* illustrates this with another set of similes: Just as drinking water will easily flow out if the jug is tipped over; or just as water of a pond will easily flow out if the embankment is broken; or just as a skilled driver will easily be able to drive a chariot wherever he likes; so too mindfulness of the body will easily lead over to the development of deep concentration.⁴⁴⁸

Thus contemplation of the body can become a basis for the development of tranquility, or alternatively can lead to an application of *sati* to feelings and mental phenomena, as described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.⁴⁴⁹ The fact that a firm grounding of awareness in the body provides an important basis for the development of both tranquility and insight may be the reason why, of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, body-contemplation has received the most extensive and detailed treatment in the discourses and in the commentaries.⁴⁵⁰ This emphasis on the body contemplations prevails also today among the *vipassanā* schools of the *Theravāda* tradition, where mindfulness of the body occupies a central position and constitutes the most prominent area of practice from the four *satipaṭṭhānas*.

The discourses repeatedly emphasise the great value of mindfulness of the body.⁴⁵¹ According to them, those who do not practice mindfulness of the body do not 'partake of the deathless'.⁴⁵² Mindfulness of the body can be considered to be truly one's best friend.⁴⁵³ A verse from the *Theragāthā* even reports a monk reflecting that, if he were granted only one wish, it would be: may the whole world enjoy unbroken mindfulness of the body.⁴⁵⁴

Although meditation practices for contemplating the body appear to have had ancient origins and were already known among ascetic and contemplative circles contemporary with the Buddha,⁴⁵⁵ the commentaries point out that his analytical and comprehensive approach was a distinctively new feature.⁴⁵⁶

VI.2) Mindfulness of Breathing

In ancient times and still today, mindfulness of breathing may well be the most widely

sannisādati ekodi hoti samādhiyati.

⁴⁴⁸ M III 96.

⁴⁴⁹ The importance of a foundation in body contemplation is stressed by Ledi: *Requisites of Enlightenment*, p 38, who illustratively compares attempts at *samatha* or *vipassanā* without a previously developed grounding in awareness of the body to driving an ox-cart yoked to an untamed bullock without a nose-rope. This importance of the body contemplations for the development of *samatha* (tranquility) is also reflected at Ps I 301, which points out that mindfulness of breathing, of the anatomical parts, and of the bodily decomposition after death are *satipaṅṅhāna* contemplations particularly suitable for the development of concentration: *ānāpānau dvattiusākāro, nava sāvathikāti ekādasa appanākammaṅṅhānāni honti.*

⁴⁵⁰ E.g. throughout the entire *Majjhima Nikāya* only aspects of body contemplation are separately expounded as independent discourses (*ānāpānasati Sutta*, M III 78, *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, M III 88). Similarly the *satipaṅṅhāna* commentaries devote as much space to the bodily contemplations, as to the remaining three *satipaṅṅhānas*: Ps I 247-274 against Ps I 274-301 (each 27 pages).

⁴⁵¹ M III 94-99: *yassa kassaci kāyagatāsati bhāvitā bahulākatā, antogadhā tassa kusalā dhammā ye keci vijjābhāgiyā ... na tassa labhati Māro ārammaḍaū ... cittaū abhininnāmeti abhiññāsacchikiriyāya, tatra tatveva sakkhibhavyataū pāpuḍāti sati sati-āyatane ... aratiratisaho hoti ... bhayabheravasaho hoti ... khamo hoti sātassa uḥassa ... catunnaū jhānānaū ... nikāmalābhā hoti ... iddhividhaū ... dibbāya sotadhātuyā ... parapuggalānaū cetasa ceto paricca pajānāti ... anekavihitāū pubbenivāsāū anussarati ... dibbena cakkhunā ... āsavānaū khayā ... ; A I 43: *yassa kassaci kāyagatā sati bhāvitā bahulākatā antogadhā tassa kusalā dhammā ye keci vijjābhāgiya;* and Dhp 293: *yesa-ca susamāradhā, niccaū kāyagatā sati ... atthaū gacchanti āsavā.**

⁴⁵² A I 45: *amataū na paribhucjanti ye kāyagatāsatiū na paribhucjanti.*

⁴⁵³ Th 1035: *natthi etādisaū mittāū, yathā kāyagatā sati* (this statement was made by *ānanda* after the passing away of the Buddha).

⁴⁵⁴ Th 468: *buddho ca me varaū dajjā, so ca labbhettha me varo, gaḍhehaū sabbalokassa, niccaū kāyagatāsatiū.*

⁴⁵⁵ Lin Li-Kouang: *L'Aide Mémoire*, p 124; and Schmithausen: "Vier Konzentrationen", p 254. The impression that contemplation of the body was known in ancient India is also to some extent supported by the introductory part to the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, M III 88, where the monks spoke in praise of the Buddha's way of presenting body contemplation in such a manner that it will have manifold benefits. If the act of contemplating the body were in itself an innovation, it would most likely have merited their explicit praise.

⁴⁵⁶ Ps I 247 and Ps-pñ I 348 maintain that other dispensations do not teach body-contemplation as completely (*sabbap-pakāra*) as the Buddha.

used method for body contemplation. The Buddha himself frequently engaged in mindfulness of breathing,⁴⁵⁷ which he called a 'noble' and 'divine' way of practice.⁴⁵⁸ Even his awakening took place based on mindfulness of breathing.⁴⁵⁹

The discourses present mindfulness of breathing in a variety of ways. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* describes four steps of practice, to which the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* adds twelve steps, thereby coming to form a scheme of altogether sixteen steps of practice. Elsewhere the discourses speak of mindfulness of breathing as a cognition (*saññā*), and also as a concentration practice.⁴⁶⁰ These various presentations demonstrate the multifunctional character of the process of breathing as a meditation object. The same is also documented in the range of its possible benefits, which include both insight and deep concentration.⁴⁶¹

As a meditation practice, mindfulness of breathing has a peaceful character and leads to stability of both posture and mind.⁴⁶² The mental stability brought about through mindfulness of breathing acts as an antidote to distraction and discursive thought.⁴⁶³ Awareness of the breath can also become a stabilising factor at the time of death, ensuring that even one's last breath will be a mindful one.⁴⁶⁴

According to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the practice of mindfulness of breathing should be undertaken in the following way:

"Here, gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut, he 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 knows: 'I breathe in long', breathing out long, he knows: 'I breathe out long.'
Breathing in short, he knows: 'I breathe in short', breathing out short, he knows: 'I breathe out short.'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body', he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body.'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in calming the bodily formation', he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out calming the bodily formation.'⁴⁶⁵

The instructions for mindfulness of breathing include the appropriate external environment and the suitable physical posture. The three kinds of places recommended for practice are a forest, the root of a tree, and an empty hut.⁴⁶⁶ In the discourses, these three usually indi-

⁴⁵⁷ S V 326: *ānāpānasatisamādhinā Bhagavā vassāvāsam bahulaū vihāsi.*

⁴⁵⁸ S V 326: *ānāpānasatisamādhi sammāvadamaṇo vadeyya ariyavihāro iti pi brahmavihāro iti pi.*

⁴⁵⁹ S V 317: *ānāpānasatisamādhi ... aham-pi sudaū ... pubbeva sambodhā anabhisambuddho bodhisatto va samāno iminā vihārena bahulaū viharāmi, tassa ... vihārena ... anupādāya ca me āsavehi cittaū vimucci.*

⁴⁶⁰ As a four-step *satipaṭṭhāna* in the (*Mahā*-)*Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas* at D II 291 and M I 59; in the sixteen-step version in the *ānāpānasati Sutta* at M III 79; as a *saṅgā* e.g. at A V 111; and as *ānāpānasatisamādhi* in the *ānāpāna Saṅgāyutta* (e.g. at S V 317); cf. Vajiraṅgā: *Buddhist Meditation*, p 227.

⁴⁶¹ S V 317-319 list overcoming of worldly intentions, of aversion and attraction, four *jhānas* and immaterial attainments, and realisation as possible benefits of mindfulness of breathing.

⁴⁶² S V 321: *ānāpānasatisamādhi bhāvito ... santo ceva paḍāto ca asecanako ca sukho ca viharo*; S V 316: *ānāpānasatisamādhissa bhavitattā ... neva kāyassa iṅjitattāū va hoti phanditattāū va, na cittassa iṅjitattāū va hoti phanditattāū va.*

⁴⁶³ A III 449: *cetaso vikkhepassa pahānāya ānāpānasati bhāvetabbā. Ud 37: ānāpānasati bhāvetabbā vitakkupacchedāya. It 80: ānāpānasatiyā ajjhataū parimukhaū sāpaññhitāya ye bāhirā vitakkāsaya vighātapakkhikā te na honti.* The *Abhidharmakoṭi-abhāyāyā* explains that mindfulness of breathing is particularly suitable for countering discursive thought because the breath is a bland meditation object, devoid of colour or outer form, and therefore does not in itself stimulate the imaginative tendency of the mind (in Pruden, p 917).

⁴⁶⁴ M I 426: *ānāpānasatiyā, evaū bahulākatāya ye pi te carimakā assāsapassāsā te pi viditā va nirujjhanti no aviditā.*

⁴⁶⁵ M I 56: *araṅgagato va rukkhamālagato va suṅgāgaragato va nisādati, pallaikaū abhujitvā, ujuū kāyāū paḍidhāya, parimukhaū satīū upaññhapetvā. So sato va assasati, sato va passasati. Dāghaū va assasanto 'dāghaū assasāmā'-ti pajānāti, dāghaū va passasanto 'dāghaū passasāmā'-ti pajānāti, rassau va assasanto 'rassau assasāmā'-ti pajānāti, rassau va passasanto 'rassau passasāmā'-ti pajānāti, 'sabbakāyapañisaivedā assasissāmā'-ti sikkhati, sabbakāyapañisaivedā passasissāmā'-ti sikkhati, 'passambhayaū kāyasaikhāraū assasissāmā'-ti sikkhati, 'passambhayaū kāyasaikhāraū passasissāmā'-ti sikkhati.*

⁴⁶⁶ From these three, the root of a tree is on other occasions especially associated with the practice of meditation. At M II 118, the mere sight of secluded trees suitable for meditation reminded a king of the Buddha. At M III 146, the root of a tree is used as a measurement for the area which a meditator is able to pervade or suffuse with his or her practice: *yāvata ekaṃ rukkhamūlaṃ mahagattan-ti pharitvā adhimuccitvā viharati ... dve vā tīni vā rukkhamūlāni ...* (referring to the radiation of *mettā*). The root of a tree as a dwelling place constitutes one of the four basic monastic

cate the suitable conditions for the practice of formal meditation,⁴⁶⁷ representing the appropriate degree of seclusion required for the practice of mindfulness of breathing (or other meditation practices).⁴⁶⁸ According to modern meditation teachers, however, mindfulness of breathing can be developed in any situation, even while, for example, standing in a queue or sitting in a waiting room.⁴⁶⁹

Besides describing the external environment, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* also specifies the proper sitting posture: the back should be kept straight and the legs crossed.⁴⁷⁰ In the discourses, this description of the appropriate posture for meditation occurs not only in relation to mindfulness of breathing, but also in the context of several other meditation practices.⁴⁷¹ Although this does not imply that meditation should be confined to the sitting posture only, nevertheless these occurrences clearly underline the importance of formal sitting for cultivating the mind.

Once the posture is set up, mindfulness is to be established 'in front'. The injunction 'in front' (*parimukhaṃ*) can be understood literally or figuratively.⁴⁷² Following the more literal understanding, 'in front' indicates the nostril area as the appropriate location for attending to the in- and out-breaths. Alternatively, 'in front' understood in a more figurative way points to a firm establishment of *sati*, to *sati* being mentally 'in front' in the sense of meditative composure and attentiveness.⁴⁷³

Both the *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries take 'in front' (*parimukhaṃ*) as indicating

requisites of a Buddhist monk or nun, (together with begged alms food, cast off cloth for robes, and cow urine as medicine) thereby representing contentment with the most minimal necessities of life. Applied in a more general sense, this expression can thus be taken to stand for contentment with whatever basic facilities one may be able to get for one's practice of meditation.

⁴⁶⁷ The forest and the root of a tree as part of the standard expression for introducing formal meditation: *vivittaṃ senāsanaṃ bhajati, araṃṇāṃ rukkhamālaṃ pabbataṃ kandaraṃ giriguhaṃ susānaṃ vanapatthaṃ abbhokāsaṃ palālapuṃjaṃ* (e.g. at D I 71). The root of a tree and the empty hut in the Buddha's emphatic exhortation: *etāni rukkhamālāni, etāni suṃṅgārāni, jhāyatha mā pamādattha* (e.g. at M I 46). In addition to forming part of the introduction to mindfulness of breathing, these terms occur in relation to various other meditation practices: at M I 297 in relation to reflection on emptiness; at M I 323 in relation to overcoming the hindrances; at M I 333 in relation to the attainment of cessation; at M I 335 in relation to the *brahmavihāras* (divine abodes); at M I 336 in relation to *asubha* (ugliness of the body), *āhāre pañikkālasaṃ* (cognition of repulsiveness in food), *sabbaloke anabhiratasaṃ* (cognition of disenchantment with the whole world), and *aniccānupassanā* (contemplation of impermanence); and at A V 109 in relation to the aggregates, to the sense-spheres, to various bodily illnesses, and to recollection of *Nibbāna*.

⁴⁶⁸ Ps I 247: *satipaṇṇhānabhāvanānurāpasenāsanaapariggaha*. Ps I 248 stresses that it is not easy to develop *ānāpānasati* in the presence of noise and distractions. Similarly Vibh 244 speaks of: *araṃṇāṃ rukkhamālaṃ ... appasaddaṃ appanigghosaṃ vijānavatāṃ manussarāhaseyyakāṃ pañisallānasārāpaṃ*.

⁴⁶⁹ Gunaratana: *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, p 10; and Khantipālo: *Practical Advice*, p 11.

⁴⁷⁰ The expression *ḥallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā*, 'having folded his legs crosswise', is not further explained in the discourses. The commentaries take it as representing the lotus posture (e.g. Sv I 209: *ūrubaddhāsana*). Yet, in view of modern practical experience it seems reasonable to include any cross-legged sitting posture in which the back is kept straight and which can be maintained for a longer time without causing unnecessary pain.

⁴⁷¹ The description of the sitting posture occurs in relation to overcoming the hindrances and developing absorption as part of the standard expositions of the gradual path, e.g. at D I 71; in the context of practising the *brahmavihāras* (divine abodes) at D III 49 and A I 183; in relation to contemplation of the five aggregates at M I 421; in the context of recollecting realisation or levels of insight gained at A I 184, Ud 46, 60, and 77; in relation to *kāyagātāsati* at Ud 27 and 77; and in the context of meditation in general (*adhicittamanuyutta*) at Ud 43.

⁴⁷² This ambiguity arises because *mukha* can assume a variety of meanings, among them 'mouth' or 'face', but also 'front' or 'top', cf. Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 533-4.

⁴⁷³ Pañis I 176: *parā-ti pariggahaṇṇho, mukhan-ti niyānaṇṇho*, i.e. *parimukhaṃ sati* 'provides' a 'way out' (of forgetfulness). Fessel: *Einbung von Gegenwärtigkeit*, p 79, suggests understanding the term in contrast to the Sanskrit *bahir mukha* (averting one's face), *parimukhaṃ* then implying presence of mind directed to the immediate environment. Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, has: "to surround oneself with watchfulness of mind" (p 672), and "to set one's mindfulness alert" (p 431). The corresponding Chinese version for *parimukhaṃ* reads: "with thoughts well controlled, not going astray" (in Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 99). In fact, in several discourses the expression *parimukhaṃ* was used by people, who were apparently quite unfamiliar with meditation, in order to describe the Buddha seated in meditation (a brahmin searching for his ox at S I 170; a woodworker at S I 179, and some brahmin students at S I 180). It is difficult to imagine that these people should have been able to know, from merely seeing the Buddha seated, that he was directing awareness to his nostrils. The more probable explanation for these instances is that '*parimukhaṃ sati*' was used by them to just express the visible fact that he was sitting in meditative composure.

a precise anatomical location.⁴⁷⁴ In the discourses, however, the specification ‘in front’ occurs in a variety of different contexts, such as, for example, in relation to overcoming the hindrances or to developing the divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*).⁴⁷⁵ Although overcoming the hindrances can occur with the aid of mindfulness of breathing, this is not necessarily the case. In fact, the standard instructions for overcoming the hindrances do not mention the breath.⁴⁷⁶ Similarly, the discourses do not relate the development of the divine abodes in any way to awareness of the breath.⁴⁷⁷ Apart from being aware of the breath, however, to direct mindfulness to the nostril area makes little sense, whether in relation to overcoming the hindrances or to developing the divine abodes. Thus, at least in these contexts, the figurative sense of ‘in front’ as a firm establishment of *sati* is the more meaningful alternative.

Therefore, although to understand ‘in front’ as indicating the nostril area makes sense in relation to mindfulness of breathing, alternative ways of practice, based on a more figurative understanding of the term, cannot be categorically excluded. In fact, several modern teachers have developed successful approaches to mindfulness of breathing independent of the nostril area. Some, for example, advise their pupils to experience the breath in the chest area, others suggest to observe the air-element at the abdomen, while still others recommend directing awareness to the act of breathing in itself, without focussing on any specific place.⁴⁷⁸

Having described the appropriate environment and posture, the *Satīpaṭṭhāna Sutta* instructs the meditator to breathe in and out mindfully.⁴⁷⁹ Next, the meditator should become aware of the length of each breath as ‘long’ or ‘short’. The point here is to be aware of long and short breaths, not to consciously control the length of the breath. Nevertheless, the progression from knowing longer breaths to knowing shorter breaths reflects the fact that the breath naturally becomes shorter and finer with continued contemplation, due to increasing mental and physical tranquility.⁴⁸⁰

The discourse compares this progress to a skilled turner, who attends to his lathe with

⁴⁷⁴ Vibh 252: *ayaū sati upaṇṇhitā hoti supaṇṇhitā nāsikagge vā mukhanimite vā, tena vuccati ‘parimukhaū satiū upaṇṇhapetvā’-ti*; same at Pañis I 171; and Ehara: *Vimuttimaggā*, p 157. Vism 283 further explains that the nose tip is the point of observation for meditators with a longer nose, while the upper lip fulfils the same function for those who have a shorter nose: *ime hi dāghanāsikassa nāsapuṇṇāū ghaṇṇentā pavattanti, rassanāsikassa uttarōṇṇhaū*.

⁴⁷⁵ D III 49, M I 274, and A IV 437: *parimukhaū satiū upaṇṇhapetvā. So ... abhijjhāya ... byāpādapadosā ... thānamiddhā ... uddhaccakukkuccā ... vicikiccāya cittaū parisodheti*. A I 183: *parimukhaū satiū upaṇṇhapetvā, so mettā sahatena cetasā ...* Other occurrences of *parimukhaū satiū upaṇṇhapetvā* are in the context of forming the determination of not changing one's posture until realisation is gained (at M I 219), of developing a mind set on the welfare of both oneself and others (at M II 139), of understanding that the defilements have been eradicated from one's mind (A I 184), or as part of the description of a monk well versed in meditation (at A III 320). *Parimukhaū* appears to be more than simply part of a stereotype formula, since in several passages in the *Udāna* it is missing from otherwise identical descriptions of meditators sitting down cross-legged (Ud 21, 42, 43, 46, 60, 71, and 77).

⁴⁷⁶ According to the standard expositions (e.g. D III 49, M I 274, M III 3, or S V 105) the counter methods are: *asubhanimitta* (attending to ugliness of the body), *mettā* (loving kindness), *ālokasaṅgā* (cognition of light), *cetasa vāpasama* (mental calm), and *akathaūkathā kusalesu dhammesu* (being unperplexed about wholesome states) for each respective hindrance. Particularly interesting in this context is M I 421, where *Rāhula* sat down to establish *parimukhaū sati* for contemplating the aggregates, but was only at a later point given *ānāpānasati* instructions. Thus it is not very probable that he was directing awareness to his nostrils during the earlier taught contemplation of the aggregates, by in some way combining it with mindfulness of breathing.

⁴⁷⁷ The instructions describe a form of radiation, e.g. at M II 207: *ekaū disaū pharivā viharati, tathā dutiyaū, tathā tatiyaū, tathā catutthiū; iti uddhaū adho tiriyaū sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaū lokaū ... pharivā viharati*, which does not seem to be related to mindfulness of breathing.

⁴⁷⁸ Dhammadharo: *Frames of Reference*, p 16, and Maha Boowa: *Wisdom*, pp 14-16, instruct to fix attention at the nose at first, but to shift to the chest or solar plexus area later on. Kamalashila: *Meditation*, p 168, proposes to counter slackness of energy by observing the breath higher up in the body (e.g. nose), while in case of excessive energy one may calm down by using a spot lower down (e.g. abdomen). Brahmavamsa: *Basic Method*, p 17, suggests not to locate the breath anywhere physically. On the other hand Kassapa: *Meditation*, p 242, sharply criticises the Mahasi tradition for observing the movement of the air element at the abdomen. However, in order to avoid contradiction with the commentarial explanation, the Mahasi tradition has always taken care to present their main meditation practice as a contemplation of the air element from among the four element meditation, not as a form of *ānāpānasati*.

⁴⁷⁹ According to Chit Tin: *Knowing Anicca*, p 44, this instruction refers in particular to clearly distinguishing between in- and out-breath.

⁴⁸⁰ The relation of shorter breaths to having developed some degree of concentration is noted by Dhammadharo: *Keeping the Breath*, p 19; Dhāraavaūsa: *Dynamic Way*, p 46; Goenka: *Satīpaṇṇhāda*, p 29; and Khantipālo: *Calm and Insight*, p 30.

full awareness of making a long turn or a short turn.⁴⁸¹ The simile of the turner suggests increasing degrees of refinement and subtlety in practising mindfulness of breathing.⁴⁸² Just as a turner makes progressively finer and more delicate cuts, when working on the lathe, similarly contemplation proceeds from long and comparatively gross breaths to shorter and subtler breaths. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* illustratively compares this progressive refinement of mindfulness of breathing to the progressively fainter sound of a gong, after it has been struck.⁴⁸³

The third and fourth steps introduce a different verb to describe the process of contemplation: in place of 'he knows' (*pajānāti*), the text now uses the expression 'he trains' (*sikkhati*).⁴⁸⁴ In the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, this 'training' covers altogether fourteen steps, in addition to the first two steps concerned with 'knowing'. The use of the word 'training' points to some degree of additional effort on the part of the meditator, due to an increasing degree of difficulty involved in these steps.⁴⁸⁵ In the present context, this seems to entail a shift to a broader kind of awareness, including also other phenomena, in addition to the breath itself. In the scheme described in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* (hereafter referred to as 'the sixteen steps'), awareness proceeds from the bodily phenomena of breathing to feelings and mental events. In 'the sixteen steps', contemplation is clearly not limited to changes in the process of breathing, but covers other related aspects of subjective experience. In this way, mindfulness of breathing becomes a skilful tool for self-observation.⁴⁸⁶

The third and fourth steps of mindfulness of breathing, alike in both the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, are concerned with experiencing the 'whole body' (*sabbakāya*) and with calming the 'bodily formation' (*kāyasaṅkhāra*). In the present context, the 'whole body' (*sabbakāya*) can be taken literally as referring to the whole physical body. Understood in this way, the instruction points to a broadening of awareness, to a shift from the breath alone to the effect of the breath on the entire body.⁴⁸⁷ According to the commentaries, however, 'whole body' should be understood more figuratively as referring to the 'body' of the breath. By understanding 'whole body' as the whole breath-body the instruction then points to full awareness of the beginning, middle, and end stages of each breath.⁴⁸⁸ This interpretation can claim support from the same *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, since here the Buddha identified the breath as a 'body' (*kāya*) among bodies.⁴⁸⁹ An argument against this interpretation, however, could be that the cultivation of full awareness of the length of the breath was the task of the previous two steps, knowing 'long' or 'short' breath, which already required the meditator to be aware of each breath from beginning to end.⁴⁹⁰ One would therefore expect this next step in the progression to introduce a distinctly new feature for contemplation, such as, for example, a shift of awareness to including the whole anatomical body.

⁴⁸¹ D II 291 and M I 56.

⁴⁸² Ariyadhamma: *ānāpānasati*, p 3, moreover explains the turner simile to point to fixity of attention.

⁴⁸³ Pañis I 185 in commenting on the third step of *ānāpānasati*.

⁴⁸⁴ According to Buddhadasa: *ānāpānasati*, p 63, the first two steps are just preliminaries, while the real practice starts with this 'training'.

⁴⁸⁵ *Vism* 274 speaks of *ghañati* and *vāyamati*. In fact at S V 326, which documents the Buddha's own practice of mindfulness of breathing, all occurrences of *sikkhati* (he trains) are replaced by *pajānāmi* (I know). This documents that, unlike the ordinary practitioner who has to make an effort in order to proceed through the sixteen steps, the Buddha, with his meditative expertise, was able to do the same effortlessly.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. also Kor: *Reading the Mind*, p 35; van Zeyst: *Search of Truth*, p 94; and Vimalo: "Contemplation of Breathing", p 158. Shapiro: "Self-control", p 588, suggests that from a psychological perspective awareness of the breath has the purpose of learning to be self-conscious. Observation of the breath is indeed an appropriate vehicle for such self-observation, since emotional changes of the mind are reflected in the breath, such as when on yawns out of boredom, sighs due to grief, or snorts in anger. Moreover, since the process of breathing is a process that may take place involuntarily and also deliberately, it stands in a particular conditional position in regard to body and mind, and therefore offers a convenient opportunity for contemplating the conditional interrelationship between physical and mental phenomena. Cf. also Govinda: *Psychological Attitude*, pp 27, 110.

⁴⁸⁷ Buddhadasa: *Mindfulness with Breathing*, p 38; Debes: "Satipaṇṇhāna", p 105; Goenka: *Satipaṇṇhāna*, p 29; Kor: *Reading the Mind*, p 38; and Solé-Leris: *Tranquility & Insight*, p 80.

⁴⁸⁸ *Vism* 273: *ādimajjhāpariyosānaṃ*.

⁴⁸⁹ M III 83: *kāyesu kāyaṃcātaraḥaṃ ... vadāmi yadidaṃ assāpassasā*.

⁴⁹⁰ Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 42.

The next step of training is the calming of the 'bodily formation' (*kāyasaṅkhāra*). Elsewhere the discourses define the 'bodily formation' as in-breathing and out-breathing.⁴⁹¹ This dovetails with the second interpretation mentioned above, according to which 'whole body' refers to the whole length of the breath.⁴⁹² The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and the *Vimuttimaggā* indicate that this fourth step of mindfulness of breathing also refers to maintaining a calm and stable posture, in the sense of calming any intention to shift or move.⁴⁹³ Thus the instruction to calm the bodily formations also implies an increase in general bodily calmness, a way of understanding which fits with the first interpretation mentioned above, taking 'body' to refer to the anatomical body. In the end, both interpretations overlap, since a calming of the breath naturally leads to increased bodily tranquility, and vice versa.⁴⁹⁴

The calming of breath and body can then either become the basis for developing awareness of the inner constitution of the body, as in the subsequent *satipaṭṭhāna* exercises, or else lead over to an awareness of feelings and mental processes, as in 'the sixteen steps'.⁴⁹⁵ In both cases this constitutes a natural progression, where the establishment of a basis in bodily calmness enables awareness to proceed to subtler aspects of contemplation. It is to these subtler aspects that I will now turn, by briefly digressing from the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and further examining the scheme of 'the sixteen steps' described in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*.

VI.3) The *Ānāpānasati Sutta*

Subsequent to the first four steps of mindfulness of breathing, the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*'s contemplation scheme directs awareness to the experience of joy (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*). Since these two are factors of absorption, their occurrence in this part of 'the sixteen steps' has led the *Visuddhimagga* to the assumption that this progression refers exclusively to absorption experience.⁴⁹⁶ Possibly due to this assumption, even the first four steps of mindfulness of breathing in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* have at times been identified as being no more than a

⁴⁹¹ *Kāyasaṅkhāra* occurring together with *vacāsaṅkhāra* and *cittasaṅkhāra* at M I 301 and S IV 293: *assāsapassāsā kāyasaṅkhāro*, (cf. Ædamoli: *Mindfulness of Breathing*, p 6 n 1).

⁴⁹² The calming of the *kāyasaṅkhāra* (in the sense of in- and out-breathing) then reaches its culmination point with the attainment of the fourth absorption (D III 270 and A V 31): *catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Evaṃ kho bhikkhu passaddhakāyasaṅkhāro hoti*, since during this attainment the breath completely ceases (cf. S IV 217: *catutthaṃ jhānaṃ samāpannassa assāsapassāsā niruddhā honti*). Cf. also Pa Auk: *Mindfulness of Breathing*, p 15: "with the attainment of the fourth *jhāna* the breath completely stops. This completes the fourth stage in the development of *ānāpānasati*, calming the breath body." Such complete calming, however, does not form part of the 'the sixteen steps', since it would be difficult to reconcile with the subsequent progression towards experiencing *pīti* (joy) and *sukha* (happiness), mental qualities have to be left behind with the attainment of the fourth *jhāna*. In fact, once the breath has completely ceased (*passaddhakāyasaṅkhāro hoti*), it would be impossible to carry out the instruction to 'breathe in (and out) calming the bodily formations' (cf. M I 56: *passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmi'ti ... passasissāmi'ti sikkhati*).

⁴⁹³ Paṭis I 184: *yathārūpehi kāyasaṅkhārehi yā kāyassa ānāmanā vināmanā sannāmanā paṇāmanā injanā phandanā calanā kampaṇā - passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmi'ti ... passasissāmi'ti sikkhati*; Ehara: *Vimuttimaggā*, p 161.

⁴⁹⁴ According to Vism 274 the calming of body and mind leads in turn to calming of the breathing: *yadā paṇassa kāyo pi cittam-pi pariggahitā honti, tadā te santā honti vāpasantā. Tesu vāpasantesu assāsapassāsā sukhumā hutvā pavattanti*. Cf. also Jayatilleke: "Problems of Translation", p 217, who suggests that breathing may be taken as one concrete instance of *kāyasaṅkhāra* as bodily reflexes in general. In fact *kāyasaṅkhāra* occurs at times as bodily action in general (together with the respective type of *vacāsaṅkhāra* and *manosaṅkhāra*), a usage which is not restricted to the breath, e.g. at A I 122: *sabyāpajjhāi kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisāikharoti ... abyāpajjhāi*; same at A II 231-6; cf. also Schumann: *Saṅkhāra*, p 29.

⁴⁹⁵ M III 82. Cf. also Kor: *Reading the Mind*, p 38.

⁴⁹⁶ According to Vism 277, and 287-290, the second and third tetrads are practicable for *jhāna*-attainers only. (Cf. also Ehara: *Vimuttimaggā*, p 161; and Ledi: *Mindfulness of Breathing*, pp 27 and 29). Vism suggests two alternatives, namely either actual development of *jhāna*, or else insightful contemplation after emerging from *jhāna*, nevertheless both of these would only be practicable for someone able to enter absorption. The net result of this is that for someone unable to attain *jhāna*, a considerable part of the Buddha's exposition on mindfulness of breathing moves beyond reach. Quite possibly due to this, additional methods came into being for the less proficient in concentration, such as counting the breath (cf. Vism 278-283 for detailed instructions). Instructions of this type cannot be found anywhere in the discourses of the Buddha. Though counting the breath may be helpful for the neophyte to mindfulness of breathing, it does, however, to some extent constitute a change in the mood of this contemplation, since sustained counting can result in dulling the mind (which is the reason underlying the proverbial advice to use counting exercises against insomnia) and also tends to stimulate the conceptual activity of the mind rather than quietening it.

concentration practice.⁴⁹⁷

Here it needs to be noted that, although the breath can undoubtedly be used to develop concentration, the instructions throughout ‘the sixteen steps’ are invariably based on distinct awareness of each in- and out-breath. The central purpose of this distinction, from the perspective of insight development, is to cultivate and maintain awareness of the impermanent nature of the breath. Whatever bodily or mental phenomena come within the focus of awareness during ‘the sixteen steps’ (see diagram 6.2 below), all of them are experienced against the background of the ever changing rhythm of in- and out-breaths, which provides a constant reminder of impermanence.⁴⁹⁸ On closer inspection, ‘the sixteen steps’ reveal an underlying structural pattern, which against this continuous background of impermanence proceeds through various increasingly subtler aspects of subjective experience, thereby paralleling the structural progression in the *Satipaṅṅhāna Sutta*.⁴⁹⁹ In contrast, on approaching absorption attainment, experience becomes more and more unified, so that one is no longer clearly aware of the distinction between in- and out-breaths, or of other related phenomena.⁵⁰⁰

The occurrence of joy (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*) as steps five and six in the scheme of the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* does not necessarily require the experience of absorption, since both can occur apart from such attainment.⁵⁰¹ According to a verse in the *Dhammapāda*, for example, joy (*pīti*) can also arise as a result of insight meditation.⁵⁰² Thus to be aware of the breath while experiencing joy or happiness is not necessarily confined to retrospective analysis after emergence from an absorption attainment, or to the stages of tranquility meditation immediately preceding such attainment. Although these two are prominent cases for such contemplation, the viewpoint introduced by ‘the sixteen steps’ is geared towards insight. That is, ‘the sixteen steps’ are not solely a concentration practice, but rather introduce an insight perspective on the development of concentration through mindfulness of breathing.

Survey of *Ānāpānasati* in Sixteen Steps:
(Diagram 6.2)

know: ~~~ long breath (*dīgham*) ~~~~~

⁴⁹⁷ Kheminda: [Path, Fruit](#), p 5: "the four foundations of mindfulness begin with a serenity (*samatha*) subject of meditation, namely, mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing." Soma: "Contemplation", p 360: "the placing of the first tetrad of the *ānāpānasati Sutta* at the very beginning of the two main *Satipaṅṅhāna Suttas* is clear indication of the necessity of at least the first *jhāna* ... the development of insight is impossible to one who has not brought into being ... at least the first *jhāna*." Ps I 249, however, only suggests that based on the breath *jhāna* may be attained, not that mindfulness of breathing in the *Satipaṅṅhāna Sutta* is only a *samatha* object of meditation. This impression is further supported by the fact that the *satipaṅṅhāna* subcomy Ps-pñ I 349 makes a point of stating that an ‘external’ (*bahiddhā*) development of mindfulness of breathing cannot yield absorption attainment. This shows that in the eyes of the commentaries mindfulness of breathing in the *satipaṅṅhāna* context was practicable apart from absorption attainment.

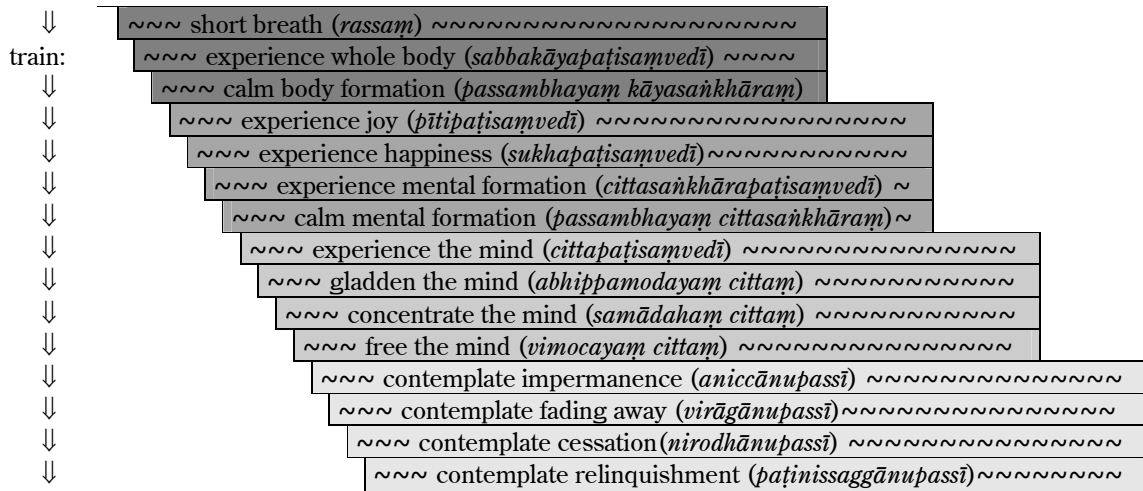
⁴⁹⁸ Such use of the breath as a means for developing insight into impermanence has a parallel at A III 306 and A IV 319, where a recollection of the inevitability and unpredictability of death is related to the unpredictability of the next breath to be taken: *bhikkhu evaṃ maraḍassatiṃ bhāveti: ‘aho vatāhaṃ tad-antarāṃ jāveyyāṃ yad-antarāṃ assasitvā vā passasāmi passasitvā vā assasāmi*. Cf. also S V 319, where the practice of the sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing leads over to realising the impermanent nature of feelings: *ānāpānasatisamādhimhi evaṃ bahulākate, sukhaṃ-ce ... dukkhaṃ-ce ... aduk-khamasukhaṃ-ce vedanaṃ vediyati, ‘sā aniccaṃ-ti pajānāti ...*

⁴⁹⁹ In fact, Th 548 recommends practice of mindfulness of breathing in ‘right order’, demonstrating a clear awareness of this inherent progressive character: *ānāpānasatā yassa, paripuḍḍā subhāvitā, anupubbāṃ paricīṭā, yathā buddhena desitā*. A detailed exposition of the sixteen steps as a single integrated practice can be found in Buddhada: [Mindfulness with Breathing](#), pp 53-89. Cf. also Gethin: [Path to Awakening](#), p 59; Levine: [Gradual Awakening](#), pp 32-36; Thanissaro: [Fire Unbound](#), p 67; and Vimalo: "Contemplation of Breathing", p 158.

⁵⁰⁰ The basic difference between mindfulness of breathing as a *samatha* or as a *vipassanā* practice depends on what angle is taken when observing the breath, since emphasis on just mentally knowing the presence of the breath is capable of leading over to deep levels of concentration, while emphasis on various phenomena related to the process of breathing (such as, for example, the physical sensations caused by the passage of the in- and out-breaths) does not lead to a unitary type of experience but stays in the realm of variety and of sensory experience, and thus is more appropriate for the development of insight.

⁵⁰¹ In fact the definition of *pāti* in this context at Pañis I 187 uses a set of expressions which do not seem to be restricted to absorption attainment: *yā pātipāmojjaṃ āmodanā pamodanā haṣo pahāso vitti odagyaṃ attamanatā cittassa, ayaṃ pāti*. Or else at M II 203 the *pāti* of the first two absorptions is contrasted with *yāyā pāti paṃca kāmaguḍe pañicca*, documenting a type of *pāti* distinctly different from absorption attainment. Cf. also Buddhada: [Mindfulness with Breathing](#), p 51.

⁵⁰² Dh 374: *yato yato sammāsati khandhānaṃ udayabbayaṃ, labhati pātipāmojjaṃ*.



(The use of ~ represents that awareness of breathing 'in' and 'out' forms the background to each step)

A consideration of 'the sixteen steps' within its context supports this suggestion. The introductory section of the discourse shows that the Buddha's rationale for giving this discourse was to demonstrate to a group of monks, who were already using the breath as a meditation object (possibly as a concentration exercise), how to develop it as a *satipaṭṭhāna*.⁵⁰³ The Buddha took up the breath as a meditation object in order to demonstrate how *sati* can naturally lead from mindfulness of breathing to a comprehensive awareness of feelings and mind, and hence to a development of all *satipaṭṭhānas* and to the seven awakening factors.⁵⁰⁴ This correlation shows that the main purpose of the Buddha's exposition was to broaden the scope of mindfulness of breathing from awareness of the bodily phenomenon breath to awareness of feelings, mind, and *dhammas*, and in this way to employ it as a means for the gaining of insight.⁵⁰⁵ It seems reasonable to conclude that the purpose of 'the sixteen steps', and by implication also of mindfulness of breathing in the first *satipaṭṭhāna*, is not restricted to the development of concentration, but rather covers both insight and tranquility.

VI.4) Postures and Activities

Returning to the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations, the next two exercises described in the discourse, awareness of the four postures and clear knowledge in regard to activities, are both concerned with directing mindfulness to the body in activity. The instructions for contemplating the four postures are:

"When walking, he knows: 'I am walking'; when standing, he knows: 'I am standing'; when sitting, he knows 'I am sitting'; when lying down, he knows: 'I am lying down'; or he knows accordingly however his body is disposed."⁵⁰⁶

The enumeration of the four postures in the above instruction progresses from the more

⁵⁰³ M III 78. Cf. also S V 315, where the Buddha introduced a monk, who was already practising some form of mindfulness of breathing, to 'the sixteen steps' in order to further his practice. Cf. also Debes: "Satipaṇṇhāna", p 197.

⁵⁰⁴ M III 83 relates each tetrad from 'the sixteen steps' to a particular *satipaṇṇhāna*; while M III 87 provides the relation to the awakening factors: *evaṃ bahulākatā satta sambojjhaṅge paripārenti*; the same correlations also occur at S V 323-336. S V 312 moreover relates mindfulness of breathing to each *bojjhaṅga* singly: *idha bhikkhu ānāpānasatisahagataṃ satsambojjhaṅgaṃ ... upekkhāsambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti*.

⁵⁰⁵ The insight potential of 'the sixteen steps' is also documented by Pañis I 95, which points out that each individual step can lead to realisation. Pañis I 178-182 illustrates this potential by relating the first step of mindfulness of breathing (long breath) to experiencing the rise and fall of feelings, cognitions, and thoughts, to the awakening factors, culminating in experiencing *Nibbāna*. Cf. also Ñāḍamoli: *Path of Discrimination*, p 163.

⁵⁰⁶ M I 56: *gacchanto vā 'gacchamā'-ti pajānāti, nḥito vā 'nḥitomhā'-ti pajānāti, nisinno vā 'nisinnomhā'-ti pajānāti, sayāno vā 'sayānomhā'-ti pajānāti. Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paḍihito hoti tathā tathā naṃ pajānāti*.

active ‘walking’ to comparatively more refined and passive postures.⁵⁰⁷ The formulation in the instruction speaks of ‘knowing’ each of these postures, probably implying some form of ‘proprioceptive’ awareness.⁵⁰⁸ In other discourses, these four postures often convey the sense of doing something ‘at any time’.⁵⁰⁹ Applied to the context of *satipaṭṭhāna*, this usage suggests continuity of body-awareness during all activities. In fact, according to the above *satipaṭṭhāna* instruction this contemplation is not limited to the four postures, but includes whatever way one’s body may be disposed.⁵¹⁰ Thus, what this particular contemplation means, practically, is to be aware of the body in a general manner, to be ‘with’ the body during its natural activities instead of being carried away by various thoughts and ideas, and thereby to be mentally anchored in the body.

This particular exercise constitutes the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation which most prominently fulfils the role of providing a firm grounding of awareness in the body. Due to this foundational role, it seems reasonable to follow the Chinese versions of *satipaṭṭhāna* and place it at the outset of the body contemplations. For the beginner in *satipaṭṭhāna*, this simple exercise of being aware of the body, in whatever position, helps to build up continuity of *sati*. By performing even the least important movement of the body in a conscious and deliberate manner, the most mundane activities can be turned into occasions for mental development. Awareness trained in this way constitutes an important foundation for more formal meditation practices, since the tendency of the mind to distraction has already been successfully subdued.

Awareness of the four postures is not only a way to build up mindfulness, but the four bodily postures can also become the object of insightful investigation. A verse from the *Theragāthā* relates the ability to assume any of the four postures to the interaction of the bones and tendons in the body responsible for the respective posture.⁵¹¹ This aspect of understanding the mechanics behind bodily activities has received much attention by modern meditation teachers.⁵¹² The mechanics involved in assuming a bodily posture or performing a movement usually escape being noticed, due to one’s preoccupation with the outcome of one’s action. A practical approach for investigating the activity of walking in particular is offered in the commentaries, who suggest to break down the process of walking into the successive stages of a single step, which can then be correlated with the four elements.⁵¹³

As I mentioned above, the four postures are often used in the discourses as a way of indicating that something should be done ‘at any time’. In this way, they are at times related to various predominantly mental events such as fear, unwholesome thoughts, or an overcoming of the five hindrances.⁵¹⁴ According to these passages, each of the four postures can lead to awareness of the concurrent state of mind. This goes to show that to remove unwholesome mental states, for example, is not confined to formal sitting meditation, but is something to be undertaken in any situation or posture. The fact that meditation does not have to be exclusively associated with the sitting posture is also recognised in the *Vimuttimaggā* and the *Visuddhimaggā*,

⁵⁰⁷ At M I 120, a progression from fast walking to slow walking, to standing, to sitting, and finally to lying down, is each time accompanied by the comment: *oëàrikaū oëàrikaū iriyāpathaū abhinivajjētvā sukhumaū sukhumaū iriyāpathaū kappēyya*, documenting a progressive refinement of posture. Cf. also Fessel: *Ein_bung_von_Gegenw_rtigkeit*, p 111.

⁵⁰⁸ Proprioception is the ability to sense the position, location, and movement of the body and its parts.

⁵⁰⁹ E.g. at A IV 301: *yena yeneva gacchasi phāsu yeva gacchasi, yattha yattha ñhassasi ... nisādissasi ... seyyaū kappessasi, phāsu yeva seyyaū kappessasi*.

⁵¹⁰ M I 57: *yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paḍihito hoti tathā tathā naū pajānāti*.

⁵¹¹ Th 570: *aññhisaighāññhāghaṇīto nahārusuttanibandhano, nekesaū saigatibhāvā kappeti iriyāpathaū*.

⁵¹² Detailed practical instructions can be found in Mahasi: *Practical Insight*, pp 9-16. Cf. also Debes: "Satipaṅṅhāna", p 113; and de Silva: *Mental Culture*, p 13.

⁵¹³ Vism 622: predominance of earth + water = placing; predominance of fire + air = lifting. Cf. also Sālananda: *Walking Meditation*, p 7.

⁵¹⁴ M I 21: *caikamantassa taū bhayabheravaū āgacchati. So kho ahaū neva tāva tiññhāmi na nisādāmi na nipajjāmi, yāva caikamanto va taū bhayabheravaū pañvinemi ... ñhitassa ... nisinnassa ... nipannassa ...*; M III 112: *caikamāya cittaū namati, so caikamati ... ñhānāya cittaū namati so tiññhati ... nisādati ... sāyati: Evaū maū caikamantaū ... sayantaū nābhijjhādomanassa pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāssavissanti*; A II 13 and It 116: *carato ... ñhitassa ... nisinnassa ... sayānassa ce pi bhikkhuno uppajjati kāmavitakko vā vyāpādavitaḅko vā vihiūsāvitaḅko vā, taḅ-ce bhikkhu nādhivāseti pajahati vinodeti vyantākaroti anabhāvāū gameti*; A II 14 and It 118: *carato ce pi ... ñhitassa ... nisinnassa ... sayānassa ce pi ... bhikkhuno jāgarassa abhijjhā vigatā hoti vyāpādo ... thānamiddhaū ... uddhaccakukkuccaū ... vicikicchā pahānā hoti*.

which indicate that, depending on the character disposition of each individual meditator, different postures may be emphasized for carrying out the practice of meditation.⁵¹⁵

Another possibility suggested by the fact that the discourses relate the four postures to various states of mind is to observe the interrelation between mental states and the way one performs activities like walking, sitting, (etc.). In this way, one can become aware of how a particular state of mind expresses itself through the medium of one's bodily posture, or else how the condition, position, and motion of the body in turn affects the mind.⁵¹⁶ Bodily posture and state of mind are intrinsically interrelated, so that clear awareness of the one naturally enhances awareness of the other. In this way, contemplation of the four postures can lead to investigating the body's conditional interrelation with the mind.

Another aspect that can be developed from this particular contemplation is to question the sense of identity underlying any of the four postures.⁵¹⁷ The commentaries give a practical shape to this suggestion, since according to them the decisive difference between simple walking and walking meditation as a *satipaṭṭhāna* is that a meditator keeps in mind the question: 'Who goes? Whose is this going?'⁵¹⁸

The *Visuddhimagga* offers an additional aspect on insight development by becoming aware of the continuous alternation between the different postures of one's body. This leads to a realisation of the suffering inherent in bodily existence, since the main reason why one continually shifts from one posture to another is to avoid the physical pain that develops when a particular posture is maintained for a long time without change.⁵¹⁹ Through closer observation it will become evident how most of the semi-conscious adjustments made in any posture are a constant effort to alleviate the pain inherent in having a body.

Of these four postures, the discourses individually relate walking and reclining to the development of awareness. Walking meditation often comes up circumstantially in the discourses when a visitor, on approaching a settlement of monks, finds them practising walking meditation in the open.⁵²⁰ Several passages report the Buddha and some of his senior disciples engaged in walking meditation.⁵²¹ This goes to show that even accomplished practitioners con-

⁵¹⁵ According to Ehara: *Vimuttimaggā*, p 61, the standing and walking postures are particularly suitable for *rāgacarita* (lustful natured) personalities, while sitting and reclining are more appropriate for *dosacarita* (anger natured) personalities. *Vism* 128 adds that whichever posture is effective for developing concentration is the one to be adopted. According to the *satipaṭṭhāna* commentary, Ps I 264, clearly knowing in regard to stretching and bending, an aspect of the next body contemplation, implies to know the right time for doing so, since the feelings arising from maintaining an uncomfortable posture for too long may obstruct the development of the meditation: *kāle samījantassa, kāle pasārentassa pana tā vedanā na uppajjanti, cittāi ekaggāi hoti, kammaññhānāi phāṭṭi gacchati, visesam adhigacchati*. Chah: "Notes", p 40, points out that "some people think that the longer you can sit, the wiser you must be. I have seen chickens sit on their nests for days on end. Wisdom comes from being mindful in all postures." Similarly Vimalaramsi: *ānāpānasati*, p 47, suggests that "it is far more important to observe what is happening in the mind than to sit with uncomfortable or painful sensations ... there is no magic in sitting on the floor. The magic comes from a clear, calm mind."

⁵¹⁶ Dhammiko: "Pfeilern der Einsicht", p 188. Fryba: *Art of Happiness*, p 125, even suggests to purposely assume the posture of an insecure and anxious person, then to change to expressing self-confidence with one's posture, and in this way to experiment with the various postures and their relatedness to different emotions; cf. also van Zeyst: *Awareness*, p 31: "one observes and is aware of how these movements are the expressions of one's mental attitude: aggressive in walking, or maybe escaping; defeated in lying down ... standing in perplexity or expectation; sitting in satisfaction or in fear ... neatness of movement in the desire to please ... roughness of movement in anger and defeat ... lack of movement in doubt and fear ..."

⁵¹⁷ Cf. the description at S III 151, of how the worldling's mistaken notion of a self is intricately bound up with his or her performing any of the four postures: *assutavā puthujjano rāpāi ... viññādaū 'etaū mama, eso ham-asmi, eso me attā-ti sam-anupassati. So gacchati ce pi ime paṅcupādānakkhandhe upagacchati, tiññhati ce pi ... nisādati ... nīpajjati ce pi ime paṅcupādānakkhandhe upanīpajjati*. According to Ñāḍapoḍika: *Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p 64, "mindfulness on postures will bring an initial awareness of the impersonal nature of the body."

⁵¹⁸ Ps I 251: *ko gacchati, and: kassa gamanāi?* Because in this way the notion of an acting self can be overcome: *sattāpā-laddhiū pajahati, attasaṅgā ughhāṇeti ... satipaṭṭhānabhāvanā ca hoti*. Ps I 252 adds that this is to be applied to any posture.

⁵¹⁹ *Vism* 640: *dukkhalakkaḍḍhāi ... iriyāpathehi pañicchanattā*. Naeb: "Development of Insight", p 143, explains: "It is pain forcing ... to change position at all times ... we change in order to cure the pain ... it is like nursing a continuous sickness ... there is pain in all positions." Similar suggestions can be found in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-āstra* (in Lamotte: *Traité*, p 1157); and in Ñāḍārāma: *Seven Contemplations*, p 29.

⁵²⁰ E.g. at D I 89: *tena kho pana samayena sambahulā bhikkhā abbhokāse caikamanti*; also at M I 229, 332, M II 119, 158, A V 65, and Ud 7.

⁵²¹ The Buddha is reported as practising *caikama* (walking meditation) at D I 105, D III 39, D III 80, S I 107, 179, S I 212,

sidered walking meditation a worthwhile practice. According to the discourses, walking meditation benefits bodily health and digestion, and leads to the development of sustained concentration.⁵²² The commentaries document the insight potential of walking meditation with instances of its use that led to full realisation.⁵²³

Contrary to the way walking meditation is usually practised nowadays, the standard instructions for walking meditation take mental events as their main object of observation. The instructions in this context do not mention awareness of one's bodily posture or of the dynamics of walking, but rather speak of purifying the mind from obstructive states.⁵²⁴ Since the same expression is also used for sitting meditation, it simply implies a continuation of the same meditation that has earlier been practised seated, albeit in a different posture.

In addition, the discourses also recommend walking meditation in order to counter drowsiness. In this particular case, however, the instructions are somewhat different: the meditator is to focus on the walking path, to keep the senses withdrawn, and to prevent the mind from getting distracted outwardly.⁵²⁵

For cultivating awareness in regard to the reclining posture, meditators should lie down mindfully on their right side to take rest during the middle part of the night, keeping in mind the time for waking up.⁵²⁶ The instructions for falling asleep mindfully appear to be mainly concerned with waking up at a predetermined time.⁵²⁷ According to other passages, falling asleep with awareness improves the quality of one's sleep and prevents bad dreams and nocturnal emissions.⁵²⁸

By way of conclusion it needs to be underlined that, in spite of these various perspectives on developing insight related to the four postures, what the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* itself suggest is simply to be aware of the whole body in general, and of its disposition in space.

Once mindfulness of the four postures has led to a grounding of awareness in the body, one may turn to the next contemplation introduced in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: clear knowing (*sampajāna*) in regard to a range of bodily activities.⁵²⁹ The instructions for such 'clear knowing' are:

"When going forward and returning he acts clearly knowing; when looking ahead and looking away he acts clearly knowing; when flexing and extending his limbs he acts clearly knowing; when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl he acts clearly knowing; when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting he acts clearly knowing; when defecating and urinating he acts clearly knowing; when

Th 480 and Th 1044. His practice of *caikama* is furthermore specified to have taken place during the night (at S I 107), and also during the day (at S I 179 and 212). S II 155 reports all the senior disciples engaged in *caikama*, each together with a company of other monks.

⁵²² A III 29: *paṅcime caikame ānisaüsā ... addhānakkhamo hoti, padhānakkhamo hoti, appabādho hoti, asitaü pātaü khāyitaü sāyitaü sammā pariḍāmaü gacchati, caikamādhigato samādhi ciraññhitiko hoti*. Improvement of health and digestion as benefits of *caikama* are also documented at Vin II 119. On the practice of *caikama* cf. also Khantipālo: *Calm and Insight*, p 95; Kundalābhivamsa: *Dhamma*, pp 75-78; and òhitavaḍḍo: *Mind*, pp 120-122.

⁵²³ Ps I 257 relates the story of a monk who realised *arahant*-ship after twenty years of sustained *caikama*. Ps I 258 records the same practice and realisation for another monk after sixteen years (seven of which supposedly without lying or sitting down at all).

⁵²⁴ M I 273: *caikamena nisajjāya āvaraḍiyehi dhammehi cittaü parisodhessāma; āvaraḍa* is a synonym for the five hindrances (compare e.g. S V 94: *paṅcime āvaraḍā nāvaraḍā*).

⁵²⁵ A IV 87: *pachāpuresaṅgā caikamaü adhiññheyāsi antogatehi indriyehi abahigatena mānasena*.

⁵²⁶ M I 273: *rattiyā majjhimaü yāmaü dakkhiḍena passena sāhaseyyaü kappessāma pāde pādaü accādhāya, satā sampajāna uññhānasaṅgaü manasikarivā*. The recommendation to sleep on one's right side (in the 'lion's posture') could be due to the fact that in this way the smooth working of the heart during sleep is less obstructed by the weight of the body than when sleeping on one's left side (which can cause unpleasant dreams and nightmares).

⁵²⁷ *Yāḍavāra*: *Clearing the Path*, p 158.

⁵²⁸ Vin I 295 and A III 251: *paṅcime ānisaüsā upaññitasatissa sampajānassa niddaü okkamayato ... sukhaü supati, sukhaü pañibujjhati, na pāpakāü supinaü passati, devatā rakkhanti, asuci na muccati*.

⁵²⁹ The foundational function of awareness of the four postures for *satisampajāna* is documented at A III 325: *bhikkhu sato va abhikkamati, sato va pañikkamati, sato va tiññhati, sato va nisādati, sato va seyyaü kappeti, sato va kammaü adhiññhāti. Idaü ... anussatiññhānaü evaü bhāvitaü evaü bahulākataü satisampajāna saüvattati*.

walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent, he acts clearly knowing."⁵³⁰

This exercise also forms a distinct step in the gradual path of training, referred to as 'mindfulness and clear knowledge' (*satisampajañña*).⁵³¹ In the sequence of the gradual path scheme, 'mindfulness and clear knowledge' in regard to bodily activities occupy a transitional place, leading over from a preparatory development to actual sitting meditation.⁵³² To be more precise, 'mindfulness and clear knowledge' complete the preliminary stages concerned with ethical conduct, restraint, and contentment, and at the same time form the starting point for the formal practice of meditation, when one resorts to a secluded place in order to overcome the hindrances, to progress through the levels of absorption, and to gain realisation.⁵³³ Thus 'mindfulness and clear knowledge' function as a foundational exercise for more formal meditations, such as, in the present context, the remaining contemplations described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.⁵³⁴

The combined expression 'mindfulness and clear knowledge' indicates that, in addition to being aware of the activities mentioned, the presence of 'clearly knowledge' plays an important role. Since 'clearly knowing' on its own, and also in combination with *sati*, occurs in the discourses in a variety of contexts and can assume a broad range of meanings,⁵³⁵ the question arises, what the exact implications of 'clear knowledge' in regard to the various activities mentioned could be. Neither the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* nor the expositions of the gradual path offer further information. The commentaries make up for this by presenting a detailed analysis of

⁵³⁰ M I 57: *abhikkante pañikkante sampajānakārā hoti, ālokite vilokite sampajānakārā hoti, samijjite pasārite sampajānakārā hoti, saighāñipattacāvaradhāraḍe sampajānakārā hoti, asite pāte khāyite sāyite sampajānakārā hoti, uccārapasāvakamme sampajānakārā hoti, gate ñhite nisinne sutte jāgarite bhāsīte tuḍhābhāve sampajānakārā hoti*. It is notable that most of the verb-forms are past participles, giving a nuance of passivity to the activities under observation. According to Kalupahana: "Language", p 283, the Buddha used passive forms as a pedagogical device to highlight the characteristic of *anattā*. Another point worth considering is that the postures mentioned in the previous exercise recur in the present context. The comy, Ps I 269, explains that the difference between contemplating 'walking', 'standing', and 'sitting' under contemplation of the postures and in the present exercise is that here they are of comparatively shorter duration. The point that the comy is trying to make could be that clear knowledge is particularly relevant for the moment when one assumes a particular posture (in terms of purpose and suitability etc.), whereas postural awareness is more profitably applied to longer periods of time.

⁵³¹ D I 70: *abhikkante pañikkante sampajānakārā hoti ... gate ñhite nisinne sutte jāgarite bhāsīte tuḍhābhāve sampajānakārā hoti. Evaū kho ... bhikkhu satisampajaññaena samannāgato hoti*.

⁵³² Based on the common characteristics of the gradual path scheme, described in various discourses (e.g. at D I 63-84, M I 179-184, 271-280, and 354-357), this pattern can be subsumed under five main stages: I. initial conviction and going forth; II. foundational training in ethical conduct, contentment, and sense-restraint; III. *satisampajañña* (mindfulness and clear knowledge in regard to bodily activities); IV. abandonment of the hindrances and development of absorption; V. realisation. These five steps represent, to some extent, the five *indriyas/balas* (faculties/ powers): I. *saddhā* (confidence), II. *virīya* (energy), III. *sati* (mindfulness), IV. *samādhi* (concentration), V. *paññā* (wisdom); cf. Crangle: *Contemplative Practices* p 163. However, it needs to be added that the five *indriyas/balas* are not to be developed only sequentially, but rather should be brought into being together. Barnes: "Deliverance", p 237, suggests an alternative scheme of six steps by distinguishing between ethical conduct and sense-restraint as two separate stages.

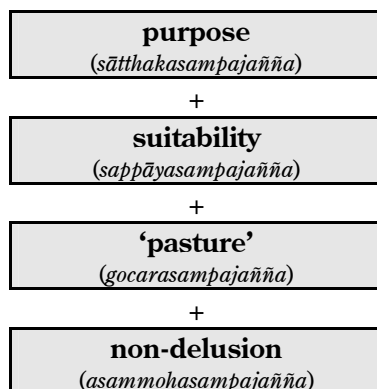
⁵³³ Several discourses (e.g. M I 181, 269, and 346) explicitly mention clearly knowing in regard to activities as a precondition for the subsequent formal sitting meditation: *iminā ca ariyena satisampajaññaena samannāgato vivittāi senāsanāi bhajati ... nisādati pallaikāi ābhujitvā ujuū kāyāi paḍidhāya parimukhāi satiū upaññhapetvā*. This foundational role of *satisampajañña* is also echoed at Ps I 290 and Ps-pñ I 380, which recommend clearly knowing in regard to activities as a basis for developing *sati* as an awakening factor. Cf. also Bronkhorst: "Dharma", p 311, and Bucknell: "Path to Liberation", p 29, who points out that while ethical conduct, sense-restraint, and *satisampajañña* are cumulative practices in that they will not be abandoned at any stage of the path, the attainment of a higher *jhāna* implies abandoning factors belonging to the lower *jhāna*, whereby the rest of the steps becomes substitutive. This shift from a cumulative to a substitutive type of development further highlights the transitional role of *satisampajañña* as the completion of a preparatory stage leading over to the subsequent stage of formal meditation.

⁵³⁴ The difference in character between *satisampajañña* and the later body contemplations has led Schmithausen: "Vier Konzentrationen", pp 253-255, to the conclusion that the contemplations of the anatomical parts, of the elements, and of the corpse could be later additions, because to him their character is too different from the type of awareness practised during contemplation of bodily postures and clearly knowing in regard to bodily activities. However, several discourses (e.g. D II 94, A V 116, and 119) mention *satisampajañña* in regard to bodily activities separately from the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, documenting that both existed independently. This suggests that, if any later addition has taken place at all, then *satisampajañña* in regard to bodily activities was the one to be added to the *satipaṭṭhāna* scheme.

⁵³⁵ Cf. chapter II.3.

‘clear knowledge’ into four aspects (see diagram 6.3 below). According to them, clear knowledge should be directed to the purpose of an activity and also to its suitability. Moreover one should clearly understand how to relate this activity to one’s meditation practice (one’s ‘pasture’) and one should also keep in mind a clear understanding of the true nature of reality.⁵³⁶ A closer inspection of the discourses brings to light several passages that support or further clarify this commentarial presentation.

