

# Measureless Mind

by Geoff Shatz

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## Introduction

The ascetic samaṇa Gotama lived in approximately the 5th century BCE. He is considered to be the Buddha of this present age. The earliest, most complete and accurate record of his life and teachings is preserved in the Pāli Nikāyas. This site is dedicated to everyone

who draws inspiration from these discourses and who is motivated to practice the Buddhadhamma and live their lives in accord with these teachings.

The Pāli suttas are primarily prescriptive and descriptive. They designate a path to develop in order to realize the cessation of unsatisfactoriness. Approached from this soteriological perspective, the value of these teachings can be fully appreciated and engaged without lapsing into theoretical abstractions separated from lived experience.

Accordingly, the only view which concerns a practitioner of the Buddha's dhamma is the view which is both "right" and "integral" to the development of the path: the understanding of unsatisfactoriness, the origin of unsatisfactoriness, the cessation of unsatisfactoriness, and the noble way of practice leading to the cessation of unsatisfactoriness. These four noble truths set the parameters for what is necessary and useful for awakening. The entire noble eightfold path has been fabricated to specifically orient and steer the practitioner towards a deeper and more integral understanding of this "right" view, eventually culminating in direct gnosis of the four noble truths. Anything else is quite irrelevant. Any other view has no soteriological value because it does not lead to the elimination of craving, and therefore does not result in liberation.

## The Contents of Measureless Mind

The topical outline of this website has been arranged according to the four groupings of teaching (cattāro dhammakkhanda) mentioned in DN 33 Saṅgīti Sutta. These four are the aggregate of ethical conduct (sīlakkhandha), the aggregate of meditation (samādhikkhandha), the aggregate of discernment (paññākkhandha), and the aggregate of liberation (vimuttikkhandha). This is also the basic topical outline found in the Vimuttimagga and the Visuddhimagga. But whereas these two latter texts contain a great deal of novel commentarial interpretation which is not found in the ancient Pāli suttas, I have endeavored to rely primarily on the suttas themselves to instruct and explain the various aspects of view and practice. Therefore, Measureless Mind is essentially a systematic compendium of important sutta instructions and explanations.

## Sutta Interpretation & Translation

The interpretive methodology that I have used here on Measureless Mind involves relying on the most ancient primary Pāli sources. These consist of the four main Nikāyas of the Suttapiṭaka and the oldest parts of the Khuddakanikāya. These sutta collections display a

remarkably high degree of internal consistency and integrated harmony. A thorough survey of these suttas is generally sufficient to further elucidate and clarify the meaning of any particular sutta passage.

When there have been instances where Pāli terms haven't been clearly defined in the suttas I have also referred to the Pāli Vibhaṅga, the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the Peṭakopadesa, and occasionally the Nettipakaraṇa and the Paṭisambhidāmagga. These works represent the oldest strata of Indian Pāli exegesis. They are widely considered to have been composed in India by Indian Buddhists during the first few centuries of the Buddha's dispensation. The advantage of referring to these texts is that the authors of these works were much closer historically, geographically, linguistically, and culturally to the earliest Buddhist community than any later commentaries and treatises.

If the definitions and interpretations found therein are consistent with the main teachings in the suttas, I have used them as sources. On a few occasions I have also referred to the early Pāli Aṭṭhakathā commentaries, again weighing the consistency of what they have to add against the sutta collections as a whole, as well as the context of the specific sutta passage in question. Also, for the sake of thoroughness, I have, at times, surveyed the existing Sarvāstivāda sūtra and commentarial sources to see how they have handled various terms, pericopes, and so on.

This sensitivity to the historical development of ancient commentary is, I believe, a coherent and pragmatic method of interpretation.

The translations of Pāli sources offered on Measureless Mind are based on the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana CD (CSCD) published by the Vipassanā Research Institute, with reference also to the Sri Lanka Tripiṭaka Project Pāli Canon (Based on the Sinhalese Buddha Jayanti Tripiṭaka Series) and the Pali Text Society edition of the canon. Regarding previous English translations, I have generally referred to the excellent translation work of Ven. Ñāṇamoli and Ven. Bodhi.

## Developmental Overview

The four noble truths are the foundational structure of the Buddha's dhamma. They serve as the comprehensive orientation for us as practitioners. Within this framework, unsatisfactoriness is to be fully understood. Craving, which is the origin of unsatisfactoriness, is to be abandoned. The elimination of craving, which is the cessation of unsatisfactoriness, is to be realized. And the middle way of practice leading to this liberation from craving is to be developed.

As we become more and more adept in our ability to understand the four noble truths and apply this understanding in all of our daily experiences, we'll find that our practice becomes simpler and that all aspects of our life become increasingly aligned with the noble eightfold path. This represents the comprehensive engagement of living an authentic and meaningful life. This alignment – the ability to embody the path – is a developmental process, which unfolds as our practice matures. This comprehensive development culminates in complete awakening.

This relationship between (i) the four noble truths as our comprehensive orientation, (ii) the noble eightfold path as the factors of comprehensive engagement, and (iii) the skillful qualities which arise sequentially as this path unfolds and develops, are presented in the following table.

Comprehensive Orientation	Comprehensive Engagement	Comprehensive Development <sup>1</sup>
unsatisfactoriness (dukkha)	integral view (sammādiṭṭhi)	dissatisfaction (dukkha)
origin of unsatisfactoriness (dukkhasamudaya)	integral resolve (sammāsaṅkappa)	faith (saddhā)
cessation of unsatisfactoriness (dukkhanirodha)	integral speech (sammāvācā)	gladness (pāmojja)
middle way of practice (majjhimāpaṭipadā)	integral action (sammākammanta)	joy (pīti)
	integral livelihood (sammāājīva)	tranquility (passaddhi)
	integral effort (sammāvāyāma)	pleasure (sukha)
	integral mindfulness (sammāsati)	meditative composure (samādhi)
	integral composure (sammāsamādhi)	gnosis & vision of things as they are (yathābhūtañāṇadassana)

		disenchantment (nibbidā)
		dispassion (virāga)
		liberation (vimutti)
		gnosis of elimination (khaññāna)

In our everyday life there are numerous things which captivate each of us and capture our attention. But because these things are temporary and difficult to sustain according to our wishes, they are incapable of providing lasting happiness. This is the case for almost all of the things which fascinate us and consume much of our time, whether it's the propagation of creature comforts, habitual emotions, or self-confirming thought patterns. Thus, we find ourselves caught in never-ending cycles struggling to create and re-create desirable situations and moods so as to be happy and satiate our wants, even as the objects of our desire are slipping through our fingers. We are being held captive by our infatuation with the very things that captivate us.

This ongoing struggle is unsatisfactory (dukkha). Craving is what propels and motivates the struggle. We are confined by our own mistaken pursuit of happiness by pursuing things that will never satisfy. Our current situation is one of captivity.

But if we can begin to see *both* the allure *as well as* the drawbacks and shortcomings of the things which captivate us and capture our attention, it's possible that this understanding will allow us to change our focus. With this new orientation we can choose to focus on and develop skillful qualities and living situations which are more easily sustainable. We can learn to apply all of our energies in ways that promote long term happiness and benefit.

## Subset A: Process Model of Factors of Awakening

Nested within the stages of comprehensive development in the third column of the above table is the process model of the seven factors of awakening. These seven factors of awakening illustrate one of the central and most important developmental sequences of

the path. In practice, these mental factors are developed in conjunction with the four applications of mindfulness and the four exertions.

Integral Orientation	Integral Engagement	Integral Development
contemplation of the body (kāyānupassanā)	exertion of restraint (saṃvarappadhāna)	mindfulness (sati)
contemplation of feelings (vedanānupassanā)	exertion of abandoning (pahānappadhāna)	dhamma-investigation (dhammavicaya)
contemplation of mind (cittānupassanā)	exertion of development (bhāvanāppadhāna)	energy (vīriya)
contemplation of phenomena (dhammānupassanā)	exertion of maintaining (anurakkhaṇāppadhāna)	joy (pīti)
		tranquility (passaddhi)
		meditative composure (samādhi)
		equanimity (upekkhā)

This developmental process is nicely explained in SN 46.3 Sīlasutta:

Abiding thus withdrawn, one recollects that dhamma and thinks it over. Whenever, monks, a monk abiding thus withdrawn recollects that dhamma and thinks it over, on that occasion the awakening factor of mindfulness is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness, on that occasion the awakening factor of mindfulness comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

Abiding thus mindfully, he discriminates that dhamma with discernment, examines it, makes an investigation of it. Whenever, monks, a monk dwelling thus mindfully discriminates that dhamma with discernment, examines it, makes an investigation of it, on that occasion the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation, on

that occasion the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

While he discriminates that dhamma with discernment, examines it, makes an investigation of it, his energy is aroused without slackening. Whenever, monks, a monk's energy is aroused without slackening as he discriminates that dhamma with discernment, examines it, makes an investigation of it, on that occasion the awakening factor of energy is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of energy, on that occasion the awakening factor of energy comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

When his energy is aroused, there arises in him non-carnal joy. Whenever, monks, non-carnal joy arises in a monk whose energy is aroused, on that occasion the awakening factor of joy is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of joy, on that occasion the awakening factor of joy comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

For one whose mind is uplifted by joy the body becomes tranquil and the mind becomes tranquil. Whenever, monks, the body becomes tranquil and the mind becomes tranquil in a monk whose mind is uplifted by joy, on that occasion the awakening factor of tranquility is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of tranquility, on that occasion the awakening factor of tranquility comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

For one whose body is tranquil and who is happy the mind becomes composed. Whenever, monks, the mind becomes composed in a monk whose body is tranquil and who is happy, on that occasion the awakening factor of meditative composure is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of meditative composure, on that occasion the awakening factor of meditative composure comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

He closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus composed. Whenever, monks, a monk closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus composed, on that occasion the awakening factor of equanimity is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of equanimity, on that occasion the awakening factor of equanimity comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.