Four Aspects of ‘Clear Knowledge’ in the Commentaries:
(Diagram 6.3)



According to the *Mahāsuññata Sutta*, talking can be done ‘clearly knowing’ by refraining from conversing on topics unsuitable for one who has gone forth.⁵³⁷ Here, ‘clearly knowing’ implies that one discusses topics related to contentment, seclusion, concentration, and wisdom (etc.), since in this way speech becomes ‘purposeful’ in regard to one’s progress on the path. This instance parallels the first aspect of clear knowledge mentioned in the commentaries, concerned with the purpose of an activity.

Several of the activities listed in this part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, such as ‘going forward and returning’, ‘looking ahead and looking away’, ‘flexing and extending one’s limbs’, and ‘wearing one’s robes and carrying one’s outer robe and bowl’, occur as a set together elsewhere in the discourses.⁵³⁸ These instances do not explicitly mention clear knowledge, but are instructions given to monks regarding proper behaviour. What the discourses emphasise in regard to these activities, is that they should be performed in a graceful and pleasing way (*pāsādika*).⁵³⁹ Similarly, the Chinese *Āgamas* speak of a monk’s ‘dignified and quiet behaviour’ when practising clear knowledge in regard to bodily activities.⁵⁴⁰ Judging from these passages, this particu-

⁵³⁶ At Ps I 253-261.

⁵³⁷ M III 113: *yāyāū kathā hānā gammā pothujjanikā anariyā anattasāūhitā na nibbidāya na virāgāya na nirodhāya na upasāyā na abhiññāya na sambodhāya na nibbānāya sāūvattati ... evarāpiūū kathāū na kathessāmāti. Itiha tattha sampajāno hoti. But: kathā abhisallekhikā cetovināvaraḍasappāyā ... nibbānāya sāūvattati, seyyathidāū appicchakathā santūññhikathā pavivekakathā asaūśaggakathā ... evarāpiūū kathāū kathessāmāti. Itiha tattha sampajāno hoti.* This parallels the explanation given in the *satipaṭṭhāna* subcomy, Ps-pñ I 364: *bātiūūsatiracchānakathāū pahāya ... bhāsite sampajānakārā nāma.*

⁵³⁸ At M I 460 and A II 123 a monk is instructed how to properly perform bodily activities: *evan-te abhikkamitabbāū, evan-te pañikkamitabbāū, evan-te āloketabbāū, evan-te viloketabbāū, evan-te samījītabbāū, evan-te pasāretabbāū, evan-te saīghāñipattacāvarāū dhāretabbāū.* At A IV 169 the whole set occurs again as a reference to ‘proper’ behaviour, where a bad monk is trying to hide behind proper outer behaviour: *idha ekaccassa puggalassa tādisāū yeva hoti abhikkantāū pañikkantāū ālokitaū vilokitaū samījītaū pasāritaū saīghāñipattacāvaradhāraḍāū, seyyathāpi acesāū bhaddakānāū bhikkhānāū, yāvassa bhikkhā āpattīū na passanti.*

⁵³⁹ A II 104: *pāsādikaū hoti abhikkantāū pañikkantāū ālokitaū vilokitaū samījītaū pasāritaū saīghāñipattacāvaradhāraḍāū;* A V 201: *pāsādiko hoti abhikkantapañikkante susāūvuto antaraghare pi nisajjāya;* Th 591 has the same for the four postures: *iriyāpathiyāū pasādaniyāū ... etāū samanassa pañirāpāū;* similarly Th 927: *tato pāsādikaū āsi, gataū bhuttaū nisevitaū ... va ... iriyāpatho;* and Pp 44: *idhekaccassa puggalassa pāsādikaū hoti abhikkantāū pañikkantāū ālokitaū vilokitaū samījītaū pasāritaū saīghāñipattacāvaradhāraḍāū ... idhekaccassa puggalassa na pāsādikaū hoti abhikkantāū ...* (etc.). Law: *Human Types*, p 81, translates *sampajāna* in this context as “deliberately.”

⁵⁴⁰ Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 83.

lar set of activities stands for a careful and dignified way of behaving, appropriate to one who is living the life of a monk or nun.

The need to maintain such good standards of conduct has found its expression in the numerous training rules for the monastic community, which regulate in great detail the various aspects of conduct in daily life.⁵⁴¹ The importance given to the externals of conduct in ancient India is also documented in the *Brahmāyu Sutta*, where a close examination of the Buddha's conduct in daily life forms part of an attempt to assess his spiritual accomplishment.⁵⁴² This need for a monk or nun to behave in a careful and dignified manner parallels the second aspect mentioned in the commentaries, which directs clear knowledge to the suitability of an action.

A passage from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* relates clearly knowing to the activity of looking. This passage reports the monk *Nanda*, who was a particularly lustful character, marshalling his full effort in order to avoid the arising of desires and discontent (*abhijjhādomanassa*) when looking in any direction.⁵⁴³ The terminology used in this instance shows that this form of clearly knowing is related to sense-restraint. A similar nuance can be found in the *Mahāsuññata Sutta*, which relates clearly knowing of the four postures to sense-restraint.⁵⁴⁴ Both passages mirror the third aspect of clear knowledge mentioned in the commentaries, which speaks of 'pasture'. The same expression came up earlier in relation to *sati* imagery, depicting *satipaṭṭhāna* as the proper 'pasture' of a monk, while improper 'pasture' represented sensual distraction.⁵⁴⁵ This suggests that clear knowledge in regard to 'pasture' refers to sense-restraint.

The fourth aspect mentioned in the commentaries, which associates clear knowledge to the absence of delusion (*asammoha*), goes beyond the context of body contemplation. To have a clear understanding of the true nature of reality is a task of clearly knowing in general, a quality that, according to the 'definition', needs to be developed with all of the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations.

The commentarial presentation of four aspects inherent in clear knowledge can be seen to follow an progressive sequence, with clearly knowing in regard to purpose (one's progress to awakening) setting the background for corresponding 'suitable' conduct, which in turn facilitates sense-restraint and one's meditative development, which then enables insight to arise. In this way, the *satipaṭṭhāna* exercise to develop clear knowledge in regard to activities combines purposeful and dignified conduct with sense-restraint, in order to build up a foundation for the arising of insight. In fact, both proper conduct and sense-restraint overlap to some degree, since several aspects of a monk's or a nun's code of conduct are for the purpose of facilitating sense-restraint, while on the other hand one's bodily activities will become more graceful and dignified if a certain degree of mental equilibrium through the absence of sensual distractions has been established.

Compared to contemplation of the four postures, clear knowledge in regard to activities introduces an additional element, since the former consists only in bare awareness of whatever posture or movement occurred naturally, while the latter includes purposely adopting a restrained and dignified behaviour.

VL5) Anatomical Parts and Elements

The next two exercises listed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, contemplating the anatomical

⁵⁴¹ These are in particular the seventy-five *sekhiya* rules, Vin IV 184-206. A convenient exposition can be found in Thanisaro: *Monastic Code*, pp 489-510. The importance of such outward behaviour is also noted by Collins: "Body in Theravāda", p 198.

⁵⁴² M II 137, giving a detailed report of the Buddha's way of performing various activities such as walking, looking, sitting down (etc.).

⁵⁴³ A IV 167: *sace ... Nandassa puratthimā ... pacchimā ... uttarā ... dakkhiṇā disā āloketabbā hoti, sabbaū cetasā samannāharitvā Nando dakkhiṇā disāū āloketi - 'evaū me dakkhiṇā disāū āloketāya nābhijjhādomanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāssavissantā'-ti. Itiha tattha sampajāno hoti ... Idaū ... Nandassa indriyesu guttadvāratāya hoti.*

⁵⁴⁴ M III 113: *caīkamati ... tiññhati ... nisādati ... sayati - 'evaū maū sayantaū nābhijjhādomanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāssavissantā'-ti. Itiha tattha sampajāno hoti.*

⁵⁴⁵ A V 352: *bhikkhu cattāro satipaṇṇhāne yathābhātaū pajānāti. Evaū ... gocarakusalo hoti. S V 149: ko ca bhikkhuno agocarō paravisayo? Yadaidā paṇṇa kāmāgūḍā.*

constitution of the body and contemplating the body in terms of the four elements, both direct mindfulness to an analysis of the body's constitution. The first of these two analytical meditations gives surveys the constitution of one's body by listing various anatomical parts, organs, and fluids.⁵⁴⁶ The passage reads:

"He reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, enclosed by skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: 'in this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, bowel, mesentery, contents of the stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine."⁵⁴⁷

In other discourses, the above list of anatomical parts is followed by the expression: 'and whatever other part there may be.'⁵⁴⁸ This indicates that the *satipaṭṭhāna* list is not exhaustive and the items mentioned are examples of the kinds of bodily parts that can be contemplated. In fact, other passages mention several bodily parts or fluids missing from the above list, such as the brain, the male organ, or earwax, which demonstrates that the *satipaṭṭhāna* list does not exhaust the ancient Indian knowledge of human anatomy.⁵⁴⁹

The set of anatomical parts given in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* follows a natural sequence from the solid and outer parts, through the internal organs, to the organic liquids. This sequence represents a progressive penetration of awareness. The parts most easily accessible to awareness are mentioned first, while the aspects of the body listed further on in the sequence require a comparatively deeper degree of awareness and sensitivity. Alternatively, the sequence can also be taken to correspond to an exercise in imaginative visualisation, during which one strips one's body of each part in turn.⁵⁵⁰

The *Visuddhimagga* indicates that the progressive practice of this exercise leads from giving attention to each individual anatomical part to becoming aware of all of them simultaneously.⁵⁵¹ This suggests that with the more advanced stages of this contemplation the individual parts recede in importance and awareness turns to the composite and unattractive nature of the body in its entirety. According to the *Sampasādanīya Sutta*, contemplation can also proceed from the above set of anatomical parts to awareness of the skeleton only.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁶ Detailed descriptions of each part can be found in Ehara: *Vimuttimaggā*, pp 171-177, and Vism 248-265. The *Madhyama āgama* list of anatomical parts corresponds quite closely to the *Pāli* version (in Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 90; and Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 157), while the *Ekottara āgama* has only twenty-four parts (Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 170). According to Hayashima: "Asubha", p 272, the Sanskrit versions of this *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation mention altogether thirty-six parts; (indeed, a passage from the *Ratnamegha*, quoted in Bendall: *oikūa*, p 202, lists thirty-six anatomical parts for body contemplation). The fact that in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* the anatomical parts listed are thirty-one could have some additional significance, since in Buddhist cosmology the realms of existence count up to the same number. Thus the descriptions of material existence on the microcosmic and the macrocosmic level were moulded on a similar pattern. Some of the anatomical parts listed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* can also be found at *Mairā Upaniṣad* 1.3: *asthi-carma-snāyumañjā-māṁsā-ukra-oḍita-leṁmā-ru-dāūākā-viō-mātra-vāta-pitta-kapha-samghate durgandhe nīpsāresmin arāre*. Although this passage quite probably postdates the *Pāli* discourses, it nevertheless documents that this type of body contemplation was not only the domain of Buddhist practitioners.

⁵⁴⁷ M I 57: *imam-eva kāyāū uddhaū pādatalā, adho kesamatthakā, tacapariyantaū pārāū nānappakārassa asucino paccavekkhati: 'Atthi imasmīū kāye kesā lomā nakkā dantā taco māūsāū nahāru aññhā aññhimiṅjā vakkāū hadayāū yakanāū kilomakāū pihakāū papphāsāū antaū antaguḍāū udariyāū karāsāū pittāū semhaū pubbo lohitaū sedo medo assu vasā kheō sīghāōikā lasikā muttan'-ti.*

⁵⁴⁸ M I 421 and M III 240: *yāū vā panaṁam-pi kiṁci ajjhataū paccattaū.*

⁵⁴⁹ Sn 199 mentions the brain: *athassa susiraū sāsāū, matthaluīgassa pārītaū*. The brain is in fact added to the *satipaṭṭhāna* list by Pañis I 7, and is also mentioned in the corresponding Chinese version from the *Madhyama āgama* (in Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 90). Vism 240 explains that the brain was not listed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, since it was already covered by bone-marrow: *matthalungāū aññhimiṅjēna sangahetvā*. The male organ is mentioned at D I 106 and Sn 1022: *vāthagyūha*. The omission of the male-organ from the *satipaṭṭhāna* list is not surprising, since the instructions have to be practicable for both male and female meditators; van Zeyst: *Meditation, Concentration & Contemplation*, p 80, however, considers that "with Victorian prudence the thought of sex has been eliminated or by-passed." Ear-wax occurs at Sn 197: *kaōōagāthako*.

⁵⁵⁰ Debes: "Satipaṭṭhāna", p 124.

⁵⁵¹ Vism 265: *atthi imasmīū kāye kesā ti imaū kāyāū oloketassa sabbe te dhammā apubbāpariyā vā pākāñā honti.*

⁵⁵² These are the first two of the four *dassanasamāpatti* presented at D III 104: *'atthi imasmīū kāye kesā lomā ... muttan'-ti ... Atikkamma ca purisassa chavimāūsālohitaū aññhim paccavekkhati*. According to S V 129, such contemplation of the

A progressive pattern similar to the *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions can be found in the *Vijaya Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, where a thorough investigation of the body leads from its outer anatomical parts to its inner organs and liquids.⁵⁵³ In the *Vijaya Sutta*, this investigation of the body concludes with the rhetorical question: ‘How else, except through lack of insight, could one exalt oneself or disparage another because of such a body?’⁵⁵⁴ This conclusion shows that the aim of the contemplation described is to reduce one’s attachment to the body, a suggestion that holds true also for the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

The Chinese *Ekottara Āgama* lists a related contemplation as part of its version of body contemplation. This exercise is concerned with the bodily orifices, directing awareness to the repulsive nature of the excretions discharged by each of them.⁵⁵⁵ The same exercise occurs also in other discourses in the *Pāli Nikāyas*.⁵⁵⁶ The main purpose of this exercise, and of contemplating the anatomical parts, is to drive home the realisation that one’s own body and the bodies of others are not inherently attractive.⁵⁵⁷ A related nuance can be found in another discourse, which refers to contemplating the anatomical constitution of the body with the heading: ‘as below, so above, as above, so below.’⁵⁵⁸ This suggests that a detached observation of the various parts of the body leads to the understanding that they are all of equal nature. Once one clearly apprehends their true nature, it becomes evident that there is nothing inherently beautiful in any particular aspect of the body (such as, for example, eyes, hair, lips, etc.). A nun in the *Therīgāthā* vividly illustrates this insight, pointing out that, if one were to turn the body inside out, even one’s own mother would be disgusted and unable to bear the smell of it.⁵⁵⁹

Following the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, to contemplate the unattractive nature of the body refers in the first instance to one’s own body.⁵⁶⁰ Realising the absence of beauty in one’s own body thereby serves in particular as a countermeasure for conceit.⁵⁶¹ Subsequently, as indicated in the *satipaṭṭhāna* refrain, the same contemplation is then to be applied ‘externally’, to the bodies of others. Such an external application can become a powerful antidote for sensual desire.⁵⁶² The potential of this contemplation as a countermeasure to sensuality has led to its inclusion in Buddhist ordination ceremonies, part of which consists in instructing a novice monk or nun to contemplate the first five anatomical parts listed in the *sati-*

bones has many benefits: *aññhikasaṃbhā bhāvitaṃ bahulākataṃ mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā*.

⁵⁵³ Sn 193-201. In fact, this progression also parallels the progression of all body contemplations listed for *satipaṭṭhāna*, since it commences with the four postures and with stretching and bending, and it concludes with the dead body eaten by animals.

⁵⁵⁴ Sn 206: *etādisena kāyena, yo maṃ uḍḍametaṃ, parāṃ vā avajāneyya, kim-aṃatra adassana?*

⁵⁵⁵ In Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 170.

⁵⁵⁶ Sn 197: *athassa navahi sotehi asucā savati sabbadā: akkhiṃhā akkhiṃhāko, kaḍḍamhā kaḍḍagāthako, siṅghāḍika ca nāsāto, mukhena vamatekadā, pittaṃ semhaṃ-ca vamaṃ, kāyamhā sedajallikā*. A IV 386: *imassa ... kāyassa ... tassa nava vaḍḍamukhāni nava abhedanamukhāni, tato yaṃ kiṃci paggharati, asuci yeva paggharati, duggandhaṃ yeva paggharati, jegucchiyaṃ yeva paggharati, yaṃ kiṃci pasavati, asuci ... duggandhaṃ ... jegucchiyaṃ yeva pasavati. Tasmātiha bhikkhave imasmīṃ kāye nibbindatha*.

⁵⁵⁷ According to A V 109 contemplation of the anatomical parts is ‘*asubhasaṃbhā*’ (cognition of ugliness), which It 80 explains: *asubhānupassānaṃ kāyasmīṃ viharataṃ yo subhāya dhātuyā rāgānusayo so pahāyati*.

⁵⁵⁸ S V 278: *kathaṃ-ca bhikkhu yaṃ adho tathā uddhaṃ, yaṃ uddhaṃ tathā adho viharati? Idha ... paccavekkhati - ‘atthi imasmīṃ kāye kesā ... muttan’-ti*. A consideration of this passage needs to take into account the traditional Indian respect for higher parts of the body over its lower parts.

⁵⁵⁹ Thā 471 (*imaṃ kāyaṃ*): *yo naṃ vinibbhujitvā, abhantaram-assa bhāhiraṃ kayirā, gandhassa asahamānā, sakā pi mātā jiguccheyya*.

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. also Vibh 193, which clearly indicates that a contemplation of the anatomical parts has to be developed first on oneself, before it can be applied to others: *idha bhikkhu ajjhataṃ kāyaṃ uddhaṃ pādatalā ... muttan-ti ... so taṃ nimittāṃ āsevitvā bhāvetvā bahulākaritvā svāvatthitāṃ vavatthāpetvā bahiddhā kāye cittaṃ upasāharati*.

⁵⁶¹ This is documented at M I 336, where the former Buddha *Kakusandha* recommended *asubhānupassānaṃ* (viz. contemplation of the anatomical parts) to his monks in order to counterbalance possible conceit at the excessive honour and veneration they were receiving from householders.

⁵⁶² A III 323: *‘kesā lomā ... muttan’-ti. Idaṃ anussatiññhānaṃ evaṃ bhāvitaṃ evaṃ bahulākataṃ kāmāragassa pahānāya saṃvattati*. A IV 47: *asubhasaṃbhāparicītena bhikkhuno cetasā bahulāṃ viharato methunadhammasamāpattiyā cittaṃ pañilāyati*. Bodhi: *Noble Eightfold Path*, p 92: “the meditation aims at weakening sexual desire by depriving the sexual urge of its cognitive underpinning, the perception of the body as sensually alluring.” An additional ‘external’ application is described at Vism 306, where the list of bodily parts is used for counteracting anger, by reflecting whether one is angry with the other person’s hair, or skin, or bones (etc.).

paṭṭhāna instruction.

Despite these benefits, the exercise has possible dangers. Excessive contemplation of 'impurity' can go overboard and lead to loathing and repugnance. Loathing one's own body or that of others, however, is only an expression of frustrated desire and does not correspond to the calming of desire intended by the exercise. The discourses document a rather drastic case of excessive and unwise use of this particular meditation practice.⁵⁶³ After the Buddha had instructed a group of monks in this practice and retired into solitude, the monks engaged with such fervour in contemplating the anatomical constitution of their own bodies that they felt thoroughly ashamed and disgusted by it. In the end, a substantial number of them committed suicide.⁵⁶⁴

The need for a balanced attitude is exemplified by the simile in this part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, which compares the contemplation of the anatomical parts to examining a bag full of grains and beans.⁵⁶⁵ Just as examining these grains and beans will quite probably not stimulate any affective reaction, so too contemplating the anatomical constitution of the body should be carried out with a balanced and detached attitude, so that the effect is to cool desire, not to stimulate aversion.

If sufficient precautions are taken to establish the appropriate attitude, a wise and balanced contemplation of the unattractiveness of the body has the potential of leading to realisation. This is documented in the *Therīgāthā*, which reports two nuns gaining full awakening by contemplating the anatomical constitution of their own bodies.⁵⁶⁶

The whole set of thirty-one anatomical parts listed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is in several discourses categorised under the earth and water elements, in the context of a general exposition of the four elements.⁵⁶⁷ This indicates that the next exercise in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, where the body is analysed into its four elementary qualities, constitutes a related type of contemplation, which further develops the analysis of the body on a more subtle and refined level.⁵⁶⁸ The instructions of this contemplation are:

"He 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.'⁵⁶⁹

The ancient Indian scheme of four elements, mentioned in the above instruction, represents four basic qualities of matter: solidity, liquidity (or cohesion), temperature, and motion.⁵⁷⁰ Since contemplation of the thirty-one anatomical parts has covered mainly the first two of these qualities, solidity and liquidity, the four-element analysis entails a more comprehensive approach, extending awareness to aspects of the body which manifest the qualities of temperature and motion.

⁵⁶³ Vin III 68 and S V 320: *tena kho pana samayena Bhagavā bhikkhānāū ... asubhabhāvanāya vāḍḍāū bhāsati ... te bhikkhā ... asubhabhāvanānuyogam-anuyuttā viharanti. Te iminā kāyena aññiyamānā harāyamānā jigucchamānā sathahārakaū pariyesanti. Dasa pi ... vāsam-pi ... tiisam-pi bhikkhā ekāhena sathatū āharanti.* On this passage comments Mills: "Murdered Monks", p 74.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Khantipālo: *Calm and Insight*, p 98; and Mendis: *Abhidhamma*, p 44.

⁵⁶⁵ This 'double-mouthed' bag (*ubhatomukhā mutoēā*) is according to Schlingloff: *Buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch*, p 33 n 10, a piece of cloth used for sowing, with an upper opening for placing the grains inside, while the lower opening is used during the actual sowing to distribute the grains. This simile might have suggested itself due to the somewhat similar 'double-mouthed' nature of the body, with an 'upper opening' for placing food inside, and a 'lower opening' as outlet for the feces.

⁵⁶⁶ Thā 33: *paccavekkhassumāū kāyāū, asuciū pātigandhikaū, evāū viharamānāya, sabbo rāgo samāhato, pariēāho samucchinnō, sātibhātāmhi nibbutā;* and Thā 82-86: *asubhāya cittaū bhāvehi ... tassā me appamattāya, vicinantiyā yoniso, yathābhātāū ayaū kāyo, diññho santarabāhiro, atha nibbindahaū kāye ... upasantamhi nibbutā.*

⁵⁶⁷ M I 185, M I 421, and M III 240. According to Vism 348, the detailed expositions on the elements in these discourses are intended for the more slow witted practitioners, while the comparatively brief instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* are for those of quick understanding.

⁵⁶⁸ According to Vism 351 the four element analysis is a refinement of the previous contemplation.

⁵⁶⁹ M I 57: *imam-eva kāyāū yathāñhitaū yathāpaḍihitaū dhātuso paccavekkhati: 'Atthi imasmīū kāye pañhavādhātu āpo dhātu tejodhātu vāyodhātāū.*

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. e.g. A III 340, according to which the same tree trunk can be seen as a manifestation of each of the four elements, since each of them is but a quality of the same tree.

Contemplation of the body's earthy and watery qualities can be undertaken by observing the physical sensations of the solid and liquid parts of the body. Awareness of its fiery quality can be developed through noting variations in bodily temperature, and to some extent also by becoming aware of the processes of digestion and ageing. Air, representing the quality of motion, can be covered by directing awareness to the different movements that take place within the organism, such as, for example, the motion of gases during digestion.⁵⁷¹ The same elementary qualities can also be combined in a single contemplation, by being aware of these four qualities as characteristics of each part or particle of the body.

The corresponding simile illustrates the effect of this particular method of contemplation with a butcher who has slaughtered and cut up a cow for sale. According to the commentaries, the butcher simile indicates a change of cognition (*saññā*), since after the slaughter the butcher no longer thinks in terms of 'a cow', but only in terms of 'meat'.⁵⁷² A similar shift of cognition takes place when a meditator dissects the body into its elementary qualities: the body is no longer experienced as 'I' or 'mine', but simply as a combination of these four qualities.

To experience oneself as a combination of material qualities reveals the qualitative identity of one's own body with the external environment.⁵⁷³ In this way, a healthy degree of detachment develops, counteracting grasping at what is, in the end, merely a combination of material qualities. With sustained contemplation a meditator may come to realise that this apparently so solid and compact material body, and with it the entire material world, is entirely without any essence.⁵⁷⁴ What is really there are but different degrees of hardness or softness, of wetness or dryness, of hotness or coldness and some degree of motion (at least on the subatomic level). Contemplation of the four elements has thus the potential of leading to a penetrative realisation of the insubstantial and selfless nature of material reality.⁵⁷⁵

The discourses relate the scheme of the four elements not only to the human body, but also to material existence in general. The *Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta* takes up the similarity in nature between one's own 'internal' four elements and their 'external' counterparts in order to bring home the truth of impermanence. The argument is that, since (according to ancient Indian cosmology) at some point in time even the whole planet will meet with destruction, what permanence could there be in this insignificant accumulation of the same elements, called 'body'?⁵⁷⁶ Appreciating the impermanent nature of all material phenomena in this way serves to counteract the search for material pleasure. Relinquishing desire through disenchantment with

⁵⁷¹ M I 188, 422 and M III 241: *yena ca santappati, cena ca jārāyati, cena ca pariāyhati, cena ca asitapātakhāyitasāyitāi sammā pariāmaū gacchati ... ayaū vuccati ... ajjhātikā tejodhātu ... uddhamgamā vātā adhogamā vātā kucchisayā vātā koñhasayā vātā aigamaigānusārino vātā, assāso passāso ... ayaū vuccati ... ajjhātikā vāyodhātu*. Practical instructions can be found in Fryba: *Art of Happiness*, p 123; or in Pa Auk: *Light of Wisdom*, p 17; cf. also Ehara: *Vimuttimagga*, pp 197-205; and Vism 351. In some contexts the four element scheme is extended to cover five or even six elements, e.g. M III 240: *chayimā dhātuyo - pañhavādhātu, āpodhātu, tejodhātu, vāyodhātu, ākāsadhātu, viāāadhātu*. These six elements form part of the *satipañhāna* instructions in the *Madhyama āgama* version, while the version from the *Ekottara āgama* has the same four that also occur in the *Satipañhāna Sutta* (cf. Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, pp 140, 158, 170). The element 'space', according to M III 242, refers to the empty and hollow aspects of the body.

⁵⁷² Ps I 272 and Vism 348: *gāvisaā antaradhāyati, maūsasaā pavattati ... evam-eva ... dhātuso paccavekkhato panassa sattasaā antaradhāyati, dhātuvasenēva cittaū santiññhati*. A 'skilled' butcher occurs also at M I 364, where it is precisely his skill in cutting out a bone so that no flesh is left on the bone for a dog to satisfy its hunger, which forms the central aspect of the simile.

⁵⁷³ E.g. M I 186 gives an extensive application of the four element meditation to both oneself and to the external environment; cf. also Debes: "Satipañhāna", p 139; and King: *Theravāda Meditation*, p 39. Yaānanda: *Calm and Insight*, p 10, aptly brings out the effect of this type of contemplation by speaking of conceit as "a misappropriation of public property (i.e. earth, water, fire, air)."

⁵⁷⁴ Sn 937: *samantam-asāro loko*.

⁵⁷⁵ M I 185 and 421: *pañhavādhātu ... vāyodhātu ... taū netaū mama, nesoham-asmi, na meso attāti - evam-etaū yathābhātāi sammappaāya daññhabbaū*, which is followed by applying this understanding of *anattā* to a situation when one is being abused or harassed by others. Again A II 164: *pañhavādhātu ... vāyodhātu ... taū netaū mama nesoham-asmi na meso attāti ... evam-etaū yathābhātāi sammappaāya disvā pañhavādhātuyā ... vāyodhātuyā nibbindati paāya cittaū virajeti ... ayaū vuccati bhikkhu ... sammā mānābhisamayā antam-akāsi dukkhassa*. Vism 640 also relates contemplation of the four elements to *anattā*.

⁵⁷⁶ M I 185: *tassā hi nāma bāhirāya pañhavādhātuyā tāva mahallikāya aniccata paāyissati ... kiū panimassa mattaññhakassa kāyassa ...* Cf. also Ledi: *Manual of Insight*, p 72, who suggests to begin insight meditation with this particular exercise as a basis, as it will help to rapidly develop understanding of impermanence.

material phenomena in this way leads to freedom from the bondage caused by the four elements.⁵⁷⁷

An additional perspective on the four elements can be found in the *Mahārāhulovāda Sutta*, which uses the four elements as an inspiration for developing the mental qualities of loving kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). Just as the earth is free from resentment, even when various types of refuse and waste are thrown on it, so too a meditator should develop a mind free from resentment.⁵⁷⁸ Keeping the mind free from resentment in this way, one will be able to react with loving kindness and compassion even in adverse circumstances.⁵⁷⁹

These passages show that a contemplation of the four elements can be employed in a variety of ways, linking the nature of one's own body to the constitution of the whole material environment, or else employing these material characteristics in order to develop wholesome mental attitudes.

VI.6) Corpse in Decay and Meditation on Death

The last meditation practice among the body contemplations involves some degree of visualisation, or at least reflection, since meditators have to compare their own body with what they would see if they were to go to a charnel ground.⁵⁸⁰ The instructions for such comparison are:

"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 ... being devoured by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals, or various kinds of worms ... a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together with sinews ... a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together with sinews ... a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together with sinews ... disconnected bones scattered in all directions ... bones bleached white, the colour of shells ... bones heaped up, more than a year old ... bones rotten and crumbling to dust - he 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.'⁵⁸¹

In ancient India, corpses were often left out in the open in such charnel grounds, where they either decayed or were devoured by wild animals.⁵⁸² The above passage from the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* vividly depicts the ensuing decomposition in altogether nine stages.⁵⁸³ According to

⁵⁷⁷ S II 170: *yaū kho pañhavādhātūū pañicca uppajjati sukhaū somanassaū, ayaū pañhavādhātuyā assādo, yaū pañhavādhātu anicca dukkhā vipariḍāmadhammā, ayaū pañhavādhātuyā ādānava, yo pañhavādhātuyā chandarāgavinayo chandarāgappahānaū, idaū pañhavādhātuyā nissaraḍaū.* (The same is then repeated for āpodhātu, tejodhātu, and vāyodhātu).

⁵⁷⁸ M I 423: *pañhavāsamaū hi te bhāvanaū bhāvayato uppannā manāpāmanāpā phassa cittaū na pariyādāya ñhassanti. Seyyathāpi pañhaviyā sucim-pi nikkhipanti, asucim-pi nikkhipanti ... na ca tena pañhavā aññiyati vā harāyati vā jigucchati vā, evam-eva kho tvaū pañhavāsamaū bhāvanaū bhāvehi ... āposamaū ... tejosamaū ... vāyosamaū ... mettaū ... bhāvanaū bhāvehi ... karuḍaū ...*

⁵⁷⁹ This is exemplified at A IV 374 by *Sāriputta* who, being wrongly accused of an offence, reacted by stating that his mind was free from resentment, just like the earth does not resent refuse being thrown onto it: *seyyathāpi pañhaviyā sucim-pi nikkhipanti asucim-pi ... evam-eva kho ahaū pañhavāsamena cetasa viharāmi ... averena avyāpajjhena.* (Similar statements follow in regard to the other three elements).

⁵⁸⁰ Āḍāmolī: *Middle Length Discourses*, p 1191 n 150: "seyyathāpi suggests that this meditation ... need not be based upon an actual encounter with a corpse ... but can be performed as an imaginative exercise." According to Ledi: *Treatise on Meditation*, p 58, this contemplation may similarly be developed based on sick or wounded persons (including oneself), or with dead animals as object. Cf. also Thate: *Steps along the Path*, p 11.

⁵⁸¹ M I 58: *seyyathāpi passeyya sarāraū sivathikāya chaḍḍitaū ekāhamataū vā dvāhamataū vā tāhamataū vā uddhumātakāū vinālakāū vipubbakajātaū ... kakehi vā khajjamānaū kulalehi vā khajjamānaū gijjhehi vā khajjamānaū supādehi vā khajjamānaū sigālehi vā khajjamānaū viddhehi vā pāḍakajātehi khajjamānaū ... aññhikasaikkhalikāū samaūsālohitaū nahārusambandhaū ... aññhikasaikkhalikāū nimāūsālohitaṃakkhitaū nahārusambandhaū ... aññhikasaikkhalikāū apagatamaūsālohitaū nahārusambandhaū ... aññhikāni apagatasambandhāni disā vidisā vikkhittāni ... aññhikāni setāni saikhavaḍḍupanibhāni ... aññhikāni puṃjakitāni terovassikāni ... aññhikāni pātāni cuḍḍakajātāni. So imam-eva kāyaū upasāūharati: 'Ayam pi kho kāyo evaiidhammo evaiibhāvā evamanatāto ti.*

⁵⁸² Rhys Davids: *Buddhist India*, p 80.

⁵⁸³ M III 91 and A III 323 subsume the same under four main stages: the bloated body, the body eaten by animals, the skeleton, and the bones. The *Madhyama āgama* version describes a contemplation of the same process in five stages, while the *Ekottara* version gives altogether eight stages, (in Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, pp 158 and 170).

Tibetan sources, the Buddha himself contemplated decaying corpses in a charnel ground, when he was still a *bodhisatta*.⁵⁸⁴

This exercise highlights two aspects: the repulsive nature of the body, revealed during the stages of its decay, and the fact that death is the inescapable destiny of all living beings. The former links this exercise to the contemplation of the body's anatomical constitution, serving as an additional tool for counteracting sensual desires.⁵⁸⁵ This suggestion finds support in the *Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta*, which employs the same set of terms as a way of contemplating the inherent 'disadvantage' (*ādīnava*) in material bodies.⁵⁸⁶ Although one might be drawn to dwell on the 'advantage' (*assāda*), the beautiful aspects of a body belonging to a young member of the opposite sex, yet the 'disadvantage' becomes only too apparent once that same body has succumbed to old age, sickness, and finally to death, when this body, which formerly appeared so attractive, proceeds through the stages of decomposition described above. This passage confirms that a purpose of contemplating a corpse in decay is to counteract sensual desire.

Following the instructions given in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the vision or memory of the decomposing body is applied to one's own body, reflecting that in future one's own body will undergo the same process of decay. This kind of contemplation then also constitutes a means for counteracting conceit.⁵⁸⁷ Subsequently, as indicated in the 'refrain', the same understanding can then be applied to the living bodies of others. Here, too, the precaution mentioned above in regard to the contemplation of the anatomical constitution applies, namely that the exercise should not lead to aversion or depression.⁵⁸⁸

Although the instructions given in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* suggest a form of visualisation or even imagination, the *Theragāthā* documents the actual practice of this contemplation in a charnel ground. Two case reports each have a monk contemplating a female corpse, however with different results. While one monk was able to gain insight, the other was unable to develop the contemplation, since the sight of the body provoked sensual desire in him.⁵⁸⁹ This danger is also reflected in the commentaries, which caution against the use of a corpse belonging to the opposite sex.⁵⁹⁰ Even though to contemplate a corpse belonging to the opposite gender may not be advisable to a novice meditator, nevertheless, if carried out successfully, one would expect such a contemplation to constitute a particularly powerful antidote to sensuality.⁵⁹¹ In fact, the *Theragāthā* also documents the case of a monk contemplating a female body while still alive, this being a beautiful girl singing and dancing.⁵⁹² He was able to put this vision to good use, since by wisely attending to this visual impact he became an *arahant*.

An alternative insight gained through this meditation practice can be the inevitability of death. The stages of decay of a dead body vividly depict the truth that whatever one clings to as an embodiment of 'I' or 'mine' will endure only for a limited time. Although this seems to be an obvious implication of this contemplation, the discourses usually develop recollection of death independent of the stages of decay. The approaches for recollecting death particularly recommended by the Buddha relate to eating and breathing: bringing to mind the fact that even the next mouthful to be eaten and the next breath to be inhaled are not sure to take place.⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁴ Rockhill: *Life of the Buddha*, p 23.

⁵⁸⁵ Compare e.g. Dh 147: *passa ... arukāyā samussitā, āturaī bahusaikkappaī, yassa natthi dhuvāī nīhiti*, which according to the commentary, Dh 108, was spoken by the Buddha after he had conducted his disciples to see the rotting corpse of the beautiful courtesan *Sirimā*. As 197 recommends the contemplation of a rotting corpse for those whose character disposition is predominantly *rāgacarita* (lustful natured).

⁵⁸⁶ M I 88.

⁵⁸⁷ A III 323: *seyyathāpi passeyya sarāraū sāvathikāya chaōōitāū ... idaū anussatiññhānaū evaū bhāvitaū evaū bahulākataū asmimānasamugghātāya saūvattati*.

⁵⁸⁸ Thanissaro: *Fire Unbound*, p 55.

⁵⁸⁹ Th 393-395; and Th 315-316. Another instance of a monk meditating in a cemetery can be found at Th 151-152.

⁵⁹⁰ Ps I 254: *purisassa mātugāmāsubhāū asappāyāū, mātugāmassa ca purisāsūbhāū. Sabhāgāū evaū sappāyāū*.

⁵⁹¹ In fact Ledi: *Treatise on Meditation*, p 59, recommends corpses of the opposite sex for *vipassanā*-purposes, while corpses of the same sex are according to him suitable for the development of *samatha*. On contemplating a corpse as a *samatha* practice cf. *Vism* 178-196.

⁵⁹² Th 267-270.

⁵⁹³ A III 306 and A IV 319: *bhikkhu evaū maraḍassatiū bhāveti - aho vatāhaū tad-antaraū jāveyyāū yad-antaraū ekāū*

Indeed, the presence or absence of breath spells life or death, so that mindfulness of breathing also has the potential to be used for recollecting death. Whatever approach one may decide to use, recollection of death helps to stir up effort in order to avoid and eradicate evil, and can ultimately culminate in a realising the 'deathless'.⁵⁹⁴

Recollection of death also serves as a useful preparation for the time when one actually has to face death.⁵⁹⁵ As the concluding exercise among the body contemplations, a regular recollection of death can lead to the realisation that death is fearful only to the extent to which one identifies with the body.⁵⁹⁶ With the aid of the body contemplations one can come to realise the true nature of the body and thereby overcome all attachment to it. Being free from attachment to the body one will be free from any fear of approaching physical death.⁵⁹⁷ In the actual event, one who is thus free from attachment and fear will simply note mindfully that physical death is about to take place. Whatever feelings are felt at this time, contemplation continues with the understanding that these are the feelings to be experienced when life comes to an end.⁵⁹⁸ Which, on a sombre tone, leads me on to the next *satipaṭṭhāna*, the contemplation of feelings.

Chapter VII: Feelings

VII.1) Contemplation of Feelings

The *Pāli* term for 'feeling' is *vedanā*, derived from the verb *vedeti*, which means both to 'feel' and to 'know'.⁵⁹⁹ In its usage in the discourses, *vedanā* comprises both bodily and mental feelings.⁶⁰⁰ *Vedanā* does not include 'emotion' in its range of meaning. Although emotions arise dependent on the initial input provided by feeling, they are more complex mental phenomena than bare feeling itself.⁶⁰¹

The first part of the *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions for contemplating feelings distinguishes between three basic kinds of feelings:

"When feeling a pleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel a pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unpleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel an unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a neutral feeling, he knows: 'I feel a neutral feeling.'"

ālopaū samkhādītva cjjhoharāmi ... yad-antarāū assasitvā vā passasāmi passasitvā vā assasāmi ... ime ... bhikkhā appamattā viharanti tikkhāū maraḍassatiū bhāventi āsavānāū khayāya.

⁵⁹⁴ A III 308 and A IV 320: *tena bhikkhunā itī paṇisa cikkhitabbaū: 'atthi nu kho me pāpakā akusalā dhammā appahānā, ye ma assu divā kālāū karontassa antarāyāya?'* A III 304 and A IV 317: *marāḍassati bhāvitā bahulākata ... amatogadhā amatapariyosānā.*

⁵⁹⁵ An illustrative description of the death process can be found in Sogyal: *Living and Dying*, pp 251-253, who correlates the final stages of the process of dying with the four elements: Earth - body loses all its strength, cannot get up, feels heavy and uncomfortable, cheeks sink, harder to move eyelids, mind drowsy; Water - loss of control of bodily fluids, become incontinent, eyes feel dry, lips bloodless, mouth and throat clogged, very thirsty, body trembles, mind irritable and nervous; Fire - warmth of the body seeps away from the feet and hands towards the heart, breath is cold, cannot remember or recognise family or friends, sound and sight confused; Air - harder to breathe, in-breaths become shorter, out-breaths longer, eyes roll up, body totally immobile, unaware of outside world, hallucinations and visions, finally one last out-breath ...

⁵⁹⁶ Debes: "Satipaṇṇhāna", p 151; and Kor: *Reading the Mind*, p 18. A certain degree of de-identification with the body during actual contemplation is in fact directly implied in the instructions for the last three contemplations (anatomical parts, elements, corpse), where one's own body is referred to as '*imam-eva kāyāū*' (M I 57-58), an expression which seems to deliberately be voiced in an impersonal manner.

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. e.g. Th 20: *marāḍe me bhayāū natthi, nikanā natthi jāvite; sandehāū nikkhipissāmi, sampajāno patissato.* According to A IV 48, such absence of attachment to life is the direct result of having repeatedly recollected death: *marāḍasa cāparicitenā bhikkhuno cetasa bahulāū viharato jāvitanikantiyā cittaū na pañūlayati.*

⁵⁹⁸ M III 245: *jāvitapariyantikāū vedanāū vedayamāno: 'jāvitapariyantikāū vedanāū vedayamāti pajānāti, 'kāyassa bhedaū uddhāū jāvitapariyadānā idheva sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sātibhāvissantā'-ti pajānāti.*

⁵⁹⁹ Hamilton: *Identity and Experience*, p 45; and Rhys Davids: *Indian Psychology*, p 299.

⁶⁰⁰ M I 302: *yaū kāyikāū vā cetasikāū vā sukhaū sātāū vedayitāū ayāū sukha vedanā, yaū kāyikāū vā cetasikāū vā dukkhāū asātāū vedayitāū ayāū dukkhā vedanā, yaū kāyikāū vā cetasikāū vā neva sātāū nāsātāū vedayitāū ayāū adukkhamasukhā vedanā; S IV 231: *dve vedanā, kāyikā ca cetasikā ca; cf. also Rhys Davids: Indian Psychology, p 300.**

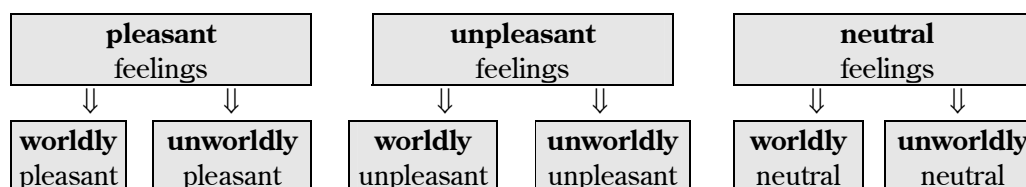
⁶⁰¹ Bodhi: *Manual of Abhidhamma*, p 80; de Silva: *Twain Peaks*, p 33; Dhāraavaṣa: *Dynamic Way*, p 109; and Yaḍapoṭika: *Contemplation of Feelings*, p 7.

When feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel a worldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly pleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel an unworldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling a worldly unpleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel a worldly unpleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly unpleasant feeling, he knows: 'I feel an unworldly unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a worldly neutral feeling, he knows: 'I feel a worldly neutral feeling'; when feeling an unworldly neutral feeling, he knows: 'I feel an unworldly neutral feeling.'⁶⁰²

According to the discourses, developing understanding and detachment in regard to these three feelings - pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral - has the potential of leading to freedom from *dukkha*.⁶⁰³ Since such understanding can be gained through the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*,⁶⁰⁴ contemplation of feelings is a meditation practice of considerable potential. This potential is based on the simple but ingenious method of directing awareness to the very beginning stages of the arising of likes and dislikes, by clearly noting whether the present moment's experience is felt as 'pleasant', or rather as 'unpleasant', or else as neither of the two.

In the above instruction, such mindfulness of these three feelings is followed by directing awareness to an additional subdivision of feelings into worldly (*sāmisā*) and unworldly (*nirāmisā*).⁶⁰⁵ According to a passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, this sixfold classification represents the range of diversity of feelings.⁶⁰⁶ Thus with this sixfold scheme, contemplation of feeling comprehensively surveys the whole scale of diversity of the phenomenon 'feeling' (see diagram 7.1 below).

Three and Six Types of Feeling
(Diagram 7.1)



The distinction into worldly (*sāmisā*) and unworldly (*nirāmisā*) feelings points to the difference between feelings related to the 'flesh' (*āmisa*) and feelings related to renunciation.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰² M I 59: *sukhaū vedanaū vediyamāno 'sukhaū vedanaū vediyamā'-ti pajānāti; dukkhaū vedanaū vediyamāno 'dukkhaū vedanaū vediyamā'-ti pajānāti; adukkhamasukhaū vedanaū vediyamāno 'adukkhamasukhaū vedanaū vediyamā'-ti pajānāti; sāmisaū vā sukhaū vedanaū vediyamāno 'sāmisaū sukhaū vedanaū vediyamā'-ti pajānāti; nirāmisāū vā sukhaū vedanaū vediyamāno 'nirāmisāū sukhaū vedanaū vediyamā'-ti pajānāti;* (followed by applying the same pattern to *dukkhā vedanā* and *adukkhamasukhā vedanā*).

⁶⁰³ A V 51: *tāsu vedanāsu ... sammā nibbindamāno sammā virajjamāno ... diññheva dhamme dukkhassantakaro hoti.* Cf. also S II 99: *'tāsu vedanāsu pariṇāpātāsu ariyasāvakaṃ natthi kiṃcī uttariū karaḍāyaṃ'-ti vadāmi.*

⁶⁰⁴ S V 189: *tissannaū vedanānaū pariṇāpāya cattāro satipaṇṇhāna bhāvetabbā.* It is remarkable that according to this passage all four *satipaṇṇhānas* are to be developed for the purpose of fully understanding *vedanā*.

⁶⁰⁵ The Chinese version of this contemplation in the *Madhyama āgama* lists in addition also feelings connected with desire (or not), and feelings related to food, while the *Ekottara* version directs awareness to the fact that the presence of one type of feeling excludes the presence of the other two, (in Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 93; and Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, pp 161 and 173). The latter suggestion has its *Pāli* parallel at D II 66: *yasmīū samaye sukhaū vedanaū vedeti, neva tasmīū samaye dukkhaū vedanaū vedeti, na adukkhamasukhaū vedanaū vedeti* (etc.). Additional categories can also be found at Pañis II 233, which includes feelings differentiated according to the six senses under contemplation of feelings. In fact, the six-fold classification in the above *satipaṇṇhāna* instructions can be further expanded not only by bringing in the six senses, but also by distinguishing occurrences in past, future, and present times, thereby totalling one-hundred-and-eight types of feelings altogether (cf. M I 398). An alternative threefold scheme for contemplation of feelings has been developed by Mogok Sayadaw (in Than Daing: *Cittānupassanā*, p 90) by distinguishing between five-sense-door feelings as "external visitors", mental feelings as "internal visitors", and feelings related to in- and out-breathing as "host visitors".

⁶⁰⁶ *Vedanānaū vemattatā* at A III 412.

⁶⁰⁷ Ps I 279 explains: *sāmisa sukha nāma paṇḍakāmaguḍāmisaniṣṣitā ... nirāmisā ... nekkhammasitā.* Cf. also S IV 235, which distinguishes between joy or happiness that is worldly (sensuality), unworldly (absorption), and completely unworldly (realisation): *paṇḍakāmaguḍe pañicca uppajjati pāti, ayaū vuccati sāmisa pāti ... sāmisaū sukhaū ... pañhamāū ... dutiyāū jhānaū ... ayaū vuccati nirāmisā pāti ... khāḍāsavassa bhikkhuno rāgā ... dosa ... mohā cittaū vimuttaū paccavekkhato uppajjati pāti, ayaū vuccati nirāmisā nirāmisatarā pāti.* The qualification *āmisa* is often used in the discourses as 'materialistic' in opposition to '*dhamma*', e.g. monks honouring 'material' things more than the *Dhamma* at M I 12: *āmisaḍāyāda*, and A I

This additional dimension revolves around an ethical evaluation of feeling, an evaluation based not on its affective nature, but on the ethical context of its arising. The basic point introduced here is to be aware of whether a particular feeling is related to progress or regress on the path.

Unlike his ascetic contemporaries, the Buddha did not categorically reject all pleasant feelings, nor did he categorically recommend unpleasant experiences for their supposedly purificatory effect. Instead, he placed emphasis on the mental and ethical consequences of any type of feeling. With the help of the above sixfold classification, this ethical dimension becomes apparent, uncovering in particular the relation of feelings to the presence or absence of a latent mental tendency (*anusaya*) towards lust, irritation, or ignorance.⁶⁰⁸ As the *Cūlavadda Sutta* points out, pleasant or neutral feelings arising during deep concentration or unpleasant feelings arising due to dissatisfaction with one's spiritual imperfection do not stimulate these underlying tendencies, unlike their more 'worldly' counterparts.⁶⁰⁹

The conditional relation between feelings and such mental tendencies is of central importance, since by activating these latent tendencies, feelings can lead to the arising of unwholesome mental reactions. The same principle underlies the corresponding section of 'the twelve links' of dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*), where feelings form the condition for the arising of craving (*taṇhā*).⁶¹⁰

This crucially important conditional dependence of craving and mental reactions on feeling explains why feelings have become one of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. In addition, the arising of pleasant or unpleasant feelings is fairly easy to notice, which makes feelings a convenient object of meditation.⁶¹¹ Thus, both the central role of feeling as a conditioning factor for craving, and its suitability for an application of awareness, commend it for contemplation.

A prominent characteristic of feelings is their ephemeral nature. Sustained contemplation of the impermanent nature of feelings constitutes a powerful tool for developing disenchantment with them.⁶¹²

Another, related aspect inviting contemplation is the fact that the affective tone of any feeling depends on the type of contact that has caused its arising.⁶¹³ Once this conditioned nature of feelings is given full attention, detachment arises naturally and one's identification with feelings starts to dissolve. The task to undermine identification with feelings is also reflected in the commentaries, who point out that to inquire 'who feels?' is what leads from merely experi-

73: *āmisagarā*, cf. also A I 91-94; or a 'material' gift at It 98: *āmisadāna*. According to Goenka: *Satipaṇṇhāna*, p 53, and Soni: *Only Way*, p 6, the same two terms are used in present day India to distinguish between vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 71, understands the two terms to represent the distinction between physiological and psychological causes for feelings (e.g. a bad feeling because of having gone to bed late the day before would be *sāmisa*). Walshe: *Thus Have I Heard*, p 591 n 658 and n 659 suggests "carnal" and "spiritual" as renderings.

⁶⁰⁸ M I 303: *sukkhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo ... dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo ... adukkhamasukkhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo anuseti*, however: *na sabbāya sukkhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo anuseti, na sabbāya dukkhāya ... paṭighānusayo ... na sabbāya adukkhamasukkhāya ... avijjānusayo* (same at M III 285 and S IV 205). The relation of the three types of feeling to their respective latent tendencies has inspired a variation of contemplation of feelings in the *Ratnacūda Sūtra* (quoted in Bendall: *Śikṣa*, p 219), where the instructions are that if one experiences a pleasant feeling, one should develop compassion towards beings indulging in passion, while in the case of unpleasant feeling compassion is to be directed to beings indulging in hatred, and with neutral feeling to beings subject to delusion.

⁶⁰⁹ M I 303: *vivekaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭhamam jhānam upasampajja viharati ... na tattha rāgānusayo anuseti ... anuttaresu vimokkhesu pihaṃ upaṭṭhāpayato uppajjati pihaṃ paṭṭhāyā domanassaṃ ... na tattha paṭighānusayo anuseti ... upekkhāsati pārisuddhiṃ catuttham jhānam upasampajja viharati ... na tattha avijjānusayo anuseti*.

⁶¹⁰ D II 58: *'sabbaso vedanāya asati vedanānirodhā api nu kho taḍhā paṭṭhāyethā'-ti? 'No hetu, bhante.'* 'Tasmātiha ... evesa hetu etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo esa paccayo taḍhāya, yadidaṃ vedanā.

⁶¹¹ According to Ps I 277, *vedanā* is a clearer object for *satipaṇṇhāna* than consciousness or contact, because the arising of pleasant or unpleasant feelings can easily be noticed.

⁶¹² This is exemplified at A IV 88, where the Buddha elaborated the injunction: *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*, 'nothing is worth clinging to', with the help of contemplation of feelings: *yaṃ kiṃci vedanāṃ vediyati ... aniccānupassā ... virāgānupassā ... nirodhānupassā ... pañinissaggānupassā viharati*, with the result of leading to realisation: *so ... viharanto ... parinibbāyati*. A detached attitude towards all feelings due to awareness of their impermanent nature then becomes a natural aspect of the *arahant's* experience of *vedanā* (M III 244): *so sukhaṃ ce ... dukkhaṃ ce ... adukkhamasukhaṃ ce vedanāṃ vedeti, sā aniccaṃ ti pajānāti, anajjhositāti pajānāti, anabhinanditāti pajānāti*.

⁶¹³ M III 242: *sukhavedanāyaṃ phassaṃ pañicca uppajjati sukhaṃ vedanā ... tasveva sukhavedanāyassa phassassa nirodhā yaṃ tajaṃ vedayitāṃ sukhavedanāyaṃ phassaṃ pañicca uppannā sukhaṃ vedanā sā nirujjhati ... dukkhavedanāyaṃ phassaṃ pañicca uppajjati dukkhā vedanā ... adukkhamasukhavedanāyaṃ phassaṃ pañicca uppajjati adukkhamasukhā vedanā ...*

encing feeling to contemplating it as a *satipaṭṭhāna*.⁶¹⁴

A poetic passage in the *Vedanā Saṃyutta* compares the nature of feelings to winds in the sky, coming from different directions. Such winds may be sometimes warm and sometimes cold, sometimes wet and sometimes dusty. Similarly, in this body different types of feelings arise. Sometimes they are pleasant, sometimes neutral, and sometimes unpleasant.⁶¹⁵ Just as it would be foolish to contend with the vicissitudes of the weather, similarly one need not contend with the vicissitudes of feelings. Contemplating in this way, one becomes able to establish a growing degree of inner detachment in regard to feelings. A mindful observer of feelings, by the very fact of observation, no longer fully identifies with them and thereby begins to move beyond the conditioning and controlling power of the pleasure/pain dichotomy.⁶¹⁶

In order to provide some additional information about the particular importance and relevance of contemplation of feelings, I will now briefly consider the relation of feelings to the forming of views (*diṭṭhi*) and opinions, followed by examining in more detail the three types of feelings presented in the *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions.

VII.2) Feelings and Views (*Diṭṭhi*)

The cultivation of a detached attitude towards feelings is the introductory theme of the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. At the outset of this discourse, the Buddha instructed his monks to be neither elated by praise nor displeased by blame, since either reaction would only upset their mental composure. Next he comprehensively surveyed the epistemological grounds underlying the different views prevalent among ancient Indian philosophers and ascetics. By way of conclusion to this survey he pointed out that, due to having fully understood feelings, he had gone beyond all these views.⁶¹⁷

The intriguing feature of the Buddha's approach is that his analysis focussed mainly on the psychological underpinnings of views, rather than on their content.⁶¹⁸ Due to this approach, he was able to trace the arising of views to craving (*taṇhā*), which in turn arises dependent on feeling.⁶¹⁹ Conversely, by fully understanding the role of feeling as a link between contact and craving, the view-forming process itself can be transcended.⁶²⁰ The *Pāsādika Sutta* explicitly

⁶¹⁴ Ps I 275: *ko vediyati?*, and *kassa vedanā?* The comy explains that the purpose of this form of inquiry is to overcome the notion of a self that feels: *sattūpaladdhiṃ pajahati, attasaññaṃ ugghāṭeti, kammaṭṭhānañceva satipaṭṭhānabhāvanā ca hoti*. Cf. also DII 68, which points out two prominent identification patterns for feelings: 'Feeling is my self', or 'My self feels'. These come together with the view 'My self is without feeling' as three ways of constructing a sense of self in regard to feeling. Their removal then leads on to realisation: *yato neva vedanaṃ attānaṃ ... no pi appaṭisaṃvedanaṃ attānaṃ ... no pi 'attā me vediyati, vedanādharmo hi me attā' ti samanupassati, so ... na kiñci loke upādiyati ... na paritassati ... pacattaṃ yeva parimabbāyati*. On this passage cf. Bodhi: *Discourse on Causation*, pp 34-36. The importance of dissociating feeling from any notion of 'I' or 'mine' is also stressed by Ñāṇapona: *Contemplation of Feeling*, p 4.

⁶¹⁵ S IV 218: *yathāpi vātā ākāse, vāyanti vividhā puthā, puratthimā pacchimā cāpi, uttarā atha dakkhiṇā, sarajā arajā vāpi, sātā uḍhā ca ekaḍā, adhimattā parittā ca, puthā vāyanti māluta, tathevimasmī pi kāyasmī, samuppajjati vedanā, sukhadukkhassamuppatti, adukkhamasukhā ca yā*.

⁶¹⁶ Debes: "Satipaṭṭhāna", p 227.

⁶¹⁷ D I 16: *Tathāgato pajānāti - 'ime diññhiññhānā evaū gahitā evaū parāmaññhā evaū gatikā bhavissanti ... tato ca uttaritarau pajānāti ... vedanānau samudaya-ca atthagama-ca assāda-ca ādānava-ca nissaraḍa-ca yathābhātau viditvā anupādā vimutto Tathāgato*.

⁶¹⁸ In fact, the *Brahmajāla Sutta* discusses sixty-two 'grounds' for formulating views (D I 39: *dvāsaññhiyā vatthāhi*), not sixty-two 'views'. The actual number of views is much less, as e.g. the first four 'grounds' make up the one 'view' of eternalism, formulated in each instance in exactly the same terms. This suggests that the Buddha's analysis was mainly concerned with the epistemological grounds for formulating views, much less with the individual content of any of these views. When S IV 287 speaks of sixty-two 'views' (*dvāsaññhi diññhigatāni Brahmajāle bhaḍitāni*) or Sn 538 of 'heresies' (*osaraḍāni*), then this does not really correspond to the terminology employed in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* itself.

⁶¹⁹ D I 39: *ye te samaḍabrāhmaḍā sassatavāḍā ... adhiccasamuppannikā ... tad-api tesau ... ajānataū apassataū vedayitau taḍhāgatānau paritassitavipphanditam-eva*; which Sv-pñ I 180 explains: *tathā yasmī vedayite avātataḍhatāya evaū diññhigataū upādiyanti, tau vedayitau samudayāditto yathābhātau ajānantānau apassantānau*. Katz: *Human Perfection*, p 150, fittingly speaks of a "psychoanalysis of metaphysical claims."

⁶²⁰ D I 45: *ye pi te samaḍabrāhmaḍā ... sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa pañisaivedenti, tesau vedanāpaccayā taḍhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānau ... Yato kho ... bhikkhu channaū phassāyatānau samudaya-ca atthagama-ca ... yathābhātau pajānāti, ayau imehi sabbeheva uttaritarau pajānāti*.

presents such transcendence of views as an aim of *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation.⁶²¹ Thus the second *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of feelings, has an intriguing potential to generate penetrative insight into the genesis of views and opinions.

According to the Buddha's analysis, feelings decisively influence and colour subsequent thoughts and reactions.⁶²² In view of this conditioning role of feeling, the supposed supremacy of rational thought over feelings and emotions turns out to be an illusion.⁶²³ Logic and thought often merely serve to rationalise already existing likes and dislikes, which in turn are conditioned by the arising of either pleasant or unpleasant feelings.⁶²⁴ The initial stages of the perceptual process, when the first traces of liking and disliking appear, are usually not fully conscious and their decisive influence on subsequent evaluations often passes undetected.⁶²⁵

Considered from a psychological perspective, feeling provides quick feedback during information processing, as a basis for motivation and action.⁶²⁶ In the early history of human evolution, such rapid feedback evolved as a mechanism of survival in dangerous situations, when a split-second decision between flight or fight had to be made. Such decisions take place based on the evaluative influence of the first few moments of perceptual appraisal, during which feeling plays a prominent role. Outside of such dangerous situations, however, in the comparatively safe average living situation in the modern world, this survival function of feelings can sometimes produce rather inadequate and inappropriate reactions.

In relation to this situation, contemplation of feeling offers an opportunity to bring their evaluative and conditioning functions back into conscious awareness. Clear awareness of the conditioning impact of feeling can lead to a restructuring of habitual reaction patterns that have become meaningless or even detrimental. In this way, emotions can be 'de-conditioned' at their point of origin.⁶²⁷ Without such de-conditioning, any affective bias, being the outcome of the initial evaluation triggered by feeling, can find its expression in apparently well reasoned 'objective' opinions and views. In contrast, a realistic appraisal of the conditional dependence of views and opinions on the initial evaluative input provided by feeling uncovers the affective attachment underlying personal views and opinions. This dependency of views and opinions on the first evaluative impact of feeling is a prominent cause for subsequent dogmatic adherence and clinging.⁶²⁸

The Buddha's analytical approach to views formed a striking contrast to the philosophical speculations prevalent in ancient India. His way of dealing with views aimed at examining their affective underpinnings. For the Buddha, the crucial issue was to uncover the psychological attitude underlying the holding of a particular view,⁶²⁹ since he clearly saw that holding a particular view is often a manifestation of desire and attachment.

An important aspect of 'right' view, is therefore to have the 'right' attitude towards one's beliefs and views. The crucial question here is whether one has developed attachment and clinging to one's own views,⁶³⁰ which often leads to heated arguments and disputation.⁶³¹ The

⁶²¹ D III 141: *imesaṃ-ca ... diññhinissayānaū pahānāya samatikkamāya evaū mayā cattāro satipaṇṇhāna desitā.*

⁶²² Cf. M I 111: *yaū vedeti taū saṃjānāti, yaū saṃjānāti taū vitakketi, yaū vitakketi taū papaṃceti, yaū papaṃceti tatonidānaū purisaū papaṃcasaṃsaikhā samudācaranti.*

⁶²³ Khantipālo: *Calm and Insight*, p 35.

⁶²⁴ Premasiri: *Aññhakavagga*, p 20

⁶²⁵ Burns: *Buddhist Meditation*, p 33.

⁶²⁶ Brown: "Meditation in Cross-Cultural Perspective", p 271.

⁶²⁷ De Silva: *Emotions and Therapy*, p 22; and Dwivedi: "Vipassanā", p 255.

⁶²⁸ This is a recurrent theme throughout the *Aññhakavagga*, see especially Sn 781, 785, 824, 878, 892, and 910 on the dogmatic grasp engendered through views, and Sn 832, 883, 888-9, 894, and 904 on how this dogmatic grasp then leads to depreciating others and to endless quarrelling. Cf. also Premasiri: "Dogmatism", p 655, who aptly relates *diññhi* to the concept of dogmatism.

⁶²⁹ Cf. also Bodhi: *Net of Views*, p 9; Burford: "Buddhist Soteriology", p 47; Collins: *Selfless Persons*, p 119; Gethin: "Wrong View", p 222; and Gomez: "Proto-Mādhyamika", p 141.