There are a number of other excellent discourses related to this development in the Bojjhaṅgasamyutta of the Saṃyuttanikāya. And of course, what these discourses summarize in a few paragraphs can encapsulate years of sustained, dedicated practice.

## Subset B: Process Model of Integral Composure

Nested within the developmental process model of the seven factors of awakening in the third column of the above table of Subset A is the process model of integral meditative composure, which includes the development of the four jhānas.<sup>2</sup>

First Jhāna (Paṭhamajjhāna)	Second Jhāna (Dutiyaajjhāna)	Third Jhāna (Tatiyaajjhāna)	Fourth Jhāna (Catutthajjhāna)
directed thought (vitakka)	joy (pīti)	pleasure (sukha)	equanimity (upekkhā)
evaluation (vicāra)	pleasure (sukha)	equanimity (upekkhā)	neither-pain-nor-pleasure (adukkhamasukhā)
joy (pīti)	internal clarity (ajjhata sampasādana)	mindfulness (sati)	purity of mindfulness (satipārisuddhi)
pleasure (sukha)	singleness of mind (cittakaggatā)	full awareness (sampajañña)	singleness of mind (cittakaggatā)
singleness of mind (cittakaggatā)		singleness of mind (cittakaggatā)	

Generally speaking, the cultivation and development of any appropriate meditation subject can lead to the suppression of the hindrances and the appearance and strengthening of the jhāna factors. The four jhānas are described in DN 22 Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta as follows:

Here monks, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful phenomena, a monk enters and remains in the first jhāna, which includes directed thought and evaluation, as well as joy and pleasure born of seclusion.

With the stilling of directed thought and evaluation he enters and remains in the second

jhāna, which has internal serene-clarity and unification of mind free from thought and evaluation, and has joy and pleasure born of composure.

With the fading away of joy he remains equanimous, mindful and fully aware, and experiences pleasure with the body; he enters and remains in the third jhāna of which the noble ones say, ‘Equanimous and mindful, he abides pleasantly.’

With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the earlier passing away of happiness and unhappiness, he enters and remains in the fourth jhāna, which is without pleasure or pain, and includes the purity of equanimity and mindfulness.

## Subset C: Process Model of Liberating Discernment

Also nested within the stages of comprehensive development in the third column of the first table is the process model of liberating discernment.

Liberating Orientation	Liberating Engagement	Liberating Development
recognition of unattractiveness (asubhasaññā)	recognition of disenchantment (nibbidasaññā)	stream-winner (sotāpanna)
recognition of impermanence (aniccasaññā)	recognition of dispassion (virāgasaññā)	once-returner (sakadāgāmi)
recognition of unsatisfactoriness (dukkhasaññā)	recognition of cessation (nirodhasaññā)	non-returner (anāgāmi)
recognition of selflessness (anattasaññā)	recognition of release (paṭinissaggasaññā)	arahant (arahant)

## Notes

1. This developmental path sequence is found in SN 12.23 (S ii 29) Upanisa Sutta. This same developmental sequence, or significant portions of it, is also presented in Vin i 294, D i 73, D i 182, D i 207, D i 214, D i 232, D i 250, D iii 241, D iii 279, D iii 288, M i

37, M i 283, S iv 78, S iv 351-8, S v 156, S v 398, A i 243, A iii 21, A iii 285, A v 1-6, A v 312, A v 315, A v 317, A v 329, A v 333. ↵

2. This enumeration of the jhāna factors for each of the four jhānas is according to the Pāli Peṭakopadesa.

## Ethical Conduct (Sīla)

The avoidance of all wrongdoing,  
The undertaking of what is skillful,  
The cleansing of one's own mind—  
This is the teaching of the buddhas.

— Dhammapada 183

Ethical conduct is one of the three main lines of development of the noble eightfold path. Skillful ethical conduct is considered to be a necessary prerequisite for the other two lines of development, which are meditative stabilization and discernment. This consideration of ethics is functional and straightforward: if we are engaging in unethical conduct the mind will be conflicted and unable to develop the mental qualities needed for steady mindfulness, full awareness, and mental composure. And without the stability of meditative composure the mind cannot develop discernment. This is the case regardless of whether or not we are aware of any conflicted defilements.

The integral role of ethical conduct as foundational for the subsequent development of all of the productive affective and cognitive qualities of the path and fruition is explained in AN 11.1 Kimatthiya Sutta:

“What is the purpose of skillful ethical conduct, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Skillful ethical conduct has freedom from remorse as its purpose, Ānanda, and freedom from remorse as its reward.”