⁶³⁰ The standard formulation of right view in the discourses is in fact directly concerned with attachment and clinging, expressed with the scheme of the four noble truths, cf. e.g. D II 312: *yaū kho ... dukkhe ṃāḍāū, dukkhasamudaye ṃāḍāū, dukkhanirodhe ṃāḍāū, dukkhanirodhagāminiyā pañipadāya ṃāḍāū, ayaū vuccati ... sammādiññhi.* This scheme of the four noble truths is then in turn applied to views at A IV 68: *ariyasāvako diññhiū pajānāti, diññhisamudayaū pajānāti, diññhinirodhaū pajānāti, diññhinirodhagāminiyū pañipadaū pajānāti. Tassa sà diññhi nirujjhati ... parimuccati dukkhasmāti*

more right view can be kept free from attachment and clinging, the better it can unfold its full potential as a pragmatic tool for progress on the path.⁶³² That is, right view as such is never to be given up, in fact it constitutes the culmination of the path. What is to be given up is any attachment or clinging in regard to it.

In the context of actual meditation practice, the presence of right view finds its expression in a growing degree of detachment and disenchantment with conditioned phenomena, due to a deepening realisation of the truth of *dukkha*, its cause, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation. Such detachment is also reflected in the absence of ‘desires and discontent’, stipulated in the *satipaṭṭhāna* ‘definition’, and in the instruction to avoid ‘clinging to anything in the world’, mentioned in the ‘refrain’.⁶³³

VII.3) Pleasant Feeling and the Importance of Joy

The conditioning role of feeling in leading to likes and even eventually to dogmatic attachment has some far reaching implications in the case of pleasant feelings. Yet, this does not mean that all pleasant feelings have to be simply avoided. In fact, the realisation that not all pleasant feelings are to be shunned was a direct outcome of the Buddha’s own quest for awakening.

On the eve of his awakening, the Buddha had exhausted the traditionally known approaches to realisation, without gaining awakening thereby.⁶³⁴ While recollecting his past experiences and considering what approach might constitute an alternative, he remembered a time in his early youth, when he had experienced a state of concentration and pleasure corresponding to the first absorption (*jhāna*).⁶³⁵ Further reflecting on this experience, he came to the conclusion that the type of pleasure experienced then was not unwholesome, and therefore was not an obstacle to progress.⁶³⁶ The realisation that the pleasure of absorption constitutes a wholesome and recommendable type of pleasant feeling marked a decisive turning point in his quest. Based on this crucial understanding, the Buddha was soon able to break through to awakening, which earlier, in spite of his deep concentration attainments and a variety of ascetic practices, he had been unable to achieve.

After his awakening, the Buddha declared himself to be one who lived in happiness.⁶³⁷

vadāmi.

⁶³¹ Absence of disputation comes at M I 500 as a result of understanding the impermanent nature of the three types of feeling: *evaṃ vimuttacitto bhikkhu na kenaci saivadati, na kenaci vivadati, yaṃ-ca loke vuttaṃ tena voharati aparāmasaṃ*. Cf. also M I 108, where the Buddha, on being challenged to proclaim his view, answered that his view was such that it led to the absence of quarrelling with anyone: *na kenaci loke viggayha tiññhati ... evaṃ vādā kho ahaṃ evaṃ akkhāyā*. At S III 138 the Buddha summed up his non-contentious attitude with: ‘I do not dispute with the world, it is the world that disputes with me’, *nāhaṃ lokena vivadāmi, loko ca mayā vivadati*.

⁶³² A pragmatic attitude towards one’s own view is recommended at M I 323: *imaṃ nu kho ahaṃ diññhiṃ āsevanto bhāvento bahulākaronto labhāmi paccattaṃ samathā, labhāmi paccattaṃ nibbutiṃ*; and also at A III 290: *yāyā diññhi ariyā nāyānikā nāyati takkarassa sammādukkhakkhaya*; both instances specifying that the purpose of one’s view should be to bring about tranquility and to lead to freedom from *dukkha*.

⁶³³ M I 56: *vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ ... anissito ca viharati, na ca kiṃci loke upādiyati*.

⁶³⁴ Neither highly refined degrees of concentration, nor the pursuit of various ascetic practices had been able to lead him to full awakening, so that (at M I 246) he questioned himself: Could there be another way to realisation, *siyā nu kho añño maggo bodhāya*? His unremitting effort to continue his quest even after exhausting all known approaches to realisation may underlie M I 219 and also A I 50, both instances presenting his awakening as the outcome of undaunted striving. His departure from all hitherto known ways of approaching realisation is indicated by the expression ‘things unheard of before’, *pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu* (e.g. at M II 211 and S V 422).

⁶³⁵ M I 246. On this passage cf. also Horsch: “Meditation”, p 107. The discourse does not give his exact age, although judging from the context it should have been at some point during his childhood. Mil 289 gives the rather improbable suggestion that he was only one month old and attained not only the first, but all four *jhānas*. On the other hand the Tibetan sources (Rockhill: *Life of the Buddha*, p 23) place this episode on the eve of his going forth, which also seems improbable.

⁶³⁶ M I 246: *kin-nu kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yan-taṃ sukhaṃ aṃatrevā kāmehi aṃatra akusalehi dhammehi? ... na kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi* (following which he realised awakening). This understanding of the importance of an ethical evaluation of mental events is also reflected at M I 114 with the pre-awakening division of thoughts into wholesome and unwholesome ones: *yan nānāhaṃ dvidhā katvā dvidhā katvā vitakke vihareyyanti. So kho ahaṃ yo cāyā kāmavitakko yo ca byāpādavitaṃ yo ca vihiisāvitaṃ imā ekabhāgam akāsiṃ, yo cāyā nekkhamavitakko yo ca abyāpādavitaṃ yo ca avihiisāvitaṃ imā dutiyaṃ bhāgam akāsiṃ*.

⁶³⁷ A I 136: *sukhaṃ asayitthaṃ, ye ca pana loke sukhaṃ senti, ahaṃ tesā aṃataro*; cf. also Dh 200: *susukhaṃ vata jāvāma*.

This statement clearly shows that, unlike some of his ascetic contemporaries, the Buddha was no longer afraid of pleasant feelings. As he pointed out, it was precisely the successful eradication of all mental unwholesomeness that caused his happiness and delight.⁶³⁸ In a similar vein, the verses composed by awakened monks and nuns often extol the happiness of freedom gained through the successful practice of the path.⁶³⁹ The presence of delight and non-sensual joy among the awakened disciples of the Buddha often found its expression in poetic descriptions of natural beauty.⁶⁴⁰ The Buddha himself was no exception to this, and in one instance he even expressed his appreciation for a slightly sensuous piece of music.⁶⁴¹ The early Buddhist monks indeed delighted in their way of life, as testified by a visiting king, who described them as 'smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful and plainly delighting, living at ease and unruffled.'⁶⁴² This description forms part of a comparison made by the king between the followers of the Buddha and other ascetics, whose demeanour was comparatively gloomy. To him, the degree of joy exhibited by the Buddha's disciples corroborated the appropriateness of the Buddha's teaching. These passages document the significant role of non-sensual joy in the life of the early Buddhist monastic community.

The skilful development of non-sensual joy and happiness was an outcome of the Buddha's own first-hand realisation, which had shown him the need to differentiate between wholesome and unwholesome types of pleasure.⁶⁴³ The *satīpaṭṭhāna* instructions for contemplating feelings reflect this wisdom, by distinguishing between worldly and unworldly types of pleasant feelings.

The ingenuity of the Buddha's approach was not only his ability to discriminate between forms of happiness and pleasure which are to be pursued and those which are to be avoided, but also his skilful harnessing of non-sensual pleasure for the progress along the path to realisation. Numerous discourses describe the conditional dependence of wisdom and realisation on the development of joy and happiness. These form a causal sequence, which leads from delight (*pāmojja*), joy (*pīti*), and happiness (*sukha*) to concentration and realisation. One discourse compares the dynamics of this causal sequence to the natural course of rain falling on a hilltop, gradually filling the rivulets and rivers, and finally flowing down to the sea.⁶⁴⁴ Once non-

⁶³⁸ D I 196: *saikilesikā ceva dhammā pahāyissanti ... pāmujaññā ceva bhavissati pāti ca ... sukho ca vihāro*. Similarly D II 215: *avijjā virāgā vijjuppadā uppajjati sukhaññā sukhaññā bhāyo somanassaññā*. Cf. also Ps I 297, according to which with full awakening joy (as an awakening factor) also reaches its perfection: *pātisambojjhaigassa ... arahattamaggena bhāvanāpāripārā hotā*.

⁶³⁹ Th 35: *sukhaññā sukhattho labhate tad-ācaram ... yo ariyam aṭṭhaṅgikam ... bhāveti maggam*; Th 526: *sabbāsava byantikato va jhāyati, tato ratim paramataram na vindati*; Th 545: *vimuttisukhena sukhito ramissāmi*; Th 24: *rāgañ-ca ahaññā dosañ-ca vicchindantī viharāmi ... aho sukhanti sukhato jhāyāmi*. Or the former criminal *Āṅgulimāla* at Th 888: *sukhaññā sayāmi jhāyāmi, sukhaññā kappemi jīvitam*.

⁶⁴⁰ E.g. at M I 212, where the beauty of the moon-light *Gosīga* forest became the occasion for several senior disciples to extol various qualities of a monk; or the descriptions of natural beauty in the verses of awakened monks at Th 13, 22, 113, 307-310, 523, 527-528, 601, 1062, 1064, 1065, 1068-1070, and 1136. The fact that the Buddha and his monks did appreciate natural beauty is also noted by Gokhale: "Image World", p 106; Kariyawasam: "Delight", p 359; and Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 62.

⁶⁴¹ At D II 267, where the Buddha expressed his appreciation of the performance of the *gandhabba Paṅcasikha*, whose song was drawing comparisons between the physical beauty of his beloved and the beauty of the life of *arahants* (note that the Buddha clearly recognised the song to be 'kāmapasāhita', connected with sensuality); on this passage comments Yaḍḍārāma: *Aspects*, pp 119-121.

⁶⁴² M II 121: *bhikkhā passāmi haññhapahaññhe udaggudagge abhiratarāpe pāḍitindriye apposukke pannalome paradavutte migabhātena cetasā viharante*; cf. also Rahula: *Humour*, p 52. In fact, according to A V 122, one who delights in the Buddha's teaching will experience happiness, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down: *anabhirati imasmīṃ dhammanayā dukkhā, abhirati sukhā ... abhiratiyā sati idaṃ sukhāññā pāṇikaikhaññā - gacchanto pi sukhāññā sātāṃ adhigacchati, ñhito pi ... nisinno pi ... sayāno pi ...*

⁶⁴³ M I 476: *mayā ... sacchikataṃ ... idhekaccassa evarāpaṃ sukhāññā vedanāññā vediyato akusalā dhammā parihāyanti kusalā dhammā abhivaśāhantāti, tasmāhaññā 'evarāpaṃ sukhāññā vedanāññā upasampajja viharathā'-ti vadāmi*; and M I 454: *paṅca kāmāguḍe paññā upajjati sukhāññā somanassaññā idaṃ vuccati kāmāsukhaññā ... anariyasukhaññā ... na bhāvetabbāññā ... paññamaññā jhānaññā ... idaṃ vuccati nekkhammasukhaññā ... 'bhāvetabbāññā, bahulākātabbāññā, na bhāyitabbāññā etassa sukhassa'-ti vadāmi*. This understanding is also reflected at Th 742: *yā ca dhammagatā rati, tāṃ samādāya vattetha, sa hi ve uttamā rati*; and in the expression *kalyāṇapāti* at Sn 969. Cf. also Premasiri: "Concept of Happiness", p 69.

⁶⁴⁴ S II 30. Same sequence at Vin I 294, D I 73, 182, 207, 214, 232, 250, D III 241, 279, 288, M I 37, 283, S IV 78, 351-8, S V 156, 398, A I 243, A III 21, 285, A V 1-6, 312, 315, 317, 329, and 333; (cf. also Pañis I 85; and Vism 144). The suppor-

sensual joy and happiness have arisen, their presence will naturally lead to concentration and realisation.⁶⁴⁵ Conversely, without gladdening the mind when it needs to be gladdened, realisation will not be possible.⁶⁴⁶

The importance of developing non-sensual joy is also reflected in the *Araṇavibhaṅga Sutta*, where the Buddha encouraged his disciples to find out what really constitutes true happiness and, based on this understanding, to pursue it.⁶⁴⁷ This passage refers in particular to the experience of absorption, which yields a form of happiness that by far surpasses its worldly counterparts.⁶⁴⁸ Alternatively, non-sensual pleasure can also arise in the context of insight meditation.⁶⁴⁹

A close examination of the *Kandaraka Sutta* brings to light a progressive refinement of non-sensual happiness taking place during the successive stages of the gradual training.⁶⁵⁰ The first levels of this ascending series are the forms of happiness that arise due to blamelessness and to contentment. These in turn lead on to the different levels of joy and happiness gained through deep concentration. The culmination point of the series comes with the supreme happiness of complete freedom through realisation.

The important role of non-sensual joy is also reflected in the *Abhidhammic* survey of mental states. Out of the entire scheme of hundred-and-twenty-one mental states, the majority are accompanied by joy, while only three are associated with mentally unpleasant feelings.⁶⁵¹ This documents that the *Abhidhamma* places great emphasis on the role and importance of joy.⁶⁵² The *Abhidhammic* scheme of mental states has moreover kept a special place for the smile of an *arahant*.⁶⁵³ Somewhat surprisingly it occurs among a set of so-called 'rootless' (*ahetu*) and 'inoperative' (*akiriya*) states of mind. These mental states are neither 'rooted' in wholesome or unwholesome qualities, nor related to the 'operation' of karma. Out of this particular group of mental states, only one is accompanied by joy (*somanassahagatā*): the smile of the *arahant*. The unique quality of this smile was apparently sufficient ground for the *Abhidhamma* to allot a special place for it within its scheme.

tive role of *pāmojja* for realisation is documented at Dh 376: *tato pāmojjabahulo, dukkhassantaū karissati*; and Dh 381 and Th 11: *pāmojjabahulo bhikkhu ... adhigacche padaū santaū, saikhārāpasamaū sukhaū*. According to Ayya Khema: *Buddhism for the West*, p 105, "inner joy is an absolute necessity for successful meditation." Buddhadhāsa: *Handbook for Mankind*, p 109, speaks of the need to develop "perpetual spiritual joy". The importance of *pāti* is also noted by Cousins: "Buddhist Jhāna", p 120; Gruber: *Vipassanā*, p 231; 𑀧𑀺𑀢𑀺𑀓𑀺𑀢𑀺: *Simile of the Cloth*, p 20 n 9; and Sekhera: *Path to Enlightenment*, p 104.

⁶⁴⁵ A V 2: *pamuditassa na cetanāya karaḍāyāū 'pāti me uppajjātā'-ti, dhammatā esā yaū pamuditassa pāti uppajjati ... na cetanāya karaḍāyāū 'kāyo me passambhātā'-ti ... 'sukhaū vediyāmā'-ti ... 'cittaū me samādhīyātā'-ti ... 'yathābhātāū jānāmi passāmā'-ti ... 'nibbindāmi virajjāmā'-ti ... 'vimuttiāḍadassanaū sacchikaromā'-ti.*

⁶⁴⁶ A III 435: *yasmīū samaye cittaū sampahaūsitabbaū tasmīū samaye cittaū na sampahaūseti ... abhabbo anuttaraū sātībhavaū sacchikātūū* (Mp III 413 relates this to mental dullness: *nirassādagatakāle samādhīnā sampahaūsitabbaū nāma*). The importance of developing joy in the context of *satipaṇṇhāna* practice is also mentioned at S V 156.

⁶⁴⁷ M III 230: *sukhavinicchayaū jaḍā sukhavinicchayaū vātvā ajjhataū sukham anuyuḍḍeyya*. M III 233 clarifies that this injunction refers to *jhāna* attainment.

⁶⁴⁸ M I 398: *paḍca ... kāmaguḍā ... atthi ... etamhā sukha aḍḍāū sukhaū abhikkantataraḍca paḍātataḍca ... paṇhamāū jhānaū ...*

⁶⁴⁹ M III 217: *rāpānaū ... dhammānaū tveva aniccataū viditvā ... yathābhātāū sammappaḍāya passato uppajjati somanassāū*; Th 398 and 1071: *paḍcaīgikena turīyena, na rati hoti tādisā, yathā ekaggacittassa, sammā dhammaū vipassato*; Th 519: *taḍhaū pahatvāna, sato va jhāyati, tato ratiū paramataraū na vindati*; Dh 373: *amānusā ratā hoti, sammā dhammaū vipassato*; and Dh 374: *yato yato sammasati, khandhānaū udayabbayaū, labhati pātipāmojjaū*.

⁶⁵⁰ M I 346: *anavajjasukhaū ... abyāsekasukhaū ... vivekajaū pātisukhaū ... samādhījaū pātisukhaū ... upekkhako satimā sukhavihārā ... nibbuto sātībhāto sukhaṇṇisaūvedā*; cf. also Th 63: *sukhenanvāgataū sukhaū*; and Th 220: *taū sukkena sukhaū laddhaū*. Govinda: *Psychological Attitude*, p 61 suggests: "cessation of suffering is supreme happiness and ... every step towards that aim is accompanied by ever-increasing joy." Warder: "Relationship", p 57, even goes so far as to compare the Buddha's emphasis on the importance of joy with Epicureanism.

⁶⁵¹ *Abhidh-s* 1-7 presents a scheme consisting of sixty-three *somanassasahagatā*, three *domanassasahagatā* and fifty-five *upekkhāsahagatā* mental states; cf. also Govinda: *Psychological Attitude*, p 63.

⁶⁵² A similar emphasis can also be found at Kv 209, which lists a total of twenty-eight types of happiness. Cf. also Vism 143, which reports that non-sensual joy may occur at five different levels, and (Vism 132) details eleven factors conducive to its development. Various types of happiness are also listed in the *Vimuttimagga* (cf. Ehara, p 5).

⁶⁵³ The *somanassasahagata hasituppādacitta* mentioned at *Abhidh-s* 2 among the *ahetuka citta*s; cf. also Bodhi: *Manual of Abhidhamma*, p 45. The *arahant's* smile is documented in several discourses for the Buddha and for *Moggallāna*, e.g. at Vin III 105-8, M II 45, 74, S I 24, S II 254-8, and A III 214.

Extrapolating from the above, the entire scheme of the gradual training can be envisaged as a progressive refinement of joy. To balance out this picture, however, it needs to be added that progress along the path invariably also involves unpleasant experiences. Yet, just as the Buddha did not recommend the avoidance of all pleasant feelings, but rather emphasised their wise understanding and intelligent use, similarly his position regarding unpleasant feelings and experiences was clearly oriented towards the development of wisdom.

VII.4) Unpleasant Feeling

In the historical context of ancient India, the wise analysis of feeling proposed by the Buddha constituted a middle path between the worldly pursuit of sensual pleasures and ascetic practices of penance and self-mortification. A prominent rationale behind the self-mortifications prevalent among ascetics at that time was an absolutist conception of karma. Self-inflicted pain, so it was believed, enables an immediate experience of the accumulated negative karmic retribution from the past, and thereby accelerates its eradication.⁶⁵⁴

The Buddha disagreed with such mechanistic theories of karma. In fact, an attempt to exhaust the retribution of the entire amount of one's past unwholesome deeds is bound to fail, because the series of past lives of any individual is without a discoverable beginning.⁶⁵⁵ Thus the amount of karmic retribution to be exhausted is unfathomable. Besides, painful feelings can also arise due to a variety of other causes, apart from karmic retribution.⁶⁵⁶

Although karmic retribution cannot be avoided,⁶⁵⁷ awakening does not come about by eradicating the accumulated effects of past deeds, but rather requires the eradication of ignorance (*avijjā*), brought about through the development of wisdom.⁶⁵⁸ With the complete penetration of ignorance through insight, *arahants* go beyond the range of most of their accumulated karmic deeds, except for those still due to ripen in this present life time.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁴ E.g. M II 214, cf. also Jayawardhana: "Determinism", p 409. Additional reasons for these practices may have been the idea that self-inflicted pain builds up spiritual power (*iddhi*), which can then be used to attain supernormal powers or attain liberation; or the idea that the body is the source of craving and thus, in order to eliminate craving, the body is to be mortified.

⁶⁵⁵ S II 178 and S III 149: *anamataggo saūsāro*; and A V 113: *purimā koṇi na paṇḍāyati avijjāya 'ito pubbe avijjā nāhosi.'* Goldstein: *Insight Meditation*, p 131, points out: "the idea that enlightenment comes when we clear up our karma ... is a mistaken view, because we are all trailing an infinite amount of past karma ... enlightenment does not happen because we have gotten rid of a certain amount of karmic activity. It happens when our mind cuts through delusion."

⁶⁵⁶ At S IV 230 the Buddha mentioned feelings originating due to disorders of bile, phlegm, or wind, due to imbalance of the bodily humours, due to change of climate, due to careless behaviour, or due to violence (*pittasamuññhāna*, *semhasamuññhāna*, *vātasamuññhāna*, *sannipātika*, *utupariḍāmaja*, *visamaparihāraja* and *opakkamika*) as alternatives to *kamnavipāka vedanā*. These alternative are also enumerated at A II 87, A III 131, and A V 110; cf. also Ledi: *Manual of Right Views*, p 66. In fact, according to A I 173 and 249 karma conceived as sole and absolute cause would imply a form of determinism and thereby logically exclude the possibility of successfully living a life devoted to purification.

⁶⁵⁷ A V 292, 297, and 299 emphasize the impossibility of completely avoiding karmic retribution: *nāhaū saṇcetanikānaū kammānaū katānaū upacitānaū appaṇisaūviditvā vyantibhāvāū vadāmi, taṇca kho diññheva dhamme upapajāū vā apare vā pariyaēye*. The same is also stated at Dh 127: *na vijjati so jagatippadeso yathaññhito muṇceyya pāpakammā*. Cf. also Ud 21, which reports a monk seated in meditation, experiencing pain due to former deeds: *aṇḍataro bhikkhu ... nisimmo hoti, pallaikāū abhujitvā, ujuū kāyaū paḍidhāya, purāḍakammavipākajāū dukkhaū tippāū kharāū kaṇkaū vedanaū adhivāsento sato sampajāno avihaṇḍamāno*. However, as A I 249 points out, the intensity of karmic retribution depends to a great extent on the present moral and mental condition of the person in question, in the sense that a particularly unwholesome deed may lead an immoral person to hell, but will not have the same consequences in the case of an otherwise moral person: *ekacco puggalo abhāvitakāyo hoti abhāvitasālo abhāvitacitto abhāvitapaṇḍo ... evarāpassa puggalassa appamattakam-pi pāpakammaū kataū tam-enaū nirayaū upaneti ... ekacco puggalo bhāvitakāyo hoti bhāvitasālo bhāvitacitto bhāvitapaṇḍo ... evarāpassa pugglassa tādisaū yeva appamattakaū pāpakammaū kataū diññhadhammavedanāyaū hoti, nāḍupi khāyati, kiū bahud-eva?*

⁶⁵⁸ A IV 382 clearly denies that the holy life under the Buddha is lived for the purpose of altering or eradicating karmic results that have not yet ripened: *yaū kammaū aparipakkavedanāyaū, tāū me kammaū paripakkavedanāyaū hotāti etassa atthāya Bhagavati brahmacariyaū vussatāti? - No hidaū āvuso - ... yaū kammaū diññhadhammavedanāyaū, tāū me kammaū samparāyavedaniyaū hotu ... yaū kammaū dukkhavedanāyaū, tāū me sukhavedanāyaū hotu ... yaū kammaū vedanāyaū, tāū me kammaū vedanāyaū hotu... - No hidaū āvuso*, but rather (A IV 384): *yaū khvassa āvuso aṇḍatāū adīññhaū appattāū asacchikataū anabhisametaū, tassa ṇāḍāya dassanāya pattiya sacchikiriyāya abhisamayāya Bhagavati brahmacariyaū vussati*, clarifying that the purpose is not the eradication of karma, but the development of knowledge and wisdom. To attempt to eradicate the results of past karma was a Jain position, which the Buddha criticised at M II 216 and 222.

⁶⁵⁹ The simple logic behind this is that the karmic results bound to ripen in future lives will no longer get an opportunity to produce results, cf. e.g. Th 81: *yaū mayā pakataū pāpāū pubbe aṇḍāsu jātisū, idheva tāū vedanāyaū, vatthu aṇḍāū na vijjati*.

The Buddha himself, prior to his own awakening, had also taken for granted that painful experiences have purifying effects.⁶⁶⁰ After abandoning ascetic practices and gaining realisation, he knew better. The *Cūladukkhakkhandha Sutta* reports the Buddha's attempt to convince some of his ascetic contemporaries of the fruitlessness of self-inflicted suffering. The discussion ended with the Buddha making the ironic point that, in contrast to the painful results of self-mortification, he was able to experience degrees of pleasure vastly superior even to those available to the king of the country.⁶⁶¹ Clearly, for the Buddha realisation did not depend on merely enduring painful feelings.⁶⁶² In fact, considered from the psychological view point, intentional subjection to self-inflicted pain can be an expression of deflected aggression.⁶⁶³

The experience of unpleasant feelings can activate the latent tendency to irritation and lead to attempts to repress or avoid such unpleasant feelings. According to the Buddha's penetrating analysis, aversion to pain can moreover fuel the tendency to seek sensual gratification, since from the unawakened view point the enjoyment of sensual pleasures appears to be the only escape from pain.⁶⁶⁴ This then creates a vicious circle, where with each experience of feeling, pleasant or unpleasant, the bondage to feeling grows.

The way out of this vicious circle lies in mindful and sober observation of unpleasant feelings. Such non-reactive awareness of pain is a simple but effective method to skilfully handle a painful experience. Simply observing physical pain for what it is, prevents it from producing mental repercussions. Any mental reaction of fear or resistance to pain will only increase the degree of unpleasantness of a painful experience. An accomplished meditator can become able to experience solely the physical aspect of an unpleasant feeling, without allowing mental reactions to arise.⁶⁶⁵ Thus meditative skill and insight have an intriguing potential for preventing physical sickness from affecting the mind.⁶⁶⁶

The discourses relate this ability of preventing physical pain from affecting mental composure to the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* in particular.⁶⁶⁷ The Buddha himself provides an example for this, since he was able to endure the strong painful feelings caused by a foot injury mindfully and clearly knowing (*sampajāna*), with a mind that remained unperturbed.⁶⁶⁸ In this way, a wise observation of pain through *satipaṭṭhāna*, leading to an understanding of its conditioned and conditioning nature, can transform experiences of pain into occasions for deep insight.

In the case of the *arahant Aṅgulimāla*, for example, retribution for his former crimes could only take place within the limited scope of that same life time (cf. M II 104).

⁶⁶⁰ M II 93: *mayham pi pubbe va sambodhā ... etad-ahosi: Na kho sukkena sukhaṃ adhigantabbā, dukkhena kho sukhaṃ adhigantabbā.*

⁶⁶¹ At M I 95, with the conclusion: *āyasmā va Gotamo sukhavahāritaro raṃṃā Māgadhenā.*

⁶⁶² M I 241: *ye hi keci samaṃā va brāhmaṃā va kāyena ceva kāmehi avāpakaññhā viharanti ... opakkamikā ce pi te bhonto samaṃābrāhmaṃā dukkhā tippā kañukā vedanā vediyanti abhabbā va te ṃāṃāya dāssanāya anuttarāya sambodhāya, no ce pi te ... dukkhā ... vedanā vediyanti abhabbā ... sambodhāya.*

⁶⁶³ Cf. de Silva: *Buddhist Psychology*, p 71.

⁶⁶⁴ S IV 208: *assutavā puthujjano dukkhāya vedanāya phuññho samāno socati kilamati paridevati ... tassāyeva kho pana dukkhāya vedanāya phuññho samāno pañighavā hoti ... yo dukkhāya vedanāya pañighānusayo, so anuseti. So dukkhāya vedanāya phuññho samāno kāmasukhaṃ abhinandati. Taiṃ kissa hetu? Na hi pajānāti ... aṃṃatra kāmasukhā dukkhāya vedanāya nissaraṃā.*

⁶⁶⁵ S IV 208: *assutavā puthujjano dukkhāya vedanāya phuññho ... dve vedanā vediyati - kāyikaṃ-ca, cetasikaṃ-ca ... ariya-sāvako dukkhāya vedanāya phuññho ... ekaiṃ vedanāṃ vediyati - kāyikaṃ, na cetasikaṃ.* The Buddha then illustrated the unawakened worlding's predicament in the case of experiencing pain with being shot at by two darts, since in addition to the 'dart' of physical pain, the mental reaction causes additional *dukkha*, viz. another dart. Cf. also de Silva: "Sense Experience", p 19; Kor: *Looking Inward*, p 6, and *Dose of Dhamma*, p 18.

⁶⁶⁶ S III 1: *evaṃ sikkhitabbā: āturakāyassa me sato cittaṃ anāturaṃ bhavissati.* The discourse explains that the point is to avoid identification with any of the five aggregates (and thereby with the pain). This suggests a sense of dissociation from the experience of pain, as if the affected part of the body did not belong to one. Although one continues to be aware of the pain as an objective phenomenon, this act of dissociation or de-identification diminishes or even removes the affective impact of the pain on the mind.

⁶⁶⁷ S V 302: *catāsu satipaññhānesu supatiññhitaccitassa viharato uppannā sārārikā dukkhā vedanā cittaṃ na pariyādaya tiññhanti.*

⁶⁶⁸ S I 27 and 110: *Bhagavato vedanā vattanti sārārikā dukkhā tibbā kharā kañukā asatā amanāpā. Tā sudaṃ Bhagavā sato sampajāno adhivāseti avihaṃṃamāno.*

VII.5) Neutral Feeling

While pleasant and unpleasant feelings can activate the respective latent tendencies to lust and irritation, neutral feeling can stimulate the latent tendency to ignorance.⁶⁶⁹ Ignorance in regard to neutral feelings means to be unaware of the arising and disappearance of neutral feelings, or to not understand the advantage, disadvantage, and escape in relation to neutral feelings.⁶⁷⁰ As the commentaries point out, awareness of neutral feelings is not an easy task and should best be approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings.⁶⁷¹

Of further interest in a discussion of neutral feeling is the *Abhidhammic* analysis of feeling tones arising at the five physical sense doors. The *Abhidhamma* holds that only the sense of touch is accompanied by pain or pleasure, while feelings arising at the other four sense doors are invariably neutral.⁶⁷² This *Abhidhammic* presentation suggests an intriguing aspect for contemplation of feeling, since it invites an inquiry into the degree to which an experience of delight or displeasure in regard to sight, sound, smell, or taste is simply the outcome of one's own mental evaluation.

In addition to this inquiry, a central feature to be contemplated in regard to neutral feelings is their impermanent nature.⁶⁷³ This is of particular importance because, in actual experience, neutral feeling easily appears to be the most stable of the three types of feeling. Thus, to counteract the tendency to regard it as permanent, its impermanent nature needs to be realised. Contemplated in this way, neutral feeling will lead to the arising of wisdom, thereby counteracting the latent tendency to ignorance.

The *Salāyatanaṅga Sutta* points out that the difference between neutral feelings associated with ignorance or with wisdom is related to whether such feelings transcend their object.⁶⁷⁴ In the deluded case, neutral feeling is predominantly the result of the bland features of the object, where the lack of effect on the observer results in the absence of pleasant or unpleasant feelings. Conversely, affective neutrality combined with the presence of wisdom transcends the object, since it results from detachment and equanimity, and not from the pleasant or unpleasant features of the object.

The same discourse depicts the establishment of such equanimity as a result of a progressive refinement of feelings. Here, at first the three types of feelings related to a life of renunciation are used to go beyond their more worldly and sensual counterparts.⁶⁷⁵ In the next stage, non-sensual joy related to renunciation is used to face and go beyond difficulties related to renunciation. This process of refinement then leads up to equanimous feelings, transcending even feelings of non-sensual joy. Equanimity and detachment as a culmination point of practice

⁶⁶⁹ M I 303: *adukkhamasukkhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo anuseti.*

⁶⁷⁰ M III 285: *adukkhamasukkhāya vedanāya phuñño samāno tassā vedanāya samudaya-ca atthaigama-ca assāda-ca ādānava-ca nissaraḍa-ca yathābhūtaū nappajānāti, tassa avijjānusayo anuseti.*

⁶⁷¹ Ps I 277: *adukkhamasukkhā paṇa duddīpanā andhakārā avihūtā ... adukkhamasukkhā vedanāti nayato gaṇhantassa pākaṭṭha hoti.* The comy then illustrates this with the example of a hunter seeing tracks on both sides of a rock, thereby inferring the path an animal has taken.

⁶⁷² Dhs 139-45; more explicitly at *Abhidh-s 2: upekkhāsahagataū cakkhuvī-āḍāū, tathā sotavi-āḍāū, ghānavi-āḍāū, jivhāvī-āḍāū* but *dukkhasahagataū kāyavi-āḍāū* and *sukhasahagataū kāyavi-āḍāū*; cf. also Rhys Davids: *Psychological Ethics*, p 171 n 2. The discourses offer a somewhat different perspective, since they speak of 'pleasant' and 'unpleasant' sights, sounds, smells, and tastes, these in turn providing the condition for the arising of corresponding feelings of pleasure or displeasure; cf. e.g. S IV 115: *cakkhunā rāpaū disvā manāpaū ... uppajjati sukhā vedanā ... rāpaū disvā amanāpaū ... uppajjati dukkhā vedanā ... sotena ... ghānena ... jivhāya*; similarly at S IV 119, the objects of the four senses are qualified with *piya/appiya*; at S IV 125 with *manorama/amanorama*; and at S IV 126 with *iñña/aniñña* and *kanta/akanta*.

⁶⁷³ It 47: *adukkhamasukkhā vedanā aniccato daññhabbā.*

⁶⁷⁴ M III 219: *cakkhunā rāpaū disvā upekkhā bālassa mēhassa puthujjanassa anodhijjanassa avipākajinassa anādānavadas-sāvino assutavato puthujjanassa, yā evarāpā upekkhā, rāpaū sā nātivattati*; but: *rāpānāū tveva aniccataū viditvā vipariḍānavirāganirodhaū: 'pubbe ceva rāpā etarahi ca sabbe te rāpā aniccā dukkhā vipariḍāmadhammā' ti evam-etaū yathābhūtaū sammappa-āya passato uppajjati upekkhā, yā evarāpā upekkhā rāpaū sā ativattati.*

⁶⁷⁵ M III 220: *nekkhammasitāni somanassāni tāni nissāya ... gehasitāni somanassāni tāni pajahatha ... nekkhammasitāni domanassāni tāni nissāya ... gehasitāni domanassāni tāni pajahatha ... nekkhammasitā upekkhā tā nissāya ... gehasitā upekkhā tā pajahatha ... nekkhammasitāni somanassāni tāni nissāya ... nekkhammasitāni domanassāni tāni pajahatha ... nekkhammasitā upekkhā tā nissāya ... nekkhammasitāni somanassāni tāni pajahatha.*

also occur in the *satipaṭṭhāna* refrain for contemplation of feeling, which instructs to contemplate all kinds of feelings ‘free from dependency’ and ‘without clinging’.⁶⁷⁶

Chapter VIII: Mind

VIII.1) Contemplation of the Mind

From awareness of the ethical distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* proceeds to the ethical quality of the mind. This ethical quality is mentioned at the outset of contemplation of the mind, in terms of the presence or absence of lust (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). The fact that these three items occur at the beginning of contemplation of the mind indicates a progressive refinement of awareness,⁶⁷⁷ leading over from awareness of feelings to mental states. The instructions for contemplation of the mind are:

"He knows a lustful mind to be ‘lustful’, and a mind without lust to be ‘without lust’;
 he knows an angry mind to be ‘angry’, and a mind without anger to be ‘without anger’;
 he knows a deluded mind to be ‘deluded’, and an undeluded mind to be ‘undeluded’;
 he knows a contracted mind to be ‘contracted’, and a distracted mind to be ‘distracted’;
 he knows a great mind to be ‘great’, and a narrow mind to be ‘narrow’;
 he knows a surpassable mind to be ‘surpassable’, and an unsurpassable mind to be ‘unsurpassable’;
 he knows a concentrated mind to be ‘concentrated’, and an unconcentrated mind to be ‘unconcentrated’;
 he knows a liberated mind to be ‘liberated’, and an unliberated mind to be ‘unliberated’.⁶⁷⁸

Contemplation of the mind operates with eight different categories.⁶⁷⁹ In each case, the task of *sati* is to know a particular mental quality or its opposite, so that contemplation of the mind actually covers sixteen mental states. The same set of sixteen states appears elsewhere in the discourses in relation to telepathic abilities.⁶⁸⁰ Thus this particular set forms a representative list of states of mind, relevant both to personal introspection and to telepathic knowledge of another’s mind.

Eight Categories for Contemplation of the Mind: (Diagram 8.1)

‘ordinary’ mental states:

lustful (*sarāga*)
angry (*sadosa*)
deluded (*samoha*)
distracted (*vikkhitta*)

‘higher’ mental states:

great (*mahaggata*)
unsurpassable (*anuttara*)
concentrated (*samāhita*)
liberated (*vimutta*)

These sixteen mental states (or eight categories) can be subdivided into two sets. The

⁶⁷⁶ M I 59: *anissito ca viharati, na ca kiñci loke upādiyati. Evam-pi kho ... vedanāsu vedanānupassā viharati.*

⁶⁷⁷ Khantipālo: *Calm and Insight*, p 37.

⁶⁷⁸ M I 59: *sarāgaū vā cittaū ‘sarāgaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, vātarāgaū vā cittaū ‘vātarāgaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, sadosaū vā cittaū ‘sadosaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, vātadosaū vā cittaū ‘vātadosaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, samohaū vā cittaū ‘samohaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, vātamohaū vā cittaū ‘vātamohaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, saikhittaū vā cittaū ‘saikhittaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, vikkhittaū vā cittaū ‘vikkhittaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, mahaggataū vā cittaū ‘mahaggataū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, amahaggataū vā cittaū ‘amahaggataū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, sa-uttaraū vā cittaū ‘sa-uttaraū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, anuttaraū vā cittaū ‘anuttaraū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, samāhitaū vā cittaū ‘samāhitaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, asamāhitaū vā cittaū ‘asamāhitaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, vimuttaū vā cittaū ‘vimuttaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti, avimuttaū vā cittaū ‘avimuttaū cittaṅ-ṭi pajānāti.*

⁶⁷⁹ The Chinese version of this contemplation in the *Madhyama āgama* lists in addition to these eight also the mind ‘with blemishes’, or ‘without blemishes’, while the *Ekottara āgama* has ‘craving’ and ‘mastery of the mind’ as additional categories (in Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 93; and Nhat Than: *Transformation*, pp 162 and 174). Pañis II 234 includes the six types of consciousness (differentiated according to the six sense-doors) in its list for contemplation of the mind.

⁶⁸⁰ *Cetopariyaṅgā*, e.g. at M I 495.

first set contrasts unwholesome and wholesome mental states, while the second set is concerned with the presence or absence of 'higher' states of mind (see diagram 8.1 below). I will turn to these different mental states individually, after an introductory assessment of contemplation of the mind in general.

Underlying this *satipaṭṭhāna* is an implicit shift in emphasis from the ordinary way of experiencing mind as an individual entity to considering mental events as mere objects, analysed in terms of their qualitative characteristics.⁶⁸¹

Contemplation of the mind also includes, in accordance with the *satipaṭṭhāna* refrain, awareness of the arising and passing away of the mental states under contemplation, thereby revealing the momentary character of all mental events. In addition, sustained contemplation of the mind will also expose the degree to which what one takes to be one's own mind is in fact influenced by external conditions. In this way realising the impermanent and conditioned nature of the mind accords with the general thrust of *satipaṭṭhāna* towards detachment and non-identification.

It is noteworthy that contemplation of the mind does not involve active measures to oppose unwholesome mental states (such as lust or anger). The task of mindfulness, rather, is to stay receptively aware, by clearly recognising the state of mind that underlies a particular train of thoughts or reactions. Such uninvolved receptivity is required because of one's instinctive tendency to ignore whatever contradicts or threatens one's sense of importance and personal integrity. The habit of employing self deception to maintain one's self esteem has often become so ingrained that the first step required for developing accurate self awareness is to honestly acknowledge the existence of hidden emotions, covert motives, and lurking tendencies in the mind, without immediately suppressing them.⁶⁸² Maintaining non-reactive awareness in this way counters the impulse towards either reaction or suppression, contained in unwholesome mental states, and thereby deactivates their emotional and attentional pull.⁶⁸³

The *Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta* offers an illustrative description of such deactivation: in order to come to grips with the repeated occurrence of unwholesome thoughts, attention turns to the nature of these thoughts and to the volitional disposition or driving force responsible for them.⁶⁸⁴ The discourse explains this simple but ingenious method of turning the full light of attention on the mental condition underlying one's thoughts with the help of a simile. Supposedly one is walking quite fast, for no particular reason. Becoming fully aware of what one is doing, one may walk slower, or even stop walking, or, instead of standing, decide to sit or even lie down. This progressive increase in physical comfort and tranquility vividly illustrates how the mental agitation and tension of unwholesome thought processes can be gradually reduced and overcome through direct observation. Watching an unwholesome state of mind without involvement in this way will deprive it of its fuel, so that it will gradually lose its power.

In the same *Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta*, however, an alternative approach for dealing with unwholesome thoughts speaks of 'beating down and crushing mind with mind.'⁶⁸⁵ This appears to disagree with the foregoing. Yet, once this instruction is considered within its context, it becomes apparent that it comes as a last resort, introduced after all other alternative approaches,

⁶⁸¹ Bodhi: *Noble Eightfold Path*, p 98; and Piatigorski: *Buddhist Philosophy*, p 41. Rhys Davids: *Indian Psychology*, p 8, draws attention to the novelty of this approach in the history of Indian thought.

⁶⁸² Bullen: *Technique of Living*, p 29.

⁶⁸³ Newman: *Disciplines of Attention*, pp 35 and 46. In fact, according to A V 39 the proper approach for overcoming mental defilements is wise aboservation: *atthi dhammā neva kāyena pahātabbā no vācāya, paṇḍāya disvā disvā pahātabbā ... lobho neva kāyena pahātabbo no vācāya, paṇḍāya disvā disvā pahātabbo ... doso ... moho ... kodho ... upanāho ... makkho ... paḍāso ... macchariyāyū ... pāpikā issā ... pāpikā icchā*. A clinical case supporting the ingenuity of this approach is documented by Deatherage: "Mindfulness Meditation", p 140, where a twenty-three year old male, hospitalised for extreme periodic aggressiveness and alcohol abuse, is cured within eight weeks, by simply being taught to recognise and mentally name the emotions he experienced, without even knowing that what he was doing was related to 'meditation'. Another chronic anger case-study involving awareness of mind as cure can be found in Woolfolk: "Self-Control", p 551.

⁶⁸⁴ M I 120: *pāpakā akusalā vitakkā ... tesāy vitakkānāy vitakkasaikhārasaōñhānāy manasikātabbāy*.

⁶⁸⁵ M I 120: *pāpakā akusalā vitakkā ... tena bhikkhunā dantehi dantamādhāya jivhāya tāluū āhacca cetasā cittaū abhiniggaōhitabbāy abhinippāēetabbāy abhisantāpetabbāy. Tassa dantehi dantamādhāya ... ye pāpakā akusalā vitakkā ... te pahāyanti te abbatthāy gacchanti*.

including the above discussed deactivation, proved ineffective.⁶⁸⁶ Thus to 'beat down and crush mind with mind' is an emergency measure when all else has failed. When the situation is about to get out of hand, the use of force will at least prevent the obsessive negative thoughts from spilling over into unwholesome activity. To 'beat down and crush mind with mind' is in fact on another occasion counted by the Buddha among those fruitless exercises which he had himself tried out and then discarded prior to his awakening.⁶⁸⁷ This goes to show that the use of mere force is not meant for mental development in general, but only for cases of emergency.

VIII.2) Eight Kinds of Mental States

The first three mental states listed in the *satipaṭṭhāna* instruction are lust (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), the three main roots of all unwholesome mental events.⁶⁸⁸ The basic principle underlying contemplation of these three unwholesome roots, and also the more evolved stages of contemplation of feeling concerned with worldliness and unworldliness, is the ability to clearly distinguish between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. Systematic development of this ability nurtures an intuitive ethical sensitivity which constitutes an important asset for one's progress on the path and a sure guide to proper conduct in daily life.

The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* presents each of these three 'roots' together with its respective opposite, the absence of lust, aversion, or delusion. This way of presentation is common in canonical usage, allowing the negative term to cover not only the opposite notion, but also to imply a wider range of meaning.⁶⁸⁹ Thus 'non-anger', for example, could be just a state of mind free from irritation, but also a mind overflowing with loving kindness.

During actual meditation, each of these three unwholesome roots can subjectively manifest in a distinct manner: The fever of lust is comparable to being on fire within, the physical tension of anger to being overpowered and controlled by a forceful opponent, and the confusion of delusion to being hopelessly entangled in a net.⁶⁹⁰

Several discourses refer to a tranquil state of mind, temporarily unaffected by any hindrance or mental defilement, as 'luminous'.⁶⁹¹ This luminous condition of the mind is its naturally undefiled state, since the defiling hindrances are specified as being 'adventitious'.⁶⁹² According to a passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, to come to know this luminous nature of the mind is a necessary requirement for mental development (*cittabhāvanā*).⁶⁹³ Thus, a possible

⁶⁸⁶ The other approaches, in addition to the above quoted *vitakkasaikhārasaḍṇhānaṁ manasikātabbāṁ*, are: *aṁṁāṁ nimittaṁ manasikātabbāṁ kusalāpasāhitaṁ ... tesāṁ vitakkānaṁ ādānava upaparikkhitabbo ... tesāṁ vitakkānaṁ asati-amanasikāro āpajjitabbo*. A similar case can be found at A IV 87, where after an extensive list of different methods for staying awake and countering drowsiness, the final recommendation is to go to sleep mindfully. Clearly in this case the last mentioned method is not really helpful for staying awake, but is also just the last resort left when all other measures had no result.

⁶⁸⁷ At M I 242.

⁶⁸⁸ Taking *rāga* as a synonym for *lobha*. A detailed exposition of the three roots can be found in Yaḍapoḍika: *Good and Evil*.

⁶⁸⁹ Khantipālo: *Calm and Insight*, p 38.

⁶⁹⁰ Compare DhP 251: *natthi rāgasamo aggi, natthi dosasamo gaho, natthi mohasamaṁ jālaṁ*. Buddhada: *Mindfulness with Breathing*, p 67, suggests to distinguish between mental tendencies such as "pulling in", "pushing away", and "running around in circles", in order to recognise the three unwholesome roots.

⁶⁹¹ S V 92: *yehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṅṅhaṁ cittaṁ na ceva mudu hoti ... na ca pabhassaraṁ pabhaṅgu ca, na ca sammā samādhīyati āsavānaṁ khayāya*; A I 10: *pabhassaram idaṁ cittaṁ, taṁ-ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṅṅhaṁ*; A I 257: *yato ... bhikkhu kālena kālaṁ samādhinimittaṁ ... paggāhanimittaṁ ... upekkhānimittaṁ manasi karoti, taṁ hoti cittaṁ ... pabhassaraṁ-ca ... sammā samādhīyati āsavānaṁ khayāya*; A III 16: *yato ... cittaṁ imehi paṁcahi upakkilesehi vimuttaṁ hoti, taṁ hoti cittaṁ ... pabhassaraṁ ... sammā samādhīyati āsavānaṁ khayāya*. These passages clearly relate the luminosity of the mind to the development of a concentrated state of mind, free from defilements and ready for realisation. Cf. also D III 223, where the development (*samādhi bhāvanā*) of cognition of light (*ālokasaṁṁā*) leads to a mind full of light or radiance (*sappabhāsa citta*); M III 243, where *pabhassara* is related to a high level of equanimity; and S V 283, where even the Buddha's body is said to be *pabhassara* as a result of concentration. Karunaratne: "Kilesa", p 219, explains: "what is meant by lustrous and pure mind (*pabhassara*) is not a state of mind which is absolutely pure, nor the pure mind which is synonymous with emancipation ... pure only in the sense, and to the extent, that it is not disturbed or influenced by external stimuli."

⁶⁹² A I 10: *āgantukehi upakkilesehi*. That the absence of defilements is a natural condition of the mind is also alluded to in the *Vatthāpama Sutta*, M I 36, where the undefiled state of mind is compared to a clean cloth, free from stains.

⁶⁹³ A I 10: *pabhassaram idaṁ cittaṁ, taṁ-ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṅṅhaṁ. Taṁ assutavaṁ puthujjano yathābhātaṁ nappajānāti. Tasmā assutavato puthujjanassa citta bhāvanā natthāti vadāmi, but: pabhassaram idaṁ cittaṁ, taṁ-ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vippamuttāṁ. Taṁ sutavaṁ ariyasāvako yathābhātaṁ pajānāti. Tasmā sutavato ariyasāvakassa*

way of putting the *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions regarding the absence of the three root defilements into practice is to turn awareness to the mind's luminous condition, temporarily free from any defilement.⁶⁹⁴

Taken in a more absolute sense, the mind unaffected by lust, anger, and delusion refers to the mind of an *arahant*.⁶⁹⁵ This indicates that contemplation of the mind is not only concerned with momentary states of mind, but also with the overall condition of the mind. In this way, to contemplate mind unaffected by lust, anger, or delusion, includes also awareness of the degree to which these three unwholesome roots are no longer 'rooted' in one's mental continuum.⁶⁹⁶

The two mental states listed next for contemplation, contracted (*sāṅkhitta*) and distracted (*vikkhitta*), both appear to have negative implications.⁶⁹⁷ The same two terms occur elsewhere, with inward 'contraction' being the result of sloth and torpor, and external 'distraction' the outcome of pursuing sensual pleasures.⁶⁹⁸ The commentaries on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* indeed relate the 'contracted' state of mind to sloth and torpor, while according to them the 'distracted' mental state stands for restlessness.⁶⁹⁹

The ability to balance the mind, by avoiding both 'contraction' and 'distraction', is an important skill required for the development of deeper levels of concentration or insight. The placing of these two mental states at this point in the instructions for contemplation of the mind points to the need to cultivate such balance, once one has at least temporarily moved beyond the reach of the unwholesome roots and is aiming towards the development of 'higher' states of mind, such as are described in the remaining part of this *satipaṭṭhāna*.

The discourses often use the qualification 'great' (*mahaggata*) in the context of tranquility meditation, such as when describing the meditative practice of radiating the four

citta bhāvanā athāti vadāmi. The comy Mp I 60 and also As 140 identify the *pabhassara citta* with the *bhavaṅga* (sub-conscious life-continuum). Here it could however be objected that the term *bhavaṅga* in the context of the commentarial *cittavāthi* (process of consciousness) theory refers to a subconscious moment that occurs between each conscious moment of the mental process. (In fact, sleeping is said to be *bhavaṅgaṃ otāreti* at Ps-pñ I 364). In contrast, the luminous state of mind at A I 10 clearly refers to a conscious experience, since it is to be known (*pajānāti*). On *bhavaṅga* cf. the excellent exposition in Gethin: "Bhavaṅga"; also Harvey: "Consciousness Mysticism", pp 94-98; and Sarachchandra: *Psychology of Perception*, p 90. The attempt by Wijsekera: "Bhavaṅga", p 348, to establish a historically early existence of the term with the help of a passage from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and several occurrences in the *Paṇṇāsa* is not convincing, as A II 79 in PTS, Burm. and Sinh. ed. invariably reads *bhavagga* (best of existences, which also fits the context much better) instead of *bhavaṅga*, and occurrences in Paṇṇāsa could also be taken as betraying the comparatively late age of this part of the *Abhidhamma*; cf. also Yaḍatiloka: *Dictionary*, p 246.

⁶⁹⁴ In fact both the *satipaṇṇāna* instructions and A I 10 employ the same verb, *pajānāti*, which suggest that a similar type of activity is intended in both cases.

⁶⁹⁵ This way of understanding is in fact the most frequent usage of *vātarāgā vātadosā vātamoha* in the discourses, cf. e.g. M I 5, where the *arahants* are said to be *khayā rāgassa vātarāgattā ... khayā dosassa vātadosattā ... khayā mohassa vātamohattā*, i.e. free from these three through their eradication; M I 65, which refers to realised ascetics as: *te vātarāgā te vātadosā te vātamohā te vātataḍhā te anupādānā*; M I 236 and S I 220, where the Buddha referred to himself as *vātarāgo vātadoso vātamoho*; or A III 43, 336, and 347: *vātarāgā vātadosā vātamoha anāsava*.

⁶⁹⁶ Cf. A IV 404 where awareness of their absence is part of the reviewing knowledge of an *arahant*: *'vātarāgāṃ ... vātadosāṃ ... vātamohāṃ me cittaṃ-ti cetasa cittaṃ suparicitaṃ hoti ... evaṃ sammā vimuttacittassa bhikkhuno*.

⁶⁹⁷ Alternatively, in order to conform with the pattern in this *satipaṇṇāna* of presenting each time a positive mental state together with its negative counterpart, the *saṅkhitta* (contracted) state of mind could be taken in a positive sense, as a 'concentrated' or 'attentive' state of mind (cf. Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 665). The corresponding verb *saṅkhipati* does indeed occur in this positive sense at Ja I 82: *mettacittaṃ saṅkhipitvā*, when the Buddha radiated *mettā* to the *paṇḍita* monks, his five earlier followers, on their first meeting after his awakening. In fact Goenka: *Satipaṇṇāna*, p 57, translates *saṅkhitta* as "collected" and "concentrated."

⁶⁹⁸ S V 279: *viriyāṃ thānamiddhasahagataṃ thānamiddhasampayuttaṃ, idaṃ vuccati ajjhataṃ saṅkhittaṃ viriyāṃ; viriyāṃ bahiddhā paṇḍita kāmāgūḍe ārabbhā anuvikkhittaṃ anuvissataṃ, idaṃ vuccati bahiddhā vikkhittaṃ viriyāṃ*. The relation of these two to 'internal' and 'external' occurs again at A IV 32: *'ajjhataṃ me saṅkhittaṃ cittaṃ-ti yathābhātaṃ pajānāti ... bahiddhā me vikkhittaṃ cittaṃ-ti yathābhātaṃ pajānāti*.

⁶⁹⁹ Ps I 280: *saṅkhittan'-ti thānamiddhānupatitāṃ ... vikkhittan'-ti uddhaccasahagataṃ*. However, in the above quoted passage from S V 279 the hindrance restlessness occurs separately, apparently not forming part of 'vikkhitta' (distracted): *viriyāṃ uddhaccasahagataṃ uddhaccasampayuttaṃ, idaṃ vuccati atipaggahitaṃ viriyāṃ*, which differs from the commentarial explanation that 'distracted' stands for restlessness. The relation of 'distracted' to the search for sense gratification (as at S V 279) occurs also at M III 225. The consequences of a 'distracted' state of mind are described at A V 147: *vikkhitta citto samāno abhabbo ayonisomanasikāraṃ pahātuṃ kummaggasevanāṃ pahātuṃ cetaso lānattaṃ pahātuṃ* (becoming unable to direct one's attention skilfully, to avoid unwholesome ways of behaviour, and to overcome mental inertia).

divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*) in all directions.⁷⁰⁰ Similarly, in the *Anuruddha Sutta* 'great' represents the ability to spatially pervade a broad area with one's meditation object, in this case as the result of *kasīna* meditation.⁷⁰¹ These instances support the commentarial explanation of this part of the *satipaṭṭhana* instructions, according to which a 'great' state of mind (*mahaggata*) is related to the development of absorption.⁷⁰²

The same commentaries relate the next mental state mentioned for contemplation of the mind, the 'surpassable' (*sa-uttara*) state of mind, also to the development of concentration.⁷⁰³ 'Surpassable' then indicates the need to clearly recognise the constituents of a particular level of absorption to be overcome in order to proceed to a higher level of absorption.⁷⁰⁴ This finds support in the *Sekha Sutta*, which refers to the fourth absorption as a state of 'unsurpassable' equanimity and mindfulness.⁷⁰⁵ On the other hand, in the discourses 'unsurpassable' occurs frequently in relation to full awakening.⁷⁰⁶ Understood in this way, the present set of terms also includes the reviewing knowledge after realisation, when one investigates to which degree, 'surpassable' or 'unsurpassable', the mind has been freed from fetters and mental defilements.

The next term in the series, the 'concentrated' (*samāhita*) state of mind, is self-explanatory. According to the commentaries, this expression includes access concentration and full absorption.⁷⁰⁷ Since in the discourses *samādhi* refers to concentration in the context of both the development of tranquility and of insight, the expression 'concentrated' mind has a fairly broad range of reference.

The qualification 'liberated' (*vimutta*) frequently occurs in the discourses in relation to full awakening.⁷⁰⁸ Understood in this way, the 'liberated' mind parallels the 'unsurpassable mind' and the mind which is forever 'without lust', 'without anger', and 'without delusion', all these being references to full awakening.⁷⁰⁹ The commentaries also relate the qualification 'liberated' to temporary freedom from defilements during the practice of insight meditation.⁷¹⁰ Elsewhere in the discourses the expression 'liberated' mind occurs as well in relation to the development of concentration, as 'freedom of the mind' (*cetovimutti*).⁷¹¹ Thus the 'liberated' mind can be taken to refer to experiences of mental 'freedom' in relation to both tranquility and insight.

The central theme underlying the contemplation of these four higher states of mind is the ability to monitor the more advanced stages of one's meditative development. In this way,

⁷⁰⁰ M II 207: *sabbadhi sabbatthatāya sabbāvantaū lokāū mettāsahagatena cetasa ... mahaggatena ... pharivā viharati.*

⁷⁰¹ M III 146: *mahaggatā cetovimutti ... yāvata dve vā tādō vā rukkhamālāni ... yāvata samuddapariyantaū pañhaviū mahaggatan'-ti pharivā adhimuccivā viharati.* Ps IV 200 explains this to be *kaśiōa* meditation. A *kaśiōa* is a meditation device, such as for example a coloured disk, used to develop concentration.

⁷⁰² Ps I 280: *mahaggatan'-ti rāpārāpāvacarāū.*

⁷⁰³ Ps I 280 explains *anuttara* (unsurpassable) to refer to absorption attainment: *anuttaranti rāpārāpāvacarāū.* Sālananda: *Four Foundations*, p 94, takes *anuttara* as a specific reference to the immaterial attainments.

⁷⁰⁴ The need to abandon lower absorption attainments is described e.g. at M I 455: *pañhamāū jhānaū ... 'analan'-ti vadāmi, 'pajahathā'-ti ... 'samattikkamathā'-ti ... tassa samattikkamo ... dutiyaū jhānaū ...* (etc.). Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 13, renders *sa-uttara* with the expression: "my mind is capable of reaching a higher state."

⁷⁰⁵ M I 357: *anuttarāū upekkhāsatiṭṭhāpārisuddhiū.* The fourth *jhāna* as a level of concentration is indeed 'anuttara', since the immaterial attainments take place with the same level of concentration, directed to progressively more refined objects.

⁷⁰⁶ E.g. D II 83: *anuttarāū sammāsambodhiū abhisambuddho*; M I 163: *anuttarāū yogakkhemaū nibbānaū*; M I 303: *anuttaresu vimokkhesu*; M II 237: *anuttarāū santivarapadaū*; S I 105: *anuttarāū vimuttiū*; S I 124: *anuttare upadhisaikhaye vimutto*; A I 168: *anuttarāū brahmacariyogadhaū*; A III 435: *anuttarāū sātibhavaū*; and Th 415: *anuttarāū visuddhiū.*

⁷⁰⁷ Ps I 280: *samāhitati yassa appanāsamādhī upacārasamādhī vā atthi.*

⁷⁰⁸ E.g. M I 141: *sammadaū vimuttā*; S III 45: *cittaū virattāū vimuttāū hoti anupādāya āsavehi*; S III 51: *nandirāgakkhaya cittaū vimuttāū suvimuttanti vuccati*; Ud 24: *anupādāya āsavehi cittaū vimuttāū*; and It 33: *taḍhakkhaye vimuttāū.*

⁷⁰⁹ E.g. D I 84: *vimuttasmīū vimuttam-iti vādāū hoti 'khāḍā jāti ... nāparaū itthattāyā'-ti pajānāti.* It is notable that this standard description of full awakening speaks of *pajānāti* (he knows), which reminds of the *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions. At times the expression 'liberated' is combined with 'unsurpassable' as references to full awakening, cf. e.g. *vimuttānuttariyena* at M I 235, or *anuttarāū vimuttiū sacchikarotha* at S I 105, or *anuttarā vimutti* at A IV 106. At D III 270 and A V 31 the *suvimutta citta* is moreover related to freedom from *rāga*, *dosa*, and *moha*.

⁷¹⁰ Ps I 280 explains: *vimuttanti tadaḍḍavikkhambhanavimuttāhi vimuttāū.* This suggestion by the commentary could claim some support from S V 157, which speaks of a calm and undistracted state of mind, fit for *satipaṭṭhāna*, as *asaikkhattāū vimuttāū.*

⁷¹¹ Various types of *cetovimutti* are listed at M I 296 (*adukkhamasukkhā, animittā, ākiṃcā, suvāta, appamāḍā*). Similarly A III 16 refers to the absence of the five hindrances as *cittaū imehi paṃcahi upakkilesehi vimuttāū.*

within the scope of contemplation of the mind *sati* can range from recognition of the presence of lust or anger to awareness of the most lofty and sublime types of mental experience, each time with the same central task to soberly reflect what is taking place.

The emphasis given in this *satipaṭṭhāna* to mindful contemplation of deep levels of concentration is a noteworthy feature. Among the Buddha's contemporaries, experiences of absorption often gave rise to speculative views.⁷¹² The Buddha's distinct departure from these speculations was his thoroughly analytical treatment of the meditative absorptions, concerned with an understanding of their composite and conditioned nature.⁷¹³ This analytical treatment is exemplified in the *Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta*, which instructs to regard the experience of absorption as being merely a product of the mind, a conditioned and volitionally produced experience. Whatever is a product of conditions, is therefore also impermanent and subject to cessation.⁷¹⁴ Such realisation of the impermanent nature of deep levels of concentration forms also part of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, when the instruction in the 'refrain' to contemplate the nature of arising and passing away (*samudaya* and *vayadhamma*) is applied to the higher mental states listed for contemplation.⁷¹⁵ Undertaken like this, *satipaṭṭhāna* in regard to higher states of mind becomes a practical expression of the Buddha's analytical attitude towards the entire range of mental experience.

Chapter IX: Hindrances

IX.1) Contemplation of *Dhammas*

The next contemplation in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is concerned with a specific set of mental states, the five hindrances, which come as the first among the contemplations of '*dhammas*'. Before embarking on a closer inspection of this exercise, I will at first examine the implications of the expression '*dhammas*', in order to provide some background for the exercises listed under the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*.