“And what is the purpose of freedom from remorse, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Freedom from remorse has gladness as its purpose, Ānanda, and gladness as its reward.”

“And what is the purpose of gladness, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Gladness has joy as its purpose, Ānanda, and joy as its reward.”

“And what is the purpose of joy, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Joy has tranquility as its purpose, Ānanda, and tranquility as its reward.”

“And what is the purpose of tranquility, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Tranquility has pleasure as its purpose, Ānanda, and pleasure as its reward.”

“And what is the purpose of pleasure, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Pleasure has meditative composure as its purpose, Ānanda, and meditative composure as its reward.”

“And what is the purpose of meditative composure, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Meditative composure has gnosis and vision of things as they are as its purpose, Ānanda, and gnosis and vision of things as they are as its reward.”

“And what is the purpose of gnosis and vision of things as they are, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Gnosis and vision of things as they are has disenchantment as its purpose, Ānanda, and disenchantment as its reward.”

“And what is the purpose of disenchantment, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Disenchantment has dispassion as its purpose, Ānanda, and dispassion as its reward.”

“And what is the purpose of dispassion, venerable sir? What is its reward?”

“Dispassion has gnosis and vision of liberation as its purpose, Ānanda, and gnosis and vision of liberation as its reward.”

Suttanipāta 5.11 offers the following explanation of the importance of ethical conduct in terms of its relationship with the eventual fruition of the path:

Dispel greed for sensual pleasures,  
Having seen renunciation as safety,  
May there be nothing  
Grasped or rejected by you.

Dry up what was before.  
May there be nothing after.  
If you do not grasp anything in the middle,  
You will wander calmed.

One completely without greed  
For name and form, brāhmaṇa,  
Has no mental outflows by which  
He would go under the sway of death.

And so ethical conduct isn't to be understood as an end in and of itself. It's a *means* skillfully employed to bring the re-becoming process of saṃsāra to an end. It's a line of development oriented towards the goal of ending birth and death. Therefore this contemplative conduct actually transcends conventional norms of "goodness."

There are repeated injunctions in the discourses — most notably in the fourth chapter of the Suttanipāta — stating that the practitioner should not even grasp onto notions of goodness, because it's understood that such clinging only reinforces identification with a view of self. Such identification can all too easily lead to views of moral superiority and self-righteous indignation. And there is nothing skillful in looking down upon others.

In practice, ethical conduct begins as the support (a somewhat shaky support for most of us) for the practice of meditation. And then over time, the calm (samatha) and full awareness (sampajañña) developed through meditation begins to reciprocally support and strengthen our ethical conduct. This makes it easier to see unskillful thoughts as they are manifesting, allowing us to abandon such thoughts, replacing them with productive, skillful applications of contemplation before they can manifest as unskillful speech or actions. In this way all aspects of the eightfold path are integrated, and progress along the path is understood to depend upon the refinement of the various aspects of ethics, meditation, and discernment.

## Going For Refuge (Saraṇagamana)

The following verses from the Khuddakapāṭha of the Khuddakanikāya are the traditional verses recited as the triple refuge recitation for Theravāda practitioners. They are usually recited before taking the five precepts. KN 1.1 Saraṇattaya:

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
I go for refuge to the Buddha.

Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
I go for refuge to the dhamma.

Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
I go for refuge to the saṅgha.

Dutiyampi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
A second time I go for refuge to the Buddha.

Dutiyampi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
A second time I go for refuge to the dhamma.

Dutiyampi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
A second time I go for refuge to the saṅgha.

Tatiyampi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
A third time I go for refuge to the Buddha.

Tatiyampi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
A third time I go for refuge to the dhamma.

Tatiyampi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
A third time I go for refuge to the saṅgha.

## The Five Precepts (Pañcasikkhāpada)

The Buddha said that he only taught two things: unsatisfactoriness and the stopping of unsatisfactoriness. He also taught that speculating about the origin of the universe — a “first cause” — wasn’t a useful soteriological line of inquiry. What is useful — indeed necessary — is attending to and understanding the dependently arisen and empty nature of this conditioned process of becoming that we presently find ourselves embedded in. Why? Because if we can understand the conditioned nature of our present situation we can consciously develop the thoughts, speech, and actions which promote liberation and we can learn to refrain from thoughts, speech, and actions that impede liberation. This is the foundational basis of the Buddha’s teaching. A teaching that is based upon both

generating and appreciating the opportunity for development which this present moment affords us.

We all know the basics of ethical thought, speech, and action: be kind, support life, and if at times you can't be kind, just try not to cause any harm. With this in mind we can voluntarily choose to undertake the five or eight precepts which are the foundational supports of ethical conduct for anyone wishing to engage in the noble eightfold path.