Most translators render the term *dhammas* in the present context as 'mental objects', referring to whatever becomes an object of the mind, in contradistinction to the objects of the five other senses. In regard to *satipaṭṭhāna*, however, this rendering appears strange. As contemplation of the mind has already received a detailed treatment in the third *satipaṭṭhāna*, why then should the 'objects' of the mind be mentioned as a separate *satipaṭṭhāna*? Moreover, if the term *dhammas* were to refer to 'objects of the mind', then the other three *satipaṭṭhāna* should also be included here, since they too can become objects of the mind. On the other hand, the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna* also includes contemplating the six senses together with their respective objects, so that in this case to be contemplating '*dhammas*' is not confined to the

⁷¹² Of the sixty-two grounds for views presented in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (D I 12-39) altogether forty-nine grounds appear to be related to concentrative attainments of various types: recollection of past lives [nos 1-3, 5-7, 17]; the divine eye [31-34, 51-57]; *kasiḍa* meditation [9-11, 19, 23-25, 29-30, 35, 39-41, 43, 47-49]; and *jhāna* in general [20-22, 27, 36-38, 44-46, 59-62]; (correlations given with the help of the comy). This ratio (close to 80 %) constitutes an overwhelming testimony for the view-generating propensity of deep concentration experiences. The fact that *jhānic* experiences may easily lead to forming wrong views is also noted by Wijebandara: *Early Buddhism* p 21.

⁷¹³ Piatigorski: *Buddhist Philosophy*, p 44: "in early historical Buddhism some non-Buddhist yogic experiences were realized, analysed and reworked so that they could be used without their previous or actual religious contents." Premasiri: "Philosophy of Religion", p 178: "The distinctive feature of Buddhism is that it described these *jhāna* states purely in psychological terms, without bringing in mystical or supernatural explanations for them."

⁷¹⁴ M I 350: '*pañhamāṇi jhānāni abhisaikhattāni abhisaṅcetaṇṇāni. Yaṁ kho pana kiṁci abhisaikhattāni abhisaṅcetaṇṇāni tad-aniccaṁ nirodhadhammanti pajānāti*. Similarly, M I 436 analyses *jhānic* experience with the help of the aggregate scheme, followed by the following consideration: *te dhammā aniccato dukkhato rogato gaḍḍhato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suṇṇato anattato samanupassati. So tehi dhammehi cittaṇi pañivāpeti ...*

⁷¹⁵ M I 60: *samudayadhammānupassā vā cittasmīṇi viharati, vayadhammānupassā vā cittasmīṇi viharati, samudayavaya-dhammānupassā vā cittasmīṇi viharati*. Cf. also S V 305: *catunnaṁ satipaṭṭhānānaṁ bhāvitattā bahulākatattā jhāna-vimokkhasamādhisamāpattānaṁ saikilesaṇi vodānaṁ vuññhānaṁ yathābhātaṁ pajānāmi*.

objects of mind as the sixth sense only. In fact, the *dhammas* listed here, such as the hindrances and the aggregates (etc.), do not naturally evoke the classification 'mental objects'.⁷¹⁶

What this *satipaṭṭhāna* actually represents are specific mental factors (such as the five hindrances and the seven awakening factors), and analyses of experience into specific categories (such as the five aggregates, the six sense-spheres, and the four noble truths). These mental factors and categories constitute central aspects of the Buddha's way of teaching.⁷¹⁷ These classificatory schemes are not in themselves the objects of meditation, but rather constitute 'frameworks' or 'points of reference' to be applied during contemplation. During actual practice one is to look at whatever is experienced in terms of these *dhammas*.⁷¹⁸ Thus the *dhammas* mentioned in this *satipaṭṭhāna* are not 'mental objects', but rather are applied to whatever becomes an object of the mind or of any other sense-door during contemplation.

The expression 'contemplation of *dhammas*' occurs also in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* in relation to the last four of the sixteen steps for developing mindfulness of breathing, which are concerned with contemplating 'impermanence', 'fading away', 'cessation', and 'letting go'.⁷¹⁹ At first sight, the four steps described here appear to be quite different from the mental factors and categories listed under contemplation of *dhammas* in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The Buddha's reason for classifying these final four steps of mindfulness of breathing as contemplation of *dhammas* was that at this more advanced point of practice a meditator will have overcome desires and discontent and become established in equanimity.⁷²⁰ The commentaries indicate that this is a reference to the removal of the hindrances.⁷²¹

Although taking desires and discontent as representing the whole set of the five hindrances is questionable,⁷²² this explanation provides a link from the final four steps of mindfulness of breathing to the sequence of *dhammas* in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, since these begin with the hindrances. According to the commentaries, the hindrances head the contemplations of *dhammas* because their removal serves as a basis for developing the comparatively sophisticated contemplations in this *satipaṭṭhāna*.⁷²³ A further parallel between the two dis-

⁷¹⁶ Thanissaro: *Wings to Awakening*, p 73. Pañis II 234 simply suggests that whatever is not included in the previous three *satipaṭṭhānas*, is to be understood as *dhammas* in this context: *kathaū dhammesu dhammānupassā viharati? Idhekacco ṇhapetvā kāyāū ṇhapetvā vedanāū ṇhapetvā cittaū tad-avasese dhamme ... anupassati*. Sālananda: *Four Foundations*, p 95, rejects a translation as 'mental objects', and suggests to leave *dhammas* untranslated, a suggestion which I have followed. Alternative translations could be: "phenomena" (in Bodhi: *Connected Discourses*, p 44, and in Jayasuriya: *Psychology*, p 161); or "patterns of events" (in Harvey: "Psychological Aspects", p 354); "conditions" (in Vajiraṅgā: *Buddhist Meditation*, p 59); or "principles" (in Watanabe: *Philosophy*, p 16).

⁷¹⁷ Āḍāmolī: *Middle Length Discourses*, p 1193 n 157 suggests: "In this context *dhammā* can be understood as comprising all phenomena classified by way of the categories of the *Dhamma*, the Buddha's teaching." Gyori: *Satipaṭṭhāna*, p 24, in regard to *dhammānupassanā* suggests that "the exercises ... in this section are specifically intended to invest the mind with a soteriological orientation."

⁷¹⁸ In this context it is noticeable that the instruction for contemplation of *dhammas* employs the locative case twice, once for *dhammas* and again for the five hindrances, the five aggregates, etc., cf. M I 60: *dhammesu dhammānupassā viharati paṅcasu nāvaraḍesu ... paṅcasupādānakkhandhesu ... chasu ajjhattikabhāhiresu āyatanesu ... sattasu bojjhaḡesu ... catusu ariyasaccesu*. Thus one is to 'contemplate *dhammas* in regard to *dhammas* in regard to the five hindrances, (etc.)', that is, one contemplates phenomena 'in terms of the categories listed as *dhammas*'. This way of introducing each contemplation differs from the other three *satipaṭṭhānas*. In addition, S V 184 conditionally relates the *dhammas* contemplated in this *satipaṭṭhāna* to attention, while body is related to nutriment, feelings to contact, and mind to name-and-form: *catunnaū ... satipaṭṭhānānaū samudayaṅca atthagamaṅca ... manasikārasamudayaḡ dhammānaū samudayo, manasikāranirodhā dhammānaū atthagamo*. This suggests that contemplation of *dhammas* requires the deliberate act of directing attention to its objects, the *dhammas*, to a stronger degree than the other *satipaṭṭhānas*. Carrithers: *Forest Monks*, p 229, explains that "the propositions of doctrine are transmuted into immediate perception, here and now." Similarly Gombrich: *Buddhism*, p 36, speaks of learning "to see the world through Buddhist spectacles"; while Gyatso: "Introduction", p 8, suggests: "previously learned categories and skills inform present experience without being recollected as such." Cf. also Collins: "Deny the Self", p 78.

⁷¹⁹ M III 83: *yasmimḡ samaye aniccānupassī ... virāḡānupassī ... nirodhānupassī ... paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmīti ... passasissāmīti sikkhati, dhammesu dhammānupassī tasmimḡ samaye viharati*.

⁷²⁰ M III 84: *so yaū taū abhijjhādomanassānaū pahānaū taū paṅcāya disvā sādhuḡaū ajjupekkhitā hoti. Tasmātiha dhammesu dhammānupassā tasmīū samaye bhikkhu viharati*.

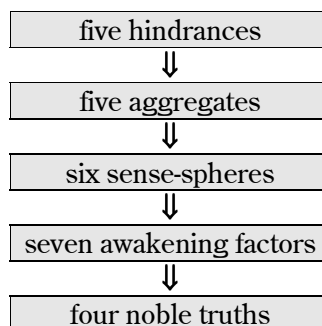
⁷²¹ Ps IV 142: *ettha abhijjhāya kāmaccandanāvaraḍāū, domanassavasena byāpādanāvaraḍāū dassitaū. Idaḡhi catukkaū vipassanāvasevā vuttaū, dhammānupassanā ca nāvaraḍapabbādivasena chabbidhā hoti*.

⁷²² Cf. chapter IV.1.

⁷²³ Ps-pñ I 373: *yesaḡhi veneyānaū pahātabbadhammesu pañhamaū nāvaraḍāni vibhāgena vattabbāni, tesāū vasenettha*

courses is that the sixteen step scheme for mindfulness of breathing leads to the development of the awakening factors,⁷²⁴ since the awakening factors also come up under contemplation of *dhammas* in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Survey of Contemplation of *Dhammas*:
(Diagram 9.1)



These parallels suggest that a temporal progression towards realisation could form the key aspect of contemplation of *dhammas* in both cases. In the *satipaṭṭhāna* context, this progression underlies the sequential order of the mental factors and categories detailed for contemplation of *dhammas* (see diagram 9.1 above), where once a sufficient degree of mental stability has been achieved through overcoming the hindrances, contemplation of *dhammas* proceeds to the five aggregates. Such analysis of subjective personality in turn leads on to analysing the relation between subjective personality and the outer world, a relation which takes place by way of the six sense-spheres, the next object of contemplation.⁷²⁵ These two ways of examining subjective experience form a convenient basis for the arising of the awakening factors, whose successful establishment constitutes a crucial condition for awakening. Awakening, then, corresponds to fully understanding the four noble truths 'as they really are', the final contemplation of *dhammas*.⁷²⁶

With the final four steps of mindfulness of breathing, however, the emphasis is mainly directed towards the insights gained through contemplation of *dhammas*. These proceed from the direct experience of the impermanent nature of phenomena (*aniccānupassī*), to giving attention to their 'fading away' (*virāgānupassī*) and 'cessation' (*nirodhānupassī*). These in turn lead to detachment, to 'letting go' (*paṭinissaggānupassī*), a state of mind fit for awakening.⁷²⁷

Contemplation of *dhammas* in both the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, then, points to a temporal progression towards detachment and realisation. Although the breakthrough to realisation can take place while practising any of the sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing, the final four steps appear to be specifically designed to lead to this end. Similarly in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, although realisation can take place while being engaged in any of the contemplations, the final section on contemplating *dhammas* seems more particularly directed to this purpose.

Bhagavatā pañhamaū nāvareāsesu dhammānupassanā kathitā.

⁷²⁴ At M III 87. Cf. also Pañis I 191, which relates contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassā*) to experiencing the rise and fall of the aggregates and sense-spheres, which provides an additional relation to the *satipaṭṭhāna* context.

⁷²⁵ Although these two contemplations would not necessarily have to be practised in this order, yet it seems meaningful to follow up an inquiry into subjective personality with an investigation of its interrelation with the external world by way of the senses.

⁷²⁶ The above presentation does not imply that the contemplation of *dhammas* have to necessarily be practised in this order and in conjunction, only that they are presented in a progressive order in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

⁷²⁷ Cf. M I 251, where the same four-step sequence, in the context of contemplating feelings, directly leads up to realisation: *yaṃ kañci vedanaṃ vedeti ... so tāsu vedanāsu aniccānupassī ... virāgānupassī ... nirodhānupassī ... paṭinissaggānupassī viharati ... na kiñci loke upādiyati, anupādiyaṃ na paritassati, aparitassaṃ paṇāpānānānaṃ parinibbāyati*. Cf. also Paṭis I 194, which explains *paṭinissaggānupassī* to be of two types: *pariccāgapaṭinissagga ca pak-khandanapaṭinissagga ca*, 'giving up' (the aggregates) and 'leaping forward' (to realisation). On *paṭinissagga* cf. also Ñāṇārāma: *Seven Contemplations* pp 85-87; and van Zeyst: "Abandonment!", p 3.

In contrast to the previous *satipaṭṭhānas*, contemplation of *dhammas* is moreover particularly concerned with recognising the conditioned nature of the phenomena under observation. In fact, the main instruction for most of the contemplation of *dhammas* directly turns to conditionality, an aspect which occurred in relation to the previous *satipaṭṭhānas* only in the 'restrain'.⁷²⁸ This brings to mind the well-known statement that one who sees dependent origination sees the *Dhamma*.⁷²⁹ Such 'seeing' (*passati*) of the *Dhamma* may well come about through 'contemplating' (*anu-passati*) of *dhammas*, a suggestion which also squares well with the acquisition of the 'method' (*ñāya*) mentioned in the 'direct path' passage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as a goal of practice.⁷³⁰

Thus 'contemplation of *dhammas*' skillfully applies *dhammas* (classificatory categories) as taught in the *Dhamma* (teaching of the Buddha) during contemplation in order to bring about an understanding of the *dhamma* (principle) of conditionality and to lead to the realisation of the highest of all *dhammas* (phenomena) - *Nibbāna*.⁷³¹

IX.2) The Five Hindrances

The first of the contemplations of *dhammas* is, in a way, a more specific version of contemplation of the mind, since it turns awareness to five particular manifestations of the earlier mentioned three unwholesome roots: the five hindrances. In contrast to the preceding contemplation of the mind, however, contemplation of the hindrances not only covers the presence or absence of a hindrance, but also the conditions underlying the presence or absence of the respective hindrance. In my exploration I will follow the two-stage pattern of this instruction, by initially focussing on the particular characteristics of each hindrance, and subsequently turning to the conditions for their presence or absence.

The *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions for contemplating the hindrances are:

"If sensual desire is present in him, he knows: 'there is sensual desire in me'; if sensual desire is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no sensual desire in me'; and he knows how unarisen sensual desire can arise, how arisen sensual desire can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed sensual desire can be prevented.
 If aversion is present in him, he knows ...
 If sloth and torpor are present in him, he knows ...
 If restlessness and worry are present in him, he knows ...
 If doubt is present in him, he knows: 'there is doubt in me'; if doubt is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no doubt in me'; and he knows how unarisen doubt can arise, how arisen doubt can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed doubt can be prevented."⁷³²

The use of the term 'hindrance' (*nīvaraṇa*) clearly indicates why these mental states have been singled out for special attention, namely because they 'hinder' the proper functioning of the mind.⁷³³ Under the influence of the hindrances one is unable to understand one's own good or that of others, or to gain concentration and insight.⁷³⁴ Learning to withstand the impact

⁷²⁸ In order to illustrate more clearly this characteristic feature of contemplation of *dhammas*, in this and in future chapters I will distinguish between these two stages of contemplation with the help of diagrams.

⁷²⁹ M I 190: *yo pañiccasamuppādaū passati so dhammaū passati, yo dhammaū passati so pañiccasamuppādaū passati*.

⁷³⁰ Cf. above chapter V.3.

⁷³¹ *Nibbāna* as the highest of all wholesome *dhammas* comes up at D III 102: *āsavaṇā khaya ... etad-anuttariyaū ... kusalesu dhammesu*. Cf. also A II 34: *yāvata dhammā saikhata vā asaikhata vā, virāgo tesau aggam-akkhāyati, yad-idaū ... nibbānaū*; and Sn 225: *amataū ... na tena dhammena samatthi kiṅci*.

⁷³² M I 60: *santaū vā ajjhataū kamacchandaū 'atthi me ajjhataū kamacchando' ti pajānāti, asantaū vā ajjhataū kamacchandaū 'natthi me ajjhataū kamacchando' ti pajānāti, yathā ca anuppannassa kamacchandassa uppādo hoti ta-ca pajānāti, yathā ca uppannassa kamacchandassa pahānaū hoti ta-ca pajānāti, yathā ca pahānassa kamacchandassa āyatīū anuppādo hoti ta-ca pajānāti*; (the same is then repeated for *byāpāda*, *thānamiddha*, *uddhaccakukkucca*, and *vicikicchā*).

⁷³³ D I 246: *paṅcime nāvaraḍā ariyassa vinaye āvaraḍāti pi vuccanti, nāvaraḍāti pi vuccanti, onahāti pi vuccanti, pariyaonahāti pi vuccanti*; S V 96: *paṅcime ... nāvaraḍā cetaso ajjhārāhā paṅcāya dubbalākaraḍā*; S V 97: *paṅcime nāvaraḍā andhakaraḍā acakkhukaraḍā aṅgāḍākarāḍā paṅcānirodhikā vighātapakkhiyā anibbānasāvattanikā*.

⁷³⁴ A III 63: *ime paṅca āvaraḍe nāvaraḍe ... attatthāū vā paṅcassati paratthāū vā ... ubhayatthāū vā ... netaū nānaū vijjati*. S V 127: *kāmarāgāpariyuññhitena cetasa ... vicikicchāpariyuññhitena cetasa ... ayam-pi kho hetu ayam-paccayo aṅgāḍāya*

of a hindrance with awareness is therefore an important skill for one's progress on the path. Therefore difficulties in counterbalancing a hindrance are a good reason for approaching an experienced meditator to ask for practical guidance.⁷³⁵

These five hindrances actually cover seven distinct mental states.⁷³⁶ This fivefold presentation is probably due to the similarities in effect and character between sloth (*thīna*) and torpor (*middha*), and between restlessness (*uddhacca*) and worry (*kukkucca*).⁷³⁷ According to the commentaries, this fivefold presentation enables correlating the hindrances with the five mental factors needed for absorption attainment (*jhāna-aṅga*).⁷³⁸ The hindrances not only obstruct absorption attainment, but also impede the establishment of the awakening factors (*bojjhaṅga*).⁷³⁹ This antagonistic relationship between the hindrances and the awakening factors is of considerable importance, since the removal of the former and the development of the latter are necessary conditions for realisation.⁷⁴⁰

Two sets of similes in the discourses depict the specific character and effect of the five hindrances. The first set of similes illustrates the effect of each hindrance with the help of a bowl full of water, used as a mirror in order to look at the reflection of one's own face. According to these similes, the effect of sensual desire is similar to water mixed with dye; aversion resembles water heated up to the boil; sloth and torpor are comparable to water overgrown with moss; restlessness and worry affect the mind like water stirred by wind; and doubt is similar to

adassanāya. S V 92: *kāmacchando ... vicikicchā ... ime paṇḍita cittaṃ upakkilesā cittaṃ ... na ca sammā samādhiyati āsavānāṃ khayāya*. M II 203: *paṇḍita nāvaraḍehi ... āvaṇṇo nivuto ophuto pariyoṇaddho, so vata uttarimanussadhammā alam-ariyaṃ ādādasanavisesāṃ ṇassati vā dakkhiti vā sacchi vā karissatāti - netaṃ nānāṃ vijjati*.

⁷³⁵ A III 317 and 321.

⁷³⁶ At S V 110 a tenfold presentation is given, by distinguishing between internal *kāmacchanda*, *byāpāda*, and *vicikicchā*, and their external counterparts, while the remaining two compounds are separated: *yad-api thānāṃ tad-api nāvaraḍāṃ, yad-api middhāṃ tad-api nāvaraḍāṃ ... yad-api uddhaccaṃ tad-api nāvaraḍāṃ ... yad-api kukkuccaṃ tad-api nāvaraḍāṃ*. This way of presentation supports the notion of seven actual states of mind. Cf. also Gunaratana: *Serenity and Insight*, p 32. A variation of the usual fivefold presentation can be found at It 8, which has a single hindrance, the *avijjānāvaraḍa* (hindrance of ignorance). Another variation occurs at Pañis I 31, 103, and 163, where enumerations of the hindrances omit *kukkucca* (worry) and have *avijjā* (ignorance) and *arati* (dissatisfaction) instead.

⁷³⁷ The similarity between sloth and torpor is noted by Vibh 254, according to which both refer to 'akalyatā' (inability, unreadiness), with the difference that sloth is of a mental type, while torpor refers to the bodily variation: *thāna ... yā cittaṃ akalyatā ... middha ... yā kāyassa akalyatā*. Vibh-a 369 understands this explanation in the case of torpor to refer to mental factors, the *cetasikas*, (differentiated from the mind, *citta*), not to the physical body. Yet, if one considers the counter methods listed for torpor at A IV 85 it becomes probable that the term *middha* does represent physical torpor. The similarity of the other two hindrances is documented at Ps-pñ I 375: *kukkuccam-pi ... uddhaccena samānalakkhaḍam-eva*.

⁷³⁸ Vism 141: *samādhi kāmacchandassa pañipakkho, pāti vyāpādassa, vitakko thānamiddhassa, sukhaṃ uddhacca-kukkuccassa, vicāro vicikicchāya*. (On this correlation cf. also Buddhādāsa: *ānāpānasati*, p 112; and Karunaratne: "Jhāna", p 51). The point that Vism is trying to make here could be, in the case of the first four correlations, that unification of the mind through concentration (*samādhi*) is opposed to the mental diversification caused by sensual desire, the mental bliss and physical ease caused by the arising of joy (*pāti*) is incompatible with the mental rigidity and physical tension of aversion, the clear grasp of the object through initial mental application (*vitakka*) counteracts the unclarity and mental fogginess of sloth and torpor, and the mental contentment and physical tranquility engendered by happiness (*sukha*) does not leave scope for restlessness or worries to arise (cf. Vism-mhñ I 165). As for the fifth hindrance, if *vicikicchā* is understood in a more broad manner, i.e. implying not only doubt but also a distracted state of mind in general (cf. Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 615, where *vicikicchati* is related to being distracted in thought), then this would find its counterbalance in the mental stability and undistractedness produced by sustained mental application (*vicāra*). On the other hand, it needs to be pointed out that in the discourses a listing of the hindrances and the individual *jhāna* factors together occurs only at M I 294: *Pañhamaṃ jhānaṃ paṇḍitaṃ avipphānaṃ, paṇḍitaṃ samānāgataṃ. Idha pañhamaṃ jhānaṃ samāpannassa bhikkhuno kāmacchando pahāno hoti, byāpādo ... thānamiddhā ... uddhaccakukkuccaṃ ... vicikicchā pahāna hoti; vitakko ca vattati vicāro ca pāti ca sukhaṃ ca cittaṃ kaggatā ca*. This passage does not directly relate each hindrance to an individual *jhāna* factor, but merely enumerates both, and that in a sequence which does not correspond to the commentarial correlation. This passage is moreover absent from the Chinese version of this discourse, the Ta-ch, -hsi-lo-ching, *Madhyama āgama* No 211 (cf. Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 100, and Stuart-Fox: "Jhāna", p 90), which otherwise corresponds exactly to the *Pāli* version. For a discussion of the *jhāna* factor analysis cf. also Rahula: "Comparative Study", p 192.

⁷³⁹ This is especially the case for *thānamiddha* (sloth and torpor) *. viriya* (energy), *uddhaccakukkucca* (restlessness and worry) *. passaddhi* (tranquility), and *vicikicchā* (doubt) *. dhammavicaya* (investigation-of-dhammas), e.g. at S V 104. In numerous instances throughout the *Bojjhaṅga Sāyutta* (S V 63-140) the awakening factors and the hindrances are presented as diametrically opposed mental states. Cf. also chapter XI.1.

⁷⁴⁰ A V 195: *ye kho keci lokamhā niyyiṃsu vā niyyanti vā niyyissanti vā, sabbe te paṇḍita nāvaraḍe pahāya ... catusu satipaññānesu supatīññhita citta satta bojjhaṅge yathābhātaṃ bhāvetvā evam-ete lokamhā niyyiṃsu vā niyyanti vā niyyissanti vā*. D II 83, D III 101, and S V 161 stipulate the same conditions for becoming a Buddha.

dark and muddy water.⁷⁴¹ In all five cases, one is unable to properly see one's own reflection in the water. These similes vividly illustrate the individual character of each hindrance: sensual desire 'colours' one's perception, because of aversion one gets 'heated up', sloth and torpor result in stagnation, through restlessness and worry one is tossed about, and doubt obscures.⁷⁴²

The other set of similes illustrates the absence of the hindrances. According to this set, to be free from sensual desire is like being relieved from a debt; to be free from the 'dis-ease' of aversion is similar to recovering from physical illness; to be unobstructed by sloth and torpor is akin to being released from prison; to be free from the agitation of restlessness and worry is like being liberated from slavery; and to overcome doubt resembles safely crossing a dangerous desert.⁷⁴³ Since the first set of similes illustrates the presence of the hindrances (in terms of their debilitating effect), while the second set of similes describes the relief of being free from them, these two sets correspond to the two alternatives for contemplating the hindrances: awareness of their presence or their absence.

The vivid illustrations in the water similes can be used to assist rapid detection and recognition of the hindrances in actual practice. According to the Buddha, if a hindrance is present and one does not recognise it, one is 'mis-meditating'.⁷⁴⁴ On the other hand, if one does recognise the presence of a hindrance and contemplates it as a *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, this in itself is already a form of mental purity.⁷⁴⁵

A passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* documents the importance of clearly recognising mental defilements for what they are. This discourse reports the monk *Anuruddha* complaining to his friend *Sāriputta* that, despite concentrative attainments, unshaken energy, and well established mindfulness, he was unable to break through to full realisation. In reply, *Sāriputta* pointed out that *Anuruddha's* boasting of concentration attainments was nothing but a manifestation of conceit, his 'unshaken energy' was simply restlessness, and his concern about not yet having awakened was just worry. Helped by his friend to recognise these hindrances, *Anuruddha* was soon able to overcome them and to achieve realisation.⁷⁴⁶

This procedure of simple recognition constitutes an ingenious way of turning obstacles to meditation into meditation objects.⁷⁴⁷ Practised in this way, bare awareness of a hindrance becomes a middle path between suppression and indulgence.⁷⁴⁸ The discourses beautifully illustrate the powerful effect of this simple act of recognition with the tempter *Māra*, who often acts as a personification of the five hindrances: as soon as he is recognised, he has to vanish.⁷⁴⁹

The ingenuity of this approach of bare recognition can be illustrated by considering the case of anger from a medical perspective. The arising of anger leads to increase in the release of adrenalin, and an increase of adrenalin in turn further stimulates the already existing

⁷⁴¹ S V 121 and A III 230.

⁷⁴² Cf. also Fryba: *Art of Happiness*, p 202, who suggests the following correlations: sensual desire - distorts perception and fragments awareness, aversion - creates divisions and cramps the mind, sloth and torpor - befog awareness, restlessness and worry - consume the mind with no sense of direction, doubt - creates irresolute vacillation.

⁷⁴³ D I 71 and also M I 275.

⁷⁴⁴ M III 14: *kāmarāgaṃ ... byāpādati ... thānamiddhaṃ ... uddhaccakukkuccaṃ ... vicikicchāṃ yeva antaraṃ karitvā jhāyati pajjhāyati nijjhāyati apajjhāyati. Evarāpaṃ kho so Bhagavā jhānaṃ na vadōesi.*

⁷⁴⁵ A I 272: *idha bhikkhu santaṃ vā ajjhataṃ kāmaccandaṃ ... vicikicchāṃ ... taṃ-ca pajānāti. Idaṃ vuccati manosoceyyāṃ.*

⁷⁴⁶ A I 282: *'idhāhaṃ dibbena cakkhunā ... sahasaṃ lokaṃ olokemi, āradhaṃ kho pana me viriyāṃ asallānaṃ, upaññhitā sati asammūñhā, passaddho kāyo asāradhho, samāhitāṃ cittaṃ ekaggāṃ. Atha ca pana me na anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimuccatāti.' 'Yam kho te evaṃ hoti 'ahaṃ dibbena cakkhunā ...' idan-te mānasmīṃ, yam-pi te evaṃ hoti - 'āradhaṃ kho pana me viriyāṃ ...' idan-te uddhaccasmīṃ, yam-pi te evaṃ hoti - 'na anupādāya ...' idan-te kukkucasmīṃ. Sādhu vatāyasmā Anuruddho ime ... dhamme pahāya ... amanasikaritvā amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasāharatu. Based on this clarification soon: aṃcātaro ca panāyasmā Anuruddho arahataṃ ahoṣi.*

⁷⁴⁷ Gunaratana: *Serenity and Insight*, p 44; and Yaḍapoḍika: *Power of Mindfulness*, 21.

⁷⁴⁸ This position of *satipaṭṭhāna* as a middle path between sense indulgence and self-mortification is documented at A I 295: *tisso imā paṇipadā ... kamesu pātavyatāṃ āpajjati, ayaṃ vuccati āgāhā paṇipadā ... kāyassa ātāpanaparitāpanānuyogam anuyutta viharati, ayaṃ vuccati nijjhāma paṇipadā ... kāye ... dhammesu dhammānupassā viharati ātāpā sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ, ayaṃ vuccati majjhimā paṇipadā.*

⁷⁴⁹ Several of these episodes can be found in the *Māra* and *Bhikkhūḍā Saṃyuttas*, S I 103-135; cf. also the injunction at Sn 967 to recognise mental defilements as manifestations of *Māra*, the 'dark one'. Goldstein: *Insight Meditation*, p 85, illustratively speaks of "wagging the finger at *Māra*." Cf. also Marasinghe: *Gods*, p 197.

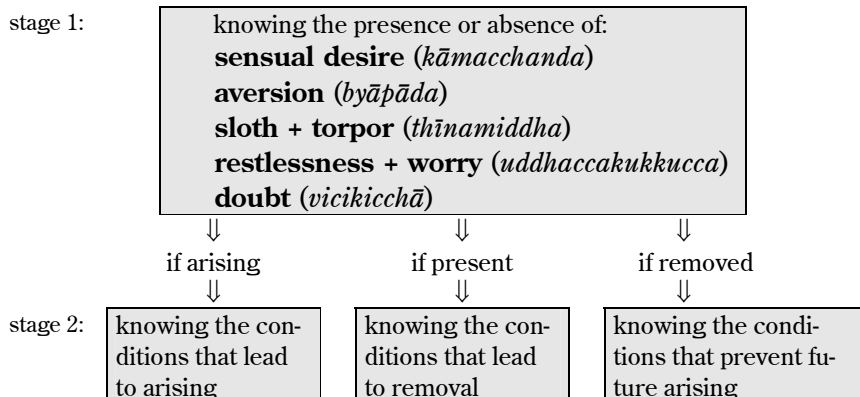
anger.⁷⁵⁰ In this way, each augments the other. The presence of non-reactive *sati* puts a brake on this vicious cycle.⁷⁵¹ By simply remaining receptively aware of a state of anger, neither the physical reaction nor the mental proliferation is given scope. If, on the other hand, one abandons the balanced state of awareness and resents or condemns the arisen anger, the act of condemnation becomes just another manifestation of aversion.⁷⁵² The vicious cycle of anger continues, albeit with a different object.⁷⁵³

Once the hindrances are at least temporarily removed,⁷⁵⁴ the alternative aspect of contemplating the hindrances becomes relevant: awareness of their absence. In several expositions of the gradual path, the absence of the hindrances forms the starting point for a causal sequence that leads via joy, happiness, and mental calmness (*pāmojja*, *pīti*, *passaddhi*, *sukha*) to concentration and absorption attainment.⁷⁵⁵ The instruction in this context is 'to contemplate the disappearance of the five hindrances within oneself.' This suggests a positive act of recognising and even rejoicing in the absence of the hindrances, which then paves the way for deep concentration. Such a conscious act of recognising and rejoicing in the absence of the hindrances is vividly illustrated in the second set of similes mentioned above, which compare this state of mental freedom to freedom from debt, disease, imprisonment, slavery, and danger.

IX.3) Conditions for Presence and Absence of the Hindrances

After the first stage of recognising the presence or the absence of a hindrance, the second stage of the same contemplation follows: awareness of the conditions that have led to the arising of a hindrance, that assist in removing an arisen hindrance, and that prevent future arising (see diagram 9.2 below). The task of *sati* in this particular context follows a progressive pattern, proceeding from diagnosis, via cure, to prevention.

Two Stages in the Contemplation of the Five Hindrances:
(Diagram 9.2)



⁷⁵⁰ De Silva: *Mental Culture*, p 25.

⁷⁵¹ A study with the help of Rorschach testing corroborates this, where Brown: "Stages of Mindfulness", p 189, comes to the conclusion that advanced meditators are not without the experience of conflict, but are remarkably non-defensive in experiencing such conflicts. This observation points to their ability to maintain non-reactive and equanimous awareness.

⁷⁵² Goldstein: *Experience of Insight*, p 57: "Often there is a tendency to condemn the hindrances when they arise. The condemning mind is itself the factor of aversion."

⁷⁵³ In fact S V 110 distinguished between internal (*ajjhata*) and external (*bahiddhā*) manifestations of aversion, documenting that aversion directed towards others and towards oneself are both included under the hindrance *byāpāda*. Cf. also Spk III 170, which speaks of *attano* and *paresaṃ uppanna pañigho*.

⁷⁵⁴ Complete eradication of all the five hindrances takes place only with the attainment of full awakening, cf. S V 327: *bhikkhā arahanto ... tesam paṃca nāvaraṃhā pahānā ucchinnamālā talāvatthukatā anabhāvakatā āyatiṃ anuppādadhammā*. In fact, when commenting on this part of the *Satipaṇṇhāna Sutta*, Ps I 282 correlates the 'future non-arising' of each hindrance with corresponding levels of realisation, in most cases these being non-return or *arahant*-ship.

⁷⁵⁵ E.g. at D I 73: *paṃca nāvaraṃhā pahāṃhā attani samanupassato pāmojjaṃ jāyati, pamuditassa pāti jāyati, pātimanassa kāyo passambhati, passaddhakāyo sukhaṃ vedeti, sukhino cittaṃ samādhiyati. So viviceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi ... pañhamajjhānāṃ ... catutthajjhānāṃ upasampajja viharati*. The use of the verb *samanupassati* indicates that a form of contemplation (*anupassanā*) is intended here.

By turning a hindrance into an object of meditation, the mere presence of awareness can often lead to dispelling the hindrance in question. Should bare awareness not suffice, more specific antidotes are required. In this case, *sati* has the task of supervising the measures undertaken for removing the hindrance, by providing a clear picture of the actual situation, without however getting involved itself and thereby losing its detached observational vantage point.

Clearly recognising the conditions for the arising of a particular hindrance not only forms the basis for its removal, but also leads to an appreciation of the general patterns of its arising. Such appreciation lays bare the levels of conditioning and misperceptions that cause the arising of a hindrance, and thereby contributes to preventing its future recurrence.

Sustained observation will uncover the fact that frequently thinking or dwelling on a particular issue produces a corresponding mental inclination, a tendency to get caught up in ever more thoughts and associations along the same lines.⁷⁵⁶ In the case of sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), for example, it will become evident that its arising is not only due to outer objects, but also because of an inclination towards sensuality embedded within one's own mind.⁷⁵⁷ This sensual tendency influences the way one perceives outer objects and thereby leads to the full-blown arising of desire, culminating in attempts to satisfy this desire.⁷⁵⁸

The particular dynamic of sensual desire is such that, every time a sensual desire is gratified, the act of gratification fuels ever stronger subsequent manifestations of the same desire.⁷⁵⁹ With detached observation it will become apparent that gratification of sensual desires is based on a misconception, on searching for pleasure in the wrong place.⁷⁶⁰ According to the Buddha, the way to inner peace and composure is indeed inexorably related to gaining independence from this vortex of desire and gratification.⁷⁶¹

A passage in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* offers an intriguing psychological analysis of the underlying causes for sensual desire. According to this discourse, the search for satisfaction through a partner of the other gender is based on being identified with the characteristics and ways of behaviour of one's own gender in the first place. That is, to search for union externally simply means that one is unable to go beyond the limitations of one's own gender role.⁷⁶² This goes to show that the affective investment inherent in identifying with one's gender role and behaviour forms an important link in the build-up of sensual desire. In contrast *arahants*, who have eradicated even the subtlest traces of identification, are unable to engage in sexual intercourse.⁷⁶³

Just as the arising of sensual desire can be analysed in terms of its psychological underpinnings, so too the absence of sensual desire depends on an intelligent management of the same psychological mechanisms. Once one has at least temporarily escaped from the vicious circle of continuous demands for satisfaction, it becomes possible to develop some form of counterbalance in one's perceptual appraisal.⁷⁶⁴ If excessive dwelling on aspects of external

⁷⁵⁶ M I 115: *yaṃ ad-eva ... bahulam-anuvitakketi anuvicāreti, tathā tathā nati hoti cetaso.*

⁷⁵⁷ S I 22: *na te kāmā yāni citrāni loke, saṅkapparāgo purisassa kāmo.*

⁷⁵⁸ This conditioned sequence is described at S II 151: *kāmadhātūū pañicca uppajjati kāmasaṃṅgā, kāmasaṃṅgāū pañicca uppajjati kāmasaṅkappo ... kāmacchando ... kāmapariēāho ... kāmapariyesanā.*

⁷⁵⁹ M I 508: *yathā yathā sattā ... kāme pañisevanti tathā tathā tesāū tesāū sattānāū kāmataḍḍhā ceva pavaóohati, kāmāpariēāhena ca parióayhanti.*

⁷⁶⁰ M I 507: *sattā kāmesu avātaragā kāmataḍḍhāhi khajjamānā kāmāpariēāhena parióayhamānā upahatindriyā dukkhasamphasseseva kāmesu sukham-iti viparātasāṃṅgāū paccalatthūū.*

⁷⁶¹ M I 508: *ye hi keci samaḍḍā vā brāhmaḍḍā vā vigatapipāsā ajjhataū vāpasantacittā vihaūsu vā viharanti vā viharissanti vā sabbe te ... kāmataḍḍhāū pahāya ... viharanti.*

⁷⁶² A IV 57: *itthi ajjhataū itthindriyāū manasikaroti itthikuttaū itthākkappaū itthividhaū itthicchandaū itthissaraū itthālaūkāraū; sā tatha rajjati tatrābhiramati, sā tatha rattā tatrābhiratā bahiddhā purisindriyāū manasikaroti ... purisālaūkāraū; sā tatha rajjati tatrābhiramati, sa tatha rattā tatrābhiratā bahiddhā saūyogaū ākaikhati ... evaū itthi itthattaū nātivattati. Puriso ajjhataū purisindriyāū manasikaroti ... (etc.); on this passage comments de Silva: "Cetovimutti", p 126.*

⁷⁶³ D III 133: *abhabbo khāóāsavo bhikkhu ... methunaū dhammaū patisevitūū* (this passage refers to the *arahant*, however the eradication of sensual desire already takes place at the level of non-return).

⁷⁶⁴ Th 1224-1225 elaborates that a distorted cognition of sensuality can be counterbalanced by avoiding sensually alluring objects, by directing attention to the ugly aspects of the body, by mindfulness of the body (in general), and by developing

beauty has led to frequent states of lust, contemplation directed towards the less appealing aspects of the body will lead to a progressive decrease of such mental states.

Typical examples for such counterbalancing can be found among the *satipatthāna* meditation practices, in particular the contemplations of the anatomical constitution of the body and of a decaying corpse. In addition to these, restraint of the senses, moderation with food, wakefulness, and awareness of the impermanent nature of all mental events are helpful measures in order to prevent the arising of sensual desire.⁷⁶⁵

Similar approaches are appropriate for the other hindrances, in each case entailing the establishment of some form of counterbalance to the conditions that tend to stimulate the arising of the respective hindrance. In the case of aversion (*byāpāda*), often the irritating or repulsive feature of phenomena has received undue attention. A direct antidote to such one-sided perception is to intentionally ignore the negative qualities of whoever is causing one's irritation, and to pay attention instead to whatever positive qualities can be found in him or her.⁷⁶⁶ By no longer paying attention to the matter, or by reflecting on the inevitability of karmic retribution, it will become possible to establish equanimity.⁷⁶⁷

A major remedy for a tendency to anger and aversion is the development of loving kindness (*mettā*).⁷⁶⁸ According to the discourses, to develop loving kindness not only helps to establish harmonious relations towards other human beings, but also towards non-human beings.⁷⁶⁹ In the present context, the concept of 'non-human beings' can also be understood in a psychological way, as representing subjective psychological disorders.⁷⁷⁰ The development of loving kindness indeed counteracts pathological feelings of alienation and low self esteem, and thereby provides an important foundation for successful insight meditation.

Loving kindness not only provides the proper preparatory ground for the practice of insight meditation, but it can also directly contribute to realisation.⁷⁷¹ According to the Buddha, the distinct character of loving kindness meditation as taught by him lies in combining it with

disenchantment: *saññāya vipariyesā cittaū te pariāyhati, nimittaū parivajjehi subhāū rāgāpasāhitaū, asubhāya cittaū bhāvehi, ekaggāū susamāhitaū, sati kāyagatā tyatthu, nibbidābahulo bhava.*

⁷⁶⁵ A IV 166: *tibbarāgo ti Nandaū sammā vadamāno vadeyya. Kim-aññatra ... indriyesu guttadvāro, bhōjane mattaññā, jāgariyāū amuyutto, satisampajañña samannāgato, yehi Nando sakkoti paripuḍḍāū parisuddhāū brahmacariyāū caritūū?* The implications of *satisampajañña* in this context are explained at A IV 168: *viditā vedanā ... saññā ... vitakkā uppajjanti, viditā upaññahanti, viditā abhhatthāū gacchanti.* Moreover at S IV 110 monks are encouraged to look on women as if they were their own mother, sister, or daughter: *mātumattāsu mātuccittāū ... bhagināmattāsu bhaginācittāū ... dhātumattāsu dhātuccittāū upaññhapethā.* The same discourse (at S IV 112) documents the importance of sense-restraint in particular, since from the various methods mentioned for countering sensual desire, sense-restraint turned out to be the acceptable explanation why even young monks are able to live in celibacy.

⁷⁶⁶ A III 186.

⁷⁶⁷ These come at A III 185 as part of altogether five antidotes: developing *mettā*, compassion, equanimity, not paying attention, and reflecting on karma: *yasmīū puggale āghāto jāyetha, mettā ... karuḍā ... upekkhā tasmīū puggale bhāvetabbā ... asati amanasikāro tasmīū puggale āpajjitabbo ... kamasakatā tasmīū puggale adhiññhātabbā.*

⁷⁶⁸ M I 424: *mettāū ... bhāvanāū bhāvayato yo byāpādo so pahāyissati.* According to Fenner: "Cognitive Theories", p 226, the *brahmavihāras* (divine abodes) are based on accurate cognitions and thus counter errant cognitions leading to unwholesome mental states. Inspiring descriptions of *mettā* and *karuḍā* (compassion) can be found in *Āḍāpoḍika: Four Sublime States*, pp 9-12.

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. S II 264: *yassa kassaci bhikkhuno mettā cetovimutti bhavitā bahulākatā so duppadhāsiyo hoti amanussehi.*

⁷⁷⁰ In fact at S II 265, non-human beings are apparently set on creating psychological disorders, which can be prevented by developing *mettā*: *yassa kassaci bhikkhuno mettā cetovimutti bhavitā bahulākatā ... tassa ce amanusso cittaū khipitabbam maññeyya, atha kho svedha amanusso kilamathassa vighātassa bhāgā assa.* Katz: *Human Perfection*, p 161, suggests: "one possible interpretation of 'non-human beings' could be those psychological functions which endanger spiritual growth."

⁷⁷¹ M I 352 describes in detail how to combine *mettā* with insight: on emergence from an absorption developed through *mettā*, one develops insight into the impermanent and conditioned nature of this attainment: *ayam-pi kho mettācetovimutti abhisāḅhatā abhisācētayitā ... tad-aniccaū nirodhadhammāū.* M I 38 and A I 196 describe the transition from *mettā* to insight: *mettāsahagatena cetasā ... sabbāvantaū lokaū ... viharati. So evaū pajānāti: 'atthi idaū, atthi hānāū, atthi paḍḍatāū, atthi imassa saññāgatassa uttariū nissaraḍan'-ti. Tassa evaū jānato evaū passato kāmāsavā pi cittaū vimuccati bhavāsavā pi ... avijjāsavā pi.* Cf. also A IV 150 and It 21: *yo ca mettāū bhāvayati, appamāḍāū patissato, tanu saīyojanā honti, passato upadhikkhayāū.* According to Aronson: *Love and Sympathy*, p 51: "the meditation on love is the soil within which concentration and, or insight are cultivated." Meier: *Satipaññāna*, p 213, suggests that both *vipassanā* and *mettā* meditation have a similar aim, namely to weaken the sense of 'I', so that their different approaches (*vipassanā* by way of analytical dissection, *mettā* by way of expansion) can be considered as complementary. (Though it needs to be kept in mind that *mettā* on its own will not be able to completely remove all attachment to a sense of 'I').

the awakening factors, since in this way loving kindness is directly harnessed to the progress to realisation.⁷⁷² Several discourses relate the practice of loving kindness in particular to the progress from stream-entry to non-return.⁷⁷³ Clearly, the advantages of developing loving kindness are not confined to its function as an antidote to anger and irritation.

Returning to the remaining hindrances, an antidote to sloth (*thīna*) and torpor (*middha*) is to develop 'clarity of cognition' (*ālokasaññā*).⁷⁷⁴ In the discourses and the *Vibhaṅga*, 'clarity of cognition' seems to refer to the development of mental clarity.⁷⁷⁵ The commentaries take the expression more literally and suggest the use of real light, either from an external source, or else light as an internal mental image.⁷⁷⁶

Such 'clarity of cognition' takes place with the aid of mindfulness and clearly knowing (*sampajāna*), which brings into play two essential qualities of *satipaṭṭhāna* as a remedy against sloth and torpor. This points back to the fact that *satipaṭṭhāna* itself can at times suffice for countering a hindrance. The same is also the case in regard to sensual desires, where the contemplation of the anatomical parts or a corpse can act as possible antidotes. Nevertheless, it needs to be kept in mind that the emphasis in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is not on actively opposing a hindrance, but on clearly recognising a hindrance together with the conditions related to its presence or absence. More active measures are the domain of the previous factor in the noble eightfold path, right effort.

The arising of sloth and torpor can be caused by discontent, boredom, laziness, drowsiness due to overeating, and by a depressed state of mind.⁷⁷⁷ An effective antidote for these can then be found in a sustained application of energy.⁷⁷⁸ The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* dedicates an entire

⁷⁷² At S V 119 the Buddha pointed out that this combination formed the distinguishing feature between the Buddhist approach and the way *mettā* was practiced by contemporary ascetics: *bhikkhu mettāsahagataū satisambojjhaigāū bhāveti ... upekkhāsambojjhaigāū bhāveti vivekanissitaū virāganissitaū nirodhanissitaū vossaggapariḍāmiū*. When considering the Buddha's way of teaching *mettā* meditation it may also be of relevance to point out that what he originally taught was an unspecified pervasion of all directions with a feeling of *mettā*, cf. e.g. M II 207: *mettāsahagatena cetasā ekāū disaū pharivā viharati, tathā dutiyaū, tathā tatiyaū, tathā catutthiū; iti udham-adho tiriyaū sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaū lokāū mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāḍena averena abyāpajjhena pharivā viharati*. Cf. also D I 251, M II 207, and S IV 322, where the spatially pervasive character of radiating *mettā* becomes all the more evident, when it is compared to a vigorous trumpeter making himself heard in all four directions. Although such pervasion often stands for absorption, this is not invariably the case, since at M I 129 this pervasion is undertaken when being verbally insulted or even physically maltreated, a situation hardly conducive to entering absorption. Or else at M II 195 a brahmin on his deathbed, suffering from agonising headaches, severe stomach cramps, and high fever, soon after being instructed to practise the *mettā* pervasion passed away and was reborn in the *Brahma* world, a circumstance which suggests that he must have been able to put the instructions to good use, even though his physical condition would have made it impossible for him to develop absorption. It is only with the commentaries, possibly because they associated the pervasion exclusively with absorption (Vism 308), that to practise *mettā* becomes an exercise in conceptual imagination, directed towards oneself, a friend, a neutral person, and an enemy in turn (cf. Vism 296). This way of practice is not found anywhere in the discourses.

⁷⁷³ S V 131: *mettā bhāvitā bahulākaṭā dvinnam phalānaū aṭṭatarāū phalaū pāṇikaikhaū diññheva dhamme aṭṭā, sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā; and A V 300: mettā cetovimutti anāgāmitāya saivvattati* (the same is in both instances repeated for the other three *brahmavihāras*). Similarly Sn 143 describes the practice of *mettā* based on: *yan-taū santaū padaū abhisamecca*, with the result (Sn 152): *na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaū punar-etī*. This suggests that the practice of *mettā* can lead one who has experienced the *santaū padaū*, i.e. one who is a stream-enterer, to transcending rebirth in a womb, i.e. to non-return. In fact the comy, Pj II 193, explains: *santaū padan'-ti ... nibbānassetāū adhivacanaū*. Moreover at Dh 368 (*mettāvihārā yo bhikkhu ... adhigacche padaū santaū, saikhārāpasamaū sukhaū*) *mettā* is again related to *santaū padaū* (state of peace), the connotation of which is further clarified by *saikhārāpasama* (calming of formations). However Jayawickrama: "Sutta Nipāta", vol 2, p 98, argues against taking *santaū padaū* to refer to a realisation of *Nibbāna*. The Sanskrit fragments from the Turfan discoveries also mention the realisation of non-return as one of the advantages of developing *mettā* (in Schlingloff: *Buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch*, p 133). The reason why *mettā* is linked to the progress from stream-entry to non-return could be related to the two fetters to be removed at this stage: sensual desire and aversion. *Mettā*, especially if developed up to absorption level, can act as an antidote for both, since the intense mental happiness experienced during deep concentration counteracts the search for pleasure through the external senses, while *mettā* by its very nature counters aversion.

⁷⁷⁴ E.g. D I 71: *ālokasaṭṭā sato sampajāno*.

⁷⁷⁵ A IV 86: *ālokasaṭṭāū ... iti vivaṇena cetasā aparionaddhena sappabhāsaū cittaū bhāveyyāsi*. Vibh 254: *ayaū saṭṭā ālokā hoti vivaṇā parisuddhā pariyodātā, tena vuccati ālokasaṭṭāti*, which Vibh-a 369 explains: *rattim-pi divā-pi diññhālokasaṭṭānana-samathāya vīgatanāvaraḍāya parisuddhāya saṭṭāya samannāgato*.

⁷⁷⁶ Ps I 284: *rattim candālokadīpāloka-ukkāloke, divā suriyālokaṃ manasikarontassāpi*; and Ps-pt I 375: *divā gahitanimittam suriyālokaṃ rattiyam manasikarontassā pīti evam-ettha attho vedītabbo*.

⁷⁷⁷ S V 64: *arati tandi vijambhitā bhattasammado cetaso ca lānattāū ... thānamiddhassa uppādāya*, (same at S V 103 and A I 3).

⁷⁷⁸ S V 105: *ārambhadhātu nikkamadhātu parakkamadhātu ayam-anāhāro ... thānamiddhassa uppādāya*.

discourse to the hindrance torpor, offering a variety of remedies. Initially, presumably while still maintaining the formal meditation posture, one can attempt to counter torpor by changing one's meditation subject, or else by reflecting on or reciting passages from the Buddha's teachings. Should this not work, one can pull one's ears, massage the body, get up, sprinkle one's eyes with water and look up at the sky. If torpor still persists, walking meditation should be practised.⁷⁷⁹

In the opposite case, when restlessness (*uddhacca*) and worry (*kukkucca*) have arisen, factors leading to an increase of mental calmness and stability should be developed. Here, mindfulness of breathing stands out as a particularly effective method for calming the thinking activity of the mind.⁷⁸⁰ In addition, any of the other subjects of tranquility meditation are appropriate in this situation, together with improving the general degree of mental calmness and composure during one's activities.⁷⁸¹

According to the discourses, restlessness and worry can sometimes arise because of excessive energetic striving.⁷⁸² Here a less pushy attitude towards one's practice can help to remedy the situation. In relation to restlessness in particular, it is moreover advisable to avoid any provocative talk, since such talk easily leads to prolonged discussions and thereby causes the arising of restlessness.⁷⁸³ The arising of worry is often related guilt, such as when one has done an unwholesome deed and feels regret about it.⁷⁸⁴ Thus maintaining an impeccable level of ethical conduct goes a long way in preventing the arising of this hindrance. The discourses also relate a monk's experience of 'worry' to lack of clarity concerning the *Dhamma*, which was then countered by an instruction or explanation given by the Buddha.⁷⁸⁵

Coming to the last of the five hindrances, here a clear distinction between what is wholesome or skilful and what is unwholesome or unskilful serves to counter the obstruction caused by doubt (*vicikicchā*).⁷⁸⁶ This obstruction is of considerable importance, since without clearly knowing what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, one will be unable to overcome lust, anger, and delusion.⁷⁸⁷ Not only in relation to the development of insight, but also in the context of tranquility meditation the hindrance of doubt plays a relevant role. This can be inferred from the *Upakkilesa Sutta*, a discourse concerned mainly with the development of concentration, where doubt heads a list of mental obstructions to the attainment of absorption.⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁷⁹ A IV 85: *yathā saṁhissa te viharato taū middhaū okkamati, taū saṁhāū (mā) manasākāsi ... yathāsutaū yathāpariyattaū dhammaū cetasā anuvitakkeyyāsi ... vitthārena sajjhāyāū kareyyāsi ... ubho kaḍḍasotāni āviṅjeyyāsi pādīnā gattāni anumajjeyyāsi ... uññhāyāsanaṁ udakena akkhāni anumajjivā disā anuvilokeyyāsi ... ālokasaṁhāū manasikareyyāsi ... caikamaū adhiññheyyāsi.*

⁷⁸⁰ A III 449: *cetaso vikkhepassa pahānāya ānāpānasati bhāvetabba*; A IV 353, 358, and Ud 37: *ānāpānasati bhāvetabba vitakkupacchedāya*; It 80: *ānāpānasatiyā ajjhataū parimukhaū sāpaññitāya ye bāhirā vitakkāsaya vighātapakkhikā te na honti.*

⁷⁸¹ A III 449: *uddhaccassa pahānāya samatho bhāvetabbo*; D I 71: *uddhacca kukkucaū pahāya anuddhato viharati, ajjhataū vāpasanta citto*; S V 105: *cetaso vāpasamo, thattha yonisomanasikāra ... ayaū anāhāra ... uddhaccakukkucassa uppādāya.*

⁷⁸² A I 256: *sace adhiccittam-anuyutto bhikkhu ekantaṁ paḅgāhanimittam yeva manasikareyya, thānaṁ taṁ cittaṁ udhaccāya saṁvatteyya*; A III 375: *accāraddhaviriyaṁ uddhaccāya saṁvattati.*

⁷⁸³ A IV 87: *viggāhikāya kathāya sati kathābhūllāū pāññikākhāū, kathābhūllulle sati uddhaccāū.*

⁷⁸⁴ Cf. e.g. Vin III 19, where the *bhikkhu Sudinna* experienced *kukkucca* due to having engaged in sexual intercourse.

⁷⁸⁵ Typical instances can be found when the Buddha, on visiting a sick monk, asked: *kacci te bhikkhu na kiṁci kukkucaū na koci vipañisāro?* (e.g. at S IV 46). This question is in the first instance related to 'guilt', but once the sick monk in question clarified that he had nothing to reproach himself: *na kho maū, bhante, atā sālato upavadati*, the same question was repeated and led on to some clarification or specific instruction concerning the *Dhamma*. Another nuance of *kukkucca* can be found at A I 282 (quoted above in footnote 70), where it stands for excessive 'worrying' about realisation. Cf. furthermore A II 157, which speaks of *dhammuddhacca*, thereby relating also 'restlessness' to the *Dhamma*.

⁷⁸⁶ D III 49: *akathāikathā kusalesu dhammesu, vicikicchāya cittaū parisodheti*. Such doubt can occur 'internally', in relation to oneself, or else 'externally', in relation to others, cf. S V 110: *yad-apī ajjhataū dhammesu vicikicchā ... yad-apī bahiddhā dhammesu vicikicchā tad-apī ... vicikicchānāvaraḍan'ti.*

⁷⁸⁷ A V 147: *vicikiccho samāno abhabbo rāgaū pahātuū dosaū pahātuū mohaū pahātuū*. The point made here is that fully overcoming doubt through stream-entry is the necessary condition for being able to completely eradicate lust, aversion, and delusion through the higher stages of awakening. Such full overcoming of doubt is documented at D II 283, where, due to a detailed exposition on wholesomeness and unwholesomeness from different perspectives, *Sakka* was able to fully overcome *vicikiccha* and realise stream-entry: *yaṁ-ca pana me vicikicchākathāikathāsallaū taṁ-ca Bhagavatā abbāhāū.*

⁷⁸⁸ M III 158, where *vicikicchā* (doubt) heads a particular set of *upakkilesas* (defilements) not encountered as such elsewhere

The clear distinction between wholesomeness and unwholesomeness, needed for overcoming doubt, can be developed with the help of the awakening factor investigation-of-dhammas (*dhammavicaya*).⁷⁸⁹ This indicates that from a Buddhist perspective the task of overcoming doubt is not a question of belief or faith. Rather, a process of investigation leads to clarity and understanding, whereby doubt is dispelled.

Overcoming these five hindrances is a matter of crucial importance for all types of meditative practices. For this purpose, the commentaries list a whole set of factors helpful for overcoming or inhibiting each hindrances, a survey of which can be found in diagram 9.3 below. With increasing meditative proficiency it becomes possible to dispell any hindrance as soon as it is recognised, as quickly as a drop of water evaporates when it falls onto a hot frying pan.⁷⁹⁰ The centrally important factor for removing a hindrance, whether slowly or quickly, is *sati*, since without awareness of the presence or arising of a hindrance, little can be done in terms of prevention or removal. It is this task of mindful recognition which is the central theme of contemplation of the hindrances.

Commentarial Survey of Factors for Overcoming or Inhibiting the Hindrances:⁷⁹¹
(Diagram 9.3)

sensual desire:	aversion:	sloth + torpor:	restlessness + worry:	doubt:
general acquaintance and formal meditation on the body's ugliness	general acquaintance and formal meditation on loving kindness	lessening food intake	good knowledge of the discourses	good knowledge of the discourses
guarding the senses	reflecting on the karmical consequences of one's deeds	changing meditation postures	clarification of above through questioning	clarification of above through questioning
moderation with food	repeated wise consideration	mental clarity/ cognition of light	being well versed in ethical conduct	being well versed in ethical conduct
good friends and suitable conversation	good friends and suitable conversation	staying outdoors	visiting experienced elders	strong commitment
		good friends and suitable conversation	good friends and suitable conversation	good friends and suitable conversation

in the discourses, which are specifically related to the development of concentration. It is particularly noticeable that the hindrances sensual desire and aversion are not mentioned, probably thereby implying that these have already been overcome at the stage of practice in question. The *upakkilesas* listed are *vicikicchā*, *amanasikāra* (inattention), *thānamiddha* (sloth and torpor), *chambhitatta* (consternation), *uppīla* (elation), *duññhulla* (unease), *accāradhaviṛiya* (excessive energy), *atīlānaviṛiya* (deficient energy), *abhijappā* (longing), *nānattasaññā* (cognition of diversity), and *atinijjhāvitatta rāpanā* (excessive meditation on forms). Their successful removal then leads on to absorption: *savitakka savicāra samādhi*, *avitakka vicāramatta samādhi* (etc.).

⁷⁸⁹ This is suggested by the fact that the nutriment for *dhammavicaya* is presented in exactly the same terms as the 'anti-nutriment for *vicikicchā*, cf. S V 104: *kusalākusalā dhammā sāvajjānavajjā dhammā hānapaḍḍatā dhammā kaḍhasukkasappañibhāgā dhammā, tattha yonisomanasikāra bahulikāro ayaū āhāro anuppannassa vā dhammavicayasambojjhāigassa uppādāya*; S V 106: *kusalākusalā dhammā sāvajjānavajjā dhammā hānapaḍḍatā dhammā kaḍhasukkasappañibhāgā dhammā, tattha yonisomanasikāra bahulikāro ayaū anāhāro anuppannāya vā vicikicchāya uppādāya*.

⁷⁹⁰ This simile occurs at M I 453 in relation to dispelling attachment; at M III 300 in relation to dispelling likes and dislikes arisen in the mind; and at S IV 190 in relation to dispelling unwholesome thoughts and memories.

⁷⁹¹ *Kāmacchanda - asubhanimittassa uggaho, asubhabhāvanānuyogo, indriyesu guttadvārātā, bhōjane mattaññūtā, kalyāṇamittatā, sappāyakathā. Byāpāda - mettānimittassa uggaho, mettābhāvanānuyogo, kammassakatāpaccavekkhaṇā, paṭisaññānabahulatā, kalyāṇamittatā, sappāyakathā. Thīnamiddha - atibhōjane nimittaggāho, iriyāpathasamparivatatanatā, ālokaññāmanasikāro, abbhokāse vāso, kalyāṇamittatā, sappāyakathā. Uddhaccakukkucca - bahussutatā, paripucchakatā, vinaye pakataññūtā, vuddhasevitā, kalyāṇamittatā, sappāyakathā. Vicikicchā - bahussutatā, paripucchakatā, vinaye pakataññūtā, adhimokkhabahulatā, kalyāṇamittatā, sappāyakathā*; (taken from Ps I 281-286).

Chapter X: Aggregates

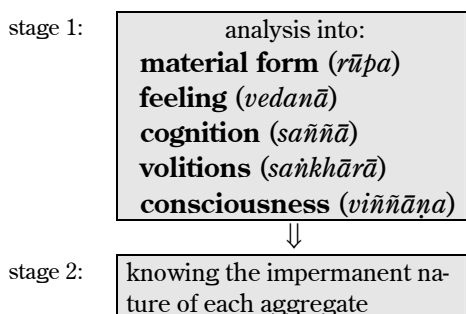
X.1) The Five Aggregates

Having overcoming the hindrances with the help of the previous contemplation of *dhammas*, one can turn to examine the basic components that make up subjective experience and personality. Such an analytical investigation of subjective personality is the topic of the contemplation of the five aggregates. The instruction for this contemplation are:

"He knows: 'such is material form, such its arising, such its passing away; such is feeling, such its arising, such its passing away; such is cognition, such its arising, such its passing away; such are volitions, such their arising, such their passing away; such is consciousness, such its arising, such its passing away.'⁷⁹²"

Underlying the above instruction is a two stage progress in contemplation: clear recognition of the nature of each aggregate, followed by awareness of its arising and passing away (see diagram 10.1 below). In my discussion I will at first attempted to clarify the range of each aggregate, followed by examining the Buddha's teaching of *anattā* within its historical context, in order to investigate the way in which the scheme of the five aggregates can be applied to an analysis of subjective experience. After that, I will examine the second stage of practice, concerned with the impermanent and conditioned nature of the aggregates.

Two Stages in the Contemplation of the Five Aggregates:
(Diagram 10.1)



To clearly recognise and understand the five aggregates is of considerable importance, since according to the discourses, without fully understanding them and developing detachment towards them, freedom from *dukkha* is impossible.⁷⁹³ Conversely, detachment and dispassion towards these five aspects of subjective personality directly leads to realisation.⁷⁹⁴ The discourses and also the verses composed by awakened monks and nuns record numerous cases where a penetrative understanding of the true nature of the five aggregates culminated in full awakening.⁷⁹⁵ These instances bring to light the eminent potential of this particular *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation.

These five aggregates are often qualified in the discourses as the 'five aggregates of

⁷⁹² M I 61: 'iti rūpaṃ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthagamo; iti vedanā, iti vedanāya samudayo, iti vedanāya atthagamo; iti saṅkhārā, iti saṅkhāya samudayo, iti saṅkhāya atthagamo; iti saikhārā, iti saikhārānaṃ samudayo, iti saikhārānaṃ atthagamo; iti viññāṇaṃ, iti viññāṇassa samudayo, iti viññāṇassa atthagamo ti.

⁷⁹³ S III 27: rūpaṃ ... viññāṇaṃ anabhijānaṃ aparijānaṃ avirājayāṃ appajahaṃ abhabbo dukkhakkhayaṃ.

⁷⁹⁴ A V 52: paṃcasu upādānakkhandhesu ... sammā nibbindamāno sammā virajjamāno sammā vimuccamāno sammā pariyantadassāvā sammatthābhisamecca diññheva dhamme dukkhassantakaro hoti. Cf. also S III 19-25, where several discourses relate an understanding of the aggregates to full realisation

⁷⁹⁵ At M III 20, a detailed exposition on the aggregates led sixty monks to full realisation. At S III 68, the Buddha's first five disciples, the paṃcavaggiyā bhikkhus, became arahants after an exposition of *anattā*, again by way of the five aggregates. Cf. also Th 87: khandhā diññhā yathābhātaṃ ... natthi dāni punabbhavo; Th 90 and 440: paṃca khandhā pariṇātā ... natthi dāni punabbhavo; Th 120: paṃca khandhā pariṇātā ... patto me āsavakkhaya; Th 161: khandhā mayā pariṇātā ... patto me āsavakkhaya; and Th 369: paṃca khandhe pariṇāya ... parinibbissatyanāsavo.

clinging' (*pañcupādānakkhandha*).⁷⁹⁶ In this context 'aggregate' (*khandha*) is an umbrella term for all possible instances of each category, whether past, present, or future, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, near or far.⁷⁹⁷ The qualification 'clinging' (*upādāna*) refers to desire and attachment in regard to these aggregates.⁷⁹⁸ Such desire and attachment in relation to the aggregates is the root cause for the arising of *dukkha*.⁷⁹⁹

The sequence of these five aggregates leads from the gross physical body to increasingly subtler mental aspects.⁸⁰⁰ The first of these aggregates, material form (*rūpa*), stands for bodily matter, usually defined in the discourses by way of the four elementary qualities of matter.⁸⁰¹ A discourse in the *Khandha Samyutta* explains that material form (*rūpa*) refers to whatever is affected (*ruppati*) by external conditions such as cold and heat, hunger and thirst, mosquitoes and snakes, emphasizing the subjective experience of '*rūpa*' as a central aspect of this aggregate.⁸⁰²

Next in the sequence of the aggregates come feeling (*vedanā*) and cognition (*saññā*), which represent the affective and the cognitive aspects of experience.⁸⁰³ In the context of the process of perception, cognition (*saññā*) is closely related to the arising of feeling, both depending on stimulation through the six senses by way of contact (*phassa*).⁸⁰⁴ The standard presenta-

⁷⁹⁶ E.g. at D II 305. To speak of 'five aggregates' seems to have been easily intelligible in ancient India, since the five aggregates occur in the Buddha's first discourse, at S V 421, apparently without any need for further elaboration or explanation. Similarly, at M I 228, the five aggregates form part of a description of the Buddha's teaching to the disputer *Saccaka* (who presumably was unfamiliar with Buddhism, but appears to have readily understood what was being said). This suggests that the five aggregates scheme may have already been in existence at the time of *Gotama* Buddha. In fact, the five aggregates are mentioned in the description of the awakening of the ancient Buddha *Vipassā*, at D II 35. Stcherbatsky: Central Conception, p 71, mentions parallels to the *khandhas* in the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*; and according to Warder: "Relationship", p 49 n 2, the *khandhas* were a known concept among the Jains and possibly also among the *ājīvikas*.

⁷⁹⁷ M III 16: *yaū kiñci rūpāū - atātānāgatapaccuppannāū ajjhataū vā bahiddhā vā, oēārikaū vā sukhumāū vā, hānāū vā paōātaū vā, yaū dāre santike vā, yaū rūpakkhandho ... ettāvata khandhānāū khandhādhivacanāū hoti*. On the term *khandha* cf. also Boisvert: Aggregates, p 16; Karunaratne: "Khandha", p 194; and Yaōamoli: Minor Readings, p 329. Rhys Davids: "Skandha", p 410, suggests that the reason why it should be five aggregates in particular could be related to the fact that the number five represents a comprehensive unit in ancient Indian thought, something which in turn is derived from the number of fingers on the human hand. The range of applicability of the five aggregate scheme is documented at M I 435, which applies the five aggregate structure to the experience of *jhāna*: *pañhamāū jhānāū ... so yad-eva tattha hoti rūpagataū vedanāgataū saōāgataū saikhāragataū viōāōāgataū te dhamme aniccato dukkhato ... anattato samanupassati*. Cf. also M I 190, which analyses the sense spheres with the help of the five aggregates scheme. Khanti: ānāpāna, p 49, applies the five aggregates to *ānāpānasati*, by distinguishing between breath, sensation of breathing, noting in/out-breath, effort to breathe, and knowing the breath.

⁷⁹⁸ M I 300 and M III 16: *na kho taū yeva upādānāū te paōcupādānakkhandhā, nā pi aōātra paōcah'upādānakkhandhehi upādānāū. Yo kho paōcasupādānakkhandhesu chandarāgo taū tattha upādānāū*; S III 47 explains '*sāsavaū upādāniyaū*' to be the crucial difference between *khandha* and *upādānakkhandha*; again at S III 167: *rūpāū ... viōāōāam upādāniyo dhammo, yo tattha chandarāgo taū tattha upādānāū*; cf. also Ayya Khema: No-Self, p 8; and Bodhi: "Aggregates", p 92.

⁷⁹⁹ As an abridged statement of the first noble truth, e.g. at D II 305: *saikhittena paōcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*. Also S III 7: *rūpe ... vedanāya ... saōāya ... saikhāresu ... viōāōe avigatarāgassa avigatachandassa ... tassa ... uppajjanti sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā*; and S III 31: *yo rūpāū ... vedanāū ... saōāū... saikhāre ... viōāōāū abhinandati, dukkhaū so abhinandati*. Cf. also Gethin: "Five Khandhas", p 41.

⁸⁰⁰ Stcherbatsky: Central Conception, p 23. Cf. also Boisvert: Aggregates, p 149, who attempts a correlation between the order of the aggregates and their conditional interrelation according to the twelve links of *pañicca samuppāda*.

⁸⁰¹ M III 17: *cattāro mahābhātā hetu ... rūpakkhandhassa paōāpanāya*. Often such definitions in the discourses also speak of the *rūpa* 'derived' from the four elements (e.g. at M I 53: *catunnaō-ca mahābhātānāū upādāya rūpāū*). Judging from M I 421, this expression may simply refer to those bodily parts or processes which are predominantly 'derived' (*upādīōōa*) from the respective element, such as the harder bodily parts like hairs and bones in the case of the element earth, the liquid bodily parts like blood and urine in the case of the element water, the process of digestion in the case of the element fire, and the breath in the case of the element air. According to the *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries, however, 'derived' *rūpa* refers to twenty-four types of secondary matter in addition to the four elements, (cf. *Vism* 444-452, a detailed survey of these can be found in Bodhi: Manual of Abhidhamma, pp 235-242; and Karunadasa: Analysis of Matter, pp 31-116). According to Kor: Reading the Mind, p 6, from the view-point of practical meditation an understanding of the four elements as exemplifying basic characteristics of matter suffices for the development of insight. Cf. also Yaōavāra: Clearing the Path, p 102, who warns against analysis carried out for its own sake.

⁸⁰² S III 86: *ruppatāti tasmā 'rūpan'-ti vuccati ... sātēna pi ruppati, uōhena pi ... jighacchāya pi ... pipāsāya pi ... oātisa-makasavātātapasirīūsapasamphassena pi ruppati*. Strictly speaking, *ruppati* and *rūpa* are not etymologically related, yet this passage offers an illustrative explanation of the term. Sarachchandra: Psychology of Perception, p 103, comments: "*rūpa* is not interpreted as mere matter, but as organic sensations" (i.e. as a subjective factor).

⁸⁰³ De Silva: Buddhist Psychology, p 17; and Karunaratne: Buddhism, p 96.

⁸⁰⁴ Cf. M I 111: *phassapaccayā vedanā, yaū vedeti taū savjānāti*. M I 293 clarifies that feeling and cognition occur as a

tions in the discourses relate feeling to the sense-organ, but cognition to the respective sense-object.⁸⁰⁵ This documents that feelings are predominantly related to the subjective repercussions of an experience, while cognitions are more concerned with the features of the respective external object.

To speak of a 'cognition' of an object refers to the act of identifying raw sensory data with the help of concepts or labels, such as when one sees a coloured object and 're-cognises' it as yellow, red, or white (etc.).⁸⁰⁶ Cognition to some extent involves the faculty of memory, which furnishes the conceptual labels used for re-cognition.⁸⁰⁷

The fourth aggregate are the volitions (*saṅkhāra*), representing the conative aspect of the mind.⁸⁰⁸ These volitions or intentions correspond to the reactive or purposive aspect of the mind, that which reacts to things or their potentiality.⁸⁰⁹ The aggregate of volitions and intentions interrelates with each of the aggregates and has a conditioning effect upon each.⁸¹⁰ In the subsequent development of Buddhist philosophy, the meaning of this term expanded until it came to include a wide diversity of mental factors.⁸¹¹

The fifth aggregate is consciousness (*viññāna*). Although at times the discourses use 'consciousness' to represent mind in a general way,⁸¹² in the context of the aggregate classification it refers to 'being conscious' of something by way of the six senses.⁸¹³ This act of being conscious is most prominently responsible for providing a sense of subjective cohesiveness, for the

conjoined pair: *yā vedanā yā ca saṅgā ... ime dhammā saūsathā no visāusathā*. On 'contact' cf. also M III 17: *phassa hetu ... paccayo vedanākkhandhassa ... saṅgākkhandhassa ... paṅṅāpanāya*.

⁸⁰⁵ D II 309: *cakkhusamphassajā vedanā* (eye-contact feeling) but *rāpasaṅgā* (cognition of form), the same goes for the other senses. Cf. Hamilton: Identity and Experience, p 15.

⁸⁰⁶ S III 87: *saṅgānātī tasmā 'saṅgā' ti vuccati ... nālam-pi saṅgānāti pātakam-pi ... lohitaṅkam-pi ... odātam-pi*. Cf. also Boisvert: Aggregates, p 89; Hamilton: Identity and Experience, pp 54, 57-59; Harvey: Selfless Mind, p 141 (whose suggestion to trsl. *saṅgā* with "cognition" I have followed); Premasiri: "Varieties of Cognition", pp 53-55; and Rhys Davids: Psychological Ethics, p 6 n 4.

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. D I 93, where *saṅgānāti* is used in the sense of 'giving a name'; or M III 234 where *saṅgā* occurs for the various terms used to refer to a bowl. On the relation of *saṅgā* to memory comments *Ṭāḍāpoḍika*: Abhidhamma Studies, p 71.

⁸⁰⁸ M I 389: *sabyāpajjhāyī kāyasaṅkhārāyī ... vacāsaṅkhārāyī ... manosaṅkhārāyī abhisāṅkharoti*; S III 60 and 63: *rāpasaṅgācetanā, saddasaṅgācetanā, gandhasaṅgācetanā, rasasaṅgācetanā, phoṇṇhabbasaṅgācetanā, dhammasaṅgācetanā, ime vuccanti saṅkhārā*. Cf. also de Silva: Freudian Psychology, p 16; Schumann: Saṅkhāra, p 90.

⁸⁰⁹ *Ṭāḍāvāra*: Clearing the Path, p 70, aptly brings out the nature of *saṅkhāra* by providing the following example for the five aggregates: a solid (*rāpa*) - pleasant (*vedanā*) - shady tree (*saṅgā*) - 'for lying under' (*saṅkhāra*) - visible to me (*viññāḍā*).

⁸¹⁰ S III 87: *saṅkhatam-abhisāṅkharontī tasmā 'saṅkhārā'-ti vuccanti ... rāpāyī rāpattāya saṅkhatam-abhisāṅkharonti, vedanāyī vedanattāya ... saṅgāyī saṅgattāya ... saṅkhāre saṅkharattāya ... viññāḍāyī viññāḍattāya*; cf. also Vibh 7. Bodhi: Connected Discourses, p 1071 n 112, comments: "This passage shows the active role of ... volition in constructing experienced reality. Not only does volition influence the objective content of the experience, but it also shapes the psychophysical organism within which it has arisen and, via its role as *kamma*, shapes the future configurations of the five aggregates to be produced by *kamma*."

⁸¹¹ Cf. the long list of mental factors given as *saṅkhāra* in Dhs (e.g. 17-18) each time a state of mind is presented; same at Vism 462-472. Cf. also Bodhi: Connected Discourses, p 45; Karunaratne: Buddhism, p 118; McGovern: Manual, p 87; Rhys Davids: Indian Psychology, p 324; and Stcherbatsky: Central Conception, p 20.

⁸¹² A typical instance is the expression *saviññāḍake kāye*, e.g. at S III 80, where *viññāḍā* stands for all four mental aggregates. Cf. also D I 21 and S II 94: *yaū ca kho etaū vuccati cittaū iti pi, mano iti pi, viññāḍāyī iti pi*. Bodhi: Connected Discourses, p 769 n 154, aptly clarifies the implications of these three terms in the discourses: "*viññāḍā* signifies the particularizing awareness through a sense faculty as well as the underlying stream of consciousness which sustains personal continuity through a single life and threads together successive lives. *Mano* serves as the third door of action (along with body and speech) and as the sixth internal sense base ... *Citta* signifies mind as the centre of personal experience, as the subject of thought, volition, and emotion." A detailed survey of differences in the usage of these three terms in the discourses can be found in Johansson: "Citta, Mano, Viññāḍā", p 208.

⁸¹³ M I 292: *sukhanti pi vijānāti, dukkhanti pi ... adukkhamasukhanti pi ... tasmā viññāḍanti vuccati*; while earlier *vedanā* was explained: *sukham-pi vedeti, dukkham-pi vedeti, adukkhamasukham-pi vedeti*, i.e. *vedanā* feels a feeling, while *viññāḍā* is conscious 'of' a feeling. At S III 87 *viññāḍā* is defined in terms of being conscious of taste: *vijānātī tasmā 'viññāḍanti vuccati ... ambilam-pi vijānāti ... tittakam-pi ... kaṇṅukam-pi ... madhuram-pi ... khārikam-pi ... akhārikam-pi ... loḍakam-pi ... aloḍakam-pi*; cf. also Hamilton: Identity and Experience, pp 54 and 92; Harvey: Selfless Mind, p 154; Premasiri: "Varieties of Cognition", p 57; Wayman: "Buddhist Terms", p 331; and Wijesekera: Vedic Studies, pp 87, 104, and 111. Concerning the difference between *saṅgā* and *viññāḍā*, *Ṭāḍāmolī*: Minor Readings, p 338 explains: "A hint of what is referred to may perhaps be got from the prefixes ... the prefix *vi-* might be taken dissociatively as the division and distribution of bare (*vi-*)*viññāḍā* over the six bases, while the prefix *saū-* might be taken associatively as the perception of synthesis of the objective fields into 'things' and 'percepts' in each of the six pairs of bases." Cf. also Gruber: Vipassanā, p 192, who suggests that the prefix *saū-* of *saṅgā* could be taken to refer to the gathering 'together' of sense experiences under a conceptual label.

feeling or notion of a substantial 'I' behind experience.⁸¹⁴ Consciousness depends on the various features of experience supplied by name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*), just as name-and-form in turn depend on consciousness as their point of reference.⁸¹⁵ This conditional inter-relationship creates the world of experience, with consciousness being aware of phenomena that are being modified and presented to it by way of name-and-form.⁸¹⁶

To provide a practical illustration of the five aggregates: during the present act of reading, for example, 'consciousness' is aware of each word through the physical sense door of the eye. 'Cognition' recognises the meanings of each word, while 'feelings' are responsible for the affective mood, for whether one feels positive, negative, or neutral about this particular piece of information. Due to 'volition' one quickly reads on, or stops to consider the present passage in more depth, or even turns to a footnote.

The discourses describe the characteristic features of these five aggregates with a set of similes, which compare material form to the insubstantial nature of a lump of foam carried away by a river; feelings to the impermanent bubbles that form on the surface of water during rain; cognition to the illusory nature of a mirage; volitions to the essence-less nature of a plantain tree (since it has no heartwood); and consciousness to the deceptive performance of a magician.⁸¹⁷

This set of similes points to central aspects that need to be understood in regard to each aggregate. In the case of the body, contemplating its unattractive and insubstantial nature corrects mistaken notions of substantiality and beauty. Concerning feelings, awareness of their impermanent nature counteracts the tendency to search for pleasure through feelings. In regard to cognition, awareness of its deluding activity uncovers the tendency to project one's own value judgements onto external phenomena as if these were qualities of the outside objects. With volitions, insight into their selfless nature corrects the mistaken notion that willpower is the expression of a substantial self. Regarding consciousness, understanding its deceptive performance counterbalances the sense of cohesiveness and substantiality it tends to give to what in reality is a patchwork of impermanent and conditioned phenomena.

Due to the influence of ignorance, these five aggregates are experienced as embodiments of the notion 'I am'. From the unawakened point of view, the body is where 'I am', feelings are how 'I am', cognitions are what 'I am' (perceiving), volitions are why 'I am' (acting), and consciousness is whereby 'I am' (experiencing). In this way, each aggregate offers its own contribution to enacting the reassuring illusion that 'I am'.

By laying bare these five facets of the notion 'I am', the early Buddhist analysis of personality into aggregates singles out the component parts of the misleading assumption that an independent and unchanging agent inheres in existence, thereby enabling the arising of insight into the ultimately selfless (*anattā*) nature of all aspects of experience.⁸¹⁸

In order to properly assess the implications of the aggregate scheme, I will now briefly examine the teaching of *anattā* against the background of the philosophical positions in existence at that time.

X.2) The Historical Context of the Teaching on *Anattā*

At the time of the Buddha, a variety of differing views about the nature of the self were

⁸¹⁴ Cf. the wrong view at M I 258 that the same consciousness feels, experiences karmical retribution, and fares on in the round of rebirths: *yvāyāi ... vedeyyo tatra tatra kalyāṇapapakānāni kammānāni vipākāni pañisatīvedeti ... idatī viññāḍāni sandhāvati saūsarati, anaññāni*.

⁸¹⁵ The importance of this conditional interrelation is highlighted at D II 34 and S II 105, where Buddha *Vipassā* and Buddha *Gotama* respectively (both still at the *bodhisatta* stage at this point), on investigating *pañicca samuppāda* up to this reciprocal relationship between consciousness and name-and-form, concluded: *adhigato kho myāyāni vipassanā maggo bodhāya*, 'I have found the path of insight leading to awakening.'

⁸¹⁶ D II 56: *viññāḍapaccayā nāmarāpaṇi ... nāmarāpapaccayā viññāḍāni*, (*nāma* is defined at M I 53 as *vedanā, saññā, cetanā, phasso, manasikāro*, feeling, cognition, volition, contact, attention).

⁸¹⁷ S III 142: *pheḍapiḍḍāpamaṇi rāpaṇi, vedanā bubbuḍḍāpamā, marācīkāpamā saññā, saikhārā kadalāpamā, māyāpamaṇi ca viññāḍāni*; with further explanations in *Vism* 479. On these similes cf also Mahasi: *Not Self*, pp 68-79.

⁸¹⁸ On the relevance of the five aggregates as a philosophical refutation of self notions cf. Kalupahana: *Causality*, p 116; Tiññhila: *Analysis*, p XXII; and Wijesekera: *Vedic Studies*, p 262.

in existence. The *Ājīvika* teachings, for example, proposed a soul having a particular colour and a considerable size as the true self.⁸¹⁹ The Jains posited a finite soul, similarly possessed of size and weight.⁸²⁰ According to them, the soul survived physical death, and in its pure state it possessed infinite knowledge.⁸²¹ The *Upaniṣads* proposed an eternal self (*ātman*), unaffected by the vicissitudes of change. *Upaniṣadic* conceptions about such an eternal self ranged from a physical self the size of a thumb abiding in the heart area and leaving the body during sleep, to an unobservable and unknowable self, immaterial, free from death and sorrow, beyond any worldly distinction between subject and object.⁸²² In the *Upaniṣadic* analysis of subjective experience, this eternal self, autonomous, permanent, and blissful, was taken to be the agent behind all the senses and activities.⁸²³

The materialist schools, on the other hand, rejected all immaterial conceptions of a self or soul. In order to account for causality, they proposed a theory based on the inherent nature (*svabhāva*) of material phenomena.⁸²⁴ According to them, a human individual was just an automaton functioning according to the dictates of matter.⁸²⁵ From their perspective, human effort was of no avail, and there was no such thing as ethical responsibility.

In this context, the Buddha's position cuts a middle path between the belief in an eternal soul and the denial of anything beyond mere matter. By affirming karmic retribution and ethical responsibility, the Buddha clearly opposed the nihilistic teachings of the materialists.⁸²⁶ At the same time, he was able to explain the operation of karmic retribution over several lives with the help of dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*), without bringing in a substantial unchanging essence.⁸²⁷ In fact, the five aggregates, which together account for subjective experience, on closer investigation turn out to be impermanent and not amenable to complete personal control. Therefore a permanent and self-sufficient self cannot be found within or apart from the five aggregates.⁸²⁸ In this way, the Buddha's teaching of *anattā* denied a permanent and inherently independent self, and at the same time affirmed empirical continuity and ethical responsibility.

X.3) Empirical Self and the Aggregate Theory

The Buddha's penetrating analysis of self does not only provide a philosophical refutation of the soul-theories, but has intriguing aspects of psychological relevance. 'Self', as an independent and permanent entity, is related to notions of mastery and control.⁸²⁹ Such notions of mastery, permanency, and also of inherent satisfaction to some degree parallel the concepts of

⁸¹⁹ According to Basham: *Ājīvikas*, p 270, the *ājīvika* soul had the colour of a *pālai* fruit (blue) and its size reached the height of five hundred *yojanas* (one *yojana* = approx. seven miles). Could this refer to the sky?

⁸²⁰ Malalasekera: "Anattā", p 569.

⁸²¹ Pande: *Origins of Buddhism*, p 356.

⁸²² Malalasekera: "Anattā", p 567.

⁸²³ Collins: *Selfless Persons*, p 80, and Jayatilleke: *Theory of Knowledge*, p 297.

⁸²⁴ Kalupahana: *Buddhist Philosophy*, p 13.

⁸²⁵ Cf. the statements of *Ajita Kesakambalā*, D I 55: *natthi sukata dukkatānāṃ kammānāṃ phalāṃ vipāka* and *Pakudha Kaccāyana*, D I 56: *natthi hanāṭṭhā vā ghātētā vā ... yo pi tiḥhena satthēna sāsāṃ chindati, na koci kiṃci jāvitā voropeti*; cf. also Jayatilleke: *Theory of Knowledge*, p 444; and Kalupahana: *Causality*, pp 25-32.

⁸²⁶ The importance of considering the *anattā* teaching in the light of the karma theory is highlighted by Sasaki: *Buddhist Thought*, pp 32-35.

⁸²⁷ Karunaratne: *Causality*, p 72: "the teaching of *anattā* is an ... adaptation of the central truth of causality."

⁸²⁸ That it is the very absence of permanence that disqualifies phenomena from being considered as 'self' becomes evident at M III 282: '*cakkhuṃ attāti yo vadeyya, taṃ na upapajjati, cakkhussa uppādo pi vayo pi paṭṭāyati, yassa kho pana uppādo pi vayo pi paṭṭāyati, 'attā me upapajjati ca veti cā-ti iccassa evam-āgataṃ hoti, tasmā taṃ na upapajjati, 'cakkhuṃ attāti yo vadeyya; iti cakkhuṃ anattā ... rāpā ... cakkhuvipāḍāṃ ... cakkhusamphasso ... vedanā ...* (quote corrected according to Ñāḍamoli: *Middle Length Discourses*, p 1355 n 1330). At S III 66, it is the lack of control over the five aggregates and their impermanence which disqualify them from being 'I' or 'mine': *rāpā-ca ... vedanā ... saṃsā ... saikhārā ... vipāḍāṃ attā abhaviṣṣa nayidaṃ vipāḍāṃ ābhāhāya saivatteyya, labbhetha ca vipāḍāḍe 'evam-me vipāḍāṃ hotu evam-me vipāḍāṃ mā ahoṣā-ti ... rāpāṃ ... vipāḍāṃ niccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā-ti? ... yam panāniccaṃ dukkhāṃ vipariḍāmadhammāṃ, kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassitū - 'etam mama, eso'ham-asmi, eso me attā-ti? Cf. also M I 231.*

⁸²⁹ Vism 640: *avasavattanākāro anattalakkhaṇāṃ*. Ñāḍavāra: *Clearing the Path*, p 70: "*attā*, 'self', is fundamentally a notion of mastery over things."

'narcissism' and the 'ideal ego' in modern psychology.⁸³⁰

These concepts do not refer to articulate philosophical beliefs or ideas, but to unconscious assumptions implicit in one's way of perceiving and reacting to experience.⁸³¹ Such assumptions are based on an inflated sense of self-importance, on a self that continuously demands to be gratified and protected against external threats to its omnipotence. Contemplating *anattā* helps to expose these assumptions as mere projections.

The *anattā* strategy can uncover a broad range of manifestations of a sense of self. According to the standard instructions for contemplating *anattā*, the five aggregates should be considered as devoid of 'mine', 'I am', and 'my self'.⁸³² This analytical approach not only covers the last mentioned view of a self, but also the mode of craving and attachment underlying the attribution of 'mine' to phenomena, and the sense of 'I am' as a manifestation of conceit and grasping.⁸³³ A clear understanding of the range of each aggregate forms the necessary basis for this investigation,⁸³⁴ an understanding which can be gained through *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation. In this way, contemplation of the five aggregates commends itself in order to uncover patterns of identification and attachment to a sense of self.

A practical approach for this is to keep on inquiring into the notion 'I am' or 'mine', lurking behind experience and activity.⁸³⁵ Once this notion of an agent or owner behind experience has been clearly recognised, the above non-identification strategy can be implemented, by considering each aggregate as 'not mine, not I, not my self'.⁸³⁶

In this way, contemplation of the five aggregates as a practical application of the *anattā* strategy can uncover the representational aspects of oneself, those aspects responsible for the formation of a self image.⁸³⁷ Practically applied in this way, contemplation of *anattā* can uncover the various types of self images responsible for identifying with and clinging to one's social position, professional occupation, or personal possessions. Moreover, *anattā* can be employed to reveal erroneous superimpositions on experience, particularly the sense of an autonomous and independent subject reaching out to acquire or reject discrete substantial objects.⁸³⁸

According to the Buddha's penetrative analysis, patterns of identification and attachment to a sense of self can take twenty different forms altogether, by taking any of the five aggregates to be self, self to be in possession of the aggregate, the aggregate to be inside self, or self to be inside the aggregate.⁸³⁹ The teaching on *anattā* aims at completely removing all these identifications with, and the corresponding attachments to, a sense of self. Such removal proceeds in stages: with the realisation of stream-entry the belief in the existence of a permanent self (*sakkāyaditṭhī*) is eradicated, while only with full awakening even the subtlest traces of attachment to oneself are forever removed.

The teaching of *anattā*, however, is not directed against what are merely the functional

⁸³⁰ Epstein: "Deconstruction of the Self", p 65, "Forms of Emptiness", p 66; and Hanly: "Ego Ideal", p 254. On Buddhist against Western notions of 'self' cf. also West: "Meditation", pp 200-204.

⁸³¹ In fact, according to Ps I 251 even animals are under the influence of 'attasaṃdā', which would certainly not be a philosophical belief.

⁸³² S III 68: *netāū mama, nesoham-asmi, na me so attā ti*, to be applied to all possible instances of the five aggregates.

⁸³³ Cf. e.g. Spk II 98: *etaū mamāti taḍhāgāho ... esoham-asmāti mānagāho ... eso me attā ti diññhigāho*. According to S III 105, the self-image 'I am' is due to the existence of some form of grasping: *upādāya asmā'-ti hoti no anupādāya*.

⁸³⁴ S IV 197: *bhikkhu rāpaū samanēsati yāvata rāpassa gati, vedanaū ... saṃcāū ... saikhāre ... viṃṃāḍāū ... yam-pissa taū hoti ahanti vā mamanti vā asmāti vā tam-pi tassa na hoti*.

⁸³⁵ A simple device to start this type of practice could be to question oneself: 'who?' or 'whose?' in regard to any activity or experience. This is in fact suggested by the *satipaṭṭhāna* commentary at Ps I 251 and 274; cf. also Khantipālo: *Calm and Insight*, p 71.

⁸³⁶ E.g. M III 18: *yāū kiṃci rāpaū ... vedanā ... saṃcā ... saikhāra ... viṃṃāḍāū: netāū mama, nesoham-asmi, na meso attā'-ti ... evaū passato ... ahaūkāra mamaūkāra mānānusaya no hotātī*. Cf. also the de-identification strategy recommended at M I 140: *yāū na tumhākaū taū pajahatha, taū vo pahānaū dāgharattāū hitāya sukhāya bhavissati. Kiṃca na tumhākaū? Rāpaū ... vedanā ... saṃcā ... saikhāra ... viṃṃāḍāū*.

⁸³⁷ Engler: "Vicissitudes of the Self", p 33; and Epstein: "Psychodynamics of Meditation", p 30. Intriguing in this context is also the suggestion by Wayman: "Nāma Rāpa", p 622, that *ātman* may refer to 'embodiment' in certain Vedic contexts, which further supports relating it to the 'representational self'.

⁸³⁸ Hamilton: "Dependent Nature", p 281.

⁸³⁹ M III 17: *rāpaū atato samanupassati, rāpavantaū vā attānaū, attāni vā rāpaū, rāpasmīū vā attānaū, vedanaū ... saṃcāū ... saikhāre ... viṃṃāḍāū ...*

aspects of personal existence, but only aims at the sense of 'I am' in relation to it.⁸⁴⁰ Otherwise an *arahant* would simply be unable to function in any way. This, of course, is not the case, as the Buddha and his *arahant* disciples were still able to function coherently.⁸⁴¹ In fact, they were able to do so with more competence than before their awakening, since they had completely overcome and eradicated all the mental defilements that can obstruct proper mental functioning.

A well-known simile of relevance in this context is that of a chariot, which does not exist as a substantial thing apart from, or in addition to, its various parts.⁸⁴² Just as the term 'chariot' is simply a convention, so too the superimposition of 'I'-identifications on experience are nothing but conventions.⁸⁴³ On the other hand, to reject the existence of an independent, substantial 'chariot' does not entail that it is impossible to ride in the conditioned and impermanent functional assemblage of parts to which the concept 'chariot' refers. In a similar way, to deny the existence of a 'self' does not imply a denial of the conditioned and impermanent interaction of the five aggregates.

Another instance documenting the need to distinguish between emptiness and nothingness, in the sense of annihilation, occurs in a discourse from the *Abyākatasaṃyutta*. Here the Buddha, on being directly questioned concerning the existence of a self (*attā*), refused to give either an affirmative or a negative answer.⁸⁴⁴ According to his own explanation later on, if he would have simply denied the existence of a self, it might have been misunderstood as a form of annihilationism, a position he was always careful to avoid.⁸⁴⁵

In fact, although the scheme of the five aggregates opposes the self notion and therefore appears essentially negative in character, it also has the positive function of defining the composites of subjective empirical existence.⁸⁴⁶ As a description of empirical personality, the five aggregates then point to those central aspects of personal experience that need to be understood in order to progress towards realisation.⁸⁴⁷

A breakdown into all five aggregates may not be a matter of absolute necessity, since some passages document less detailed analytical approaches to insight. According to the *Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta*, for example, the simple distinction between body and consciousness constituted a sufficient degree of analysis for several disciples of the Buddha to gain realisation.⁸⁴⁸ Yet, most discourses operate with the more usual analysis of the mental side of experience into four aggregates. This more detailed analysis may be due to the fact that it is considerably more difficult to realise the impersonal nature of the mind than of the body.⁸⁴⁹

Compared to the previous *satipatṭhāna* contemplations of similar phenomena (such as

⁸⁴⁰ Harvey: *Selfless Mind*, p 17, illustrates this difference by distinguishing between 'Self' (permanent, substantial, etc.) and 'self' (empirical and changing). Yaōananda: *Calm and Insight*, p 10, aptly sums up: "Accept yourself - and reject your self."

⁸⁴¹ De Silva: *Nibbāna*, p 4.

⁸⁴² Cf. S I 135: *yathā hi aīgasambhārā, hoti saddo ratho iti, evaū khandhesu santesu, hoti satto ti sammuti*. This same simile forms part of the introductory dialogue at Mil 25. A modern version can be found in Claxton: "Meditation", p 27. Cf. also Yaōavāra: *Clearing the Path*, p 46.

⁸⁴³ 'I' and 'mine' are then used as simply conventions by an *arahant*, cf. S I 14: *khāōāsavo ... ahaū vadāmāti pi so vadeyya, mamaū vadantāti pi so vadeyya, loke samaāāū kusalo viditvā vohāramattena so vohareyyāti*.

⁸⁴⁴ S IV 400: 'kiū nu kho, bho Gotama, atthattā ti? Evaū vutte Bhagavā tuōhā ahoṣi. 'Kiū pana, bho Gotama, natthattā ti? Dutiyam-pi kho Bhagavā tuōhā ahoṣi.

⁸⁴⁵ S IV 400: 'natthattā' ti puññho samāno 'natthattā' ti byākareyyaū, ye te samaōabrāhmaōā ucchedavādā tesam-etaū sad-dhiū abhaviṣṣa.

⁸⁴⁶ M I 299: *paāca ... upādānakkhandhā sakkāyo vutto Bhagavatā*; cf. also Hamilton: "Anattā", p 54; and Kalupahana: *Buddhist Philosophy*, pp 70-72.

⁸⁴⁷ Hamilton: *Identity and Experience*, p XXIV.

⁸⁴⁸ M II 17: 'ayaū kho me kāyo rāpā cātumahābhātiko ... idaāca pana me viāāōāū ettha sitaū ettha pañibaddhanti. Tatra ca pana me sāvakā bahā abhiāāvosānapāramippattā viharanti. In this passage viāāōā acts as a representative of mind in its entirety. Cf. also M I 260, which comprehensively refers to the entire set of the five aggregates as something that has 'come to be', *bhātam-idaū*, in conditional dependence on nutriment, a way of developing deep insight leading to freedom from doubt and purified view which does not seem to require analysing them separately. Ps II 307 explains that *bhātam-idaū* refers to the entire set of the five aggregates, *khandhapaācakaū*.

⁸⁴⁹ S II 94: *assutavā puthujjano imasmīū cātumahābhātikasmīū kāyasmīū nibbindeyya pi virajjeyya pi ... dissati ... kāyassa ācayo pi apacayo pi ādānam-pi nikkhepanam-pi ... cittaū ... tatrāssutavā puthujjano nālaū nibbindituū nālaū virajjituū ... dāgharattāū hetaū ... ajjhositaū mamāyitaū parāmāññhaū - 'etaū mama, esoham-asmī, eso me attā' ti.*

body, feelings, and mind), contemplation of the aggregates stands out for its additional emphasis on exposing identification-patterns. Once these patterns of identification are seen for what they really are, the natural result will be disenchantment and detachment in regard to these five aspects of subjective experience.⁸⁵⁰ A key aspect for understanding the true nature of the aggregates, and thereby of oneself, is awareness of their impermanent and conditioned nature.

X.4) Arising and Passing Away of the Aggregates

The instruction for the contemplation of the five aggregates in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* requires a clear recognition of the aggregates, followed by contemplating their arising (*samudaya*) and their passing away (*atthagama*). This second stage of practice reveals the impermanent nature of the aggregates, and to some extent thereby also points to their conditioned nature.⁸⁵¹

In the discourses, contemplation of the impermanent nature of the aggregates, and thereby of oneself, stands out as a particularly prominent cause for gaining realisation.⁸⁵² Quite probably due to its powerful awakening potential, the Buddha spoke of this particular contemplation as his 'lion's roar'.⁸⁵³ The reason underlying the eminent position of contemplating the impermanent nature of the aggregates is that it directly counters all conceit and 'I- or 'mine'-making.⁸⁵⁴ The direct experience of the fact that every aspect of oneself is subject to change undermines the basis on which conceit and 'I- or 'mine'-making take their stand. Conversely, to the extent to which one is no longer under the influence of 'I or 'mine' notions in regard to the five aggregates, any change or alteration of the aggregates will not lead to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.⁸⁵⁵ As the Buddha emphatically advised: let go of the aggregates, since none of them is truly your own.⁸⁵⁶

In practical terms, contemplating the arising and passing away of each aggregate can be undertaken by noting change taking place in every aspect of one's personal experience, be these, for example, the cycle of breaths or the blood circulation in the body, the change of feelings from pleasant to unpleasant, the variety of cognitions and volitional reactions arising in the mind, or the changing nature of consciousness, arising at this or that sense door. This way of practice then leads on to contemplating the arising and passing away of all five aggregates together, when one surveys the five aggregate-components of any experience in a comprehensive way and at the same time witnesses the impermanent nature of this experience.

Contemplating the arising and passing away of the five aggregates also highlights their conditioned nature. The interrelatedness of the two aspects of impermanence and conditionality in the contemplation of the arising and passing away of the five aggregates is practically de-

⁸⁵⁰ This disenchantment is vividly described at M I 511: *dāgharattaū vata bho ahaū iminā cittena nikato vaṅcito paladdho, ahaū hi rāpaū yeva ... vedanaū ... saṅgāū ... saikhāre ... viṅgāḍāū yeva upādiyamāno upādiyitū.*

⁸⁵¹ Cf. e.g. S II 28 where 'iti rāpaū ... iti viṅgāḍāssa atthagamo' ti is immediately followed by an exposition of dependent origination.

⁸⁵² At D II 35 former Buddha *Vipassā* realised full awakening by contemplating the impermanence of the five aggregates: *Vipassā bodhisatto ... vihāsi: 'iti rāpaū ... iti viṅgāḍāssa atthagamo' ti.' Tassa paṅcasupādānakkhandhesu udayabbayānupassino viharato na cirasveva anupādāya āsavehi cittaū vimucci.* The same contemplation and result by a nun is documented at Thā 96: *yathābhātam apekkhantā, khandhānaū udayabbayaū, vimuttacittā uññhāsīū.* Cf. also D III 223 and A II 45: 'iti rāpaū ... iti viṅgāḍāssa atthagamo', *ayaū ... samādhībhāvanā bhāvītā bahulākatā āsavānaū khayāya saivattati.* S II 29: *iti rāpaū ... viṅgāḍāssa atthaigamo, evaū jānato evam-passato āsavānaū khayō hoti.* S II 253: *yaū kiṅci rāpam ... viṅgāḍāū ... netaū mama ... evam-etaū yathābhātaū sammappaṅgāya disvā anupādā vimutto hoti.* A IV 153: *paṅcasu ... upādānakkhandhesu udayabbayānupassā viharati: 'iti rāpaū ... viṅgāḍāssa atthagamo' ti. Ayaū ... hetu ... adibrahmacariyikāya paṅgāya ... paññābhāya.* Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, p 56, concludes: "the practice of watching rise and fall with regard to the five aggregates of grasping seems to be particularly associated with the gaining of the insight that leads ... directly to awakening."

⁸⁵³ S III 84.

⁸⁵⁴ M I 486: *iti rāpaū ... iti viṅgāḍāssa atthagamo ... sabba-ahaūkāramamaūkāra-mānānuyānaū khayā ... anupādā vimutto.* M III 115: *paṅcasupādānakkhandhesu udayabbayānupassino viharato yo ... asmimāno so pahāyati.* S III 157: *iti rāpaū ... iti viṅgāḍāssa atthagamo ... sabbaū asmimānaū samāhanati.*

⁸⁵⁵ S III 4: 'ahaū rāpaū ... viṅgāḍāū, mama rāpaū ... viṅgāḍān'-ti na pariyuññhaññhāyā hoti ... tassa rāpavipariḍāma-ṅathābhāva ... viṅgāḍāvipariḍāma-ṅathābhāva nuppajjanti sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsa.

⁸⁵⁶ S III 33: *rāpaū ... viṅgāḍāū na tumhākaū, taū pajahatha, taū vo pahānaū hitāya sukhāya bhavissati.*

picted in a discourse from the *Khandhasamyutta*, where realisation of the impermanent nature of the five aggregates takes place based on understanding their conditioned nature. Since the conditions for the arising of each aggregate are impermanent, this passages points out, how could the conditionally arisen aggregate be permanent?⁸⁵⁷

Another discourse in the *Khandha Samyutta* relates the arising and passing away of the material aggregate to nutriment, while feelings, cognitions, and volitions depend on contact, and consciousness on name-and-form.⁸⁵⁸ Dependent on nutriment, contact and name-and-form, these five aggregates in turn constitute the condition for the arising of pleasant and unpleasant experiences. The same discourse points out that against the all too apparent ‘advantage’ (*as-sāda*) of experiencing pleasure through any of the aggregates stands the ‘disadvantage’ (*ādīnava*) of their impermanent and thereby unsatisfactory nature. Thus, the only way out (*nissaraṇa*) is to abandon desire and attachment towards these five aggregates.⁸⁵⁹

A related viewpoint on ‘arising’ (*samudaya*) is provided in yet another discourse from the same *Khandhasamyutta*, which points out that delight provides the condition for the future arising of the aggregates, while the absence of delight leads to their cessation.⁸⁶⁰ This passage links the conditioned and conditioning nature of the aggregates to a comprehension of dependent origination, a comprehension which in the *Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta* leads on to an understanding of the four noble truths.⁸⁶¹

From a practical perspective, to contemplate the conditioned and conditioning nature of the five aggregates can be undertaken by becoming aware of how any bodily or mental experience depends on, and is affected by, a set of conditions. Since these conditions are not amenable to full personal control, one evidently does not have power over the very foundation of one’s own subjective experience.⁸⁶² ‘I’ and ‘mine’ turn out to be utterly dependent on what is ‘other’, a predicament which reveals the characteristic of *anattā*.

The one centrally important condition, however, which can be brought under personal control through systematic training of the mind, is identification with the five aggregates. This crucial conditioning factor of identification is the central focus of this *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation, and its complete removal constitutes the successful completion of the practice.

According to the discourses, detachment from these constituent parts of one’s personality through contemplating the conditioned and impermanent nature of the aggregates is of such significance that direct knowledge of the arising and passing away of the five aggregates is a sufficient qualification for becoming a stream-enterer.⁸⁶³ Not only that, but contemplation of the five aggregates is well capable of leading to all stages of awakening, and is still practised even by *arahants*.⁸⁶⁴ These instances vividly demonstrate the central importance of this contempla-

⁸⁵⁷ S III 23: *yo pi hetu, yo pi pacayo rāpassa ... viññāḍassa uppādāya, so pi anicco. Aniccasambhātāū rāpāū ... viññāḍāū kuto niccāū bhavissati?*

⁸⁵⁸ S III 62: *āhārasamudaya rāpasamudayo, āhāranirodhā rāpanirodho ... phassasamudaya vedanāsamudayo ... phassasamudaya saññāsamudayo ... phassasamudaya saññāsamudayo ... nāmarāpasamudaya viññāḍāsamudayo ...* (same at S III 59).

⁸⁵⁹ S III 62: *yaū rāpāū pañicca uppajjati sukhaū somanassaū ... ayaū rāpassa assādo. Yaū rāpāū aniccaū dukkhaū vipariḍāmadhammaū - ayaū rāpassa ādānava. Yo rāpasmiū chandarāgavinayo chandarāgappahānaū - idaū rāpassa nissaraḍāū ...* (same repeated for the other aggregates).

⁸⁶⁰ S III 14: *ko ca rāpassa ... viññāḍassa samudayo? Idha abhinandati, abhivadati ajjhosāya tiññhati ... ya ... nandi tad-upādānaū. Tassupādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti ... evam-etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. ... Ko ca rāpassa ... viññāḍassa atthagamo? Idha nābhinandati ...*

⁸⁶¹ M I 191: *‘yo pañiccasamuppādaū passati so dhammaū passati, yo dhammaū passati so pañiccasamuppādaū passatā’-ti. Pañiccasamuppāna kho panime yadidaū paṅcupādānakkhandhā. Yo imesu paṅcasupādānakkhandhesu chando ālayo anunayo ajjhosānaū so dukkhasamudayo. Yo imesu paṅcasupādānakkhandhesu chandarāgavinayo chandarāgappahānaū so dukkhanirodho. Cf. also S IV 188, which relates contemplation of the arising and passing away of the aggregates to understanding the arising and passing away of dukkha: ‘iti rāpāū, iti rāpassa samudayo ... iti viññāḍassa atthagamo’ ti, evaū bhikkhu sabbesaū yeva dukkhadhammānaū samudaya-ca atthagama-ca yathābhātāū pajānāti.*

⁸⁶² S III 66: *yasmā ca kho ... rāpāū ... viññāḍāū anattā, tasmā ... na ca labbhati: ‘evaū me rāpāū ... viññāḍāū hotu, evaū me rāpāū ... viññāḍāū mā ahosā’-ti.*

⁸⁶³ S III 160 and 193: *yato ... imesaū paṅcannaū upādānakkhandhānaū samudaya-ca atthagama-ca assāda-ca ādānava-ca nissaraḍā-ca yathābhātāū pajānāti, ayaū vuccati ... sotāpanno ... sambodhiparāyano.*

⁸⁶⁴ S III 167: *vijjati yaū sālava bhikkhu ime paṅcupādānakkhandhe aniccato, dukkhato ... anattato yoniso manasikaronto sotāpattiphalāū sacchikareyya ... sakadāgāṃiphalāū sacchikareyya ... anāgāṃiphalāū sacchikareyya ... arahattāū*

tion, which progressively exposes and undermines self identifications and attachments and thereby becomes a particularly powerful manifestation of the direct path to liberation.

Chapter XI: Sense-spheres

XI.1) The Sense-spheres and the Fetters

In addition to analysing subjective personality with the help of the aggregate scheme, an alternative or complementary approach is to turn to the relationship between the subject and the outer world.⁸⁶⁵ This is the topic of the contemplation of the sense-spheres, which directs awareness to the six 'internal' and 'external' spheres of perception (*ajjhattikabāhira āyatana*), together with their respective fetters. The instructions are:

"He knows the eye, he knows forms, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.
 He knows the ear, he knows sounds, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and ...
 He knows the nose, he knows odours, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and ...
 He knows the tongue, he knows flavours, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and ...
 He knows the body, he knows tangibles, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and ...
 He knows the mind, he knows mind-objects, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented."⁸⁶⁶

Each of the above spheres of perception includes both the sense organ and the sense object. Besides the five physical senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) with their respective objects (sight, sound, smell, flavour, and touch) the mind (*mano*) ranges as the sixth sense together with its mental objects (*dhamma*). As the discourses point out, to develop understanding and detachment in regard to these six internal and external spheres of perception is of central importance for the progress towards awakening.⁸⁶⁷

The sixth sense, mind (*mano*), in the present context represents the activity of thought (*maññati*).⁸⁶⁸ While each of the five physical senses constitutes an independent organ, in that they do not share each other's respective field of activity, all of them relate to the mind as the sixth sense.⁸⁶⁹ Thus all perceptual processes rely to some extent on the interpretative role of the mind.⁸⁷⁰ This shows that the early Buddhist scheme of six sense-spheres does not set pure sense perception against the conceptual activity of the mind, but considers both as interrelated processes, which together bring forth the subjective experience of the world.

sacchikareyya. This is then followed by: *arahatā ... ime dhammā bhāvītā bahulākatā diññhadhammasukhavihārāya saivattanti satisampajāyā ca*.

⁸⁶⁵ In fact at M III 279 and S IV 106, contemplation of the sense-spheres is directly related to the aggregate scheme: *yaū idāū cakkhusamphassapaccayā uppajjati vedanāgataū saāgataū saikhāragataū viāāgataū, tam-pi niccaū vā aniccaū vā' ti? ... sotaū ... mano ... Evaū passāū sutavā ariyasāvako cakkhusmiū nibbindati ... yam-pidaū cakkhusamphassapaccayā uppajjati vedanāgataū saāgataū saikhāragataū viāāgataū, tasmim-pi nibbindati. Sotasmiū ... manasmīū ... Cf. also S IV 68. On the contemplations of the aggregates and the senses as complementary approaches cf. Bodhi: Connected Discourses, p 1122; and Gethin: "Five Khandhas", p 50.*

⁸⁶⁶ M I 61: *cakkhuā-ca pajānāti, rāpe ca pajānāti, yaā-ca tad-ubhayaū pañicca uppajjati saūyojanaū taā-ca pajānāti, yathā ca anuppannassa saūyojanassa uppādo hoti taā-ca pajānāti, yathā ca uppannassa saūyojanassa pahānaū hoti taā-ca pajānāti, yathā ca pahānassa saūyojanassa āyatim anuppādo hoti taā-ca pajānāti*. (The same is then repeated for the other sense-spheres: *sotaā-ca pajānāti, saddhe ca ... ghānaā-ca pajānāti, gandhe ca ... jivhaā-ca pajānāti, rase ca ... kāyaā-ca pajānāti, phoññhabbe ca ... manaā-ca pajānāti, dhamme ca ...*).

⁸⁶⁷ S IV 89: *cakkhuū ... manāū anabhijānaū aparijānaū avirāyayaū appajahaū abhabbo dukkhakkhayāya, ... rāpe ... dhamme ...*; A V 52: *chasa ajjhattikesu āyatanesu ... sammā nibbindamāno sammā virajjamāno sammā vimuccamāno sammā pariyantadassavā sammatthābhisamecca diññheva dhamme dukkhassantakaro hoti*.

⁸⁶⁸ Cf. Johansson: "Citta, Mano, Viāāda", pp 183-187; and Rhys Davids: Dictionary, p 520.

⁸⁶⁹ M I 295 and S V 218: *paācimāni indriyāni nānāvīsayāni nānāgocarāni, na āāamaāassa gocaravisayaū paccanu-bhonti, seyyathādaū cakkhundriyāū, sotindriyāū, ghānindriyāū, jivhindriyāū, kāyindriyāū. Imesaū paācannaū indriyānaū ... mano pañisaraāū, mano ca nesaū gocaravisayaū paccanubhoti*.

⁸⁷⁰ Tilakaratne: Nirvana and Ineffability, p 49.

It is particularly revealing that early Buddhism regards the mind as just another sense-door. Thought, reasoning, memory, and reflection are treated in the same manner as the sense data of any other sense door. That is, the thinking activity of the mind shares the impersonal status of outer phenomena perceived through the five senses.

Insight into this impersonal nature of 'one's own' thoughts can be gained even with the first few attempts at meditation, when one discovers how difficult it is to avoid getting lost in all kinds of reflections, daydreams, memories, and fantasies, despite being determined to focus on a particular object of meditation. Just as it is impossible to only see, hear, smell, taste, and touch what is wished for, so too, with an untrained mind, it is not possible to only have thoughts when and how one would want them to be. Precisely due to this predicament, a central purpose of meditative training is to remedy this situation, by gradually taming the thinking activity of the mind and bring it more under conscious control.⁸⁷¹

The above passage from the *Satipatthāna Sutta* lists both the sense organs and sense objects for contemplation. On the face of it, the instruction to 'know' (*pañānāti*) eye and forms, ear and sounds (etc.), seems rather flat. Yet, on further consideration this instruction may reveal some deeper implications.

Often these six senses and their objects occur in descriptions of the conditioned arising of consciousness (*viññāna*).⁸⁷² An intriguing aspect of this conditional situation is the role which subjective influence plays in the perceptual process. Experience, represented by the six types of consciousness, is the outcome of two determinant influences: the 'objective' aspect on the one hand, that is, the in-coming sensory impressions; and the 'subjective' on the other hand, namely, the way in which these sense impressions are received and cognised.⁸⁷³ Supposedly objective perceptual appraisal is in reality conditioned by the subject as much as by the object.⁸⁷⁴ One's experience of the world is the product of an interaction between the 'subjective' influence exercised by how one perceives the world, and the 'objective' influence exercised by the various phenomena of the external world.

Understood in this way, the *satipatthāna* instruction to 'know' each sense could have some deeper implications, in the sense of pointing to the need to recognise the subjective bias inherent in each perceptual process. The influence of this subjective bias has a decisive effect on the first stages of perception and can lead to the arising of a fetter (*saṃjoyana*). Such subsequent reactions are often based on qualities and attributes assumed to belong to the perceived object. In actual fact, these qualities and attributes are often projected onto the object by the perceiver.

Satipatthāna contemplation of the six sense-spheres can lead to a clear recognition of this influence of personal biases and tendencies on the process of perception. Contemplating in this way will uncover the root cause for the arising of unwholesome mental states and reactions. This reactive aspect forms in fact part of the above instructions, where the task of *sati* is to observe the fetter that can arise in dependence on sense and object.

Although a fetter arises in dependence on sense and object, the binding force of such a fetter should not be attributed to the senses or objects per se. The discourses illustrate this with the example of two bulls, bound together by a yoke. Just as the bondage is not caused by any of the bulls, but by the yoke, so too the fetter should not be imputed to its inner and outer

⁸⁷¹ This has found its expression in various passages such as M I 122: *bhikkhu vasā vitakkapariyāyapathesu yaū vitakkaū ākaikhissati taū vitakkaū vitakkessati*; M I 214: *bhikkhu cittaū vasaū vatteti, no ca bhikkhu cittassa vasena vattati*; or Dh 326: *idaū pure cittaū acāri cārikaū, yenicchakkaū yatthakāmaū yathāsukhaū, tad ajjahaū niggaheṣṣāmi yoniso, hatthippabhinnāū viya aikusaggaho*.

⁸⁷² E.g. at M I 111: *cakkhu-ca pañicca rāpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvijjādaū ... mana-ca pañicca dhamme ca uppajjati manovijjādaū*.

⁸⁷³ Nānamoli: *Thinker's Note Book*, p 159, aptly expresses this: "*ajjhātikāyatana* = the organization of experience ... *bahiddhāyatana* = the experience as organized"; van Zeyst: "*Āyatana*", p 470, explains: "the inner sphere ... constitutes the subjective element which is the capacity of reaction, and the outer sphere constitutes the objective element which produces the impact."

⁸⁷⁴ Cf. e.g. Bodhi: *Discourse on Causation*, p 16; de Silva: *Buddhist Psychology*, p 21; Guenther: *Philosophy*, p 16; and Naranjo: *Psychology of Meditation*, p 189.

conditions (for example eye and forms), but to the binding force of desire.⁸⁷⁵

In the discourses, a considerable degree of variation in the usage of the term ‘fetter’ can be found, which suggests that to speak of ‘fetters’ does not always necessarily refer to a fixed set, but may sometimes include whatever falls under the same principle, in the sense of fettering and causing bondage.⁸⁷⁶ The most common presentation of fetter in the discourses lists altogether ten types: belief in a substantial and permanent self, doubt, dogmatic clinging to particular rules and observances, sensual desire, aversion, craving for fine-material existence, craving for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance.⁸⁷⁷

The eradication of these ten fetters takes place with the different stages of realisation:⁸⁷⁸ due to the personal experience of *Nibbāna* at stream-entry, belief in a permanent self becomes impossible. Since this experience comes as the successful outcome of following the right path, doubt about what is wholesome and skillful for progress on this path, together with dogmatic clinging to particular rules and observances, are also left behind. With continued practice, the next two fetters of sensual desire and aversion are diminished at once-return and then fully overcome with the realisation of non-return. With full awakening, the last remnants of restlessness and of attachment in the form of craving for deep states of concentration (and corresponding forms of existence) are extinguished, together with any traces of the notion ‘I am’ as a manifestation of conceit, and therewith all ignorance is overcome as well.

Since all these ten fetters may not necessarily manifest in the context of actual *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, and since the term fetter can have a certain breadth of meaning in the discourses, during contemplation of the sense-spheres awareness can be directed in particular to the fettering force of desire and aversion in regard to whatever is perceived.

The pattern of a fetter’s arising proceeds from what has been perceived, via various thoughts and considerations, to the manifestation of desire and thereby to bondage.⁸⁷⁹ A mindful observation of the conditions that lead to the arising of a fetter constitutes the second stage of contemplation of the sense-spheres (see diagram 11.1 below). The task of awareness in this case, paralleling the previous contemplation of the hindrances, is non-reactive observation. Such non-reactive observation aims at individual instances of perception causing desire and bondage, and also at discovering the general patterns of one’s mental inclinations, in order to be able to prevent the future arising of a fetter.

⁸⁷⁵ S IV 163, 164, and 283: *na cakkhu rāpānaū saūyojanaū, na rāpā cakkhussa saūyojanaū, ya-ca tattha tad-ubhayā pañicca uppajjati chandarāgo taū tattha saūyojanaū ... na mano dhammānaū saūyojanaū ...* Cf. also S IV 89: *cakkhuū ... mano saūyojaniyo dhammo, yo tattha chandarāgo, taū tattha saūyojanaū*; and S IV 108: *santi cakkhuvicceyyā rāpā ... manovicceyyā dhammā ... ime vuccanti saūyojaniyā dhammā. Yo tattha chandarāgo, taū tattha saūyojanaū.*

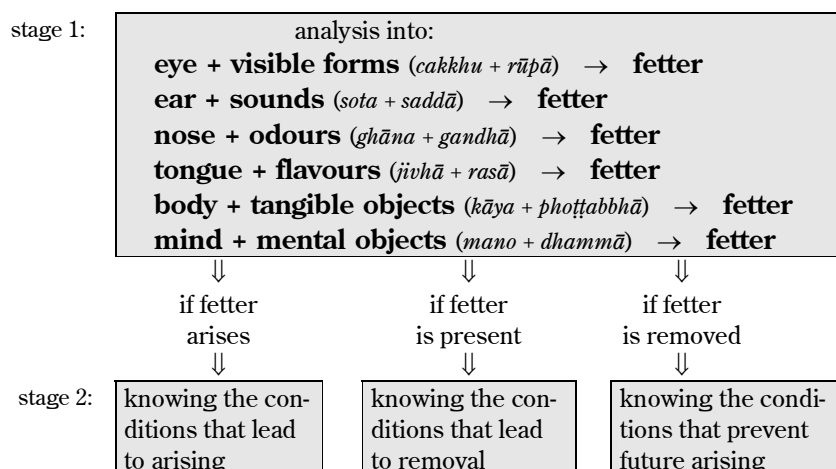
⁸⁷⁶ M I 361 has eight *saūyojanas* in relation to *pāḍātipāta* (killing), *adinnādāna* (stealing), *musāvāda* (false speech), *pisuḍāvācā* (malicious speech), *giddhiloḅha* (rapacious greed), *nindārosa* (spiteful scolding), *kodhupāyāsa* (angry despair), *atimāna* (arrogance); D III 254, A IV 7, and 8 list seven: *anunaya* (complaisance), *pañigha* (irritation), *diññhi* (views), *vicikicchā* (doubt), *māna* (conceit), *bhavarāga* (craving for existence), and *avijjā* (ignorance); M I 483 has a *gihisaūyojana* (householdership fetter); It 8 also has a single fetter, the *taḍḥasaūyojana* (fetter of craving).

⁸⁷⁷ S V 61: *pa-cimāni orambhāgiyāni saūyojanāni ... sakkāyadiññhi, vicikicchā, sālabbataparāmāsa, kamacchando, byāpādo ... Pa-cimāni uddham-bhāgiyāni saūyojanāni ... rāparāgo, arāparāgo, māno, uddhaccaū, avijjā.* Ps I 287 lists: *kāmarāga, pañigha, māna, diññhi, vicikicchā, sālabbataparāmāsa, bhavarāga, issā, macchariya, avijjā* for the *satipaṭṭhāna* context. Concerning *sālabbataparāmāsa*, Bodhi: *Connected Discourses*, p 727 n 5, explains that *sālabbata* can refer to such rules and practices as e.g. the ascetic practice of behaving like a dog (cf. the *kukkurasāla, kukkuravata* at M I 387). Some ascetics adopted such practices in the hope of gaining purification or rebirth in heaven (cf. M I 102: *imināhaū sālena vā vatena vā ... devo vā bhavissāmi*). Cf. also Ud 71, where *sālabbata* replaces the more usual ‘self-mortification’ as one of the two extremes to be avoided. However, at Dh 271 the Buddha spoke to his own monks about the need to go beyond *sālabbata* in order to reach realisation; thus this verse indicates that *sālabbata* can also become a problem for Buddhist monks. Cf. also A I 225, according to which *sālabbata* can be either wholesome or unwholesome, which suggests that the fettering aspect is to be found in *parāmāsa* (dogmatic clinging). The absence of such dogmatic clinging is indeed explicitly mentioned as one of the qualities of a streamerter (e.g. D II 94, S II 70, A II 57): *ariyakantehi sālehi samannāgato ... aparāmāññhehi*, i.e. the streamerter is endowed with pure moral conduct, but without dogmatically clinging to it (Vism 222 explains *aparāmāññha* in this context to refer to clinging by way of craving and views).

⁸⁷⁸ E.g. at D I 156, or at Thā 165.

⁸⁷⁹ A I 264: *atāte ... anāgate ... paccuppanne chandarāgaññhānāye dhamme ārabha cetasā anuvitakketi anuvicāreti, tassa ... chando jāyati, chandajāto tehi dhammehi sa-utto hoti; etāhaū saūyojanaū vadāmi, yo cetaso sarāgo.*

Two Stages in the Contemplation of the Six Sense-Spheres:
(Diagram 11.1)



As with the contemplation of the hindrances, the second stage of contemplation (concerned with the arising and removal of a fetter) follows a progressive pattern from diagnosis via cure to prevention. In contrast to the contemplation of the hindrances, however, this section of *satipaṭṭhāna* places a stronger emphasis on the perceptual process. This constitutes an additional degree of refinement, since here attention is directed to the beginning stages of the perceptual process, which, if unattended to, can lead to the arising of unwholesome mental repercussions.

To fill in some background to this aspect of *satipaṭṭhāna*, I will now briefly survey the Buddha's analysis of the perceptual process, with particular attention to the latent tendencies (*anusaya*) and influxes (*āsava*), and also to restraint at the sense-doors. This will provide the necessary basis for evaluating the early Buddhist approach to cognitive training, and for examining the Buddha's pithy instruction to the ascetic *Bāhiya*, which lead to the latter's immediate full awakening.