Again, these precepts are not “commandments from on high,” nor are they to be grasped as ends in themselves. They are skillful supports to create harmony in one's life and aid in meditative stability. This in turn transforms our understanding of the dhamma from theoretical conjecture to actual experiential discernment. And as skillful guidelines these precepts are of a purely functional nature. As with all conditioned phenomena, they shouldn't be rigidly grasped at or clung to. This non-grasping attitude is, in fact, an essential guiding principle of the precepts themselves.

The five precepts — also referred to as the fivefold ethical conduct (pañcasīlāni) — are voluntary training guidelines to be undertaken by anyone who has gone for refuge in the three jewels (tiratana, i.e. the Buddha, the dhamma, and the saṅgha). The five precepts are recited as follows:

1. I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking life.
2. I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking what is not given.
3. I undertake the training rule to abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. I undertake the training rule to abstain from false speech.
5. I undertake the training rule to abstain from fermented and distilled intoxicants which are the basis for heedlessness.

The essence of the first precept is to diligently avoid killing or harming any sentient being, and to develop an attitude of universal kindness, non-ideological pacifism and harmlessness. The essence of the second precept is to diligently avoid taking anything that is not freely offered, and to develop an attitude of universal generosity. The essence of the third precept is to not engage in sexual promiscuity, and to develop universally compassionate relationships. The essence of the fourth precept is to diligently avoid false speech, malicious speech, profane speech, and frivolous speech, and to thereby develop kind and honest speech. And the essence of the fifth precept is to diligently avoid all intoxicants and addictive activities (such as gambling, etc.), and to develop a calm, clear mind.

## Eightfold Ethical Conduct (Aṭṭhasīla)

The above five precepts are to be undertaken at all times if one so chooses. On Uposatha observance days<sup>1</sup> and during meditation retreats the five precepts are amended with the inclusion of three additional training rules. Based on the five precepts, the eight precepts include the following additions:

1. I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking life.
2. I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking what is not given.
3. I undertake the training rule to abstain from incelibacy.
4. I undertake the training rule to abstain from false speech.
5. I undertake the training rule to abstain from fermented and distilled intoxicants which are the basis for heedlessness.
6. I undertake the training rule to abstain from eating beyond the time limit.
7. I undertake the training rule to abstain from dancing, singing, instrumental music, unsuitable shows, and from wearing garlands, using scents, and beautifying the body with cosmetics.
8. I undertake the training rule to abstain from high and luxurious beds and seats.

By reflecting on all of the arahants who have gone before us, and finding inspiration in the examples that their lives displayed, lay practitioners often undertake the eight precepts for set periods of time. On such occasions the third precept is amended so that one maintains complete sexual abstinence.

Undertaking the sixth precept during Uposatha and during meditation retreats means that one doesn't eat any solid food after the midday meal. The essence of the sixth precept relates to diligently avoiding overeating and eating as a form of addictive activity, and to thereby develop an attitude of moderation and contentment.

The essence of the seventh precept is to avoid frivolous entertainment as a form of addictive escapism, to avoid obsessing over the body and physical appearances, and to see the value of developing inner qualities of mental calm and clarity.

The essence of the eighth precept is to avoid obsessing over material acquisitions and hyper-consumerism, and to develop an attitude of voluntary simplicity. By keeping the examples of the arahants who have gone before us in mind, as well as appreciating a life of voluntary simplicity, the essence of all eight precepts can serve as an inspirational foundation for anyone who understands for him or herself the relevance of the non-grasping, non-materialistic, non-addictive attitude that the precepts entail.

## Notes



1. For the Uposatha observance days as observed in Thailand see: 2013 Calendar of Uposatha Days.

## Sense Restraint (Indriya Saṃvara)

Sense restraint is an important aspect of ethical conduct, which helps create an optimal mental environment for the development of meditation (samādhi) and discernment (paññā). This relationship between sense restraint and the development of mental factors which are conducive to meditation is explained in SN 35.97 Pamādevihārī Sutta:

And how, monks, does one abide diligently? If one abides with restraint over the eye faculty, the mind is not scattered among forms cognizable by the eye. If the mind is not scattered, gladness is born. When one is gladdened, joy is born. When the mind is uplifted by joy, the body becomes tranquil. With a tranquil body, one abides with pleasure. A pleasurable mind becomes concentrated. When the mind is concentrated, phenomena become apparent. Due to phenomena becoming apparent, one is designated as ‘one who abides diligently.’

If one abides with restraint over the ear faculty, the mind is not scattered among sounds cognizable by the ear.... If one abides with restraint over the nose faculty, the mind is not scattered among odors cognizable by the nose.... If one abides with restraint over the tongue faculty, the mind is not scattered among flavors cognizable by the tongue.... If one abides with restraint over the body faculty, the mind is not scattered among tactual objects cognizable by the body....

If one abides with restraint over the mind faculty, the mind is not scattered among mental phenomena cognizable by the mind. If the mind is not scattered, gladness is born. When one is gladdened, joy is born. When the mind is uplifted by joy, the body becomes tranquil. With a tranquil body, one abides with pleasure. A pleasurable mind becomes concentrated. When the mind is concentrated, phenomena become apparent. Due to phenomena becoming apparent, one is designated as ‘one who abides diligently.’

MN 38 Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta offers the standard instruction on how to develop sense restraint:

On seeing a form with the eye, he does not grasp at any representation or features. Since, if he left the eye faculty unguarded, worthless unskillful qualities such as covetousness or unhappiness might assail him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the eye faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the eye faculty.

On hearing a sound with the ear, he does not grasp at any representation or features.

Since, if he left the ear faculty unguarded, worthless unskillful qualities such as covetousness or unhappiness might assail him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the ear faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the ear faculty.

On smelling an odor with the nose, he does not grasp at any representation or features. Since, if he left the nose faculty unguarded, worthless unskillful qualities such as covetousness or unhappiness might assail him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the nose faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the nose faculty.

On tasting a flavor with the tongue, he does not grasp at any representation or features. Since, if he left the nose faculty unguarded, worthless unskillful qualities such as covetousness or unhappiness might assail him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the nose faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the nose faculty.

On touching a tactual object with the body, he does not grasp at any representation or features. Since, if he left the body faculty unguarded, worthless unskillful qualities such as covetousness or unhappiness might assail him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the body faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the body faculty.

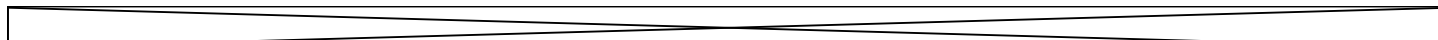
On cognizing a mental phenomenon with the mind, he does not grasp at any representation or features. Since, if he left the mind faculty unguarded, worthless unskillful qualities such as covetousness or unhappiness might assail him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the mind faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the mind faculty.

Possessing this noble restraint of the faculties, he experiences unsullied pleasure within himself.

## Evening Chanting (Pāli & English)

Listen to the evening chants in either Pāli or English. Follow along with the text below.<sup>1</sup>

Listen to the Evening Chanting in Pāli



## Dedication of Offerings

(Yo so) bhagavā arahaṃ sammāsambuddho  
(To the Blessed One,) the Lord, who fully attained perfect enlightenment,

Svākkhāto yena bhagavatā dhammo  
To the Teaching, which he expounded so well,

Supaṭipanno yassa bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
And to the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well,

Tammayāṃ bhagavantāṃ sadhammaṃ sasaṅghaṃ  
To these — the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha —

Imehi sakkārehi yathārahaṃ āropitehi abhipūjayāma  
We render with offerings our rightful homage.

Sādhu no bhante bhagavā sucira-parinibbutopi  
It is well for us that the Blessed One, having attained liberation,

Pacchimā-janatānukampa-mānasā  
Still had compassion for later generations.

Ime sakkāre duggata-paññākāra-bhūte paṭiggaṇhātu  
May these simple offerings be accepted

Amhākaṃ dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya  
For our long-lasting benefit and for the happiness it gives us.

(Arahaṃ) sammāsambuddho bhagavā  
The Lord, the Perfectly Enlightened and Blessed One —

Buddhaṃ bhagavantāṃ ābhivādemi  
I render homage to the Buddha, the Blessed One.  
(Bow.)

(Svākkhāto) bhagavatā dhammo  
(The Teaching,) so completely explained by him —

Dhammaṃ namassāmi  
I bow to the Dhamma.  
(Bow.)

(Supaṭipanno) bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
(The Blessed One's disciples,) who have practiced well —

Saṅghaṃ namāmi  
I bow to the Saṅgha.  
(Bow.)

## Preliminary Homage

(Handa maya buddhassa bhagavato pubbabhāga-namakāraṃ karomase)  
(Now let us pay preliminary homage to the Buddha.)

(Namo tassa) bhagavato arahato sammābuddhassa (Three times.)  
Homage to the Blessed, Noble, and Perfectly Enlightened One.

## Recollection of the Buddha

(Handa mayaṃ buddhānussatinayaṃ karomase)  
(Now let us chant the recollection of the Buddha.)

(Taṃ kho) pana bhagavantam evaṃ kalyāṇo kittisaddo abbhuggato  
(A good word) of the Blessed One's reputation has spread as follows:

Itipi so bhagavā araham sammāsambuddho  
He, the Blessed One, is indeed the pure one, the perfectly enlightened one;

Vijjācaraṇa-sampanno sugato lokavidū  
He is impeccable in conduct and understanding, the accomplished one, the knower of the worlds;

Anuttaro purisadammasārathi  
He trains perfectly those who wish to be trained;

Satthā deva-manussānaṃ  
He is teacher of gods and humans;

Buddho bhagavāti  
He is awake and holy.