XI.2) The Perceptual Process

The conditionality of the perceptual process is a central aspect of the Buddha's analysis of experience. According to the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*, the conditioned sequence of the average perceptual process leads from contact (*phassa*) via feeling (*vedanā*) to cognition (*saññā*) and thought (*vitakka*), which in turn can stimulate conceptual proliferation (*papañca*).⁸⁸⁰ Such conceptual proliferations tend to give rise to further concoctions of proliferations and cognitions (*papañcasaññāsankhā*), which lead from the originally perceived sense data to all kinds of associations concerning past, present, and future.

The Pāli verb forms employed in the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* indicate that the last stage of this perceptual process is an event of which one is the passive experiencer.⁸⁸¹ Once the conditioned sequence of the perceptual process has reached the stage of conceptual proliferation, one becomes, as it were, a victim of one's own associations and thoughts. The thought process proliferates, weaving a net built out of thoughts, projections, and associations, of which the 'thinker' has become almost a helpless prey.

The crucial stage in this sequence, where the subjective bias can set in and distort the perceptual process, occurs with the initial affective appraisal of feeling (*vedanā*) and the subsequent stage of cognition (*saññā*). Initial distortions of the sense data arising at this stage will re-

⁸⁸⁰ M I 111: *cakkhuṃ-ca pañicca rāpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīṇṇādaū, tiḍḍaū saīgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, yaū vedeti taū saṅgānāti, yaū saṅgānāti taū vitakketi, yaū vitakketi taū papaṇceti, yaū papaṇceti tatonidānaū purisaū papaṇcasaṅgāsaikhā samudācaranti atātānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuvīṇṇeyyesu rāpesu;* (same repeated for the other senses).

⁸⁸¹ Cf. Ñāṇananda: *Concept and Reality*, p 5.

ceive further reinforcement by thinking and by conceptual proliferation.⁸⁸² Once the stage of conceptual proliferation is reached, the course is set. The proliferations are projected back onto the sense data, and the mind continues proliferating in the same direction. The stages of cognition and initial conceptual reaction are therefore decisive aspects of this conditioned sequence.

The perceptual sequence described in the *Madhuṣiṅḍika Sutta* occurs in an elucidation of a short statement made by the Buddha, where he had related his teaching to the dispelling of various latent (*anuseti*) types of cognitions (*saññā*), and to overcoming the latent tendencies (*anusaya*) which can come into operation during the process of perception.⁸⁸³

The discourses mention various types of latent tendencies. A commonly occurring set of seven includes sensual desire, irritation, views, doubt, conceit, craving for existence, and ignorance.⁸⁸⁴ The central characteristic of a latent tendency is that of unconscious activation. As the verb *anuseti*, to 'lie along with', suggests, a latent tendency lies dormant in the mind, but can become activated during the process of perception. In their dormant stage, the underlying tendencies are already present in newborn babies.⁸⁸⁵

Practically applied, to contemplate the nature of these underlying tendencies can be undertaken by directing awareness to the untrained mind's 'tendency' to react to sensory experience with either lust or irritation; to its 'tendency' to respond to more theoretical information by either forming views and opinions or else by feeling confused and doubtful; and by contemplating how the sense of 'I' underlying subjective experience 'tends' to manifest as conceit and moreover 'tends' to clamour for eternal continuation (viz. craving for existence). Contemplating in this way will reveal the surprising degree to which the perceptions of an unawakened mind in some way or other 'tend' towards ignorance.

A term of similar importance in relation to the process of perception is influx (*āsava*).⁸⁸⁶ These influxes (*āsava*) can 'flow' (*āsavati*) into and thereby 'influence' the perceptual process.⁸⁸⁷ As with the underlying tendencies, this influence operates without conscious intention. The arising of the influxes is due to unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) and to ignorance (*avijjā*).⁸⁸⁸ To counteract and prevent the arising of the influxes is the central aim of the monastic training rules laid down by the Buddha,⁸⁸⁹ and their destruction (*āsavakkhaya*) constitutes full awakening.⁸⁹⁰

The discourses often mention three types of influxes: the influx of sensual desire, of de-

⁸⁸² Sn 874 emphasises the dependence of *papaṅca* (proliferation) on *saṅgā* in particular: *saṅgānidānaṃ hi papaṅcasiṅkhā*.

⁸⁸³ M I 108: *yathā ca pana kāmehi visaiyuttaū viharantaū taū brāhmaḍāū akathāikathīū chinnakukkucaū bhavābhavē vātataḍhaū saṅgā nānuseti - evaīvāḍā kho ahaī;* which the Buddha then explained to imply that *yatonidānaū ... purisaū papaṅcasiṅkhā samudācaranti, ettha ce natthi abhinanditabbaū ... esevanto rāgānusayānaū esevanto pañighānusayānaū esevanto diññhānusayānaū esevanto vicikicchānusayānaū esevanto mānānusayānaū esevanto bhavarāgānusayānaū esevanto avijjānusayānaū*. Cf. also M III 285, which relates a part of the same conditioned perceptual sequence to the activation of the latent tendencies: *cakkhuṅca pañicca rāpe ca uppajjati cakkhaviḍḍāḍam tiḍḍaū saīgati phasso, phassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaū sukhaū vā dukkhaū vā adukkhamasukhaū vā. So sukhāya vedanāya phuññho samāno abhinandati abhivadati ajjhosāya tiññhati, tassa rāgānusayo anuseti. Dukkhaū vedanāya ... pañighānusayo anuseti. Adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya ... avijjānusayo anuseti*.

⁸⁸⁴ A IV 9: *kāmarāgānusayo, pañighānusayo, diññhānusayo, vicikicchānusayo, mānānusayo, bhavarāgānusayo, avijjānusayo, ime satta anusayā*. Alternative *anusayas* are at S III 135: *adhiññhānābhinivesānusaya*, at S IV 205: *rāgānusaya*, and at Dh 338: *taḍhānusaya*. According to Āḍāponika: *Sutta Nipāta*, p 238, *anusaya* includes both the actually arisen mental defilement and the corresponding mental disposition, this being the result of long-time habits.

⁸⁸⁵ M I 432: *daharassa kumārassa mandassa uttānasayyakassa... anuseti tvevassa sakkāyadiññhānusayo ... vivikicchānusayo ... sālabbataparāmāsānusayo ... kāmarāgānusayo ... byāpādānusayo ...*; cf. also M II 24.

⁸⁸⁶ *āsava* also means 'outflow', as when a sore suppurates (A I 124: *duññhāruko ... ghaññīto bhiyyosomattāya āsavaū deti*), or 'fermentation', as when liquor is brewed from flowers etc. (Sv III 944: *pupphāsava, phalāsava, madhvāsava, guēāsava*).

⁸⁸⁷ M I 9: *cakkhundriyasāivarāū asaīvutassa ... manindriyasāivarāū asaīvutassa viharato uppajjeyyūū āsavā vighāta-pariēhā*.

⁸⁸⁸ M I 7: *ayoniso manasikaroto anuppannā ceva āsavā uppajjanti, uppannā ca āsavā pavaḍḍhanti; yoniso ca manasikaroto anuppannā ceva āsavā na uppajjanti, uppannā ca āsavā pahāyanti*. A III 414: *avijjā āsavānaū nidānasambhavo*.

⁸⁸⁹ E.g. at Vin III 20; cf. also M I 445. M I 7-11 mentions moreover seven methods to counter the influxes: 'seeing' (*dasana*), in the sense of not getting entangled in wrong views; 'restraining' (*saīvara*) the senses; 'using' (*pañisevana*) requisites properly; 'enduring' (*adhivāsana*) heat, cold, hunger, pain, etc.; 'avoiding' (*parivajjana*) dangerous animals and unsuitable intimacy with the other gender; 'removing' (*vinodana*) unwholesome intentions and thoughts; and 'developing' (*bhāvanā*) the factors of awakening.

⁸⁹⁰ E.g. at M I 171.

sire for existence, and of ignorance.⁸⁹¹ Sensual desire and desire for existence come up also in the second noble truth as main factors for the arising of *dukkha*,⁸⁹² while ignorance forms the starting point of 'the twelve links', depicting the 'dependent origination' of *dukkha*. This indicates that the scheme of the influxes is intrinsically related to the causes for the arising of *dukkha*.⁸⁹³ That is, desire for sensual enjoyment, desire for becoming this or that, and the deluding force of ignorance are those 'influences' which are the main springs for the genesis of *dukkha*.

The whole purpose of practising the path taught by the Buddha is to destroy the influxes (*āsava*), to uproot the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), and to abandon the fetters (*saṃyojana*).⁸⁹⁴ These three terms refer to the same basic problem from slightly different perspectives, namely to the arising of craving (*taṇhā*) and related forms of unwholesomeness in relation to any of the six sense-spheres.⁸⁹⁵ That is, the influxes represent root-causes for the arising of *dukkha* that may 'flow into' perceptual appraisal, the underlying tendencies are those unwholesome inclinations in the unawakened mind that 'tend' to get triggered off during the perceptual process, and the fetters arising at any sense-door are responsible for 'binding' beings to continued transmigration in *samsāra*.

A method to avoid the operation of the influxes, underlying tendencies, and fetters, and thereby the arising of unwholesome mental states and reactions at any sense-door, is the practice of sense-restraint (*indriya saṃvara*). The method of sense-restraint is mainly based on establishing *sati*, whose presence exerts a restraining influence on the reactions and proliferations that otherwise tend to occur during the perceptual process.⁸⁹⁶ As the discourses point out, sense-restraint causes the arising of joy and happiness, which in turn form the basis for concentration and insight.⁸⁹⁷ Indeed, to live with full awareness in the present moment, free from sensual distraction, can cause an exquisite sense of delight.

Such cultivation of mindfulness at the sense-doors does not imply that one is simply to avoid sense impressions. As the Buddha pointed out in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*, if simply avoiding to see and to hear were in itself conducive to realisation, blind and deaf people would be accomplished practitioners.⁸⁹⁸ Instead, the instruction for sense-restraint enjoins not to dwell on the sign (*nimitta*) or secondary characteristics (*anuvyañjana*) of sense objects, in order to avoid the 'flowing in' of detrimental influences.⁸⁹⁹ In the present context, 'sign' (*nimitta*) refers

⁸⁹¹ M I 55: *tayo āsavā: kāmāsavo, bhavāsavo, avijjāsavo*. In addition to these three influxes, the influx of views is mentioned in a few instances (e.g. at D II 81: *kāmāsavā, bhavāsavā, diññāsavā, avijjāsavā*); however according to Yaḍatiloka: *Dictionary*, p 27, and Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 115, the set of three *āsavas* is probably the more original version. On the *āsavas* cf. also Johansson: *Dynamic Psychology*, p 178; and Premasiri: "Emotion", p 58.

⁸⁹² E.g. at S V 421: *dukkhasamudayam ariyasaccaū ... kāmataḍḍhā, bhavataḍḍhā, vibhavataḍḍhā*.

⁸⁹³ The same also underlies the fact that descriptions of the actual event of full awakening often apply the scheme of the four noble truths to *dukkha* and then again to the influxes, cf. e.g. D I 84.

⁸⁹⁴ S V 28: *saiyōjanappahānathaū ... anusayasamugghānanathaū ... āsavānaū khayatthaū ... Bhagavati brahmacariyaū vussati*.

⁸⁹⁵ The all-pervasive range of craving is illustrated in the detailed exposition of the second noble truth in the *Mahāsatiipaṇḍāna Sutta*, D II 308, where the various stages of the perceptual process, from the six senses, their respective objects and types of consciousness, via contact, to feeling, cognition, volition, initial, and sustained mental application are all listed as possible instances for the arising of craving. This analysis of sense experience occurs again at S II 109, and also at Vibh 101 (in the *suttanta* exposition of the four noble truths).

⁸⁹⁶ Bodhi: *Connected Discourses*, p 1127, explains: "to restrain the senses ... involves stopping at the bare sensum, without plastering it over with layers of meaning whose origins are purely subjective." Karunaratne: "Indriya Saṃvara", p 568, relates restraint of the senses in particular to the *vedanā* stage of the perceptual process.

⁸⁹⁷ S IV 78: *cakkhundriyaū saivutassa ... manindriyaū saivutassa viharato cittaū na byāsi-cati manovi-cceyyesu dhammesu. Tassa abyāsitacittassa pāmojjaū jāyati, pamuditassa pāti jāyati, pāṭimanassa kāyo passambhati, passaddhakāyo sukhaū viharati, sukhino cittaū samādhiyati, samāhite citte dhammā pātubhavanti*. The same also underlies the expression *abyāsekasukha* at M I 346, the 'pure' happiness resulting from sense-restraint.

⁸⁹⁸ At M III 298 a Brahmin proposed: *cakkhunā rāpaū na passati, sotena saddaū na suḍḍati, evaū ... indriyabhāvanāū, to which the Buddha answered: evaū sante andho bhāvitindriyo bhavissati, badhiro bhāvitindriyo bhavissati, instead: ariyassa vinaye anuttarā indriyabhāvanā ... cakkhunā rāpaū disvā uppajjati manāpaū ... amanāpaū ... so evaū pajānāti ... ta-cā ... pañicca samuppannāū ... etaū paḍḍatāū yadidaū upekkhā*. Cf. also Tilakaratne: *Nirvana and Ineffability*, p 72.

⁸⁹⁹ M I 273: *indriyesu guttadvārā bhavissāma, cakkhunā rāpaū disvā na nimittaggāhā nānubya-cjanaggāhā. Yatvādhi-karaḍam enaū ... asaivutaū viharantaū abhijjhādomanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāssaveyyuū, tassa saivārāya pañipajjissāma*. The verb *anvāssavati*, to flow into, is derived from *anu* + *ā* + *savati* (Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 50) and is reminiscent of *āsava*.

to the distinguishing feature by which one recognises or remembers something.⁹⁰⁰ In regard to the process of perception this 'sign' (*nimitta*) is related to the first evaluation of the raw sense data, due to which the object appears to be, for example, 'beautiful' (*subhanimitta*) or 'irritating' (*paṭighanimitta*), which then usually leads to subsequent evaluations and mental reactions.⁹⁰¹

The instruction to bring restraint to bear on the secondary characteristics (*anuvyañjana*) could correspond to further associations in the perceptual process, which elaborate 'in detail' the initial biased cognition (*saññā*).⁹⁰² The tendency to biased and affective reactions is rooted in the stage of sign making, when the first barely conscious evaluations that may underlie cognition (*saññā*) can arise. In the context of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta's* injunction to contemplate the causes related to the arising of a fetter, this stage of sign making is especially relevant. It is this stage therefore, and the possibilities of influencing it, to which I will now turn in more detail.

XI.3) Cognitive Training

According to the discourses, a penetrative understanding of the nature of cognition (*saññā*) is a prominent cause for realisation.⁹⁰³ Cognitions under the influence of sensuality or aversion lead to cognitive distortions and thereby cause the arising of unwholesome thoughts and intentions.⁹⁰⁴ Distorted or biased cognitions include significant misapprehensions of reality that affect the fundamental structure of ordinary experience, such as when one wrongly perceives permanence, satisfaction, substantiality, and beauty in what in fact is the opposite.⁹⁰⁵ Such unrealistic elements inherent in cognition are due to a process of habitual projection of one's own mistaken notions onto cognised sense data, a process of projection of which one is usually not aware. These habitual projections underlying the perceptual process are responsible for unrealistic expectations and thereby for frustration and conflict.⁹⁰⁶

As a countermeasure to these unrealistic cognitive appraisals, the discourses recommend cultivating beneficial cognitions. Such beneficial cognitions direct awareness to the impermanence or unsatisfactoriness of all aspects of experience. Others are concerned with more specific issues, such as the unattractive features of the body or of food.⁹⁰⁷ Regarding the nature of these cognitions, an important point to be kept in mind is that to 'cognise' something as beautiful or as impermanent does not refer to a process of reflection or consideration, but only to

⁹⁰⁰ E.g. *nimitta* as the outer aspect of being a householder at M I 360: *te hi te gahapati ... nimittā yathā taū gahapatissāti*; or at Vin III 15 and M II 62 where a slave woman recognised the former son of the house, now a monk, returning after a long absence: '*nimittāū aggahesi*'. In other passages *nimitta* has a more causal function (cf. e.g. S V 213, A I 82, A II 9, A IV 83; and Th 1100). On *nimitta* cf. also Harvey: "Signless Meditations", pp 31-33; and chapter XII, footnote 21.

⁹⁰¹ A I 3: *subhanimittāū ayoniso manasikaroto ... kāmaccchando uppajjati ... paṭighanimittāū ayoniso manasikaroto ... vyāpādo uppajjati*. M I 298: *rāgo ... nimittakaraḍo, doṣo nimittakaraḍo, moho nimittakaraḍo*. The mental bondage that arises due to delighting in the *nimitta* is depicted at M III 225: *nimittānusārā vīḍāḍāū hoti ... nimittassādagathitāū ... nimittassādaviniḍandhāū ... nimittassādasāyūjanasāyūyuttāū*.

⁹⁰² As 400 however seems to take the term as referring to the details of the perceived object. On the other hand, in similar passages in the discourses *nimitta* may be followed by various types of thoughts, which could correspond to 'association', e.g. M I 119: *yaū nimittāū āgamma yaū nimittāū manasikaroto uppajjanti pāpakā akusalā vitakkā*. Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 43, translates *anuvyañjana* with "accompanying attribute", "supplementary or additional sign or mark." The corresponding Chinese version (Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 82) speaks of not grasping the general appearance and not 'taking delight in it'. On *anuvyañjana* as 'association' cf. Vimalo: "Awakening", p 54.

⁹⁰³ A II 167: *idhekacce sattā imā hānabhāgiyā saḍḍā ti yathābhātaū pajānanti, imā nḍhitibhāgiyā saḍḍā ... imā viṣesabhāgiyā saḍḍā ... imā nibbedhabhāgiyā saḍḍā ... ayāū hetu ayāū paccayo yenam idhekacce sattā dīñḍheva dhamme parinibbāyanti*. Cf. also Sn 779: *saḍḍāū pariḍḍā vitareyya oghāū*; and Sn 847: *saḍḍāvirattassa na santi ganthā*.

⁹⁰⁴ M I 507: *kāmesu sukham iti viparātasāḍāū*; M II 27: *kāmasaḍḍā, byāpādasāḍḍā, vihiḍḍāsāḍḍā - ito samuñḍhānā akusalasaikappā*.

⁹⁰⁵ A II 52: *anicce niccanti saḍḍāvīpallāso ... dukkhe sukḍhanti ... anattani attāti ... asubhe subḍhanti* (PTS ed. has *adukkhe dukḍhanti*, an entertaining printing error). Cf. also Paṇis II 80; and Bodhi: *Root of Existence*, p 4.

⁹⁰⁶ Fromm: "Psychoanalysis", p 127: "man in the state of repressedness ... does not see what exists, but he puts his thought image into things, and sees them in the light of his thought images and fantasies, rather than in their reality. It is the thought image ... that creates his passions, his anxieties." Johansson: *Dynamic Psychology*, p 96: "things are seen through the lenses of our desires, prejudices and resentments and are transformed accordingly."

⁹⁰⁷ E.g. A III 79: *asubhasaḍḍā, marāḍasaḍḍā, āḍānavasaḍḍā, āhāre pañikkālasaḍḍā, sabbaloke anabhiratasāḍḍā*; or A V 109: *aniccasaḍḍā, anattasaḍḍā ... pahānasaḍḍā, virāgasāḍḍā, nirodhasaḍḍā ... sabbasaikhāresu aniccāsaḍḍā*; cf. also D III 251, 253, 289; A III 83-85; A IV 24, 46, 387; and A V 105-107.

being aware of a particular feature of an object, to experience it from a particular point of view. In the case of ordinary cognitive appraisal, this point of view or act of selection is usually not at all conscious. To cognise someone or something as beautiful often takes place as the combined outcome of past conditioning and one's present mental inclinations. These tend to determine which aspect of an object becomes prominent during cognition. Thought only subsequently enters into the scene, already influenced by the kind of cognition that has led to its arising.⁹⁰⁸

The crucial point, from a meditative perspective, is that cognitions are amenable to a process of training.⁹⁰⁹ The ability to train cognitions is related to the fact that cognitions are the outcome of mental habits. By way of cognitive training, one can establish new and different habits and thereby deliberately alter one's cognitions. The basic procedure for such cognitive training is related to the same habit-forming mechanism, namely to becoming accustomed to, and familiar with, a certain way of viewing experience.⁹¹⁰ By directing awareness again and again to the true characteristics of conditioned existence, these will become more and more familiar, will imprint themselves onto one's way of viewing experience, and will thereby lead to the arising of similar ways of cognising on future occasions.

The method of training cognition can be conveniently exemplified with a set of terms occurring in the *Girimānanda Sutta*, where reflection (*paṭisañcikkhati*) and contemplation (*anupassanā*) are mentioned alongside cognition (*saññā*).⁹¹¹ Although this is not spelled out in the discourse, this passage lists those activities that are related to training cognition: reflection as the basis and the sustained practice of contemplation (*anupassanā*). These, skilfully combined, can gradually transform the way the world is cognised.

To give a practical example: if, based on an intellectual appreciation of impermanence, one regularly contemplates the arising and passing away of phenomena, the result will be the arising of *aniccasaññā*, of cognitions apprehending phenomena from the viewpoint of impermanence. With continued practice, awareness of impermanence will become increasingly spontaneous and will thereby also develop an increasing influence on one's daily experiences, outside of actual contemplation. In this way, sustained contemplation can lead to a gradual change in the operational mechanics of cognition, and thereby in one's outlook on the world.

According to the discourses, such cognitive training can lead to a stage where one is able to cognise phenomena at will as agreeable (*appaṭikkūla*) or as disagreeable (*paṭikkūla*). The culmination point is reached when one transcends such evaluations completely and becomes established in perceptual equanimity.⁹¹² The discourses go so far as to state that such mastery over one's cognitions is superior even to supernatural powers such as walking on water

⁹⁰⁸ M II 27: *akusalasaṅkappā ... saṅgāsamuññhānā*, and (M II 28): *kusalasaṅkappā ... saṅgāsamuññhānā*. In fact, according to D I 185, *saṅgā* temporally precedes *vāda* (knowledge): *saṅgā pañhamāṃ uppañjati, pacchā vādaṃ, saṅguppadaṃ ca pana vāduppado hoti*, a temporal precedence which can lead to a considerable degree of influence exercised by cognition on what is being 'known'; cf. also Ādāvāra: [Clearing the Path](#), p 110.

⁹⁰⁹ D I 180: *sahetā sappaccayā purisassa saṅgā uppañjanti pi nirujjhanti pi, sikkhā ekā saṅgā uppañjanti, sikkhā ekā saṅgā nirujjhanti* (this occurs in the context of *jhāna* attainment); cf. also Premasiri: [Aññhakavagga](#), p 12. Claxton: "Meditation", p 25, points out that "the Buddhist position, because it asserts that perception is changeable by psychological practices such as meditation, assumes a 'constructivist' view."

⁹¹⁰ A long list of such cognitive trainings is given at A V 107, which are always introduced by the participle '*paricita*' (accustomed, acquainted, familiar with): *aniccasāparicita-ca no cittaṃ bhavissati ... anattasāparicita-ca ... asubhasāparicita-ca ... ādānavasāparicita-ca ... lokassa samā-ca visama-ca vātvā taṃ saṅgāparicita-ca ... lokassa sambhava-ca vibhava-ca vātvā taṃ saṅgāparicita-ca ... lokassa samudaya-ca aññhaigama-ca vātvā taṃ saṅgāparicita-ca ... pahānasāparicita-ca ... virāgasāparicita-ca ... nirodhasāparicita-ca no cittaṃ bhavissati*. Cf. also Pañis I 32: *niccasaṅgāṃ pajahato aniccānupassanāvāsena ... sukhasāṅgāṃ pajahato dukkhānupassanāvāsena ... attasaṅgāṃ pajahato anattanupassanāvāsena*.

⁹¹¹ A V 109: *bhikkhu ... pañisañcikkhati: 'rāpaṃ aniccaṃ ... viṇṇādaṃ aniccanti. Iti imesu paṅcasu upādānakkhandhesu aniccānupassā viharati. Ayaṃ vuccati aniccasaṅgā*, or (A V 109): *bhikkhu ... pañisañcikkhati: 'cakkhuṃ anattā ... dhammā anattā' ti. Iti imesu chasu ajjhattikabhāhiresu āyatanesu anattānupassā viharati. Ayaṃ vuccati anattāsaṅgā*.

⁹¹² M III 301: *sace ākaikhati -'pañikkāle appañikkālasaṅgā vihareyyanti, appañikkālasaṅgā tatha viharati ... 'appañikkāle pañikkālasaṅgā vihareyyanti... pañikkāla-ca appañikkāla-ca tad-ubhayaṃ abhinivajjtvā upekkhako vihareyyaṃ sato sampajāno' ti*. A III 169 explains that the purpose of this cognitive training is to counter the arising of lust or anger: *mā me rajanāyesu dhammesu rāgo udapādāti, idaṃ ... atthavasāṃ pañicca appañikkāle pañikkālasaṅgā vihareyya. ... mā me dosanāyesu dhammesu doso udapādāti, idaṃ ... atthavasāṃ pañicca pañikkāle appañikkālasaṅgā vihareyya*.

or flying in the air.⁹¹³

The basis for developing such intriguing kinds of mastery is *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation.⁹¹⁴ The presence of *sati* directly counteracts automatic and unconscious ways of reacting, which are so typical of habits. By directing *sati* to the early stages of the perceptual process, one can train cognition and thereby reshape habitual patterns. Of central importance in this context is the receptive quality of mindfulness, which gives full attention to the cognised data. Of equal significance is also *sati's* non-judgemental quality, which avoids immediate reactions.

In this way, receptive *sati* applied to the early stages of the perceptual process can make habitual reactions conscious and thereby enable an assessment of the extent to which one is reacting automatically and without conscious deliberation. This also reveals the selective and filtering mechanisms of perception, highlighting the extent to which subjective experience mirrors one's hitherto unconscious presumptions. In this manner, through *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation it becomes possible to access and redress a root cause for the arising of unwholesome cognitions, and thereby for the activation of influxes (*āsava*), underlying tendencies (*anusaya*), and fetters (*samyojana*), by de-automatising or de-conditioning habits and subconscious evaluations.

A practical application of this skill is the topic in the next and final section of my exploration of the contemplation of the sense-spheres.

XI.4) The Instruction to *Bāhiya*

'*Bāhiya* of the bark-garment' was a non-Buddhist ascetic who once approached the Buddha for instructions, while the latter was collecting alms food. Still out on the roads of the city, the Buddha gave him a short instruction concerned with cognitive training, with the result that *Bāhiya* immediately gained full awakening.⁹¹⁵ The Buddha's cryptic instruction was:

"When in the seen will be only what is seen, in the heard only what is heard, in the sensed only what is sensed, in the known only what is known, then you will not be 'by that'; when you are not 'by that', then you will not be 'therein'; when you are not 'therein', then you will be neither 'here', nor 'there', nor 'in between'. This is the end of *dukkha*."⁹¹⁶

This instruction directs bare awareness to whatever is seen, heard, sensed, or cognised. Maintaining bare awareness in this way prevents the mind from evaluating and proliferating the raw data of sense-perception. This corresponds to an interception of the first stages in the sequence of the perceptual process, through mindful attention. Here, bare awareness simply registers whatever arises at a sense-door, without giving rise to biased forms of cognition and to unwholesome thoughts and associations.⁹¹⁷ In terms of sense-restraint, the stage of making a

⁹¹³ D III 113.

⁹¹⁴ Cf. S V 295, where an exposition of *satipaṭṭhāna* is then followed by a description of the ability to influence cognition (*pañikkāle appañikkālasaṅgā*). Scientific corroboration of perceptual changes due to meditation can be found in Brown: "Differences in Visual Sensitivity", p 727. Cf. also Brown: "Model for the Levels", p 248; Deikman: "Experimental Meditation", p 204; and Santucci: "Psychological Observations", p 72.

⁹¹⁵ Ud 8; for this he was noted among the Buddha's disciples as pre-eminent in quick understanding (A I 24: *khippabhī*). S IV 63 and S V 165 report the realisation of a monk by the same name, *Bāhiya*, based however in one case on contemplating the six senses as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not self, and in the other case on *satipaṭṭhāna*. According to Malalasekera: *Dictionary*, vol II, p 281-283, these latter two are different from the *Bāhiya* of the *Udāna* episode. Another *Bāhiya* who causes dissension among the monks is mentioned at A II 239. At S IV 73 the monk *Māluikyaputta* receives the '*Bāhiya*' instruction, where it again becomes the cause for full awakening, although in this case after a period of practice in seclusion.

⁹¹⁶ Ud 8: *yato kho te diṅṅhe diṅṅhamattaū bhavissati, sute sutamattaū bhavissati, mute mutamattaū bhavissati, viṅṅate viṅṅatamattaū bhavissati, tato tvaū na tena; yato tvaū na tena, tato tvaū na tattha; yato tvaū na tattha, tato tvaū nevidha na hurāū na ubhayamantarena. Esevanto dukkhassa;* (misprints in the PTS ed. corrected in agreement with the Burm. and Sinh. ed., and with the same instruction in the PTS ed. of S IV 73, cf. also Masefield: *Udāna*, p 16 n 70). The *Bāhiya* case also comes up in the *satipaṭṭhāna* subcomy Ps-pñ I 357, in the context of *kāyasampajaṅga*.

⁹¹⁷ This seems to be the implication of several passages in the *Sutta Nipāta* which employ the same terms (*diṅṅha*, *suta*, *muta*), cf. Sn 793 and 914: *sa sabbadhammesu visenibhāto, yaū kiṅci diṅṅhaū va sutāū mutaū vā*; Sn 798: *tasmā hi diṅṅhaū va sutāū mutaū vā ... na nissayeyya*; Sn 802: *tassāḍha diṅṅhe va sute mute vā, pakappitā natthi aḍā pi saṅgā*; Sn 812: *evaū muni nopalippati yad-idaū diṅṅhasutaū mutesu vā*. Mahasi: *Mālukyaputta*, p 42, explains: "when one concentrates only on

'sign' (*nimitta*) is thereby brought into conscious awareness.⁹¹⁸ Establishing bare awareness at this stage of the perceptual process prevents the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), influxes (*āsava*), and fetters (*samyojana*) from arising.

The activities of seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing, mentioned in the *Bāhiya* instruction, occur also in the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*. This discourse contrasts the *arahant's* direct comprehension of phenomena with the ordinary way of perception through misconceiving the cognised data in various ways.⁹¹⁹ The *Chabbisodhana Sutta* relates the elaborations absent from what is seen, heard, sensed, and known by an *arahant* to freedom from attraction and rejection.⁹²⁰ Other passages discuss the same set of activities with an additional emphasis on avoiding any form of identification.⁹²¹ This injunction is particularly pertinent, since according to the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* the activities of seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing can lead to wrongly developing a sense of self.⁹²² Truth be told, passages in the *Upaniṣads* indeed take these activities as evidence for the perceiving activity of a self.⁹²³

According to the *Bāhiya* instruction, by maintaining bare *sati* at all sense doors one will not be 'by that', which points to not being carried away by the conditioned sequence of the perceptual process, thereby not modifying experience through subjective biases and evaluative cognitions.⁹²⁴ Not being carried away, one is not 'therein' by way of subjective participation and identification.⁹²⁵ Such absence of being 'therein' draws attention to a key aspect of the instruction to *Bāhiya*, to the realisation of *anattā* as the absence of a perceiving self. Neither being 'by that' nor 'therein' constitutes a comparatively advance stage of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, when the meditator has become able to continuously maintain such bare awareness at all sense-doors, thereby not being 'by that' by remaining free from 'clinging to anything in the

the act of seeing without thinking over what one has seen, visual perception will last only for an instant ... in that case defilements will have no time to assert themselves." According to Namto: *Wayfaring*, p 15: "it is possible to focus on the split-second between hearing a sound and recognizing it in the conventional manner." Practical experiences that reflect the above injunctions are described in Shattock: *Mindfulness*, p 68; and Walsh: "Meditative Experiences", p 267.

⁹¹⁸ Compare the detailed treatment given by *Māluṅkyaputta* after receiving the '*Bāhiya*' instructions at S IV 73, where he points out how lack of mindfulness (*sati muññhā*) leads to giving attention to the sign of affection (*piyanimitta*) and thereby to an infatuated state of mind (*sārattacitto*): *rāpaū disvā ... saddaū sutvā ... gandhaū ghatvā ... rasaū bhotvā ... phassaū phussa ... dhammaū atvā ... sati muññhā, piyanimittai manasikaroto, sārattacitto vedeti, ta-ca ajjhosāya tiññhati, tassa vaóhanti vedanā, anekā rāpa-(... dhamma)-sambhavā, abhijjhā ca vihesā ca, cittam-assāpahaṭṭati; evam-ācinato dukkhaū, āra nibbānaū vuccati*; (same again in part at Th 98-99 and in full at Th 794-817).

⁹¹⁹ M I 1: *assutavā puthujjano ... diññhaū diññhato saṅgānāti, diññhaū diññhato saṅgātvā diññhaū maṅgati, diññhasmīū maṅgati, diññhato maṅgati, diññhaū me ti maṅgati, diññhaū abhinandati* (the same is then repeated for *suta ... muta ... viṅgāta*). On the other hand: *bhikkhu arahaū ... diññhaū diññhato abhijānāti. Diññhaū diññhato abhiṅgāya diññhaū na maṅgati ... tam kissa hetu: khayā rāgassa vātarāgattā ... khayā dosassa vātaḍosattā ... khayā mohassa vātamohattā*. The Buddha's ability to see through and fully understand whatever is seen, heard, sensed, or cognised is documented at A II 23: *yaū ... diññhaū sutaū mutaū viṅgātaū pattaū pariyesitaū anuvaritaū manasā sabbaū taū Tathāgatena abhisambuddhaū*; and at A II 25: *iti kho Tathāgato daññhā daññhabbaū diññhaū na maṅgati adiññhaū na maṅgati daññhabbaū na maṅgati daññhāraū na maṅgati, sutvā ... mutvā ... viṅgātvā ...*

⁹²⁰ M III 30: *diññhe ... sute ... mute ... viṅgāte ... anupāyo anapāyo anissito appañibaddho vippamutto visāyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharāmi*.

⁹²¹ M I 136: *yam-pidaū diññhaū sutaū mutaū viṅgātaū ... tam-pi: netaū mama nesoham-asmi, na me so attā' ti ... samanupassati ... so evaū samanupassanto ... na paritassati*. Cf. also M III 261: *evaū sikkhitabbaū: Yam pidaū diññhaū sutaū mutaū viṅgātaū ... tam-pi na upādiyissāmi na ca me tan-nissitaū viṅgāḍāū bhavissati*.

⁹²² M I 135: *assutavā puthujjano ... yam-pidaū diññhaū sutaū mutaū viṅgātaū ... etaū mama, esoham-asmi, eso me attā' ti samanupassati*. Cf. also Bhattacharya: "Diññhaū", p 10.

⁹²³ *Bḥadāraḍyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.5: *ātma va are draūñavyaḥ rotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsītavyah: maitreyi ātmano va are dar-anena ravaḍena matyā vijānenedaū sarvaū viditam* (the self should be seen, heard of, thought about, and meditated upon, by the seeing, hearing, sensing and cognising of the self everything is known); *Bḥadāraḍyaka Upaniṣad* 4.5.6: *ātmani khalvare ḍcūñe, rute, mate, vijāte, idaū sarvaū viditaū* (once the self is seen, heard, sensed, and cognised, everything is known).

⁹²⁴ 'By that' (*tena*) in the sense of 'thereby', compare e.g. Dh 258: *Na tena paḍōito hoti yāvata bahu bhāsatī*. According to Ireland: "Bāhiya", p 160 n 3, *tena* and *tattha* "are the key words in this text."

⁹²⁵ 'Therein', *tattha*, is a locative adverb, which can also be translated by 'there', 'in that place', or 'to this place' (Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 295). Vimalo: "Awareness", p 27, renders this passage (*tena + tattha*): "then you will not be influenced by that, if you are not influenced by it, you are not bound to it." For 'subjective participation' in the sense of affective involvement cf. Sn 1086: *idha diññhasutamutaviṅgātesu piyarāpesu ... chandarāgavinodanaū nibbānapadam accutaū*. Bodhi: *Root of Existence*, p 13, commenting on the *Bāhiya* instruction, explains: "what is to be eliminated from cognition is precisely the false imputations of subjectivity that distort the incoming data and issue in erroneous judgements and beliefs."

world', nor being 'therein' by continuing to 'abide independently', as stipulated in the *satipatthāna* 'refrain'.

According to the final part of the *Bāhiya* instruction, by maintaining awareness in the above manner one will not be established 'here' or 'there' or 'in between'. A way of understanding 'here' and 'there' is to take them as representing the subject (senses) and the respective objects, with 'in between' standing for the conditioned arising of consciousness.⁹²⁶ According to a discourse from the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, it is the 'seamstress' craving (*taṇhā*) which ties consciousness ('the middle') to the senses and their objects (the two opposite ends).⁹²⁷ Applying this imagery to the *Bāhiya* instruction, in the absence of the seamstress craving these three conditions for perceptual contact do not get sufficiently 'tied' together, so to say, for further proliferations. Such absence of unnecessary proliferation is characteristic of the cognitions of *arahants*, who are no longer influenced by subjective biases and who cognise phenomena without self reference. Free from craving and proliferations, they are not identified with either 'here' (senses), or 'there' (objects), or 'in between' (consciousness), resulting in freedom from any type of becoming, whether it be 'here', or 'there', or 'in between'.

Chapter XII: Awakening Factors

XII.1) The Awakening Factors

Contemplation of the awakening factors proceeds in a way similar to the contemplation of the hindrances: first awareness turns to the presence or absence of the respective mental quality, followed by investigating the conditions for its presence or absence (see diagram 12.1 below). However, while in the case of the hindrances contemplation is concerned with the conditions for their future non-arising, with the awakening factors the task is to know how to develop and firmly establish these beneficial mental qualities. The instructions for contemplating the awakening factors are:

"If the mindfulness awakening factor is present in him, he knows: 'there is the mindfulness awakening factor in me'; if the mindfulness awakening factor is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no mindfulness awakening factor in me'; and he also knows how the unarisen mindfulness awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen mindfulness awakening factor can be perfected by development.
 If the investigation-of-*dharmas* awakening factor is present in him, he knows ...
 If the energy awakening factor is present in him, he knows: ...
 If the joy awakening factor is present in him, he knows ...
 If the tranquillity awakening factor is present in him, he knows ...
 If the concentration awakening factor is present in him, he knows ...
 If the equanimity awakening factor is present in him, he knows: 'there is the equanimity awakening factor in me'; if the equanimity awakening factor is not present in him, he knows: 'there is no equanimity awakening factor in me'; and he also knows how the unarisen equanimity awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen equanimity awakening factor can be perfected by development."⁹²⁸

⁹²⁶ Following Ṭhānāyā: Clearing the Path, p 435. The comy Ud-a 92 however relates these expressions to spheres of rebirth, pointing out that on this interpretation, however, 'in between' should not be taken to refer to an intermediate existence (*antarābhava*). In fact, the *Pāli* commentarial tradition holds that the moment of rearing follows immediately on the moment of passing away. A close examination of the discourses, on the other hand, reveals several instances which suggest that from their perspective such a state in between existences did exist, where the being to be reborn (M I 265 and M II 157: *gandhabba*), propelled on by craving (S IV 399: *yasmīi samaye ima-ca kāyāi nikkhipati satto ca aṅgatarāi kāyāi anupapanno hoti, tam-ahaū taḍhāpādānaū vadāmi*), seeks a new existence (M I 48 and Sn 147: *sambhavesi*), or else can attain full awakening in that intermediate state (e.g. D III 237, S V 70, 201, 204, 237, 285, 314, 378, A I 233, A II 134, A IV 14, 71, 146, 380, and A V 120: *antarāparinibbāyi*). Cf. also Bodhi: Connected Discourses, p 1902 n 65.

⁹²⁷ Cf. A III 400: *cha ajjhattikāni āyatanāni eko anto, cha bhāhiraṇi āyatanāni dutiyo anto, viṅṅādaū majjhe, taḍhā sibbanā, commenting on Sn 1042: so ubhanta-m-abhiṅṅāya, majjhe mantā na lippati ... so idha sibbanim-accagā*. Cf. also Dh 385: *yassa pāram-apāraū vā, pārapāraū na vijjati, vātaddaraū visaṅṅuttaū*, a passage which may possibly be interpreted in a similar way. The seamstress (craving) occurs again at Th 663: *ye ca dukkhe sukhasmi-ca majjhe sibbanim-accagā*. Cf. also Ṭhānāyā: Seeing Through, p 19.

⁹²⁸ M I 61: *santaū vā ajjhataū satisambojjhaigaū 'atthi me ajjhataū satisambojjhaigo' ti pajānāti, asantaū vā ajjhataū*

This particular set of mental factors provides the conditions conducive to awakening, which is why they are termed ‘awakening factors’.⁹²⁹ Just as a river inclines and flows towards the ocean, likewise the awakening factors incline towards *Nibbāna*.⁹³⁰

Like the contemplation of the hindrances, the instructions for contemplating the awakening factors do not mention any active endeavour to set up or maintain a particular awakening factor, apart from the task of setting up awareness. However, just as the mere presence of *sati* can counter a hindrance, similarly the presence of *sati* can promote the arising of the other awakening factors. According to the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, the seven awakening factors form a conditionally related sequence, with *sati* as its initial cause and foundation.⁹³¹ This suggests that the development of the awakening factors is a natural outcome of practising *satipaṭṭhāna*.⁹³²

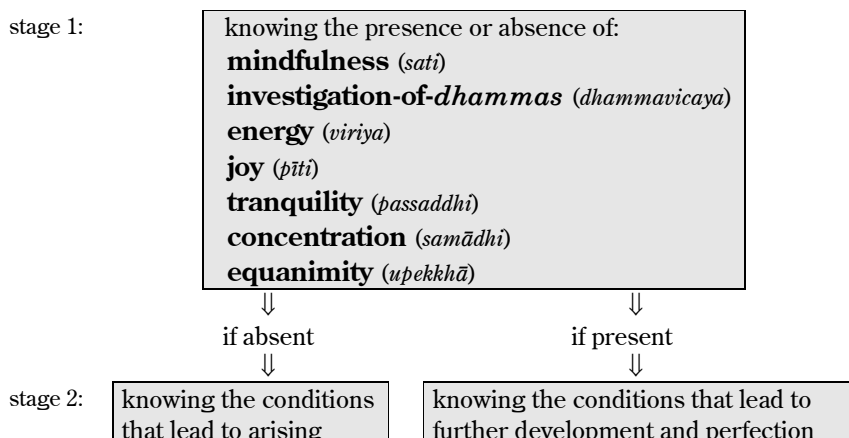
satisambojjhaigaū 'natthi me ajjhataū satisambojjhaigo' ti pajānāti, yathā ca anuppannassa satisambojjhaigassa uppādo hoti ta-ca pajānāti, yathā ca uppannassa satisambojjhaigassa bhāvanāya paripārā hoti ta-ca pajānāti. (The same is then applied to the remaining factors, the *dhmavicayasambojjhaiga*, *viriyasambojjhaiga*, *pāṭisambojjhaiga*, *passaddhisambojjhaiga*, *samādhisambojjhaiga*, and the *upekkhāsambojjhaiga*).

⁹²⁹ S V 72: *bodhāya saivattantāti tasmā bojjaigāti vuccanti* (also at S V 83; and Pañis II 115). Cf. also D III 97: *satannaū bodhipakkhiyānaū dhammānaū bhāvanam-anvāya diññheva dhamme parinibbāyati*; Dh 89: *yesaū sambodhi-aīgesu sammā cittaū subhāvitaū ... te loke parinibbutā*; and Thā 21: *ime satta bojjaigā maggā nibbānapattiyā*. According to Norman: Philological Approach, p 29, *bodhi* is better rendered by ‘awakening’ than by ‘enlightenment’, a suggestion which I have followed.

⁹³⁰ S V 134: *bhikkhu satta bojjaigē bhāvento bahulākaronto nibbānaninno hoti nibbānapoḍo nibbānapabbhāro*.

⁹³¹ M III 85 and S V 68: *yasmīū samaye bhikkhuno upaññhitā sati hoti asammūññhā, satisambojjhaigo tasmīū samaye bhikkhuno ... bhāveti ... So tathāsato viharanto taū dhammaū paṭṭāya pavicinati pavicarati parivāmaisaū āpajjati ... dhmavicayasambojjhaigo ... bhāveti ... tassa taū dhammaū paṭṭāya pavicinato ... āraddhaū hoti viriyaū asallānaū ... viriyasambojjhaigo ... bhāveti ... āraddhaviriyassa uppajjati pāti nirāmisā ... pāṭisambojjhaigo ... bhāveti ... pāṭimanassa kāyo pi passambhātī, citta-pi passambhātī ... passaddhisambojjhaigo ... bhāveti ... passaddhakāyassa sukhino cittaū samādhīyati ... samādhisambojjhaigo ... bhāveti ... so tathāsamaḥitāū cittaū sādhuakāū ajjupekkhitā hoti ... upekkhāsambojjhaigo tasmīū samaye bhāveti*.

⁹³² S V 73: *cattāro satipaññhānā bhāvītā bahulākatā satta bojjaigē paripārenti*; A V 116: *cattāro satipaññhānā paripārā satta bojjaigē paripārenti*.

Two Stages in the Contemplation of the Seven Awakening Factors:
(Diagram 12.1)

Sati, besides providing the foundation for the other factors, is moreover the one awakening factor whose development is beneficial at any time and on all occasions.⁹³³ The remaining six factors can be split into two groups of three: investigation-of-dhammas (*dhammavicaya*), energy (*viriya*), and joy (*pīti*) are particularly appropriate when the mind is sluggish and deficient in energy, while tranquility (*passaddhī*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*) are recommended for those occasions when the mind is excited and over-energetic.⁹³⁴

In the conditional sequence of the awakening factors, 'investigation-of-dhammas' (*dhammavicaya*) develops out of well-established mindfulness. Such 'investigation' seems to combine two aspects: on the one hand an enquiry into the nature of experience (by taking 'dhammas' to stand for 'phenomena'), and on the other a correlation of this experience with the teachings of the Buddha (the '*Dhamma*').⁹³⁵ This twofold character also underlies 'investigation' (*vicaya*), derived from the verb *vicinati*, whose range of meaning includes both 'investigation' and 'discrimination'.⁹³⁶ Thus 'investigation-of-dhammas' can be understood as an 'investigation' of subjective experience based on the 'discrimination' gained through familiarity with the *Dhamma*. Such discrimination refers in particular to the ability to clearly distinguish between what is wholesome or skilful for progress on the path, and what is unwholesome or unskilful.⁹³⁷ This directly contrasts 'investigation-of-dhammas' with the hindrance doubt (*vicikicchā*), which arises due to lack of clarity about what is wholesome and what unwholesome.⁹³⁸

⁹³³ S V 115: *satiī ca khvāhaū sabbatthikaū vadāmi*. This importance of *sati* is illustratively compared by the commentators to the need for salt when preparing food, Ps I 292: *loḍadhāpanaū viya sabbabyaṅjanesu ... tenāha sati ca pana sabbatthikā vuttā Bhagavatā*. The central importance of *sati* is also brought out at Ps I 243: *na hi sativirahitassa anupassanā nāma atthi*; and Ps-pī I 363: *na hi kadāci satirahitā āḍappavatti atthi*, according to which *sati* forms the essential condition for 'contemplation' and 'knowledge'.

⁹³⁴ S V 112: *yasmīū samaye lānaū cittaū hoti ... kālo tasmīū samaye dhammavicayasambojjhaigassa ... viriyasambojjhaigassa ... pātisambojjhaigassa bhāvanāya ... yasmīū ... samaye uddhataū cittaū hoti ... kālo tasmīū samaye passad-dhisambojjhaigassa ... samādhisambojjhaigassa ... upekkhāsambojjhaigassa bhāvanāya*.

⁹³⁵ At S V 68, 'investigation-of-dhammas' refers to further reflection on earlier heard explanations by elder monks: *bhikkhānam dhammaū sutvā ... taū dhammaū paṅṅāya pavicinati pavicarati parivāmaisaū āpajjati dhammavicayasambojjhaigo ... āradho hoti*. In contrast at S V 111, 'investigation-of-dhammas' stands for investigating internal and external phenomena: *yad-api ajjhataū dhammesu paṅṅāya pavicinati ... yad-api bahiddhā dhammesu paṅṅāya pavicinati pavicarati parivāmaisaū-āpajjati tad-api dhammavicayasambojjhaigo*.

⁹³⁶ Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 616.

⁹³⁷ S V 66: *kusalākusalā dhammā, sāvajjānavajjā dhammā, hānapaḍāṭā dhammā, kaḍhasukkasappatibhāgā dhammā ... ayam-āhāro ... dhammavicayasambojjhaigassa uppādāya*. On *dhammavicaya* cf. also Jootla: *Investigation*, pp 43-48; and Ledi: *Requisites of Enlightenment*, p 105, who assembles the five higher stages of purification, the three contemplations, and the ten insight knowledges under this particular awakening factor. According to Mil 83, *dhammavicaya* is a mental quality of crucial importance for realisation: *Ekena bojjhaigēna bujjhati: dhammavicayasambojjhaigēna ... dhammavicayasambojjhaigēna vinā chahi bojjhaigēhi na bujjhati*.

⁹³⁸ Cf. S V 104, which describes the *āhāra* (nutriment) for *dhammavicayasambojjhaigo* in exactly the same terms which S V 106 uses for the *anāhāra* for *vicikicchā*, namely *yonisomanasikāra* in regard to '*kusalākusalā dhammā, sāvajjānavajjā dhammā, hānapaḍāṭā dhammā, kaḍhasukkasappatibhāgā dhammā*', (in short at D III 49: *akathāūkathā kusalesu dham-*

The development of 'investigation-of-*dhammas*' in turn arouses the awakening factor of energy (*virīya*).⁹³⁹ The arising of 'energy' is related to putting forth effort.⁹⁴⁰ The discourses further qualify such energy with the attribute 'unshaken'.⁹⁴¹ This qualification draws attention to the need for effort or energy to be applied with continuity, a specification which parallels the quality of being diligent (*ātāpī*) mentioned in the 'definition' part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. According to the discourses, energy can manifest either mentally or physically.⁹⁴² As an awakening factor, energy stands in direct opposition to the hindrance sloth and torpor (*thīnamiddha*).⁹⁴³

In the sequence of the awakening factors, energy in turn leads to the arising of joy (*pīti*). Joy as an awakening factor is clearly a non-sensual type of joy, such as the joy that can be experienced during absorption attainment.⁹⁴⁴ The progression of the awakening factors then leads from joy (*pīti*), via tranquility (*passaddhi*), to concentration (*samādhi*). This echoes a causal sequence often described elsewhere in the discourses, which similarly proceeds from joy, tranquility, and happiness to concentration, and then culminates with the arising of wisdom and realisation.⁹⁴⁵

As an awakening factor, tranquility (*passaddhi*) is related to physical and mental calmness and thereby comes as a direct antidote to the hindrance restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*).⁹⁴⁶ As part of the causal sequence leading to concentration, the awakening factor tranquility leads to a happy state of mind, which in turn facilitates concentration.⁹⁴⁷ Concentration, then, arises due to the development of tranquility and due to lack of distraction.⁹⁴⁸ Accord-

mesu). The correlation between these two is further supported by the fact that such clarity is in both cases concerned with 'internal' as well as 'external' *dhammas* (S V 110 and 111).

⁹³⁹ According to Debes: "Satipaṭṭhāna", p 292, the effect of investigation-of-*dhammas*, by finding out the validity and relevance of the Buddha's teachings to experienced reality, is to awaken energy ("Tatkraft").

⁹⁴⁰ S V 66: *ārambhadhātu nikkamadhātu parakkamadhātu ... ayam-āhāro ... viriyasambojjhaigassa uppādāya*.

⁹⁴¹ S V 68: *virīyāū 'asallānaū'*.

⁹⁴² S V 111: *yad-api kāyikaū virīyāū ... yad-api cetasikaū virīyāū tad-api viriyasambojjhaigo*. Spk III 169 mentions the practice of walking meditation as an example for physical *virīya*.

⁹⁴³ S V 104: *ārambhadhātu nikkamadhātu parakkamadhātu ... ayam-āhāro ... viriyasambojjhaigassa*; S V 105: *ārambhadhātu nikkamadhātu parakkamadhātu ... ayam-anāhāro thīnamiddhassa*.

⁹⁴⁴ S V 68 speaks of '*pāti nirāmisa*'. Such non-sensual joy can be experienced during the first or second *jhāna*, cf. S V 111: *yad-api savitakka savicāra pāti ... yad-api avitakka avicāra pāti tad-api pātisambojjhaigo*. However, *pāti* in this context is not confined to *jhānic pāti*, since non-sensual *pāti* can also be the result of insight meditation, cf. e.g. Dh 374: *yato yato sammāsati khandhānaū udayabbayāū, labhati pātipāmojjāū*.

⁹⁴⁵ This sequence leads from *pāti* via *passaddhi*, *sukha* and *samādhi* to *yathābhāta*→*āḍassana*, *nibbidā*, *virāga*, and *vimutti*; cf. e.g. S II 32; cf. also chapter VII, footnote 46.

⁹⁴⁶ S V 104: *kāyapassaddhi cittapassaddhi ... ayam-āhāro ... passaddhisambojjhaigassa*. For the contrast between *passaddhi* and *uddhaccakukkucca* cf. S V 106: *cetaso vāpasamo ... ayam-anāhāro ... uddhaccakukkucassa* (although the terminology is not exactly the same: *cittapassaddhi* - *cetaso vāpasamo*). Another noteworthy point is that the discourses analyse both the awakening factor tranquility and the hindrance sloth and torpor into a bodily and a mental aspect, documenting that both have a physical and a psychological component.

⁹⁴⁷ S V 69: *passaddhakāyassa sukhaū hoti, sukhino cittaū samādhiyati*.

⁹⁴⁸ S V 105: *samathanimittāū avyagganimittaū ... ayam-āhāro ... samādhisambojjhaigassa uppādāya*. Vism 134 explains: *samathanimittanti ca samathasvetam-adhivacanāū, avikkhepaññhena ca tasseva avyagganimittaū*. The '*samathanimitta*' is also mentioned at D III 213 and S V 66. The term '*nimitta*' occurs also on various other instances, often in apparent relation to the development of concentration. Frequently a '*samādhinimitta*' can be found in the discourses (D III 226, 242, 279, M I 249, 301, M III 112, A I 115, 256, A II 17, A III 23, 321). Though at M I 301 this *samādhinimitta* is related to the four *sati-paññhānas*, in other instances it seems to imply the practice of *samatha* meditation, e.g. M I 249 and M III 112 speak of: *samādhinimittāū ajjhataū eva cittaū saññhapetabbāū sannisādetabbāū ekodikātabbāū samādahātabbāū*. In some instances one also finds a '*cittanimitta*' (e.g. at S V 151 and A III 423), which Th 85 relates to non-sensual happiness: *cittanimittassa kovido ... jhāyāū nipako patissato adhigaccheyya sukhaū nirāmisaū*, an instance reminiscent of the experience of non-sensual happiness during absorption. A IV 419 directly relates *nimitta* to absorption: *pañhamāū jhānaū upasampajja viharitūū, so taū nimittāū āsevati bhāveti bahulākaroti*. Another relevant passage is at M III 157, where the Buddha spoke of *nimittāū pañvijjhitabbāū* (in relation to *obhāsa*→*ceva sa*→*janāmi dassana*→*ca rāpānaū*) which could be rendered: you should 'penetrate' or 'acquire' that *nimitta*. In fact, the set of defilements to be overcome in this discourse form a unique set, which as such does not occur elsewhere and is clearly related to *samatha* meditation (cf. chapter IX footnote 73). Ps IV 207 however, possibly having in mind A IV 302, identifies *dassana*→*ca rāpānaū* with *dibbacakkhu* (divine eye). This reading by the comy does not make much sense, since the above passage clearly deals with a level of practice prior even to the first *jhāna*, while the attainment of *dibbacakkhu* would necessitate attainment of the fourth *jhāna*. Shwe: *Controversy*, p 387, explains: "anything entering into a causal relation, by which its effect is signified, marked or characterised, is a *nimitta*. An object, image or concept which, on being meditated upon, induces *samādhi* (*jhāna*) is a *nimitta*." On the term *nimitta* in a different

ing to the discourses, concentration with and without initial mental application (*vitakka*) can serve as an awakening factor.⁹⁴⁹

The culmination point of the development of the awakening factors comes with the establishment of equanimity (*upekkhā*), a balanced state of mind resulting from concentration.⁹⁵⁰ Such refined mental balance and equipoise corresponds to a level of well developed *satipaṭṭhāna*, when the meditator is capable to 'dwell independently, without clinging to anything in the world', as stipulated in the 'refrain'.⁹⁵¹

Practically applied, the whole set of the seven awakening factors can be understood to describe the progress of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice to such a level of deep equanimity: Based on well established mindfulness, one investigates the nature of subjective reality (viz. investigation of *dharmas*). Once sustained investigation gains momentum (viz. energy), with growing insight the object of contemplation becomes clearer and the meditator feels inspired (viz. joy) to continue with the practice. If at this point the danger of succumbing to elation and agitation can be avoided, continued contemplation leads over to a state of tranquility, when the mind effortlessly stays with its meditation object without succumbing to distraction (viz. concentration). With maturing insight, this process then culminates in a state of firm equanimity and detachment.

It is at this point, when the inspired momentum of mindful investigation takes place against a background of tranquil composure that the mental equipoise needed for the breakthrough to realisation comes about. At this level of practice, a deep sense of completely letting go prevails.⁹⁵² Such equanimity and mental balance, the consummation of the other six awakening factors, constitutes also the climax point in the commentarial scheme of the insight knowledges, in which 'equanimity in regard to all conditioned phenomena' (*sankhārupekkhānāṇa*) marks the culmination of the series and the suitable mental condition for the event of realisation.

The profitable effect of the awakening factors stands in direct opposition to the detrimental repercussions of the hindrances, a contrast frequently mentioned in the discourses.⁹⁵³ Both these sets form aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation and are of central importance for cultivating the mental conditions conducive to realisation.⁹⁵⁴ According to the Buddha, these two aspects from among the contemplations of *dharmas*, a removal of the hindrances and an establishment of the awakening factors, are the necessary conditions not only for realisation,

context cf. also chapter XI, footnote 36.

⁹⁴⁹ S V 111: *yad-api savitakko savicāro samādhi ... yad-api avitakko avicāro samādhi tad-api samādhisambojjhaigo*. As Vism 126 points out, the *jhāna* factors already begin to arise during access-concentration, although they become fully stable only with the attainment of the first *jhāna*. Thus *savitakka savicāra samādhi* may also include levels of concentration bordering on absorption, during which the presence of *vitakka* and *vicāra* is responsible for further deepening concentration and thereby leading on to the attainment of the first *jhāna*. Understood in this way, also levels of concentration close to absorption, corresponding to the commentarial notion of 'access concentration', could be put into service as *samādhisambojjhaiga*.

⁹⁵⁰ S V 69: *tathā samāhitaū cittaū sādhuakāū ajjupekkhitaū hoti*. Aronson: "Equanimity", p 2, explains that *upekkhā* is formed from "*upa* meaning 'toward' and a derivative of the verb *ikkh* meaning 'to see'", and thus conveys a "notion of over-looking a situation from a distance." Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, p 160, points out that "*upekkhā* ... is both the balance of the skilful mind and the force which maintains that balance."

⁹⁵¹ M I 56: *anissito ca viharati, na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*.

⁹⁵² Such 'letting go' as a central purpose of the *bojjhaigas* becomes apparent in a set of attributes frequently associated with them, which stipulate that in order to actualise the awakening potential of the *bojjhaigas* they need to be based on 'seclusion', on 'fading away', and on 'cessation', since in this way they will culminate in 'relinquishment' (cf. e.g. M III 88: *vivekanissitaū virāganissitaū nirodhanissitaū vossaggapariḍāmiū*, because *evaū bhāvita satta bojjhaiga evaū bahulākatā vijjāvimuttitū paripārenti*). The same awakening dynamics can also be related to the noble eightfold path (S I 88, S IV 367 and S V 1-62); and to the five *indriyas* (S IV 365, S V 239 and 241); or the five *balas* (S IV 366, S V 249 and 251); cf. also Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, pp 162-168.

⁹⁵³ The discourses express this contrast by calling the awakening factors *anāvaraḍā*, 'non-hindrances', e.g. at S V 93. Cf. also chapter IX, footnote 24. In the Chinese *Madhyama āgama*, contemplation of the awakening factors immediately follows contemplation of the hindrances in the sequence of the *dharmā*-contemplations, which illustrates how the removal of the latter naturally leads over to a development of the former; cf. Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 94; and Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 163

⁹⁵⁴ S V 128: *satisambojjhaigaū ... upekkhāsambojjhaigaū ... ayam-pi hetu ayaū paccayo aḍḍāya dassanāya*, while: *kāmarāgapariyuññhitena cetasā ... vicikicchāpariyuññhitena cetasā ... ayam-pi hetu ayaū paccayo aḍḍāya adassanāya*.

but also for developing mundane types of knowledge.⁹⁵⁵

The same central importance of these two sets of mental qualities is also reflected in the fact that all Chinese and Sanskrit versions of contemplation of *dhammas* do include the hindrances and the awakening factors. In contrast, none of these versions mentions the contemplation of the five aggregates, and several versions also omit the contemplation of the sense-spheres and of the four noble truths.⁹⁵⁶ Thus, what remains as the unanimously accepted core of contemplation of *dhammas* in all different versions are the five hindrances and the seven awakening factors, a finding which underlines their importance.⁹⁵⁷ This finding has a parallel in the *Vibhaṅga*, which also lists only these two meditation practices for contemplation of *dhammas*.⁹⁵⁸ To overcome the hindrances, to practice *satipaṭṭhāna*, and to establish the awakening factors are indeed, according to the *Pāli* discourses, the key aspects and the distinctive feature common to the awakenings of all Buddhas, past, present, and future.⁹⁵⁹

The development of the awakening factors can be combined with a broad range of meditation exercises, including, for example, contemplation of a decaying corpse, the divine abodes, mindfulness of breathing, or contemplation of the three characteristics.⁹⁶⁰ This indicates that to contemplate the awakening factors does not mean that one has to relinquish one's primary object of meditation. Rather, it means that one is aware of these seven mental qualities as facets of the progress to insight, that one consciously develops and balances them so that the contemplation of one's primary object can issue in awakening.

There is a sense of mental mastery in this ability to overlook the progress of insight during *satipaṭṭhāna* practice and to oversee the harmonious interaction of the awakening factors. The discourses illustrate this sense of mental mastery with the ability to choose whatever garment is suitable to the occasion from a full wardrobe.⁹⁶¹ A survey of the supportive factors listed in the commentaries for such mental mastery can be found in diagram 12.2.

As indicated by the discourses, a revelation of the awakening factors takes place only when a 'Perfected One' (*Tathāgata*) and his teaching have arisen.⁹⁶² Hence, in the eyes of the early Buddhists, the development of the awakening factors was a specifically Buddhist teaching. That other contemporary ascetics were also instructing their disciples to develop the awakening factors was, according to the commentaries, a case of mere plagiarism.⁹⁶³

Commentarial Survey of Supportive Conditions for Developing the Awakening Factors:⁹⁶⁴

⁹⁵⁵ According to S V 121 they constitute the reason why at times what has been well learned may be forgotten, while at other times matters not studied intensively may still be well remembered.