## Supreme Praise of the Buddha

(Handa mayāṃ buddhābhigītiṃ karomase)  
(Now let us chant the supreme praise of the Buddha.)

(Buddhavārahanta) varatādiguṇābhiyutto  
(The Buddha,) the truly worthy one, endowed with such excellent qualities,

Suddhābhiñña-karuṇāhi samāgatatto  
Whose being is composed of purity, transcendental wisdom, and compassion,

Bodhesi yo sujanataṃ kamalaṃ va sūro  
Who has enlightened the wise like the sun awakening the lotus —

Vandāmahaṃ tamaraṇaṃ sirasā jinendaṃ  
I bow my head to that peaceful chief of conquerors.

Buddho yo sabbapāṇīnaṃ saraṇaṃ khemamuttamaṃ  
The Buddha, who is the safe, secure refuge of all beings —

Paṭhamānussatiṭṭhānaṃ vandāmi taṃ sirenahaṃ  
As the First Object of Recollection, I venerate him with bowed head.

Buddhassāhasmi dāso<sub>2</sub> va buddho me sāmikissaro  
I am indeed the Buddha's servant, the Buddha is my Lord and Guide.

Buddho dukkhassa ghātā ca vidhātā ca hitassa me  
The Buddha is sorrow's destroyer, who bestows blessings on me.

Buddhassāhaṃ niyyādemi sarīrañjīvitañcidaṃ  
To the Buddha I dedicate this body and life,

Vandantohaṃ<sub>3</sub> carissāmi buddhasseva subodhitaṃ  
And in devotion I will walk the Buddha's path of awakening.

Natthi me saraṇaṃ aññaṃ buddho me saraṇaṃ varaṃ  
For me there is no other refuge, the Buddha is my excellent refuge.

Etena saccavajjena vaḍḍheyyaṃ satthu-sāsane  
By the utterance of this truth, may I grow in the Master's Way.

Buddhaṃ me vandamānena<sup>4</sup> yaṃ puññaṃ pasutaṃ idha  
By my devotion to the Buddha, and the blessing of this practice —

Sabbepi antarāyā me māhesuṃ tassa tejasā  
By its power, may all obstacles be overcome.

*(Bowinḡ:)*

Kāyena vācāya va cetasā vā  
By body, speech, or mind,

Buddhe kukammaṃ pakataṃ mayā yaṃ  
For whatever wrong action I have committed towards the Buddha,

Buddho paṭiggaṇhātu accayantaṃ  
May my acknowledgement of fault be accepted,

Kālantare saṃvarituṃ va buddhe  
That in the future there may be restraint regarding the Buddha.

## Recollection of the Dhamma

(Handa mayaṃ dhammānussatinayaṃ karomase)  
(Now let us chant the recollection of the Dhamma.)

(Svākkhāto) bhagavatā dhammo  
The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One,

Sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko  
Apparent here and now, timeless, encouraging investigation,

Opanayiko paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhīti  
Leading inwards, to be experienced individually by the wise.

## Supreme Praise of the Dhamma

(Handa mayaṃ dhammābhigītiṃ karomase)  
(Now let us chant the supreme praise of the Dhamma.)

(Svākkhātātā) diguṇa-yoga-vasena seyyo  
(It is excellent) because it is “well expounded,”

Yo maggapāka-pariyatti-vimokkha-bhedo  
And it can be divided into Path and Fruit, Practice and Liberation.

Dhammo kuloka-patanā tada-dhāri-dhārī  
The Dhamma holds those who uphold it from falling into delusion.

Vandāmaṃ tamaharaṃ varadhammametaṃ  
I revere the excellent teaching, that which removes darkness —

Dhammo yo sabbapāṇīnaṃ saraṇaṃ khemamuttamaṃ  
The Dhamma, which is the supreme, secure refuge of all beings —

Dutiyaṇussatiṭṭhānaṃ vandāmi taṃ sirenaṃ  
As the Second Object of Recollection, I venerate it with bowed head.

Dhammassāhasmi dāso<sup>5</sup> va dhammo me sāmikissaro  
I am indeed the Dhamma’s servant, the Dhamma is my Lord and Guide.

Dhammo dukkhassa ghātā ca vidhātā ca hitassa me  
The Dhamma is sorrow’s destroyer, and it bestows blessings on me.

Dhammassāhaṃ niyyādemi sarīrañjīvitañcidaṃ  
To the Dhamma I dedicate this body and life.

Vandantoḥaṃ<sup>6</sup> carissāmi dhammasseva sudhammataṃ  
And in devotion I will walk this excellent way of Truth.

Natthi me saraṇaṃ aññaṃ dhammo me saraṇaṃ varaṃ  
For me there is no other refuge, the Dhamma is my excellent refuge.

Etena saccavajjena vaḍḍheyyaṃ satthu-sāsane  
By the utterance of this truth, may I grow in the Master’s Way.