⁹⁵⁶ According to Schmithausen: "Vier Konzentrationen", p 248, the four noble truths occur only in the *oāriputrābhidharma*, i.e. they are missing in four out of the five existing versions. The six sense-spheres occur in the *Madhyama* version, but not in the version from the *Ekottara* (Nhat Than: [Transformation](#), p 176), which has only the awakening factors and, based on removal of the hindrances (mentioned at the outset of the discourse), the development of the four *jhānas*.

⁹⁵⁷ Warder: [Indian Buddhism](#), p 86.

⁹⁵⁸ Vibh 199. *Yāḍatiloka*: [Guide](#), p 39, seems to take this 'omission' on the side of the *Vibhaṅga* as a matter of intentional selection. Cf. also Thanissaro: [Wings to Awakening](#), p 74.

⁹⁵⁹ D II 83 (same at D III 101 and S V 161): *ye te ahesuī atātaū addhānaū arahanto sammāsambuddhā, sabbe te bhagavanto paṅca nāvaraḍe pahāya ... catusu satipaṅṅhānesu supatīṅṅhita cittā satta bojjaḅge yathābhātaū bhāvetvā anuttaraū sammāsambodhiū abhisambujjiḅsu. Ye pi te bhavissanti anāgataū addhānaū ... Bhagavā pi etarahi ...*

⁹⁶⁰ At S V 129-133 the *bojjaḅgā*s are related to the following meditation subjects: *aṅṅhikasaḅḅā ... puḅavakasaḅḅā ... vinālakasaḅḅā ... vicchiddakasaḅḅā ... uddhumātakasaḅḅā ... mettā ... karuḅā ... muditā ... upekkhā ... ānāpānasati ... asubhasaḅḅā ... maraḅasaḅḅā ... āhāre paṅṅkālāsaḅḅā ... sabbaloke anabhiratisaḅḅā ... aniccasaḅḅā ... anicce dukkhasaḅḅā ... dukkhe anattasaḅḅā ... pahānasaḅḅā ... virāgasaḅḅā ... nirodhasaḅḅā.*

⁹⁶¹ S V 71; it is interesting to note that the monk possessing this ability was *Sāriputta*, who is characterised elsewhere in the discourses for his wisdom (e.g. S I 191, and A I 23) and his ability in mental analysis (M III 25). At M I 215 he used the same simile to illustrate mental mastery.

⁹⁶² S V 77: *satta bojjaḅgā ... uppajjanti nāḅḅatra sugatavinaya*. Again S V 99: *Tathāgatassa pātubhāvā ... sattannaū bojjaḅgaratanānaū pātubhāvo hoti*.

⁹⁶³ S V 108 and 112; Spk III 168; cf. also Gethin: [Path to Awakening](#), pp 177-180; and Woodward: [Kindred Sayings](#), vol V p 91 n 1.

⁹⁶⁴ *Sati*: *satisampajaḅḅā, muṅṅhassatipuggalaparivajjanatā, upaṅṅhitasatipuggala-sevanatā, tad-adhimuttatā. Dhammavīcaya*: *paripucchakatā, vatthuvīsadakiriya, indriyasamattapaṅṅipādanā, duppaḅḅapuggalaparivajjanā, paḅḅavanta-gapuggalasevanā, gambhāraḅḅāacariyapaccavekkhāḅā, tad-adhimuttatā. Viriya*: *apāyabhayapaccavekkhāḅatā, ānisaūsa-dassāvītā, gamanavāthipaccavekkhāḅatā, piḅḅāpatāpacāyanatā, dāyajjamahattapaccavekkhāḅatā, satthumahattapac-*

(Diagram 12.2)

mindfulness: (<i>sati</i>)	mindfulness + clear knowledge (<i>satisampajañña</i>), avoiding unmindful and associating with mind-ful people, and inclining the mind accordingly (i.e. towards the development of <i>sati</i>)
investigation: (<i>dhammavicaya</i>)	theoretical inquiry, bodily cleanliness, balance of the five faculties (<i>indriya</i>), avoiding unwise and associating with wise people, reflecting on the deeper aspects of the <i>Dhamma</i> , and inclining the mind accordingly
energy: (<i>viriya</i>)	reflecting on the fearfulness of the planes of misery, seeing the benefits of effort, on the path to be practised, on honouring the offerings one has received, reflecting on the inspiring qualities of the tradition that one is following, of one's teacher, of one's status as a follower of the Buddha, and of fellow companions in the holy life, moreover avoiding lazy and associating with energetic people, and inclining the mind accordingly
joy: (<i>pīti</i>)	recollecting the Buddha, the <i>Dhamma</i> , the <i>Saṅgha</i> , one's virtue, one's acts of generosity, heavenly beings, and the peace of realisation, moreover avoiding rough and associating with refined people, reflecting on inspiring discourses, and inclining the mind accordingly
tranquility: (<i>passaddhī</i>)	good food, agreeable weather, comfortable posture, balanced behaviour, avoiding restless and associating with calm people, and inclining the mind accordingly
concentration: (<i>samādhi</i>)	bodily cleanliness, balancing the five faculties (<i>indriya</i>), skill in taking up the sign of concentration (<i>nimitta</i>), skill in inciting, restraining, gladdening, and not interfering with the mind at the right time, avoiding distracted and associating with concentrated people, reflecting on the attainment of absorption, and inclining the mind accordingly
equanimity: (<i>upekkhā</i>)	detachment towards people and things, avoiding prejudiced and associating with impartial people, and inclining the mind accordingly

The relation of the awakening factors to the 'Perfected One', together with their qualification as treasures on another occasion, reminds one of the universal monarch (*cakkavatti rāja*), who is similarly in the possession of seven precious treasures.⁹⁶⁵ Just as the realisation of universal sovereignty depends on those seven precious possessions and is heralded by the arising of the wheel-treasure (*cakkaratana*), so too the realisation of awakening depends on seven mental treasures, the awakening factors, and is heralded by the arising of *sati*.

The beneficial effect of the awakening factors is not confined to mental conditions, since several discourses report that their recollection sufficed for curing some *arahants*, including the Buddha himself, of physical illness.⁹⁶⁶ Associations of cure and illness also underlie the formulation of the next and final meditation practice in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the contemplation of the four noble truths.

Chapter XIII: Noble Truths

cavekkhaḍāṭā, jātimahattapaccavekkhaḍāṭā, sabrahmacārimahattapaccavekkhaḍāṭā, kusātapuggalaparivajjanatā, āradhāviriya-puggalasevanatā, tad-adhimuttatā. Pāti: buddhānussati, dhamma-saṅgha-sāla-cāga-devatānussati, upasamānussati, lākhapuggalaparivajjanatā, simiddhapuggalasevanatā, pasādanāya suttanta paccavekkhaḍāṭā, tad-adhimuttatā. Passaddhi: paḍātabhojanasevanatā, utusukhasevanatā, iriyāpathasukhasevanatā, majjhatapayogatā, sāraddhakāyapuggalaparivajjanatā, passaddhakāyapuggalasevanatā, tad-adhimuttatā. Samādhi: vatthuvisadakiriyatā, indriyasamattapaṇipādanatā, nimittakusalatā, samaye cittassa paggaḍhanatā, samaye cittassa niggaḍhanatā, samaye sampahaūsanatā, samaye ajjhupekkhaḍāṭā, asamāhitapuggalaparivajjanatā, samāhitapuggalasevanatā, jhānavimokkhapaccavekkhaḍāṭā, tad-adhimuttatā. Upekkhā: sattamajjhataṭā, saikhāramajjhataṭā, sattasaikhāarakelāyanapuggalaparivajjanatā, sattasaikhāramajjhataṭā, tad-adhimuttatā; (taken from Ps I 290-299).

⁹⁶⁵ S V 99 presents both the '*bojjhaṅga-ratana*' (awakening factors as treasures) of a *Tathāgata* and the seven precious possessions of a *cakkavatti* ruler: *cakkaratana, hatthiratana, assaratana, maḍiratana, itthiratana, gahapatiratana, pariḍāyakarātana*, (these are a wheel, an elephant, a horse, a jewel, a woman, a steward, and a counsellor, each endowed with magical qualities), which Spk III 154 then correlates individually.

⁹⁶⁶ S V 79-81, where *Kassapa, Moggallāna*, and the Buddha were each cured from illness by a recitation of the *bojjhaṅgas*. The effect of thus recalling and probably at the same time also re-establishing the constellation of mental factors that had led each of them to full awakening was apparently powerful enough to effect an abating of their physical disease. On the curative effect of the *bojjhaṅgas* comment. also Dhammananda: *Meditation*, p 134; and Piyadassi: *Satta Bojjhaṅgā*, pp 2-4. The Chinese *āgamas* have only preserved the instance involving the Buddha, not the other two, cf. Akanuma: *Catalogue*, p 242.

XIII.1) The Four Noble Truths

The instructions for the final exercise among the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations are:

"He knows as it really is: 'this is *dukkha*', he knows as it really is: 'this is the arising of *dukkha*', he knows as it really is: 'this is the cessation of *dukkha*', he knows as it really is: 'this is the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.'"⁹⁶⁷

According to more detailed expositions found in other discourses, the first of the four noble truths relates *dukkha* to physical events such as disease and death, and to the mental displeasure which arises from being unable to satisfy desires and wishes. As the same first noble truth points out, all these forms of *dukkha* can in the final count be traced to the basic fivefold clinging at existence by way of the aggregates.⁹⁶⁸

Although the Buddha placed much emphasis on *dukkha*, this does not mean that his analysis of reality was only concerned with the negative aspects of existence. In fact, an understanding of *dukkha* and its arising leads on to the third and the fourth noble truths, which are concerned with the positive values of freedom from *dukkha* and the practical path leading to that freedom. As the Buddha himself expressly stated, a realisation of the four noble truths will be accompanied by happiness, and the noble eightfold path is a path productive of joy.⁹⁶⁹ This goes to show that understanding *dukkha* is not necessarily a matter of frustration and despair.

Dukkha is often translated as 'suffering'. Suffering, however, represents only one aspect of *dukkha*, a term whose range of implications is difficult to capture with a single English word.⁹⁷⁰ *Dukkha* can be derived from the Sanskrit *kha*, one meaning of which is the 'axle-hole of a wheel', and the antithetic prefix *duh* (= *du*), which stands for 'difficulty' or 'badness'.⁹⁷¹ The entire term then evokes the image of a wheel-axle being off-centre with respect to its axle-hole. Based on this image, *dukkha* points to 'disharmony' or 'friction'. Alternatively *dukkha* can be related to the Sanskrit *stha*, 'standing' or 'abiding', combined with the same antithetic prefix *duh*.⁹⁷² *Dukkha* in the sense of 'standing badly' then conveys nuances of 'uneasiness' or of being 'uncomfortable'.⁹⁷³ In order to catch the various nuances of '*dukkha*', a possible way of translating it is 'unsatisfactoriness', though it might be best to leave the term untranslated.

The need for a careful translation of the term can be demonstrated with a passage from the *Nidānasamyutta*, where the Buddha stated that whatever is felt is included within *dukkha*.⁹⁷⁴ To understand *dukkha* here as an affective quality and to take it as implying that all feelings are 'suffering' conflicts with the Buddha's analysis of feelings into three mutually exclusive types, which are, in addition to unpleasant feeling, pleasant and neutral feelings.⁹⁷⁵ On another occa-

⁹⁶⁷ M I 62: 'idañ dukkhan'-ti yathābhātañ pajānāti, 'ayañ dukkhasamudayo' ti yathābhātañ pajānāti, 'ayañ dukkhanirodho' ti yathābhātañ pajānāti, 'ayañ dukkhanirodhagāminā pañipadā' ti yathābhātañ pajānāti.

⁹⁶⁸ S V 421: jāti pi dukkhā jarā ... vyādhi ... maraḍam ... appiyehi sampayogo ... piyehi vippayogo ... yam-picchañ na labhati ... saikhittena paḍcupādānakkhandhā pi dukkhā. Gethin: [Path to Awakening](#), p 18, comments: "understanding the first noble truth involves not so much the revelation that *dukkha* exists, as the realisation of what *dukkha* is." Hamilton: [Identity and Experience](#), p 206, points out that "the first noble truth ... can most accurately be understood if it is borne in mind that this is a truth statement, not a value judgement."

⁹⁶⁹ S V 441: na kho pañāham saha dukkhena saha domanassena catunnam-ariyasaccānam-abhisamayāñ vadāmi, api cāhañ saha sukkena saha somanassena catunnam-ariyasaccānam- abhisamayāñ vadāmi; M I 118: pātigamanāyo' ti ... ariyassetāñ aññhañgikassa maggassa adhivacanāñ.

⁹⁷⁰ Cf. Rhys Davids: [Dictionary](#), p 324; and Wijesekera: [Vedic Studies](#), p 75.

⁹⁷¹ Monier-Williams: [Dictionary](#), pp 334 (*kha*) and 483 (*dupkha*); cf. also Smith: [Religions of Man](#), p 109. The corresponding Pāli terms are the prefix *du* (difficulty, badness), and *akka* (axle of a wheel), cf. Rhys Davids: [Dictionary](#), pp 2 and 324. Vism 494 gives another rather imaginative explanation of the term, by relating *kha* to *ākāsa* (space), which is then supposed to represent the absence of permanence, beauty, happiness, and self.

⁹⁷² Monier-Williams: [Dictionary](#), p 1262.

⁹⁷³ Cf. also Ñāḍamoli: [Path of Purification](#), p 823 n 8, who suggests "uneasiness" as a preferable rendering for *dukkha* when this is used as a characteristic of the whole of experience.

⁹⁷⁴ S II 53: yañ kiñci vedayitāñ tañ dukkhasmiñ.

⁹⁷⁵ D II 66: yasmīñ samaye sukhañ vedanañ vedeti, neva tasmīñ samaye dukkhañ vedanañ vedeti, na adukkhamasukhañ vedanañ vedeti, sukhañ yeva tasmīñ samaye vedanañ vedeti. Other passages, in fact, document that according to the Buddha certain kinds of experiences and corresponding realms of existence are '*ekantasukha*', pure pleasure or happiness, e.g. at M I 76: *ekantasukhā vedanā vediyamānañ*; or at M II 37: *atthi ekantasukho loko, atthi ākāravatā pañipadā ekantasukhassa*

sion, the Buddha explained his earlier statement that ‘whatever is felt is included within *dukkha*’ to refer to the impermanent nature of all conditioned phenomena.⁹⁷⁶ The changing nature of feelings, however, need not necessarily be experienced as ‘suffering’, since in the case of a painful experience, for example, change may be experienced as pleasant.⁹⁷⁷ Thus all feelings are not ‘suffering’, nor is their impermanence ‘suffering’, but all feelings are ‘unsatisfactory’, since they cannot provide lasting satisfaction.

Dukkha as a qualification of all conditioned phenomena is not necessarily experienced as ‘suffering’, since to suffer depends on someone being sufficiently attached to suffer. This is in fact the implication of the second noble truth, which points out that in order for the unsatisfactory nature of phenomena in the world to lead to actual suffering, the necessary requirement is the presence of craving (*taṇhā*).⁹⁷⁸ As the third noble truth indicates, once all traces of attachment and craving have been eradicated by the *arahant*, such suffering is also eradicated.⁹⁷⁹ Thus actual ‘suffering’, unlike ‘unsatisfactoriness’, is not a quality inherent in the phenomena of the world, but only inherent in the way how the unawakened mind experiences them. This much is indeed the underlying theme of the whole set of the four noble truths, namely that the suffering caused by attachment and craving can be overcome by awakening. That is, for an *arahant* the unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned phenomena is no longer capable of causing any mental suffering.

The fourth noble truth then treats the conditions for such overcoming in detail, by depicting the practical way (*magga, paṭipadā*) to be undertaken. This noble eightfold path covers the central activities and qualities to be cultivated in order to bring about the transformation from ignorant ‘worldling’ (*puṭhujjana*) to *arahant*.⁹⁸⁰ Since in this context right mindfulness (*sammāsati*) is juxtaposed with other factors such as view, speech, and action, the noble eightfold path sets the necessary framework for a development of *satipaṭṭhāna*.⁹⁸¹

The four noble truths express the essence of the Buddha’s awakening and form a central theme in what is recorded as his first formal discourse.⁹⁸² Since these four truths accord with reality, they are further qualified as ‘noble’, as the four ‘noble’ truths.⁹⁸³ The underlying fourfold structure parallels a fourfold method of diagnosis and prescription used in ancient Indian medicine (see diagram 12.3 below).⁹⁸⁴ Similar nuances occur in several discourses,

lokassa sacchikiriyāya. Cf. also Nanayakkara "Impermanence", p 538.

⁹⁷⁶ S IV 216: *yāyū kiṃci vedayitāy, tāy dukkhasminti, tāy kho panetaṃ mayā saṅkhārānāy yeva aniccataṃ sandhāya bhāsitaṃ*. M III 208 discusses the same statement. Cf. also Āḍamoli: [Middle Length Discourses](#), p 1340 n 1227; and Āḍavāra: [Clearing the Path](#), p 477.

⁹⁷⁷ M I 303: *dukkhā vedanā ... vipariḍāma sukhā*.

⁹⁷⁸ E.g. at S V 421: *dukkhasamudayam-ariyasaccāy. Yāyāyū taḍhā ponobhavikā nandā-rāgasahagatā tatra tatrābhinandinā, seyyathādaṃ, kāmataḍhā, bhavataḍhā, vibhavataḍhā*. Cf. also Gruber: [Vipassanā](#), pp 94 and 194; and Nanayakkara: "Dukkha", p 699.

⁹⁷⁹ S V 421: *dukkhanirodham-ariyasaccāy. Yo tassā yeva taḍhāya asesavirāganirodho cāgo paṇinissaggo mutti anālayo*.

⁹⁸⁰ In addition to the eightfold enumeration of the path-factors, occasionally a fivefold presentation can be found, applicable to the context of meditation and presupposing the previous fulfilment of right speech, action and livelihood, cf. M III 289, Vibh 238-240, and the discussion at Kv 600; Āḍatiloka: [Guide](#), p 32. A tenfold enumeration also occurs (e.g. at D II 217 and M III 76), which adds qualities of the *arahant*: *sammācāḍa* and *sammāvimutti* (right knowledge and liberation).

⁹⁸¹ *Satipaṇṇhāna* as the path factor of right mindfulness is in particular closely interrelated with *sammādiṇṇhi* (right view), since on the one hand right mindfulness is required to establish right view, cf. M III 72: *so sato micchādiṇṇhiṃ pajahati, sato sammādiṇṇhiṃ upasampajja viharati*, (this *sati* is further on defined as *sammāsati*), while on the other hand, right view serves as a basis for all other path factors, cf. D II 217: *sammādiṇṇhissa sammāsaṅkappo pahoti ... sammāsati pahoti ... sammāsamādiṇṇhi pahoti*, and M I 71: *sammādiṇṇhi ... pubbaṅgamā*. According to Vibh 242, *sammādiṇṇhi* is the root (*hetu*) of the other seven path-factors. The need for right view as a foundation for progress on the path is also emphasised by Bodhi: [Right View](#), p 3; and Story: "Buddhist Meditation", p 167.

⁹⁸² S V 423: *yato ca kho me ... imesu catusu ariyasaccesu ... yathābhātaṃ cāḍadassanāy suvisuddhāy ahoṣi, athāhaṃ ... ‘anuttarāy sammāsambodhiy abhisambuddho’ ti paccaḍḍāsīy*.

⁹⁸³ Cf. S V 435: *cattāri ariyasaccāni tathāni avitathāni anaḍḍathāni, tasmā ‘ariyasaccānā’-ti vuccanti*. Another discourse at S V 435 offers the alternative explanation that they are so called since their author is the ‘Noble One’: *sadevake loke ... Tathāgato ariyo, tasmā ‘ariyasaccānā’-ti vuccanti*. This discourse, unlike the preceding one, is missing from the Chinese *āgamas*, cf. Akanuma: [Catalogue](#), p 263. According to Norman: "Truths", p 389 the attribute *ariya* may not have been part of the historically earliest formulations of the four (noble) truths.

⁹⁸⁴ De la Vallee Poussin: "Vyādhisātra", p 580; de Silva: [Freudian Psychology](#), p 166; and Pande: [Origins of Buddhism](#), p 398. According to Wezler: "Quadruple Division", pp 312-324, there is no evidence for this scheme to have predated the

which compare the Buddha to a doctor and his teaching to medicine.⁹⁸⁵ This presentation underlines the pragmatic orientation of the four noble truths as a practical investigation of reality.⁹⁸⁶

The Scheme of the Four Noble Truths:
(Diagram 13.1)

disease:	<i>dukkha</i>
virus:	craving
health:	<i>Nibbāna</i>
cure:	path

Each of the four noble truths makes its own demand on the practitioner: *dukkha* has to be 'understood', its origination has to be 'abandoned', its cessation has to be 'realised', and the practical path to this realisation has to be 'developed'.⁹⁸⁷ In particular: the five aggregates are to be understood, ignorance and craving for existence are to be abandoned, knowledge and freedom are to be realised, and tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) are to be developed.⁹⁸⁸

Just as the footprints of all animals can fit within the footprint of an elephant, so too, whatever wholesome states there are, all of them are embraced by the four noble truths.⁹⁸⁹ On the other hand, to believe that one can realise awakening without having understood the four noble truths is like trying to construct the upper floors of a house without having first constructed its lower floors and foundation.⁹⁹⁰ Taken together, these statements underscore the central importance of the four noble truths.

For the purpose of contemplation (*anupassanā*), the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* proposes to focus either on *dukkha* and its arising, or on its cessation and the path leading to its cessation.⁹⁹¹ This then corresponds to the two stage sequence found throughout the contemplations of *dharmas*, where in each case the recognition of the presence or absence of a particular phenomenon includes also directing mindfulness to the causes related to presence or absence (see diagram 12.4 below).

Practically applied to a mundane level, contemplation of the four noble truths can, for example, be directed to patterns of clinging (*upādāna*) at existence occurring in everyday life, such as when one's expectations get frustrated, when one's position is threatened, or when things do not go the way one wants (*yam-picchaṃ na labhati*). The task here is to acknowledge the underlying pattern of craving (*taṇhā*) that has led to the build-up of clinging and expectations, and also its resultant manifestation in some form of *dukkha*. This understanding

Buddha's formulation of the four noble truths, so that it is also possible that it was adopted from his teaching by the medical sciences. Parallels to the four noble truths occur also in the *Yoga Sātra* by *Patañjali*, II 15-26, a detailed discussion of which can be found in Wezler: "Quadruple Division", pp 301-307.

⁹⁸⁵ M II 260 and A IV 340: '*bhisakko*' ti ... *Tathāgatassetam adhivacanam*; A III 238 explains: *seyathā pi bho puriso ābādihiko dukkhito bāḷhagilāno, tassa kusalo bhisakko ṭhānaso ābādham nīhareyya, evam-eva ... yato yato tassa bhoto Gotamassa dhammaṃ suṇāti ... tato tato sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā abbattham gacchanti*; again at It 101: *aham-asmi ... anuttaro bhisakko sallakatto*; '*sallakatto*' occurs also at Sn 560 and 562; while Th 1111 has: *mahābhisakko*. Cf. also Ehara: *Vimuttimaggā*, p 275; and Vism 512.

⁹⁸⁶ Buswell: "Introduction", p 3, speaks of early Buddhism's "spiritual pragmatism according to which the truth of a religious proposition consists in its practical utility."

⁹⁸⁷ S V 436: *dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ pariṇeṇyaṃ ... dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccaṃ pahātabbāṃ ... dukkhanirodhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ sacchikātabbāṃ ... dukkhanirodhagāminā pañipadā ariyasaccaṃ bhāvetabbāṃ*.

⁹⁸⁸ S V 52 and A II 247: *paṇcupādānakkhandhā ... ime dhammā abhiṇṇā pariṇeṇya ... avijjā ca bhavataḍḍhā ca, ime dhammā abhiṇṇā pahātabbā ... vijjā ca vimutti ca, ime dhammā abhiṇṇā sacchikātabbā ... samatho ca vipassanā ca, ime dhammā abhiṇṇā bhāvetabbā*. Cf. also S III 159 and 191: *rāpam ... viṇṇādam, ime vuccanti pariṇeṇya dhammā ... rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo ... vuccati pariṇṇā*.

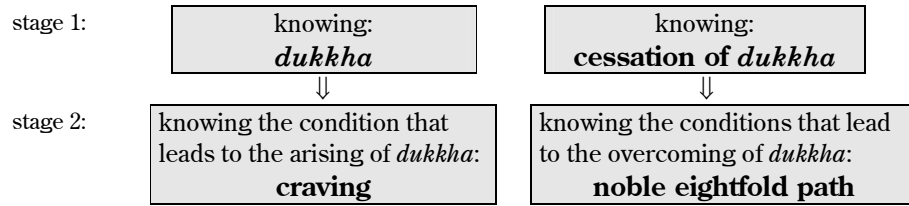
⁹⁸⁹ M I 184: *ye keci kusalā dhammā sabbe te catusu ariyasaccesu saīgahaṃ gacchanti*.

⁹⁹⁰ S V 452.

⁹⁹¹ Sn (prose previous to verse 724): '*idaṃ dukkhaṃ, ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo*' ti ayam ekānupassanā; '*ayaṃ dukkhanirodho, ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminā pañipadā*' ti, ayaṃ dutiyānupassanā.

in turn forms the necessary basis for letting go of craving (*taṇhāya paṭinissagga*). With such letting go, clinging and *dukkha* can as well, at least momentarily, be overcome. Practised in this way, one will become increasingly able to 'fare evenly amidst the uneven'.⁹⁹²

Two Stages in the Contemplation of the Four Noble Truths:
(Diagram 13.2)



The four noble truths, listed as the final meditation practice in this *satipaṭṭhāna*, do not only constitute the conclusion of this series of contemplations, but can also be interrelated with each of the other contemplations of *dharmas*.⁹⁹³ The commentaries go further by relating each of the meditation practices described throughout the entire *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* to the scheme of the four noble truths.⁹⁹⁴ In fact, the successful completion of any *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation is to realise *Nibbāna*, which corresponds to knowing the third noble truth 'as it really is'.⁹⁹⁵ Yet, a full understanding of the third noble truth implies a penetration of all four, since each one is but a different facet of the same central realisation.⁹⁹⁶ Thus the four noble truths form indeed the culmination of any successful implementation of *satipaṭṭhāna* as the direct path to *Nibbāna*.

Chapter XIV: Realisation

In the present chapter I turn to the concluding passage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, which gives a 'prediction' of realisation within a variable time period. The passage reads:

"If anyone should develop these four *satipaṭṭhānas* in such a way for seven years ... six years ... five years ... four years ... three years ... two years ... one year ... seven months ... six months ... five months ... four months ... three months ... two months ... one month ... half a month ... seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.
So it was with reference to this that it was said: Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of *dukkha* and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realisation of *Nibbāna*, namely, the four *satipaṭṭhānas*."⁹⁹⁷

⁹⁹² S I 4 and 7: *caranti visamasamaṃ*, an expression illustrating the inner balance and flexibility of the *arahants*.

⁹⁹³ S IV 86 applies the scheme of the four noble truths to an understanding of the six sense-spheres: *cakkhuṃ-ca pañicca rāpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvijjādaṃ, tiḍḍaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taḍhā, ayaṃ dukkhassa samudayo ... tassā yeva taḍhāya asesavirāganirodhā ... ayaṃ dukkhassa atthagamo*, (cf. also S V 426); while M I 191 and S V 425 do the same in regard to the aggregates. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* itself, the contemplations of the hindrances and of the awakening factors reveal an underlying pattern paralleling the diagnostic scheme of the four noble truths, since each observation turns to the presence of the respective mental quality, its absence, and the causes for presence or absence.

⁹⁹⁴ The four noble truth scheme is applied at Ps I 250 to mindfulness of breathing, at Ps I 252 to the four postures, at Ps I 270 to activities, at Ps I 271 to the anatomical parts, at Ps I 272 to the four elements, at Ps I 279 to feelings, at Ps I 280 to mind, at Ps I 286 to the hindrances, at Ps I 287 to the aggregates, at Ps I 289 to the sense-spheres, and at Ps I 300 to the awakening factors.

⁹⁹⁵ Vibh 116: *nirodha saccaṃ asaṅkhatāṃ*. Cf. also S V 442, according to which a distinctive quality of a stream-enterer is: *yo 'idaṃ dukkhan'-ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, 'ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo' ti ... 'ayaṃ dukkhanirodho' ti ... 'ayaṃ dukkhanirodha-gāminā paṇipadā' ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*.

⁹⁹⁶ S V 437: *yo dukkhaṃ passati dukkhasamudayam-pi so passati, dukkhanirodham-pi passati, dukkhanirodhagāminiṃ paṇipadam-pi passati*. Cf. also Kv 218; Vism 690-692; Bodhi: *Noble Eightfold Path*, p 126; and Cousins: *Nibbāna and Abhidhamma*, p103. In fact, according to Sn 884 there is only one truth, *ekaṃ hi saccaṃ na dutiyaṃ atthi*, so that the scheme of four truths does not imply four separate truths.

⁹⁹⁷ M I 62: *yo hi koci ime cattāro satipaṭṭhāne evaṃ bhāveyya satta vassāni ... cha vassāni ... paṃca vassāni ... cattāri vassāni ... tādā vassāni ... dve vassāni ... ekaṃ vassāni ... satta māsāni ... cha māsāni ... paṃca māsāni ... cattāri māsāni ... tādā*

I will at first examine this prediction and in particular discuss whether the progress towards realisation is 'gradual' or 'sudden'. In addition, I will try to provide some ideas, perspectives, and suggestions on the above mentioned goal of *satipaṭṭhāna*, the 'realisation of *Nibbāna*'.

XIV.1) Gradual and Sudden

The prediction regarding the potential fruits of *satipaṭṭhāna* mentions two realisations, non-return and *arahant*-ship, the higher two of the four stages of awakening. The fact that only the two higher stages of realisation are mentioned underlines the thoroughness of *satipaṭṭhāna* as the 'direct path' to *Nibbāna*, drawing attention to its potential of leading 'at least' to the eradication of the five lower fetters (*saṃyojana*), and therewith to complete freedom from sensual desire and aversion.⁹⁹⁸

The other noteworthy feature of this prediction is the way in which the time can vary for *satipaṭṭhāna* practice to bear fruit.⁹⁹⁹ Apparently, even someone of inferior ability can gain freedom from desire and aversion within a maximum of seven years, while someone of superior ability may do the same within only seven days.¹⁰⁰⁰ However, in evaluating this prediction it needs to be kept in mind that the number 'seven' may have only a symbolic character in this context, simply indicating a complete period or cycle of time.¹⁰⁰¹

The prediction of realisation in the Chinese *Madhyama Āgama* allows for even quicker awakening than the *Pāli* discourses, since here realisation can occur in the evening even if practice has only started that same morning.¹⁰⁰² The possibility of such instant realisation through *satipaṭṭhāna*, within the interval of just one day or night, is also documented in the *Pāli* commentaries,¹⁰⁰³ while in the discourses the same is stated in relation to the five 'factors of striving' (*pañca padhāniyaṅga*).¹⁰⁰⁴

The varying time periods for the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* to bear fruit suggest that the decisive breakthrough to realisation can happen at any time, provided the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is undertaken in accordance with the instructions given in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. That

māsāni ... dve māsāni ... ekaṃ māsāni ... aóóhamāsāni ... sattāhaṃ ... tassa dvinnaṃ phalānaṃ aóóatarāṃ phalaṃ paññikaṃkhaṃ - diññheva dhamme aóóā, sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā. Ekāyano ayāṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā sokapariddavānaṃ samatikkamāya dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthagamāya āyassa adhigamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṇṇhānāti. Iti yan-taṃ vuttaṃ idam-etaṃ pañicca vuttaṃ. The same prediction concerning the higher two stages of awakening occurs again for *satipaṇṇhāna* at S V 181, and for *ānāpānasati* at S V 314, but also in a variety of other contexts, e.g. at S V 129-133, 236, A III 82, 143, A V 108, Sn 724-765, and It 39-41.

⁹⁹⁸ The freedom from sensual desire and aversion envisaged in the prediction echoes to some extent the 'definition' part of the discourse, which relates the practice of *satipaṇṇhāna* to freedom from desires and discontent, M I 56: *vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassāni*. Horner: "Four Ways", p 792, however understands the expression '*sati vā upādisese*' ('if there is a trace of clinging left') to represent *sa-upādisesa* in contrast to *anupādisesa Nibbāna* (the *arahant's* awakening against his or her passing away); cf. also Masefield: "Controversy", p 221.

⁹⁹⁹ The same occurs again in a different context at D III 55, where the Buddha stated that within such a variable time period he could guide a disciple to realisation. This instance could be a reference to *satipaṇṇhāna*, since the Buddha did not further specify in what he would instruct the disciple.

¹⁰⁰⁰ On this passage comment Knight: *Mindfulness*, p 3; and Solé-Leris: *Tranquility & Insight*, p 103.

¹⁰⁰¹ According to Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 673, the number seven is invested with a "peculiar magic nimbus" in *Pāli*, which mitigates against taking the above prediction too literally. An example of such symbolic use of the number seven can be found at A IV 89, where the Buddha related a past life of his in which, as a fruit of 'seven' years of *mettā* practice, he was not reborn in this world for 'seven' aeons, for 'seven' times he became a *Mahā Brahmā*, for many times 'seven' he became a universal monarch, possessed of the 'seven' treasures. Furthermore, in the above prediction at the end of the *Satipaṇṇhāna Sutta* it is noticeable that, when counting down, 'one year' is not followed by 'eleven months', as should be expected, but by 'seven months', documenting that the sequence does not follow mathematical logic. According to Dumont: "Conception of Kingship", p 73: "the number seven ... indicates a totality" (in ancient India).

¹⁰⁰² Minh Chau: *Madhyama āgama*, p 94; and Nhat Than: *Transformation*, p 166.

¹⁰⁰³ Ps I 302: *tikkhapaṃcāni pana sandhāya, pāto anusīñño sāyaṃ visesaṃ adhigamissati, sāyaṃ anusīñño pāto visesaṃ adhigamissatā-ti vuttaṃ.*

¹⁰⁰⁴ M II 96, however with the specification: *Tathāgataṃ vināyakaṃ labhamāno*, i.e. the Buddha himself were to train the practitioner, a specification which is not stipulated in the *Satipaṇṇhāna Sutta*. This suggests that for realisation within a single days time the personal presence of the Buddha as the teacher is required. The five factors of striving mentioned in this discourse are: confidence, physical health, honesty, energy, and wisdom regarding the arising and disappearance of phenomena (this last could be taken to represent the wisdom gained through *satipaṇṇhāna* practice, especially in regard to contemplating the nature of arising and of passing away, stipulated in the *satipaṇṇhāna* 'refrain').

is, once *sati* is well established (*supatitṭhita*), every moment is pregnant with potential awakening. This brings up the question, to what extent the progress to realisation follows a 'gradual' pattern, as against an unexpected 'sudden' breakthrough to awakening.¹⁰⁰⁵

According to the discourses, it is impossible to exactly measure the quantity of defilements eradicated during a day of practice, just as a carpenter cannot measure the extent to which the handle of his adze has worn out during a day of use. Yet, just as a carpenter after repeated use will realise that the handle has worn out, so will a meditator, after repeated practice, realise that the defilements are growing weaker and being eradicated.¹⁰⁰⁶ This perspective of the progress towards realisation depicts awakening as something achieved by a gradual, though not precisely measurable, evolution of practice.

The gradual nature of the progress towards realisation is a recurring theme in the discourses.¹⁰⁰⁷ A passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, for example, illustrates the gradual character of the process of purification with the gradual refining of gold, where at first gross and middling impurities are removed, followed in turn by removing finer impurities.¹⁰⁰⁸ Similarly in the realm of mental culture one at first removes the gross types of impurities, and only then is able to proceed to subtler levels.

According to the discourses, one's progress in the practice of the *Dhamma* gradually deepens, comparable to the gradual deepening of the ocean.¹⁰⁰⁹ Another simile compares the practice of the threefold training in ethical conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) to a farmer, who has to plant and water his crop in due time. Neither the farmer, nor a practitioner of the threefold training have the magical power to say: let my effort ripen now and bear fruit. Yet, their constant effort will bring about the desired results.¹⁰¹⁰ This simile indicates that the progress to awakening follows a natural dynamic, comparable to the growth of plants in nature.

Another illustration of the progress towards realisation is the simile of a hen sitting on her eggs. Just as the hen's sustained sitting on her eggs will in due course lead to the hatching of the chicks, so too a practitioner's sustained practice will in due course lead to realisation.¹⁰¹¹ The chicks' hatching and 'suddenly' breaking out of their shells depends on a 'gradual' process of inner development due to the hen sitting on the eggs. In a similar way, the 'sudden' breakthrough to *Nibbāna* depends on a 'gradual' process of inner development and mental cultivation. Just as the hen cannot directly make the chicks break their shells, similarly the breakthrough to *Nibbāna* cannot be directly made to happen. Both will occur in their own time, if the necessary conditions are in place.

These passages clearly indicate that the progress to awakening follows a gradual pattern. On the other hand, however, several of the stream-entry realisations reported in the discourses take place in a rather 'sudden' manner, usually while listening to a discourse given by the Buddha. On considering these instances it seems almost as if to hear a discourse were sufficient for awakening, without much need to gradually develop concentration and engage in insight meditation.¹⁰¹² Here, however, it needs to be taken into consideration that if someone had

¹⁰⁰⁵ On 'sudden' and 'gradual' cf. also Gethin: *Path to Awakening*, pp 132, 246; and Nanayakkara: "Insight", p 581. Pensa: "Meditational States", p 335, relates this distinction to the difference between peak- and plateau-experiences.

¹⁰⁰⁶ S III 154 and A IV 127: *bhāvanāni anuyuttassa bhikkhuno viharato kiṃcāpi na evaṃ ādāni hoti - 'ettakaṃ me aṃjā āsavānāni khāḍāni, ettakaṃ hiyyo, ettakaṃ pare' ti, atha khvassa khāḍekhāḍanteva ādāni hoti.*

¹⁰⁰⁷ M I 479: *nāhaṃ ādikeneva ārādhanaṃ vadāmi, api ca anupubbāsikkhā anupubbakiriyā anupubbapaṇipadā ārādhanaṃ hoti.* M III 2: *sakkā imasmīṃ dhammavinaye anupubbāsikkhā anupubbakiriyā anupubbapaṇipadā paṇipetvā.* A I 162: *anupubbena nibbānāni adhigacchanti paḍōitā.* Cf. also Strenski: "Gradual Enlightenment", pp 4 and 8.

¹⁰⁰⁸ At A I 254. Cf. also Dh 239: *anupubbena medhāvā, thokaṃ thokaṃ khaḍe khaḍe, kammāro rajatasseva, niddhame malam-attano.*

¹⁰⁰⁹ Vin II 238, A IV 200, 207 and Ud 54: *seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo anupubbaninno ... evam-eva imasmīṃ dhammavinaye anupubbāsikkhā anupubbakiriyā anupubbapaṇipadā, na āyatakeneva āpaṇivedho.*

¹⁰¹⁰ A I 240: *taṃ bhikkhuno natthi sā iddhi vā ānubhāvo vā, aṃjeva me anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimuccatu sve vā uttarassevāti. Atha kho hoti so samayo yaṃ tassa bhikkhuno adhisālamī sikkhato adhiccittam-pi sikkhato adhipaṃsam-pi sikkhato anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimuccati.*

¹⁰¹¹ M I 104, M I 357, S III 154, and A IV 125.

¹⁰¹² In fact Dhammavuddho: *Liberation*, p 10, suggests translating *sotāpanna* as "ear-entry", being realised by the

realised stream-entry while meditating alone and in seclusion, this did not occasion a discourse and therefore was not recorded later.¹⁰¹³ But when someone realised stream-entry while listening to the Buddha, by the very nature of its circumstance it necessarily became part of the later reported discourse. Thus it is to be expected that only the latter type of stream-entry realisations are recorded in the discourses. The same discourses do indeed document the potential of insight meditation to lead to the realisation of stream-entry, which would be a meaningless statement if stream-entry were to depend solely on listening to a discourse.¹⁰¹⁴ Besides, if simply listening to a discourse were sufficient for realisation, the Buddha would not have given so many injunctions to meditate.¹⁰¹⁵

A rather condensed version of the gradual path can be found in one instance where a layman, who was slightly drunk, was nevertheless able to gain stream-entry. On meeting the Buddha for the first time, this man sobered up and, after receiving a gradual discourse, he then and there realised stream-entry.¹⁰¹⁶ In this particular case, the impact of personally meeting the Buddha was apparently so powerful that the breakthrough to stream-entry could take place, despite that fact that just a few moments earlier he had been inebriated. This layman is not the only such case, since the discourses also report the attainment of stream-entry at the time of death by another layman, who during his lifetime had been unable to abstain from alcohol.¹⁰¹⁷ A closer consideration of this discourse suggests that this layman was probably someone who had earlier already progressed so far on the path that stream-entry had to take place (at the latest) at death, despite the fact that in the meantime his ethical foundation had deteriorated.¹⁰¹⁸

Rather 'sudden' experiences of awakening can even lead all the way through to *arahant*-ship. A case in point is the ascetic *Bāhiya*, whose full awakening came within minutes of his first meeting with the Buddha, right after receiving a short but penetrative instruction.¹⁰¹⁹ *Bāhiya* is certainly a prototype of 'sudden' awakening. On considering the background to his awakening it becomes apparent that *Bāhiya's* gradual development took place outside of the Buddhist scheme of training. At the time of his encounter with the Buddha, *Bāhiya* already possessed a high degree of spiritual maturity, so that the brief instructions he received were

sāvakas (listeners) on hearing a discourse. Similarly Masfield: *Divine Revelation*, p 134, presumes that "sota in the term *sotāpanna* might mean 'hearing' rather than 'stream'." However, on considering the discourses one finds that although listening to the *Dhamma* is mentioned at S V 347 as one of the factors of stream-entry (*saddhammasavanam sotāpattiyaṅgam*), the same discourse then clearly defines *sota* and the *sotāpanna*, S V 347: *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo sota*, and S V 348: *ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena samannāgato, ayam vuccati sotāpanno*. (In addition it could be pointed out that the correct *Pāli* term for receiving the *Dhamma* by hearing is *sotānugata*, not *sotāpanna*, cf. A II 185). The 'stream' image comes up also at S V 38, where the noble eightfold path is compared to the *Gaṅges* river, due to the fact that it leads towards *Nibbāna*.

¹⁰¹³ Only realisation of *arahant*-ship was deemed worthwhile for a public pronouncement (*avāḍa vyākaroṭi*).

¹⁰¹⁴ S III 167: *vijjati yaū sālavā bhikkhu ime paṅcupādānakkhandhe aniccato, dukkhato ... anattato yoniso manasi karonto sotāpattiphalāū sacchikareyya*. A I 44: *kāyagatāsati, ayāū ... ekadhammo bhāvito bahulākato sotāpattiphalasacchikiriyāya saivattati*. A III 442-443: *sabbasaikhāre aniccato ... dukkhato ... anattato samanupassanto ... sotāpattiphalāū ... sacchikarissati*. Cf. also D III 241 and A III 21, where listening to the *Dhamma* constitutes one out of five occasions for awakening (*vimuttāyatana*), the others being: teaching the *Dhamma*, reciting the *Dhamma*, reflecting on the *Dhamma*, and, last not least, meditation.

¹⁰¹⁵ Cf. e.g. the Buddha's exhortation to meditate: *jhāyatha mā pamādattha!* (e.g. at M I 46, 118, M II 266, M III 302, S IV 133, 359, 361, 368, 373, S V 157, A III 87, 88, A IV 139, and 392); or the frequent description of a meditator going off into seclusion for intensive practice and retreat: *vivittaū senāsanaū bhajati ...* (e.g. at D I 71, 207, D II 242, D III 49, M I 181, 269, 274, 346, 440, M II 162, 226, M III 3, 35, 115, 135, A II 210, A III 92, 100, A IV 436, and A V 207).

¹⁰¹⁶ A IV 213: *yadāhaū ... Bhagavantaū pañhamaū dārato va addasaū, saha dassaneneva me Bhagavato cittaū pasādi surāmodo ca pahāyi ... tassa me Bhagavā anupubbikathaū kathesi ... vināvaraḍaccittaū ... tasmīū yeva āsane virajaū vātamalaū dhammacakkhūū udapādi*.

¹⁰¹⁷ Cf. S V 375, which reports the outraged reaction of the laity on hearing that the Buddha had declared *Sarakāni* to have passed away as a stream-enterer: *ettha dāni ko na sotāpanno bhavissati! ... Sarakāni sakko sikkhādubbalyam-āpādi, majjapānaū apāyi*.

¹⁰¹⁸ According to the Buddha, *Sarakāni* completed the training at the time of his death S V 380: *Sarakāni ... maraḍakāle sikkhāya paripārakārā ahoṣi*, which suggests that *Sarakāni* attained stream-entry at that time. Since S V 379 has the same set of terms that are used in the definitions of the *dhammānusārā* and the *saddhānusārā* at M I 479, it seems highly probable that he had been a *dhammānusārā* or a *saddhānusārā* and thus was bound to realise stream-entry latest at death (cf. S III 225: *saddhānusārā ... dhammānusārā ... abhabbo ca tāva kālaū kātūū yava na sotāpattiphalāū sacchikaroti*).

¹⁰¹⁹ Ud 8; cf. above chapter XI.4.

sufficient to trigger a complete breakthrough.¹⁰²⁰

Most of the instances mentioned so far reveal the powerful influence of the Buddha's personal presence, which provided a potent catalyst for realisation. On further perusing the discourses, additional examples of at times remarkably 'sudden' realisations can be found. In an all out attempt to reach realisation, *Ānanda* finally gained full awakening precisely at the moment when he had given up striving and was about to lie down to rest.¹⁰²¹ Elsewhere a nun, and on another occasion a monk, both on the verge of committing suicide, were 'saved', so to say, by awakening.¹⁰²² And the commentaries recount the story of an acrobat, who gained realisation while balancing on the top of his pole.¹⁰²³ All these instances demonstrate the sudden and unpredictable nature of the event of awakening. They document that, although a gradual progress towards realisation is the rule, the time period required for such gradual preparation to bear fruit varies greatly according to the individual. This is also a central implication of the different time periods listed in the prediction of realisation at the close of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Thus early Buddhism proposes a gradual development as the necessary preparation for an eventual sudden breakthrough to realisation. Viewing the path in this way, as a combination of these two aspects, reconciles the apparent contradiction between the frequently recurring emphasis on the need for a particular type of conduct and for the development of knowledge, while at the same time the realisation of *Nibbāna* is not simply the result of conduct or knowledge.¹⁰²⁴

Not only is it impossible to predict the precise moment when realisation will take place, but, from the viewpoint of actual practice, even the gradual progress towards realisation does not necessarily unfold in a uniform way. Rather, most practitioners experience a cyclic succession of progression and regression, oscillating within a fairly broad spectrum.¹⁰²⁵ Yet, if these recurring cycles are considered within a broader time-perspective, they reveal a slow but consistent gradual evolution, which has thus an ever increasing potential to culminate in a sudden realisation of *Nibbāna*.

To the implications of realising *Nibbāna* I will now turn in more detail.

XIV.2) *Nibbāna* and its Ethical Implications

Nibbāna, translated literally, refers to the going out of a lamp or a fire. The image of an extinguished lamp occurs indeed several times in the discourses as a description of the experience of *Nibbāna*.¹⁰²⁶ The corresponding verb *nibbāyati* means to 'be extinguished' or to 'become cool'. Such extinction is probably best understood in a passive sense, where the fires of lust, aversion and delusion become cool through lack of fuel.¹⁰²⁷ The metaphor of an extinguished

¹⁰²⁰ *Bāhiya* must have developed a high degree of inner purification by whatever type of practice he was following, as, according to the *Udāna* account, he (mistakenly) deemed himself to be already fully awakened. The sincerity of his aspiration becomes evident from the fact that, once a doubt about his presumed realisation had arisen, he immediately undertook the journey across half the Indian subcontinent to meet the Buddha. His sense of urgency was so strong that he even went to search for the Buddha in the town where the latter had gone to collect alms, unable to await his return to the monastery. (The comy Ud-a 79 gives a rather incredible account of *Bāhiya*, presenting him as a shipwrecked hypocrite, wearing bark in order to make an easy living, while his long journey across half of India was according to Ud-a 86 a feat of supernormal power).

¹⁰²¹ Vin II 285: *ānando ... bahudeva rattīū kāyagatāya satiyā vātināmetvā rattiyā paccāsamayaū 'nipajjissāmā'-ti kāyāū āvajjesi. Appatta-ca sāsai bibbohanāū, bhāmito ca pādā muttā. Etasmīū antare anupādāya āsavehi cittāū vimucci.*

¹⁰²² Thā 80-81 and Th 408-409.

¹⁰²³ Dh-p-a IV 63.

¹⁰²⁴ At A II 163 *Sāriputta* was asked: *vijjāyantakaro hoti? ... caraḍenantakaro hoti? ... vijjācaraḍenantakaro hoti? ... a-caatra vijjācaraḍenantakaro hoti?* He however negated each alternative, explaining: *vijjāya ... caraḍena ... vijjācaraḍena antakaro abhaviṣsa savupādāno va samāḍo antakaro abhaviṣsa, a-caatra vijjācaraḍena antakaro abhaviṣsa, puthujjano antakaro abhaviṣsa; puthujjano hi a-caatra vijjācaraḍena caraḍavipanno yathābhātaū na jānāti na passati; caraḍāsaḍampanno yathābhātaū jānāti passati, yathābhātaū jānāū passāū antakaro hoti.* This passage is commented on by Jayatilleke: "Avijjā", p 456. Cf. also Sn 839: *na diññhiyā na sutiya na caḍena, sālabbatenāpi na suddhim-āha, adiññhiya assutiya a-caḍāḍā, asālatā abbatā no pi tena; ete ca nissajja anuggahāya.*

¹⁰²⁵ Debes: "Satipaṅhāna", pp 204 and 208; Kornfield: "Insight Meditation", p 53.

¹⁰²⁶ D II 157, S I 159, A I 236, A IV 3, 4, and Th 906: *pajjotasseva nibbānāū, vimokkho hoti cetaso*; Thā 116 has the slightly different formulation: *padāpasseva nibbānāū vimokkho ahu cetaso*, when *Pañcārā's* experience of *Nibbāna* actually coincided with the 'nibbāna' of her lamp.

¹⁰²⁷ Cf. M III 245 and S V 319: *seyyathāpi tela-ca pañicca vaññi-ca pañicca telappadāpo jhāyati, tasseva telassa ca vañ-*

fire in its ancient Indian context has nuances of calmness, independence, and release.¹⁰²⁸

Judging from the evidence in the discourses, contemporary ascetics and philosophers used the term *Nibbāna* with predominantly positive connotations. The *Brahmajāla Sutta*, for example, lists five positions advocating *Nibbāna* 'here and now', which were five different conceptions of happiness: the pleasures of worldly sensuality and of the four levels of absorption.¹⁰²⁹ Another discourse reports a wanderer taking '*Nibbāna*' to refer to health and mental well being.¹⁰³⁰ Similar positive connotations underlie the standard definition in the *Pāli* discourses of *Nibbāna* as freedom from the unwholesome mental roots of lust, anger, and delusion.¹⁰³¹

This definition highlights in particular the ethical implications of realising *Nibbāna*. These ethical implications require further examination, since at times the realisation of *Nibbāna* has been taken to imply the transcendence of ethical values.¹⁰³² Such transcendence seems, at first sight, to be advocated in the *Samañamañḍikā Sutta*, since this discourse associates awakening with the complete cessation of wholesome ethical conduct.¹⁰³³ Similarly, other passages speak in praise of going beyond 'good' and 'evil'.¹⁰³⁴

Taking the passage from the *Samañamañḍikā Sutta* first, a close examination of the discourse reveals that this particular statement does not refer to the abandoning of ethical conduct, but only to the fact that *arahants* no longer identify with their ethical behaviour.¹⁰³⁵ Regarding the other passages, which speak of 'going beyond good and evil', here one needs to clearly distinguish between the *Pāli* terms translated as 'good', which can be either *kusala* or *puñña*. Although the two terms cannot be completely separated from each other in canonical usage, they often carry quite distinct meanings.¹⁰³⁶ While *puñña* mostly denotes deeds of positive merit, *kusala* covers any type of wholesomeness, including the realisation of *Nibbāna*.¹⁰³⁷

What *arahants* have 'gone beyond' is the accumulation of karma. Thereby they have transcended the generation of 'good' (*puñña*) and of its opposite 'evil' (*pāpa*). But the same cannot be said of wholesomeness (*kusala*). In fact, by eradicating all unwholesome (*akusala*) mental states, *arahants* become the highest embodiment of wholesomeness (*kusala*). So much is this the case that, as indicated in the *Samañamañḍikā Sutta*, they are spontaneously virtuous and do not even identify with their virtue.

Nibbāna, at least as understood by the Buddha, has quite definite ethical implica-

ñiyā ca pariyādānā aṁssa ca anupāhārā anāhāro nibbāyati. Collins: *Nirvana*, p 191, and Rhys Davids: *Dictionary*, p 362, point out that *Nibbāna* refers to the extinction of a fire through lack of fuel, not through active blowing out.

¹⁰²⁸ Thanissaro: *Fire Unbound*, p 41. For parallels in the *Upaniṣads* employing the imagery of extinguished fire cf. Schrader: "Nirvāna", p 167.

¹⁰²⁹ D I 36: *paṁcāhi kāmaguḍehi samappito ... ettāvata ... paramadiññhadhammanibbānau patto hoti* (the same statement is then repeated for each of the four *jhānas*). The Buddha's definition of '*diññha dhamma nibbāna*' can be found at A V 64.

¹⁰³⁰ M I 509: *idan-tāu nibbānāu: ahaū hi ... etarahi arogo sukhā, na maū kiṁci ābādhati*. In the eyes of the Buddha this was clearly a mistaken view of *Nibbāna*.

¹⁰³¹ At S IV 251, 261, and 371: *yo kho rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo - idaū vuccati nibbānanti*; S V 8 has the same definition for '*amataū*'; cf. as well S I 39 and Sn 1109: *taḍhāya vippahānena nibbānau iti vuccati*. This parallels a somewhat imaginative way of deriving the term *Nibbāna* found in the commentaries, which proceeds by taking *Nibbāna* to be composed of *ni* (absence) and *vāna* (as a metaphorical expression of craving), the entire compound then representing 'absence of craving'; (e.g. at Vism 293, also in Vajiraḍḍā: *Nibbāna* p 20).

¹⁰³² This is maintained by van Zeyst: "Absolute", p 143.

¹⁰³³ M II 27: *cetovimuttii paṁcāvimuttii yathābhātaū pajānāti, yatthassa te kusalasāla aparisesā nirujjhanti*.

¹⁰³⁴ E.g. Dh 39: *puṁcapāpāhānassa*; Dh 267: *yodha puṁca-ca pāpa-ca bāhetvā*; Dh 412: *yodha puṁca-ca pāpa-ca, ubho saigāti upaccagā*; Sn 547: *evaū puṁca-ca pāpe ca, ubhaye tvaū na lippasi*; Sn 790: *puṁca-ca pāpe ca anupalitto*; Sn 900: *sālabbataū vāpi pahāya sabbatū, kamma-ca sāvajjanavajjam-etatū, 'suddhā, asuddhā'-ti apathayāno virato care santim-anuggahāya*.

¹⁰³⁵ M II 27: *kusalasāla kuuū aparisesā nirujjhanti? ... Idha bhikkhu sālava hoti, no ca sālamo*. ñanamoli: *Middle Length Discourses*, p 1283 n 775, comments: "this passage shows the *arahant*, who maintains virtuous conduct but no longer identifies with his virtue." Wijesekera: *Vedic Studies*, p 35 n 83, explains: "master morality, but not allow morality to get the better of him." Cf. also M I 319, where the Buddha pointed out that, although he was possessed of a high level of virtue, nevertheless he did not identify with it: *ye vodāta ... dhammā, saivijjanti te Tathāgatassa, etapattoham-asmi, etagocarō, no ca tena tammayo*.

¹⁰³⁶ According to Carter: "Beyond Good and Evil", p 48, some degree of overlap exists between *kusala* and *puṁca* in the context of the threefold volition, but a clear distinction between both terms can be drawn in regard to a person's qualities.

¹⁰³⁷ Premasiri: "Principal Ethical Terms", p 69. Cf. also Collins: *Nirvana*, p 154; and Nanayakkara: "Kusala", p 258.

tions.¹⁰³⁸ *Arahants* are simply unable to commit an immoral act, since with their full realisation of *Nibbāna*, all unwholesome mental states have been extinguished.¹⁰³⁹ The presence of any unwholesome thought, speech, or deed, would therefore directly contradict the claim to being an *arahant*.

In the *Vimamsaka Sutta*, the Buddha applied this principle even to himself, openly inviting prospective disciples to examine his claim to full awakening by thoroughly investigating and observing his behaviour and deeds.¹⁰⁴⁰ Only if no trace of unwholesomeness was found, he explained, would it be reasonable for them to place their confidence in him as a teacher. Even a Buddha should exemplify his teachings by his deeds, as indeed he did. That which the Buddha taught was in complete conformity with his behaviour.¹⁰⁴¹ This was so to such an extent that even after his full awakening the Buddha still engaged in those activities of restraint and careful consideration that had brought about purification in the first place.¹⁰⁴² If the Buddha made himself measurable by common standards of ethical purity, there is little scope to find a moral double standard.

Even if awakening takes place 'only' at the level of stream-entry, the experience of *Nibbāna* still has clear ethical consequences. A major consequence of realising stream-entry is that stream-enterers become unable to commit a breach of ethical conduct serious enough to lead to a lower rebirth.¹⁰⁴³ Although they have not yet reached the level of ethical perfection of the Buddha or an *arahant*, still the first realisation of *Nibbāna* has already caused an irreversible ethical change.

In order to provide additional perspectives on *Nibbāna*, I will now briefly consider some canonical descriptions of *Nibbāna*.

XIV.3) The Early Buddhist Conception of *Nibbāna*

The early Buddhist conception of *Nibbāna* was not easily understood by contemporary ascetics and philosophers. The Buddha's consistent refusal to go along with any of the four standard propositions about the survival or the annihilation of an *arahant* after death was rather bewildering to his contemporaries.¹⁰⁴⁴ According to the Buddha, to entertain these different propositions was as futile as to speculate about the direction in which a fire had gone, once it had gone out.¹⁰⁴⁵

¹⁰³⁸ In fact, at D III 102 the realisation of *Nibbāna* is said to the highest among wholesome phenomena: *āsavaṇāṇi khayā anāsavaṇi cetovimuttāni paṇḍavimuttāni diññheva dhamme sayāni abhiṇṇā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati, etad-ānuttariyāni bhante kusalesu dhammesu*; cf. Premasiri: "Principal Ethical Terms", p 68.

¹⁰³⁹ According to (e.g.) D III 133, 235, M I 523, and A IV 370 the ethical perfection of *arahants* is such that they are incapable of deliberately depriving a living being of life, of stealing, of engaging in sexual intercourse, of lying, and of enjoying sensual pleasures by storing things up as is done by laity: *abhabbo khāḍāsavo bhikkhu saṅgicca pānāni jāvitā voropetuṇi ... adinnāni theyyasaikhātāni ādātuṇi ... methunāni dhammāni patisevituṇi ... sampajānamusā bhāsituṇi ... sannidhikārakāni kāme paribhucjituṇi seyyathā pi pubbe agāriyabhāto*. Cf. also de Silva: *Nibbāna*, p 7.

¹⁰⁴⁰ M I 318: *vāmaṇsakena bhikkhunā ... Tathāgato samannesitabbo ... ye saṅkiliṇṇhā ... dhammā, saṅvijjanti vā te Tathāgatassa no vā ti?* Cf. also Premasiri: "Epistemology", p 100.

¹⁰⁴¹ D II 224, D III 135, A II 24, and It 122: *yathāvādā kho pana so Bhagavā tathākārā, yathākārā tathāvādā*. The same comes up in a different way at A IV 82, where the Buddha clarified that for him there was no need to conceal any of his actions: *natthi Tathāgatassa kāyaduccharitāni ... vacāduccaritāni ... manoduccharitāni, yāni Tathāgato rakkheyya 'mā me idaṇi paro aṅgāsā-ti*. Cf. also D III 217: *parisuddhakāya ... vacā ... manosamācāro Tathāgato*; and M II 115: *sabbākusaladhammapahāno Tathāgato kusalahammasamannāgato*.

¹⁰⁴² M I 464: *ye āsavā ... pahānā te Tathāgatassa, tasmā Tathāgato saikhāyekaṇi paṇisevati ... adhivāseti ... parivajjeti ... vinodeti*. (On correlating these with M I 11 or A III 390 the use of *vinodeti* seems however strange, as one would expect the Buddha not to be experiencing unwholesome thoughts any longer, so that a need to remove them should not arise in the first place).

¹⁰⁴³ M III 64 lists the following as impossibilities for a stream-enterer: killing one's mother, one's father, an *arahant*, wounding a Buddha, and causing a schism in the monastic community. The inability to commit such serious breaches of ethical conduct comes as one of the four limbs of stream-entry, a topic of frequent occurrence in the discourses, e.g. S V 343: *ariyakantehi sālehi sammannāgato*. In addition, according to M I 324 and Sn 232, stream-enterers are also unable to hide their wrongdoings.

¹⁰⁴⁴ M I 486: *upapajjatāti na upeti ... na upapajjatāti na upeti... upapajjati ca na ca upapajjatāti na upeti ... neva upapajjati na na upapajjatāti na upeti ... etthāhaṇi, bho Gotama, aṅgādam-āpādiṇi, ettha sammoham-āpādiṇi, yā pi me esā bhoto Gotamassa purimena kathāsallāpena ahu pasādamatāni sā pi me etarahi antarahitā*.

¹⁰⁴⁵ M I 487.

The Buddha found the existing ways of describing a state of realisation or awakening inapplicable to his realisation.¹⁰⁴⁶ His understanding of *Nibbāna* constituted a new pathway of thought, a radical departure from the existing conceptions of the time. He was well aware of this himself, since after his awakening he immediately reflected upon the difficulty of conveying to others what he had experienced.¹⁰⁴⁷

Despite these difficulties, the Buddha did try to explain the nature of *Nibbāna* on several occasions. In the *Udāna*, for instance, he spoke of *Nibbāna* as something beyond this world or another world, beyond coming, going, or staying, beyond the four elements representing material reality, and also beyond all immaterial realms. This 'sphere' (*āyatana*), he pointed out, objectless and without any support, constitutes 'the end of suffering.'¹⁰⁴⁸ This description shows that *Nibbāna* refers to a dimension completely different from what constitutes ordinary experience of the world, and also different from meditative absorption experiences.¹⁰⁴⁹

A related nuance comes up in a rather poetic passage, which compares the peculiar character of the 'unstationed' consciousness of an *arahant* to a ray of sun passing through the window of a room without opposite walls: the ray does not alight anywhere.¹⁰⁵⁰ Other discourses also speak of a 'non-manifestative' consciousness, which they characterise in terms of the absence of whatever constitutes normal worldly experience.¹⁰⁵¹

Another passage describes *Nibbāna* with the help of a set of past participles as not-born (*a-jāta*), not-become (*a-bhūta*), not-made (*a-kata*), and not-conditioned (*a-saṅkhata*).¹⁰⁵² This particular passage again emphasises that *Nibbāna* is completely 'other', so to say, in that it is not born or made, not produced or conditioned. It is due to this 'otherness' that *Nibbāna* constitutes freedom from birth (*jāti*), becoming (*bhava*), karma (*kamma*), and formations (*saṅkhāra*).¹⁰⁵³ Birth (*jāti*) in a way symbolises existence in time, while *Nibbāna*, not being subject to birth or death, is time-less or beyond time.¹⁰⁵⁴

These few passages show that *Nibbāna* is markedly different from any other sphere, state, or realm. In order to further clarify the distinctive character of the Buddha's conception of

¹⁰⁴⁶ At M I 329, the *Nibbānic* realisation forms part of what almost amounts to a contest, in which the Buddha proved that his realisation (*viññāḍaṇī anidassanaṇī*) was beyond the ken of *Brahmā*, demonstrating metaphorically that it went beyond the hitherto known and valued types of realisation (on this passage cf. Jayatilleke: "Nirvāna", p 115).

¹⁰⁴⁷ S I 136: *idam-pi kho ñhānaṇī duddasaṇī yadidaṇī sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṇinissaggo taḍhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṇī*; (also at M I 167). On the difficulty to describe *Nibbāna* with ordinary language cf. also Burns: *Nirvāna*, p 20; and Story: "Nibbāna", p 42.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ud 80: *atthi tad-āyatanaṇī, yattha neva pañhavā na āpo na tejo na vāyo na ākāsāna-cāyatanaṇī na viññāḍana-cāyatanaṇī na āki-ca-cāyatanaṇī na nevasa-ānāsa-cāyatanaṇī nāyaṇī loko na paraloko no ubho candimasāriyā, tatra pāham neva āgatiṇī vadāmi na gatiṇī na ñhitiṇī na cuttiṇī na upapattiṇī, appatiññhaṇī appavattaṇī, anārammaḍaṇī eva taṇī, esevanto dukkhassa*. In this context 'sphere' (*āyatana*) could be taken to refer to a 'sphere' of experience, since on other occasions the same set of terms form part of a description of a meditative experience, cf. A V 7, 319, 353, 355, 356, and 358: 'siyā ... tathārāpo samādhipaṇilābho, yathā neva pañhaviyāṇī pañhaviṇāssa, na ... āposaṇṇā ... na ... tejosaṇṇā ... na ... vāyosaṇṇā ... na ... ākāsāna-cāyatanaṇā ... na ... viññāḍa-cāyatanaṇā ... na ... āki-ca-cāyatanaṇā ... na ... nevasa-ānāsa-cāyatanaṇā ... na ... idhalokasaṇṇā ... na ... paralokasaṇṇā assa, saṇṇā ca pana assā-ti?' 'Siyā ... bhikkhu evaṇisaṇṇā hoti - 'etaṇī santaṇī, etaṇī paḍātaṇī, yad-idaṇī sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbāpadhipaṇinissaggo taḍhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānanti.' Mp V 2 explains this experience to be the *arahant's* fruition-attainment.

¹⁰⁴⁹ In fact the discourses assign *Nibbāna* to a category apart not only from the sensual sphere, but even from both the fine material and the immaterial spheres, e.g. at It 45: *tisso dhātuyo ... rāpadhātu arāpadhātu nirodhadhātu*.

¹⁰⁵⁰ S II 103, where due to the complete absence of craving for any of the four nutriments, consciousness is unstationed (*apattiññhita*), this in turn resulting in freedom from future becoming.

¹⁰⁵¹ D I 223: *viññāḍaṇī anidassanaṇī, anantaṇī sabbato pahaṇī, ettha āpo ca pañhavā, tejo vāyo na gādhati, ettha dāgha-ca-rassa-ca, anuṇī thālaṇī subhāsubhāṇī, ettha nāma-ca rāpa-ca, asesāṇī uparujjhati*. On this passage cf. also Harvey: "Consciousness Mysticism", p 88; Nāḍananda: *Concept and Reality*, p 66; and Yāḍamoli: *Thinker's Note Book*, p 178.

¹⁰⁵² Ud 80 and It 37: *atthi ajātaṇī abhātaṇī akataṇī asaṅkhataṇī, no ce taṇī abhaviṇāssa ajātaṇī abhātaṇī akataṇī asaṅkhataṇī, nayidha jātassa bhātassa katassa saṅkhataṇī nissaraḍaṇī paṇṇāyetha*; It 37 then continues: *tassa nissaraḍaṇī santaṇī, atakkāvacaraṇī dhuvāṇī, ajātaṇī asamuppannaṇī, asokaṇī virajaṇī paḍaṇī, nirodho dukkhadhammānaṇī, saṅkhārāpasamo sukho*. On this passage cf. Kalupahana: *Buddhist Philosophy*, p 92; and Norman: "Mistaken Ideas", p 220.

¹⁰⁵³ D III 275 and It 61: *yaṇī kho pana kiṇci bhātaṇī saṅkhataṇī paññicasamuppannaṇī nirodho tassa nissaraḍaṇī*. On this passage cf. Premasiri: "Social Relevance", p 49.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Cf. e.g. M I 162 where one's wife, children, and material possessions are defined as *jātidhamma* (phenomena subject to birth), followed by classifying *Nibbāna* as *ajāta* (unborn, i.e. not subject to birth). On possible implications of the term *jāti* cf. also Buddhādāsa: *Heart-Wood*, p 26; Govinda: *Psychological Attitude*, p 50; Harvey: "Consciousness Mysticism", p 90; and Karunadasa: "Nibbānic Experience", p 11.

Nibbāna, it needs to be set off against the realisation of all-embracing unity (as envisaged by the 'non-dual' religious traditions), and also against annihilationism.

XIV.4) *Nibbāna*: neither All-Embracing Unity nor Annihilation

While early Buddhism does not deny the distinction between subject and object, it also does not treat this distinction as being of particular importance. Both are insubstantial, the subject being nothing other than a complex of interactions with the world (object), while the expression 'world' refers basically to what is being perceived by the subject.¹⁰⁵⁵

Unity, in terms of subjective experience, entails a merging of the subject with the object. Experiences of this kind are often the outcome of deep levels of concentration. On the other hand, *Nibbāna* is the cessation of both subject and object, not some kind of merger with a higher reality.¹⁰⁵⁶ Such cessation constitutes an 'escape' from the entire field of cognition.¹⁰⁵⁷ Although *Nibbāna* partakes of non-duality in so far as it has no 'counterpart',¹⁰⁵⁸ its implications nevertheless go far beyond the type of teachings which are related to experiences of oneness or unity.¹⁰⁵⁹

Experiences of oneness were actually not unknown to the early Buddhist community, but even in their most refined forms, the immaterial attainments, they were not considered to be the final goal.¹⁰⁶⁰ Just as the Buddha himself did not feel satisfied with the immaterial attainments he had experienced based on the indications received from his first teachers,¹⁰⁶¹ similarly he admonished his disciples to go beyond and transcend such 'transcendental' experiences.¹⁰⁶² Some of his disciples had achieved various non-dual experiences, while others had

¹⁰⁵⁵ Tilakaratne: *Nirvana and Ineffability*, p 74.

¹⁰⁵⁶ E.g. S IV 98: *ye àyatane vedītabbe yattha cakkhu ca nirujjhanti, rāpasa ca virajjati, ye àyatane vedītabbe ... yattha mano ca nirujjhanti, dhammasa ca virajjati, ye àyatane vedītabbe*, this being 'saēāyatanañirodha' (S IV 100), identified by the comy with *Nibbāna* (Spk II 391: *saēāyatanañirodho vuccati nibbānā ... nibbānasmīhi cakkhu-ādāni ceva nirujjhanti rāpasa-ādāyo ca nirujjhanti*). Another reference of relevance could be the standard description of stream-entry, e.g. at S V 423: *virajjā vātamaḷā dhammacakkhū udapādi - yaū kiñci samudayadhammā sabbaū taū ñirodhadhammanti*; an expression which may well be describing the subjective experience of *Nibbāna*, where all conditionally arisen phenomena cease. Similarly the declaration of realisation at M III 265 and S IV 58 points to a cessation experience: *cakkhusmī cakkhuvī-ādāe cakkhuvī-ādāvi-ādābbesū dhammesu ñirodhaū dīsvā ñirodhaū abhi-āyā ... sotasmī ... ghānasmī ... jivhāyā ... kāyasmī ... manasmī*. Cf. also Vism 681: *sotāpattimaggakkhaē ... bahiddhā ca sabbānimittehi vuññhāti ... sakadāgāṃimaggakkhaē ...* (etc.). Realisation as a cessation experience is also reflected in the writings of modern meditation teachers and scholars, cf. e.g. Brown: "Stages of Mindfulness", p 205; Goenka: "Buddha's Path", p 113, and *Sati-paññhāna*, p 34; Goleman: *Meditative Experience*, p 31; Griffith: "Concentration or Insight", p 610; Kornfield: *Buddhist Masters*, p 291; Mahasi: *Wheel of Dhamma*, p 286; and Ædārāma: *Seven Contemplations*, p 80. Cf. also footnote 30 above.

¹⁰⁵⁷ M I 38: *atthi imassa sa-āgatassa uttariū nissaraḍāū*; this 'escape from the whole field of cognition' is identified by the comy with *Nibbāna* (Ps I 176: *uttari nissaraḍāū nibbānāū atthi*). Similarly Thā 6 refers to *Nibbāna* as *sa-āvāpāsama*.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Cf. M I 304: *nibbānassa kiū paññbhāgo?*, (what is the counterpart to *Nibbāna*?), a question which, according to the *arahant* nun *Dhammadinnā*, cannot be answered. Ps II 369 explains: *nibbānāū ... appaññbhāgāū*.

¹⁰⁵⁹ This much can be deduced from a statement made by the Buddha that, with the direct experience of *Nibbāna*, all views and standpoints related to an experience of unity are left behind and transcended, M II 229-233: *ekattasa-ā attā ca loko ca ... saikhārānāū ñirodho ... viditvā tassa nissaraḍadassāvā Tathāgato tad-upātivatto*. Cf. also S II 77, where the Buddha clearly rejected the view 'all is one', *sabbam-ekattaū*, as one of the extremes to be avoided. Furthermore, according to A IV 40 and 401, in different *Brahma* realms either unitary or diversified experiences prevail, so that a categorical statement like 'all is one' would not accord with the early Buddhist description of cosmic reality: *santi sattā nānattakāyā ekattasa-āino, seyyathā pi devā brahmacāyikā pañhamābhinnibbattā ... santi sattā ekattakāyā nānattasa-āino, seyyathā pi devā ābhassarā ... santi sattā ekattakāyā ekattasa-āino, seyyathā pi devā subhakiḍhā*. Cf. also Ling: "Nibbāna", p 167.

¹⁰⁶⁰ The immaterial attainments are explicitly identified with 'unity' at M III 220: *upekkhā ākāśāna-cāyatanañissitā, atthi vī-ādā-cāyatanañissitā, atthi āki-cā-cāyatanañissitā, atthi nevasa-ānāsa-cāyatanañissitā - ayaū upekkhā ekattā ekattasitā*. In fact the whole series begins with *nānattasa-ānāū amanasikāra* (not giving attention to diversified cognitions) as a basis for developing the sphere of infinite space (e.g. at A IV 306), which clearly documents the unitary character of these experiences. Similarly at M III 106, the four immaterial attainments are qualified as 'ekatta' (unity), each of them forming part of a gradual 'descent' into emptiness. The culmination point of this gradual descent (*paramānuttarā su-cātāvakkāū*) is reached with the destruction of the influxes (M III 108), at which point the qualification *ekatta* is no longer used. This passage clearly illustrates that full awakening goes beyond even the most refined experiences of oneness. This discourse also indicates that there may be various types of 'emptiness' experiences, but that it is the complete destruction of the influxes alone which qualifies whether (or not) an experience of emptiness does indeed constitute full awakening.

¹⁰⁶¹ Cf. M I 165, where the Buddha remarked about the realisations of *ālāra Kālāma* and *Udaka Rāmaputta*: *nāyaū dhammo nibbidāya ... na nibbānāya saūvattati*.

¹⁰⁶² E.g. M I 455-456, where the Buddha commented on each of the meditative absorptions in turn: *analanti vadāmi, pajahathāti vadāmi, samatikkamathāti vadāmi*.

realised full awakening without experiencing any of the immaterial attainments.¹⁰⁶³ The latter were the living proof that such attainments, far from being identifiable with *Nibbāna*, are not even a necessary requisite for its realisation.

The early Buddhist concept of *Nibbāna* needs not only to be distinguished from views based on experiences of unity, but it also has to be differentiated from the theories of annihilation that were held among the deterministic and materialistic schools of ancient India. On several occasions the Buddha was in fact wrongly accused of being an annihilationist. His rather humorous reply to such allegations was that he could rightly be called so, if this meant the annihilation of unwholesome mental states.¹⁰⁶⁴

A consideration of the discourses shows that *Nibbāna* is described in both positive and negative terms. Negative expressions occur frequently in a practical context, indicative of the work still to be done.¹⁰⁶⁵ On the other hand, the discourses refer to *Nibbāna* with a variety of positive epithets, calling it a state of peace, of purity, and of freedom, sublime and auspicious, wonderful and marvellous, an island, a shelter, and a refuge.¹⁰⁶⁶ The happiness of freedom contingent upon having realised *Nibbāna* constitutes the highest possible form of happiness.¹⁰⁶⁷ Described as the source of supreme happiness, as a state of freedom, sublime and auspicious, *Nibbāna* seems to have little in common with mere annihilation.

According to the Buddha's penetrating analysis, the attempt to annihilate self still revolves around a sense of selfhood, since it is motivated by disgust with self. Thus annihilationism is still in bondage to a sense of self, comparable to a dog moving in circles around a post to which it is bound.¹⁰⁶⁸ Such craving for non-existence (*vibhavataṇhā*) forms indeed an obstacle to the realisation of *Nibbāna*.¹⁰⁶⁹ As the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* explains, to think in terms of: 'I shall not be' is a form of conceiving as much as the thought: 'I shall be.' Both are to be left behind in order to proceed to awakening.¹⁰⁷⁰

To maintain that an *arahant* will be annihilated at death is a misunderstanding, since such a proposition argues the annihilation of something that cannot be found in a substantial sense even while still alive.¹⁰⁷¹ Therefore any statement concerning the existence or

¹⁰⁶³ These were the *paṇḍavimutta arahants*, defined at M I 477 as: *ye te santā vimokkhā ... te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paṇḍāya cassa disvā āsavā parikkhāḍā honti*.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Vin III 2, A IV 174 and 183: *atthi pariyāyo yena mañi pariyāyena sammā vadamāno vadeyya - 'ucchedavādo samaḍo Gotamo' ti. Ahañi hi ucchedaū vadāmi rāgassa dosassa mohassa, anekavihitānaū pāpakānaū akusalānaū dhammānaū ucchedaū vadāmi*. Cf. also Vin I 234, Vin III 3, M I 140 and A V 190, where the Buddha is called a nihilist ('*venayiko*').

¹⁰⁶⁵ Bodhi: "Nibbāna", p 171; Nāḍapoḍika: *Anattā*, p 25; and Sobti: *Nibbāna*, p 134.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Compare S IV 368-373, which gives a long list of such epithets, among these: *santa, suddhi, mutti, paḍāta, siva, acchariya, abbhuta, dāpa, leḍa, saraḍa*. Another similar but shorter list occurs at A IV 453.

¹⁰⁶⁷ E.g. at M I 508, Dh 203, and Dh 204: *nibbānaū paramaū sukhaū*; Thā 476: *nibbānasukhā paraū natthi*. These expressions refer to the *arahant's* experience of *vimuttisukha*, cf. e.g. M II 104, S I 196, Ud 1, 10, and 32. The superiority of this happiness over all other types of happiness is stated at Ud 11: *yaū ca kāmasukhaū loke, yaū cidāū diviyāū sukhaū; taḍhakkhayaasukhassete, kalaū nagghanti soḍasiū*. However, it needs to be pointed out that *Nibbāna* itself is not a felt type of happiness, since with *Nibbāna* all feelings cease. Cf. A IV 414, where *Sāriputta* stated: *sukham-idaū nibbānaū*. When questioned how there could possibly be happiness in the absence of any feeling, he explained that for him it was exactly the absence of feeling which constituted the happiness: *etad-eva khvettha sukhaū, yad-ettha natthi vedayitaū*. Cf. also M I 400, where the Buddha explained that he considered even the cessation of feelings and perceptions to constitute happiness, since he did not limit 'happiness' to happy feelings only: *na ... Bhagavā sukhaū yeva vedanaū sandhāya sukhasmiū paḍāpeti, api ca yattha yattha sukhaū upalabbhati yañiū yañiū taū taū Tathāgato sukhasmiū paḍāpeti*. Johansson: *Psychology of Nirvana*, p 25, points out that *Nibbāna* is "'a source of happiness' and not 'a state of happiness'."

¹⁰⁶⁸ M II 232: *ye ... samaḍabrāhmaḍā sato sattassa ucchedaū vināsaū vibhavaū paḍāpentī, te sakkāyabhaya sakkāyaparijegucchā sakkāyapaḍāpā anuparidhāvanti anuparivattanti. ... saikhārānaū nirodho ... viditvā tassa nissaraḍadassavā Tathāgato tad-upātivatto*.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Since it is one of the forms of craving included in the second noble truth, e.g. S V 421: *dukkhasamudayam-ariyasaccaū ... seyyathādaū, kāmataḍhā, bhavataḍhā, vibhavataḍhā*.

¹⁰⁷⁰ M III 246: '*bhavissanti maḍāitam etaū; 'na bhavissanti maḍāitam etaū ... sabbamaḍāitānaū ... samatikkamā muni santo' ti vuccati*.

¹⁰⁷¹ At S IV 383, the destiny of an *arahant* after death had posed a dilemma to the monk *Anurādhā*, which he had attempted to solve by stating that it could be described in a way other than the four standard propositions used in ancient India for such discussions. After dismissing this (according to Indian logic impossible) fifth alternative, the Buddha led *Anurādhā* to the conclusion that, even while still alive an *arahant* cannot be identified with any of the five aggregates, or with anything outside of them: *taū kīū maḍāsi, Anurādhā, rāpaū vedanā saḍā saikhārā viḍāḍaū Tathāgato ti samanupassasāti? ... ayāū so arāpā vedano asaḍā asaikhāro aviḍāḍo Tathāgato ti samanupassasāti? ... ettha te diññheva dhamme saccato thetato*

annihilation of an *arahant* after death turns out to be meaningless.¹⁰⁷² What *Nibbāna* does imply, is that the ignorant belief in a substantial self is annihilated, an ‘annihilation’ which already takes place with stream-entry. With full awakening, then, even the subtlest traces of grasping at a sense of self are forever ‘annihilated’, which is but a negative way of expressing the freedom gained through realisation.

With the grasping at self completely gone, the *arahants* go beyond any form of reckoning whatsoever. While the unawakened worldlings can still be reckoned due to the existence of various tendencies, identifications, biases, and proclivities,¹⁰⁷³ all of which revolve around the basic grasping at a self, the *arahants*, free from bias and limitation, cannot be either reckoned or grasped at or defined. They are free like birds, which leave no tracks in the sky.¹⁰⁷⁴

Chapter XV: Conclusion

The Buddha once said that he would be able to answer questions about *satipaṭṭhāna* without repeating himself or exhausting his answers, even if the inquiry were to continue for a hundred years.¹⁰⁷⁵ This statement illustrates that *satipaṭṭhāna* is an inexhaustible topic for discussion. Compared to the Buddha’s understanding and expository skill, the present essay can at best be only a humble attempt to offer a starting point for further discussion and exploration of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Nevertheless, the time has now come to summarise some of the points discussed so far. In addition to reviewing some key aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna*, I will also place *satipaṭṭhāna* within a wider context, by turning to its importance and relevance in the context of the general path scheme of early Buddhism.

XV.1) Key Aspects of *Satipaṭṭhāna*

The ‘direct path’ to *Nibbāna*, described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, presents a comprehensive set of contemplations that progressively lay bare ever subtler aspects of subjective experience. The mental qualities required for this direct path of *satipaṭṭhāna* are, according to the ‘definition’ part of the discourse, a balanced and sustained application of effort (*ātāpī*), clear knowing (*sampajāna*), and a balanced state of mind, free from desires (*abhijjhā*) and discontent (*domanassa*). These three qualities revolve like the three spokes of a wheel around the central mental quality of *sati*, the hub of this wheel.

As a mental quality, *sati* represents the deliberate cultivation and a qualitative improvement of the receptive kind of awareness that characterises the initial stages of the perceptual process. Important qualities of *sati* are bare and equanimous receptivity, combined with an alert, broad, and open state of mind. A central task of *sati* is to de-automatise habitual reactions and perceptual evaluations. *Sati* thereby leads to a progressive restructuring of perceptual appraisal, and culminates in an undistorted vision of reality ‘as it is’. The element of non-reactive watchful receptivity in *sati* forms the foundation for *satipaṭṭhāna* as an ingenious middle path approach, which neither represses the contents of experience, nor compulsively reacts to them.

Tathāgate anupalabbhiyamāne. The same reasoning can be found also at S III 112, where *Sāriputta* rebuked the monk *Yamaka* for presuming that an *arahant* will be annihilated at death: *khāḍāsavo bhikkhu kāyassa bhedā ucchijjati vinassati na hoti param-maraḍā..*

¹⁰⁷² Cf. also Sn 1074: *accā yathā vāta vegena khitto atthaū paleti na upeti saikhaū, evaū munā nāmakāyā vimutto atthaū paleti na upeti saikhaū.* The only acceptable declaration to be made about *arahants* at death is that they ‘enter the *Nibbāna* element without remainder’ (D II 109 and D III 135): *anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuya parinibbāyati*; further explained at It 38: *bhikkhu arahāū hoti khānāsavo ... tassa idheva sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sātibhavissanti, ayaū vuccati anupādisesā nibbānadhātu; cf. also Vism 509.*

¹⁰⁷³ S III 36: *yaū anuseti taū anumāyati, yaū anumāyati tena saikhaū gacchati.*

¹⁰⁷⁴ Dh 93 and Th 92: *suṁato animitto ca, vimokkha yassa gocaro, ākāse va sakuntānaū, padaū tassa durannayaū.*

¹⁰⁷⁵ M I 82: *idha me assu cattāro sāvaka vassasatāyukā ... te maū catunnaū satipaṇṇhānaū upādāyupādāya paṇṇhaū puccheyyū, puṇṇho puṇṇho cāhaū tesāū byākareyyaū, byākataṁ-ca me byākatato dhāreyyū, na ca maū dutiyakaū uttari paripuccheyyū.* Ps II 52 has each of the four questioners specialise on one *satipaṇṇhāna*: *sace hi eko bhikkhu kāyānupassanaū pucchati, aṁṁo vedānupassanaū, aṁṁo cittānupassanaū, aṁṁo dhammānupassanaū. Iminā puṇṇhaū ahaū pucchissāmāti eko ekaū na oloketi.*

This mental quality of *sati* has a broad variety of possible applications. Within the context of *satipaṭṭhāna*, *sati* can range from the coarsest situations, such as defecation and urination, all the way up to the most sublime and exalted situation, when *sati* is present as a mental factor during the realisation of *Nibbāna*. A similar breadth of applications can be found in the context of tranquility meditation, where the tasks of *sati* range from recognising the presence of a hindrance, to emerging with awareness from the highest meditative absorption.

Based on the central aspects and qualities of *satipaṭṭhāna* described in the ‘definition’ and in the ‘refrain’, the main thrust of *satipaṭṭhāna* can be summed up as:

KEEP CALMLY KNOWING CHANGE

Here the injunction ‘keep’ intends to represent both continuity and comprehensivity in *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation. Continuity of awareness underlies the quality ‘diligent’ (*ātāpī*), mentioned in the ‘definition’. The element of comprehensivity comes up in the ‘refrain’, which instructs to contemplate both internally (*ajjhatta*) and externally (*bahiddhā*), that is, to comprehensively contemplate both oneself and others.

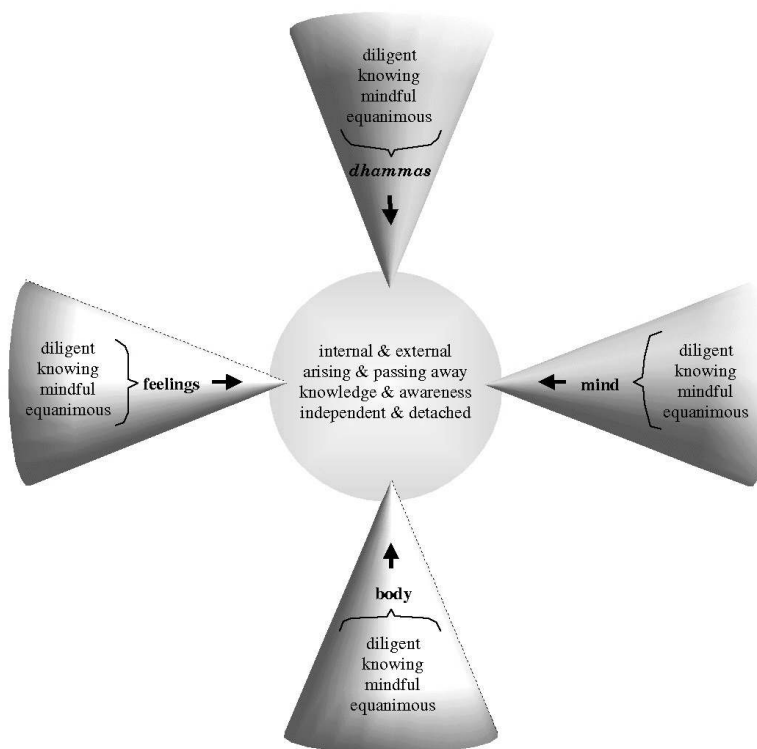
The qualification ‘calmly’ stands for the need to undertake *satipaṭṭhāna* equanimously, free from desires and discontent (*vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam*), and also free from any clinging or dependency (*anissito ca viharati, na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*), mentioned in the ‘definition’ and the ‘refrain’.

The use of the verb ‘knowing’ echoes the frequent use of the verb *paṇānāti* in the discourse. Such ‘knowing’ represents the quality of bare mindfulness (*sati*) combined with clearly knowing (*sampajāna*), both mentioned in the ‘definition’. Both occur also in the ‘refrain’, which speaks of contemplating merely for the sake of knowledge and continued awareness (*nāṇamatāya paṭissatimattāya*).

The ‘refrain’ also explains to which aspect of body, feelings, mind, and *dhammas* this quality of knowing is to be directed, which is in particular their nature to arise and pass away (*samudaya-vaya-dhammānupassī*). Such contemplation of impermanence can either lead on to an understanding of conditionality, or else form the basis for an understanding of the other two characteristics of conditioned phenomena, *dukkha* and *anattā*. This growth of insight into the true nature of conditioned existence, based on directly realising impermanence, is above subsumed under ‘change’.

The essential features of *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation can also be brought out in a more visual fashion (see diagram 14.1 below). This diagram illustrates the interrelation between the ‘definition’, the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, and the ‘refrain’. The central aspects mentioned in the ‘refrain’ stand in the centre of the diagram. The qualities listed in the ‘definition’ are at the bottom of each cone. These four cones represent the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, each of which can become the main focus of practice and lead to deep insight and realisation.

Central Characteristics and Aspects of *Satipaṭṭhāna*
(Diagram 15.1)



As the braces in the diagram indicate, it is the combination of all the four qualities listed in the ‘definition’ which is required for undertaking *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation of body, feelings, mind, or *dhammas*. Such contemplation then leads on to the four aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna* presented in the ‘refrain’.

What the diagram intends to bring out is that each of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* constitutes a ‘door’ or ‘stepping stone’, so to say, in the sense that the contemplations included under the four *satipaṭṭhānas* are not ends in themselves, but only tools to develop the central aspects described in the ‘refrain’. Whichever ‘door’ or ‘stepping stone’ is used to develop insight, the main task is to employ it skilfully as a means in order to gain a comprehensive and balanced vision of the true nature of subjective experience.

Based on the exploration in the preceding pages, the contemplations listed under the four *satipaṭṭhānas* do not seem to constitute a rigidly fixed set of templates into which individual practice has to fit. That the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is not necessarily restricted to the range of objects listed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is also documented in the *Salāyatanvibhaṅga Sutta*, where the Buddha mentioned three ‘*satipaṭṭhānas*’ different from the practices listed in the more usual four *satipaṭṭhāna* scheme.¹⁰⁷⁶ This suggests that the contemplations described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* do not determine the only proper and suitable ways for carrying out ‘*satipaṭṭhāna*’ contemplation, but rather illustrate, by way of example, possible applications.

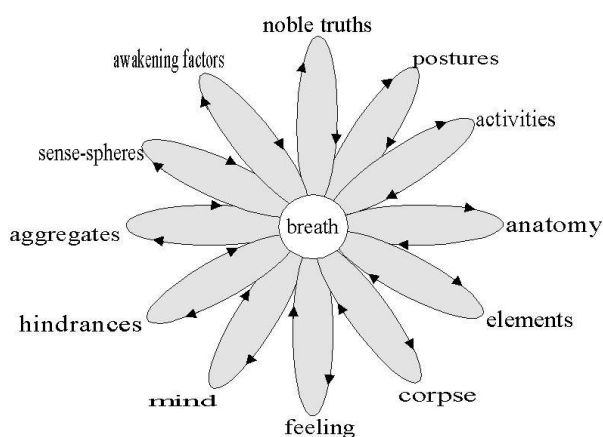
The contemplations in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* follow a progressive sequence from gross to subtle aspects of experience. It needs to be kept in mind, however, that the discourse represents a theoretical model of *satipaṭṭhāna*, not a case study. In actual practice, the different contemplations described in the discourse can be combined in a variety of possible ways, so that it would be a misunderstanding to take the progression in the discourse as prescribing the only possible sequence of developing *satipaṭṭhāna*.

The flexible interrelation of the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations in actual practice can be illustrated by taking a cross-sectional cut, as it were, through the direct path of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Such a sectional view resembles to some extent a twelve petalled flower (see diagram 14.2 be-

¹⁰⁷⁶ M III 221; cf. also chapter I.4).

low), with the main object of contemplation (here the breath as an example) constituting the centre of the 'flower'.

Dynamic Interrelation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* Contemplations
(Diagram 15.2)



From the main object of meditation, the dynamics of contemplation can at any given moment lead over to any of the other *satipaṭṭhāna* exercises, and then revert back to the main object. That is, from being aware of the process of breathing, for example, awareness may turn to any other occurrence in the realm of body, feelings, mind, or *dhammas*, which has become prominent, and then revert back to the breath. Or else, in case the newly arisen object of meditation should require sustained attention and deeper investigation, it can become the new centre of the flower, with the former object turned into one of the petals.

Any meditation practice from the four *satipaṭṭhānas* can serve as the main focus for insight contemplation and lead to realisation. At the same time, meditations from one *satipaṭṭhāna* can be interrelated with those from other *satipaṭṭhānas*. This demonstrates the flexibility of the *satipaṭṭhāna* scheme, which allows freedom for variations and combinations according to the individual character and level of development of a meditator. Understood in this way, to practise *satipaṭṭhāna* should be less a question of practising either one or another *satipaṭṭhāna*, but rather of contemplating one as well as the others. In fact, with the deeper stages of the practice, when one is able to abide 'independent and free from clinging to anything in the world', the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* progresses from any particular object or area to a more and more comprehensive way of practice, embracing all aspects of experience. Applied to diagram 14.2, this would be as if, when the sun is about to set, the twelve petals of the flower gradually come together to form a single bud. Practised in this way, *satipaṭṭhāna* becomes a fourfold cohesive survey of experience, which at one go takes into account its material, affective, and mental facets and relates it to the *Dhamma*, whereby this experience turns into a vehicle for swift progress along the direct path leading to *Nibbāna*.

XV.2) The Importance of *Satipaṭṭhāna*

The Buddha not only recommended the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* to newcomers and beginners, but also included advanced practitioners and *arahants* among the cultivators of *satipaṭṭhāna*.¹⁰⁷⁷

For the beginner embarking on *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, the discourses stipulate a basis in

¹⁰⁷⁷ S V 144: *ye te bhikkhā navā acirapabbajitā ... catunnaṃ satipaṇṇhānānaṃ bhāvanāya samādapetabbā... ye pi te bhikkhā sekhā ... te pi kāye kāyānupassino ... dhammesu dhammānupassino viharanti ... ye pi te bhikkhā arahanto khāṇāsava ... te pi kāye kāyānupassino ... dhammesu dhammānupassino viharanti.* That different levels of disciples should practice *satipaṇṇhāna* comes up again at S V 299: *sekheṇa ... asekhena ... cattāro satipaṇṇhānā upasampajja vihātābba.* (Woodward: *Kindred Sayings*, vol V p 265, translates "should be abandoned". This rendering is not convincing, since in the present context *vihātābba* seems to be a future passive form of *viharati*, not of *vijahati*.)

ethical conduct and the presence of 'straight' view as necessary foundations.¹⁰⁷⁸ According to a passage in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* leads to overcoming weakness with regard to the five precepts.¹⁰⁷⁹ This suggests that the ethical foundation needed to begin *satipaṭṭhāna* may be weak at the outset, but then will get strengthened as practice proceeds. Similarly, the above mentioned 'straight' view may refer to a preliminary degree of proper motivation and understanding, which will then develop further with the progress of *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation.¹⁰⁸⁰ Additional prerequisites for *satipaṭṭhāna* practice are to refrain from unnecessary activities, from gossiping, from excessive sleeping, and from socialising, and to develop sense restraint and moderation in regard to food.¹⁰⁸¹

It may already have come as a surprise that a newcomer to the path should be encouraged to right away cultivate *satipaṭṭhāna*.¹⁰⁸² But that the Buddha and his fully awakened disciples should still engage in the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* may be even more surprising. Why would one, who has realised the goal and has nothing further left to do, still continue practising *satipaṭṭhāna*?

The answer is that *arahants* continue with their insight meditation because for them this is simply the most appropriate and pleasant way of spending their time.¹⁰⁸³ Proficiency in *satipaṭṭhāna*, together with delight in seclusion, are indeed distinguishing qualities of an *arahant*.¹⁰⁸⁴ Once true detachment has set in, the continuity of insight meditation becomes a source of delight and satisfaction.¹⁰⁸⁵ Thus *satipaṭṭhāna* is not only the direct path leading to the goal, but also the perfect expression of having realised the goal. To borrow from the poetic language of the discourses: path and *Nibbāna* merge into one, like one river merging with another.¹⁰⁸⁶

A similar nuance underlies the final part of the 'refrain', according to which contemplation continues for the sake of - continued contemplation.¹⁰⁸⁷ This goes to show that there is no

¹⁰⁷⁸ S V 143, 165, 187, and 188: *sālaṃ nissāya sāle patiññhāya cattāro satipaṭṭhānaṃ ... bhāveyyāsi*. Cf. also S V 171, where the purpose of *sāla* is to lead up to the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*: *kusalāni sālāni yāvada-eva imesaṃ catunnaṃ satipaṭṭhānaṃ bhāvanāya vuttāni Bhagavatā*. S V 143 and 165 add *diññhi ca ujukā* to the necessary conditions for practising *satipaṭṭhāna*. Cf. also Th 865: *sālakhandhe patiññhāya satiṃ paṇḍitaṃ ca bhāvayaṃ pāpuṃṇi anupubbena sabbasaṃvajanakkhayaṃ*.

¹⁰⁷⁹ A IV 457: *paṇḍitānaṃ sikkhādubbalyānaṃ pahānāya ime cattāro satipaṭṭhānaṃ bhāvetabbā*.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Some discourses present the direct experience of the impermanent nature of the aggregates or the sense-spheres as 'right view', which documents a form of right view that is clearly an outcome of insight meditation, cf. S III 51: *rāpaṃ ... viññāḍāṇi aniccanti passati, yāyaṃ hoti sammādiññhi*; S IV 142: *cakkhuṃ ... rāpe ... aniccaṃ ti passati, sāyaṃ hoti sammādiññhi*.

¹⁰⁸¹ A III 450: *cha dhamme appahāya abhabbo ajjhataṃ kāye kāyānupassā ... dhammesu dhammānupassā viharitū ... kammārāmataṃ, bhassārāmataṃ, niddārāmataṃ, saṅgādikārāmataṃ, indriyesu aguttadvārataṃ, bhojane amattaṃ utatū*.

¹⁰⁸² It needs to be pointed out, however, that there is a clear qualitative difference between *satipaṭṭhāna* practised by a beginner and by an *arahant*. S V 144 documents this qualitative progression, which leads from the initial insight of the beginner: *kāyassa ... dhammānaṃ yathābhūtaṃ ādāya*, via the penetrative comprehension of the *sekha*: *kāyassa ... dhammānaṃ ... pariṇāya*, to the full detachment present during contemplation undertaken by an *arahant*: *kāyena ... dhammehi visatīyutta*. Even for the beginner's initial insight, this discourse stipulates that *satipaṭṭhāna* is to be undertaken with a calm and concentrated mind (*ekodibhātaṃ vipassanacittā samāhitaṃ ekaggacittā*) for true insight to arise, a requirement not easily met by those who have just started to practise.

¹⁰⁸³ S III 168: *arahatā ime paṇḍitānaṃ aniccato ... anattato yoniso manasikattabbā. Natthi arahato uttarikarāḍāyaṃ katassa vā pañicayo, apī ca kho ime dhammā bhāvitā bahulākatā diññhadhammasukkhavīhārāya ceva saṃvattanti satisampajaṇḍāya ca*. Cf. also S I 48, where the Buddha declared that an *arahant*, although meditating, has nothing more to do since he or she has 'gone beyond': *khāḍāsavassa nipakassa jhāyino ... nāyāhati pāragato hi so*.

¹⁰⁸⁴ S V 175 defines an *arahant* as one who has perfected the cultivation of *satipaṭṭhāna*: *catunnaṃ satipaṭṭhānaṃ samattaṃ bhāvitatā asekho hoti*. According to S V 302, *arahants* often dwell established in *satipaṭṭhāna*: *yo so bhikkhu arahatū khāḍāsavo ... so imesu catusu satipaṭṭhānesu supatiññhitacitto bahulā viharati*. The *arahant's* delight in seclusion is documented at D III 283, A IV 224, and A V 175: *khāḍāsavassa bhikkhuno vivekaninnaṃ cittaṃ hoti vivekapoḍāṃ vivekapabbhāraṃ vivekaññhāṃ nekkhammābhiraṃ*. The *arahant's* proficiency in *satipaṭṭhāna* comes up again at A IV 224 and at A V 175: *khāḍāsavassa bhikkhuno cattāro satipaṭṭhānaṃ bhāvitā honti subhāvitā*. Katz: [Human Perfection](#), p 67, concludes: "*satipaṭṭhāna* ... the *arahants* enjoy this practise, which would mean ... that it is a natural expression of their attainment."

¹⁰⁸⁵ Vism 650: *sabbasaṃvajanānaṃ ādānavato passanto ... sabhedake saikhāragate nibbindati ... bhāvanārāmataṃ pana bhāvanāratīyā samannāgatattā sattaṃ anupassanāsu yeva ramati*.

¹⁰⁸⁶ D II 223: *seyyathā pi nāma Gaṅgākaṃ Yamunodakena saṃsandati sameti, evam-eva ... saṃsandati nibbānaṃ ca paṇipadā ca*. Malalasekera: [Dictionary](#), vol I p 734, explains that "the junction of the *Gaṅgā* and the *Yamunā* ... is used as a simile for perfect union."

¹⁰⁸⁷ M I 56: *sati paccupaññhitā hoti, yāvada-eva ādamattāya pañissatimattāya*.

point at which a practitioner goes beyond the practice of meditation. Thus the relevance of *sati-paṭṭhāna* contemplation extends from the very beginning of the path all the way through to the moment of full realisation, and even beyond. The continued relevance of formal meditation practice even for *arahants* is in fact documented in various passages, which I will now briefly survey.

According to the discourses, the Buddha and his disciples were always given to meditation, irrespective of their level of realisation.¹⁰⁸⁸ The Buddha was well known among contemporary ascetic circles for being in favour of silence and retreat.¹⁰⁸⁹ The *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* reports the Buddha and a large congregation of monks meditating in such deep silence that an approaching king feared to be led into an ambush, since it seemed impossible to him that so many people could be assembled together without making any noise at all.¹⁰⁹⁰ The Buddha's appreciation for silence went so far that he would quite readily dismiss noisy monks or noisy lay supporters from his presence.¹⁰⁹¹ If the hustle and bustle around him reached a level which he found excessive, he was capable of just walking off by himself, leaving the congregation of monks, nuns, and lay followers to themselves.¹⁰⁹² Seclusion, he explained, was a distinctive quality of the *Dhamma*.¹⁰⁹³

The discourses report that, even after his full awakening, the Buddha still went into solitary silent retreat.¹⁰⁹⁴ Even outside of intensive retreat, distinguished visitors were

¹⁰⁸⁸ E.g. S V 326 reports the Buddha and some *arahants* engaged in the practice of mindfulness of breathing: *ānāpānasatisamādhiṇā Bhagavā vassāvāsāū bahulāū viḥāsi, bhikkhā arahanto khāḍāsavā ... tesam-ānāpānasatisamādhi bhāvito bahulākatō diññheva dhamme sukhavihārāya ceva saūvattati satisampajāyā ca*. From the *arahant* disciples, *Anuruddha* was especially known for his frequent practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* (cf. S V 294-306). Sn 157 stresses again that the Buddha did not neglect meditation: *Buddho jhānāū na riṇṇati*. Cf. also Th 6, where an *arahant* monk was still engaged in *kāyagatāsati*.

¹⁰⁸⁹ E.g. D I 179, D III 37, M I 514, M II 2, 23, 30, A V 185, and 190, where the Buddha and his followers are characterised as being 'in favour of silence, practising silence, praising silence': *appasaddakāmā, appasaddavinītā appasaddassa vaṇṇavādino*. Cf. S III 15 and S IV 80, where the Buddha emphatically exhorted his disciples to make an effort at living in seclusion: *paṭisallāne, bhikkhave, yogam-āpajjatha. Paṭisallīno bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*. According to A III 422, seclusion is a necessary requirement for really gaining control over the mind: *eko paviveke anabhiramanto cittassa nimittaṃ gahessaṭṭhi, netamā ṭhānaṃ vijjati*. Cf. also It 39, where the Buddha spoke again in praise of seclusion: *paṭisallānārāmā bhikkhave viharatha paṭisallānaratā*. Or else Sn 822: *vivekaṃ yeva sikkhetha, etad-ariyānam uttamaṃ*. At Vin I 92 the Buddha even exempted junior monks from the need to live in dependence (*nissaya*) on a teacher, if they were comfortably meditating in seclusion. To live in community appears to be almost a second-rate alternative, since at S I 154 community life is recommended to those monks who are unable to find delight in seclusion: *sevetha paṭṭhāni senāsanāni, careyya samyojanaviṇṇamokkhā, sace ratim nādhigaccheyya tattha, saṅghe vase rakkhitatto sātīmā*. The importance of seclusion in the historically early stages of the Buddhist monastic community is also noted by Panabokke: *Buddhist Saṅgha*, p 14. To live in seclusion, however, requires some degree of meditative proficiency, as the Buddha pointed out at M I 17 and A V 202: *dukkaraṃ pavivekaṃ, durabhiramaṃ ekatte, haranti maññe mano vanāni samādhim alabhamānassa bhikkhuno*. If such meditative proficiency was lacking, then the Buddha would advise monks against going off into seclusion (cf. the cases of *Upālī* at A V 202 and *Meghiya* at Ud 34).

¹⁰⁹⁰ D I 50: *kathaū hi nāma tāva mahato bhikkhusaighassa aóhateāsānāū bhikkhu-satānāū neva khipitasaddo bhavissati na ukkāsitasaddo na nigghoso ti?*

¹⁰⁹¹ At M I 457 a newly ordained group of monks was dismissed by the Buddha for being too noisy. The same happened again at Ud 25. At A III 31 (= A III 342 and A IV 341), the Buddha was disinclined to accept food brought by a group of householders, because they were creating a lot of noise. On the other hand, however, to merely observe silence for its own sake was criticised by the Buddha. At Vin I 157 he rebuked a group of monks who had spent a rains season together observing complete silence. This instance needs to be considered in the light of M I 207, where the silent living together of a group of monks is described in the same terms, but met with the Buddha's approval. Here the decisive difference was that every fifth day this group of monks would interrupt their silence and discuss the *Dhamma*, i.e. in this case silence was not observed merely for its own sake, but was wisely balanced with discussion about the *Dhamma*. In fact these two activities, to either discuss the *Dhamma*, or else to observe silence, were often recommended by the Buddha as the two appropriate ways of spending time together with others, e.g. at M I 161: *sannipatitānāū vo, bhikkhave, dvayaū karaāyāū - dhammā va kathā, ariyo va tuóhābhāvo*.

¹⁰⁹² Ud 41: *Bhagavā ... bhikkhāhi ... upāsakehi ... ākiódo dukkhaū na phāsu viharati ... anāmantetvā upaññhākaū anapa-loketvā bhikkhusaighaū eko adutiyo ... carikaū pakkāmi*. A similar action was undertaken at A V 133 by a group of senior monks, who departed without even taking their leave of the Buddha, in order to avoid the noise created by some of his visitors, an action which the Buddha, on being told later, approved.

¹⁰⁹³ Vin II 259 and A IV 280: *ye dhammā ... pavivekāya saūvattanti no saigaóikāya ... eso dhammo, eso vinayo, etāū satthu sāsānāū*.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Vin III 68, S V 12 and 320 report the Buddha going for two weeks into complete seclusion for a silent retreat, while Vin III 229, S V 13 and 325 document the same for a three-month period.

sometimes not allowed to approach him if he was still engaged in his daily meditation.¹⁰⁹⁵ As the Buddha himself admitted in the *Mahāsuññata Sutta*, if while abiding in emptiness meditation he was visited by monks, nuns, or laity, his mind inclined to seclusion to such an extent that he would talk to them in a way intending to dismiss them.¹⁰⁹⁶

His secluded life style earned the Buddha some undeserved ridicule from other ascetics, who insinuated that he might be in dread of being vanquished in debate with others.¹⁰⁹⁷ This, however, was not the case, as the Buddha was not afraid of debate or of anything else. His secluded and meditative life style was simply the appropriate expression of his realisation, and at the same time a way of setting an example for others.¹⁰⁹⁸ These various instances clearly document the importance given in the early Buddhist community to retiring into seclusion and engaging in the practice of intensive meditation.

This importance is also reflected in the statement that the practice of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, together with removing the hindrances and establishing the awakening factors, constitutes a common feature of the awakening of all Buddhas, past, present, and future.¹⁰⁹⁹ In fact, not only Buddhas, but all those who have realised or will realise awakening do so by overcoming the hindrances, establishing *satipaṭṭhāna*, and developing the awakening factors.¹¹⁰⁰ In view of the fact that both the hindrances and the awakening factors are objects of contemplation of *dharmas*, it becomes evident that *satipaṭṭhāna* is an indispensable ingredient for growth in the *Dhamma*.¹¹⁰¹ No wonder that the Buddha equated neglecting *satipaṭṭhāna* with neglecting the path to freedom from *dukkha*.¹¹⁰²

The relevance of *satipaṭṭhāna* for all of the Buddha's disciples is also documented by the fact that, according to the discourses, many nuns were accomplished practitioners of *satipaṭṭhāna*.¹¹⁰³ Other instances document lay-meditators proficient in *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation.¹¹⁰⁴ These cases clearly demonstrate that the expression 'monks' (*bhikkhave*), used in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* by the Buddha as a form of addressing his audience, does not intend to restrict the instructions to fully ordained monks only.¹¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁹⁵ At D I 151: *akālo Bhagavantaū dāssanāya, pañisallāno Bhagavā*. According to D II 270 once even *Sakka*, king of gods, had to depart without being able to meet the Buddha, since he was not allowed to disturb the Buddha's meditation.

¹⁰⁹⁶ M III 111: *ajjhataū suṁātaū upasampajja viharitū ... Tathāgataū iminā vihārena viharantaū bhavanti upasaikamitāro bhikkhā bhikkhuniyo upāsakā upāsikāyo ... Tathāgato vivekaninneneva citta ... uyyojanikapāñisāyuttaū yeva kathāū kattā hoti*.

¹⁰⁹⁷ D I 175 and D III 38.

¹⁰⁹⁸ At D III 54 the Buddha pointed out that all Awakened Ones of past times have similarly been dedicated to seclusion and silence. M I 23 and A I 60 explain his reasons for living in seclusion: *dve athavase sampassamāno araṁevanapatthāni pantāni senāsānāni pañisevāmi: attano ca diññhadhammasukhavihāraū sampassamāno pacchima-ca janataū anukampamāno*. Cf. also Mil 138.

¹⁰⁹⁹ D II 83, D III 101, and S V 161: *ye te ahesuū atātaū addhānaū arahanto sammāsambuddhā, sabbe te bhagavanto paṁca nāvaraḍe pahāya ... catusu satipaññānesu supatiññhita citta satta bojjaḥge yathābhātaū bhāvetvā anuttaraū sammāsambodhiū abhisambujjhīsu. Ye pi te bhavissanti anāgataū addhānaū ... Bhagavā pi etarahi ...* (The authenticity of this passage is however doubted by Nāḍārāma: *Mission Accomplished*, p 26.) At S I 103 the Buddha explicitly stated that his awakening took place based on *sati: nḥito sato bodhiū samajjhagāū*.

¹¹⁰⁰ A V 195: *ye kho keci lokamhā niyyīsu vā niyyanti vā niyyissanti vā, sabbe te paṁca nāvaraḍe pahāya ... catusu satipaññānesu supatiññhita citta satta bojjaḥge yathābhātaū bhāvetvā evam-ete lokamhā niyyīsu vā niyyanti vā niyyissanti vā*. This statement appears to be of such crucial importance that, in the corresponding version in the Chinese *Madhyama āgama*, it has been inserted into the introductory part of the discourse itself, cf. Nhat Hanh: *Transformation*, p 151. Cf. also the shorthand path description at A III 386: *so evaū pabbajito samāno paṁca nāvaraḍe pahāya cetaso upakkīlese paṁcāya dubbalākaḥge catāsu satipaññānesu supaññhitacitto satta bojjaḥge yathābhātaū bhāvetvā akāḍhaū asukkaū nibbānaū abhijāyati*.

¹¹⁰¹ In fact, according to A V 153 loss of mindfulness spells incapability of growing in the *Dhamma*: *so vata bhikkhu muññhassati samāno imasmīū dhammavinaye vuddhiū virāḍehiū vepullaū āpajjissatāti, netaū nḥānaū vijjati*. The usefulness of *satipaññhāna* is further corroborated by the substantial list of its possible benefits at A IV 457-460.

¹¹⁰² S V 179: *yesaū kesaṁci cattāro satipaññhānā viraddhā, viraddho tesāū ariyo maggo sammādukkhakkhayagāmā*.

¹¹⁰³ S V 155: *sambahulā bhikkhuniyo catusu satipaññānesu supatiññhitacittā viharantiyo uḗraū pubbenāparaū visesaū sampajānanti*.

¹¹⁰⁴ E.g. at M I 340 the lay disciple *Pessa* states: *mayam-pi hi bhante gihā odātavanā kālana kālāū imesu catusu satipaññānesu supatiññhitacittā viharāma* (the expression *supatiññhitacittā* indicates that *Pessa's* practice must have been of a rather advanced level). Similarly S V 177 reports the layman *Sirivāoóho* and S V 178 the layman *Mānadinna* to be both engaged in the practice of *satipaññhāna* (both were then declared by the Buddha to have achieved non-return).

¹¹⁰⁵ Ps I 241 explains: *bhikkhā ti pañipattisampādakapuggalanidassanaū etaū ... yo ca imaū pañipattīū pañipajjati, so bhik-*

Although the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is clearly not limited to the members of the monastic community, it nevertheless holds particular benefits for them, since it counters tendencies towards personal and communal decline.¹¹⁰⁶ As the Buddha pointed out, once a monk or a nun has practised *satipaṭṭhāna* for a sufficient length of time, nothing in the world can tempt them to disrobe and forsake their way of life, since they have become thoroughly disenchanted with worldly temptations.¹¹⁰⁷ Well established in *satipaṭṭhāna*, they have become truly self-reliant and are no longer in need of any other form of protection or refuge.¹¹⁰⁸

The wholesome effects of *satipaṭṭhāna* are not restricted to benefiting oneself only. The Buddha quite emphatically advised that one should encourage one's friends and relatives to also practise *satipaṭṭhāna*.¹¹⁰⁹ In this way, *satipaṭṭhāna* can become a tool for integrating social responsibility with one's personal practice. The Buddha once illustrated the proper procedure for such integration with the example of two acrobats, who were about to perform a balancing act on a bamboo pole. In order for both to perform safely together, each of them first of all had to pay attention to his own balance. Similarly, the Buddha advised, one should first of all establish balance within oneself by developing *satipaṭṭhāna*.¹¹¹⁰ Only from an established position of inner balance will one be able to relate to external circumstances with patience, non-violence, and compassion, and thereby be truly able to benefit others.

The simile of the two acrobats suggests that self development by way of *satipaṭṭhāna* should take precedence over any premature engagement in social work.¹¹¹¹ According to the Buddha, to attempt to assist others without first having done so for oneself is like trying to save another person from sinking in a quagmire while one is sinking oneself.¹¹¹² According to him, to attempt to lead others to realise what one has not yet realised oneself is like someone carried away by a swift river trying to help others to cross it.¹¹¹³

All these passages document the central position and importance of *satipaṭṭhāna* in the early Buddhist path scheme. Indeed, it is the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, the systematic development of this unobtrusive quality of mindfulness, which constitutes the direct path to the reali-

khu nāma hoti.

¹¹⁰⁶ D II 77: *yāvakaṅkaṅka-ca bhikkhā paccattaṅka yeva satii upaṅṅhāpessanti*; D II 79: *yāvakaṅkaṅka-ca bhikkhā ... upaṅṅhitasatā bhavissanti ... yāvakaṅkaṅka-ca bhikkhā sati-sambojjhāgaṅga bhāvessanti*, each of these instances ensuring future prosperity for the *Saṅgha* and preventing its decline. Similarly at S V 172 and 174: *catunnaṅga satipaṅṅhānānaṅga bhāvitattā bahulākatattā Tathāgate parinibbute saddhammo ciraṅṅhitiko hoti*. S V 173: *catunnaṅga satipaṅṅhānānaṅga bhāvitattā bahulākatattā saddhamma aparihānaṅga hoti*.

¹¹⁰⁷ S V 301: *bhikkhu cattāro satipaṅṅhāne bhāvento ... bahulākaronto sikkhāṅga paccakkhāṅga hāṅga yāvattissatāṅga netaiṅga ṅhānaṅga vijjati. Taiṅga kissa hetu? Yaṅga-hi taiṅga cittaṅga dāgharattaṅga vivekaninnaṅga vivekapoṅgaṅga vivekapabbhāraṅga*. It is revealing if this statement is contrasted with A III 396, according to which even a fourth *jhāna* attainer is still susceptible to disrobing and returning to a worldly life style.

¹¹⁰⁸ D II 100, D III 58, 77, S V 154, 163, and 164: *kathaṅga-ca bhikkhu attadāpo viharati attasaraṅga anaṅga asaraṅga, dhammadāpo dhammasaraṅga anaṅga asaraṅga? Idha bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassā viharati ... vedanāsu ... citta ... dhammesu ... ye hi keci ... etarahi vā mamaṅga vā accayena attadāpā viharissanti ... tamatagge me te bhikkhā bhavissanti ye keci sikkhākāma*. Sv II 549 emphasises again that it is the practice of the four *satipaṅṅhānas* which will lead to the highest: *sabbe pi te catusatipaṅṅhānagocarāva bhikkhā agge bhavissantāṅga arahattanikāṅga*.

¹¹⁰⁹ S V 189: *ye bhikkhave anukampeyyātha ... te vo catunnaṅga satipaṅṅhānānaṅga bhāvanāya samādapetabbā nivesetabbā patiṅṅhāpetabbā*. It is a little surprising that this discourse has not made its way into the Chinese *āgamas* (cf. Akanuma: *Catalogue*, 247).

¹¹¹⁰ S V 169: *attānaṅga rakkhissāmāṅga satipaṅṅhānaṅga sevittabbāṅga, paraṅga rakkhissāmāṅga satipaṅṅhānaṅga sevittabbāṅga. Attānaṅga rakkhanto paraṅga rakkhati, paraṅga rakkhanto attānaṅga rakkhati. Kathaṅga-ca attānaṅga rakkhanto paraṅga rakkhati? āsevanāya, bhāvanāya, bahulākammena ... Kathaṅga-ca paraṅga rakkhanto attānaṅga rakkhati? Khantiyā avihīṅgaṅga, mettatāya, anudayatāya*. On this passage cf. also *Ṡāpoṅga*: "Protection", p 3; *Ṡāpavāra*: *Clearing the Path*, p 211; Piyadassi: "Mindfulness", p 475; and Thanissaro: *Wings to Awakening*, p 81.

¹¹¹¹ Cf. A II 95-99, where the Buddha distinguished between the four possibilities of practising only for one's own benefit, only for others' benefit, for the benefit of neither, or for the benefit of both, with the at first sight surprising conclusion that to practise only for one's own benefit is superior to practising only for the benefit of others (cf. also Dhp 166: *attadathāṅga paratthena bahunā pi na hāpāye*). The underlying rationale is that unless one is oneself established in overcoming unwholesomeness (A II 96) or in ethical restraint (A II 99), one will be unable to really benefit others.

¹¹¹² M I 45: *attanā palipapalipanno paraṅga palipapalipannaṅga uddharissatāṅga, netaiṅga ṅhānaṅga vijjati*, similarly: *attanā adanto avināto aparinibbuto paraṅga damessati vinessati parinibbāpessatāṅga, netam ṅhānaṅga vijjati*. Similarly Dhp 158 recommends to be well established oneself, before teaching others: *attānam eva paṅṅhamāṅga patirāpe nivesāye, athaṅga am-anusāseyya*. Cf. also Premasiri: "Ethics", p 160, who points out the need for a basis of internal peace before proceeding to serve others.

¹¹¹³ Sn 320: *sayaṅga ajānaṅga avitīṅga ākaṅga, kiṅga so pare sakkhati nijjhapetuiṅga?*

sation of *Nibbāna*, to the perfection of wisdom, to the highest possible happiness, and to unsurpassable freedom.¹¹¹⁴

Appendix

1)References:

In quoting *Pāli* sources, my references are according to volume and page of the PTS edition. In the case of the *Dhammapāda*, the *Sutta Nipāta* and the *Thera/ Therīgāthā*, quotations are by verse number of the PTS edition, instead of the page number. Quotations from the subcomy/*Ṭīkā* and the Abhidh-s are according to the volume and page of the Burmese *Chattha Saṅgāyana* edition, published on cd-rom by the *Vipassanā* Research Institute, Igatpuri, India 1997. For matters of comparison, I have also consulted the Sinhalese *Buddha Jayanti* edition, published by the Sri Lanka Tripitaka Project, Colombo. For the sake of consistency, the system of transliteration in the *Pāli* quotes has been standardized.

In the preceding pages, I have throughout italicised *Pāli* and Sanskrit terms and quotes, except for terms such as 'Buddha', 'karma', or 'Sanskrit', which have by now become part of standard English vocabulary. Also, authors' names and titles quoted for reference remain unitalicised.

In order to keep the footnotes within manageable size, in the preceding pages I have often quoted titles of books and articles in an abbreviated form. To facilitate finding the corresponding title in the present list of references, I have marked the abbreviated part of the full title with > <. These marks, then, do not form part of the original title. Taking the first title as an example: *Catalogue* is the abbreviation used in the footnotes, while the full original title is *The Comparative Catalogue of Chinese Āgamas & Pāli Nikāyas*. If only the definite or the indefinite article has been abbreviated, I have not especially marked the abbreviation. In keeping with academic requirements, titles of articles are placed within quotation marks, while titles of books are underlined.

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2) List of Abbreviations

Sources:

A	<i>Āṅguttara Nikāya</i>
Abhidh-s	<i>Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha</i>
As	<i>Atthasālinī</i> (comy to Dhs)
D	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapāda</i>
Dhp-a	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā</i> (comy to Dhp)
Dhs	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i>
It	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
Ja	<i>Jātaka</i>
Kv	<i>Kathāvatthu</i>
M	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
Mil	<i>Milindapañhā</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i> (comy to A)
Nett	<i>Nettipakaraṇa</i>
Nid I	<i>Mahāniddeśa</i>
Nid II	<i>Cūḷaniddesa</i>
Paṭis	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i>
Paṭṭh	<i>Paṭṭhāna</i>
Pj II	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i> (comy to Sn)
Pp	<i>Puggalapaññatti</i>
Ps	<i>Paṇāśasūdanī</i> (comy to M)
Ps-pt	<i>Ps-purāṇaṭṭhikā</i> (subcomy to M)
S	<i>Samyutta Nikāya</i>
Sn	<i>Sutta Nipāta</i>
Sp	<i>Samantapāsādikā</i> (comy to Vin)
Spk	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī</i> (comy to S)
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i> (comy to D)
Sv-pt	<i>Sv-purāṇaṭṭhikā</i> (subcomy to D)
Th	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Th-a	<i>Theragāthāṭṭhakathā</i> (comy to Th)
Thī	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
Ud	<i>Udāna</i>
Ud-a	<i>Paramatthadīpanī</i> (comy to Ud)
Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>
Vibh-a	<i>Sammohavinodanī</i> (comy to Vibh)
Vin	<i>Vinayaṭṭhaka</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>
Vism-mh	<i>Paramatthamañjūsā</i> (Vism-mahāṭṭhikā)

Other abbreviations:

Bd	Band
BL	Bodhi Leaf
BPS	Buddhist Publication Society
Burm.	Burmese <i>Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana</i> (ed.)
cf.	compare
comy	commentary (<i>aṭṭhakathā</i>)
diss.	dissertation
ed.	edition / edited by
e.g.	for example
esp.	especially
et al	and others
Ges.	Gesellschaft
ibid.	ibidem, just there
i.e.	that is to say
n	footnote
no	number
p(p)	page(s)
PTS	<i>Pāli</i> Text Society
publ.	published / publication
Sinh.	Sinhalese <i>Buddha Jayanti</i> (ed.)
sg.	singular
subcomy	subcommentary (<i>ṭīkā</i>)
trsl.	translated/translation
unpubl. manus.	unpublished manuscript
viz.	that is, namely
vol	volume
VRI	<i>Vipassanā</i> Research Institute
Wh	Wheel (BPS)

3) Index and Glossary

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