Dhammaṃ me vandamānenaz yaṃ puññaṃ pasutaṃ idha  
By my devotion to the Dhamma, and the blessing of this practice —

Sabbepi antarāyā me māhesuṃ tassa tejasā  
By its power, may all obstacles be overcome.

*(Bowing:)*

Kāyena vācāya va cetasā vā  
By body, speech, or mind,

Dhamme kukammaṃ pakataṃ mayā yaṃ  
For whatever wrong action I have committed towards the Dhamma,

Dhammo paṭiggaṇhātu accayantaṃ  
May my acknowledgement of fault be accepted,

Kālantare saṃvarituṃ va dhamme  
That in the future there may be restraint regarding the Dhamma.

## Recollection of the Saṅgha

(Handa mayaṃ saṅghānussatinayaṃ karomase)  
(Now let us chant the recollection of the Saṅgha.)

(Supaṭipanno) bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
(They are the Blessed One's disciples,) who have practiced well,

Ujupaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
Who have practiced directly,

Ñāyapaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
Who have practiced insightfully,

Sāmīcipaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
Those who practice with integrity —

Yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā  
That is the four pairs, the eight kinds of noble beings —

Esa bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
These are the Blessed One's disciples.



Āhuṇeyyo pāhuṇeyyo dakkhiṇeyyo añjali-karaṇīyo

Such ones are worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect;

Anuttaraṃ puñṇakkhettaṃ lokassāti

They give occasion for incomparable goodness to arise in the world.

## Supreme Praise of the Saṅgha

(Handa mayaṃ saṅghābhigītiṃ karomase)

(Now let us chant the supreme praise of the Saṅgha.)

(Saddhamma) supaṭipattiguṇābhiyutto

(Born of the Dhamma,) that Saṅgha which has practiced well,

Yoṭṭhabbidho ariyapuggala-saṅghasetṭho

The field of the Saṅgha formed of eight kinds of noble beings,

Sīlādidhamma-pavarāsaya-kāya-citto

Guided in body and mind by excellent morality and virtue.

Vandāmaṃ tamariyāna gaṇaṃ susuddhaṃ

I revere that assembly of noble beings perfected in purity.

Saṅgho yo sabbapāṇīnaṃ saraṇaṃ khemamuttamaṃ

The Saṅgha which is the supreme, secure refuge of all beings —

Tatīyānussatiṭṭhānaṃ vandāmi taṃ sirenaṃ

As the Third Object of Recollection, I venerate it with bowed head.

Saṅghassāhasmi dāsoḃ va saṅgho me sāmikissaro

I am indeed the Saṅgha's servant, the Saṅgha is my Lord and Guide.

Saṅgho dukkhassa ghātā ca vidhātā ca hitassa me

The Saṅgha is sorrow's destroyer and it bestows blessings on me.

Saṅghassāhaṃ niyyādemi sarīraṇṇjīvitaṇṇidaṃ

To the Saṅgha I dedicate this body and life.

Vandantoḃ carissāmi saṅghasso-paṭipannataṃ

And in devotion I will walk the well-practiced way of the Saṅgha.

Natthi me saraṇaṃ aṇṇaṃ saṅgho me saraṇaṃ varaṃ  
For me there is no other refuge, the Saṅgha is my excellent refuge.

Etena saccavajjena vaḍḍheyyaṃ satthu-sāsane  
By the utterance of this truth, may I grow in the Master's Way.

Saṅghaṃ me vandamānena<sup>10</sup> yaṃ puññaṃ pasutaṃ idha  
By my devotion to the Saṅgha, and the blessing of this practice —

Sabbepi antarāyā me māhesuṃ tassa tejasā  
By its power, may all obstacles be overcome.

*(Bowinɡ:)*

Kāyena vācāya va cetasā vā  
By body, speech, or mind,

Saṅghe kukammaṃ pakataṃ mayā yaṃ  
For whatever wrong action I have committed towards the Saṅgha,

Saṅgho paṭiggaṇhātu accayantaṃ  
May my acknowledgement of fault be accepted,

Kālantare saṃvarituṃ va saṅghe  
That in the future there may be restraint regarding the Saṅgha.

*(At this time meditation is practiced in silence, sometimes followed by a Dhamma talk, and ending with the following.)*

## Closing Homage

(Arahaṃ) sammāsambuddho bhagavā  
The Lord, the Perfectly Enlightened and Blessed One,

Buddhaṃ bhagavantaṃ abhivādemi  
I render homage to the Buddha, the Blessed One.  
(Bow.)

(Svākkhito) bhagavatā dhammo  
The Teaching, so completely explained by him,

Dhammaṃ namassāmi  
I bow to the Dhamma.  
(Bow.)

(Supaṭipanno) bhagavato sāvakaśaṅgho  
The Blessed One's disciples, who have practiced well,

Saṅghaṃ namāmi  
I bow to the Saṅgha.  
(Bow.)

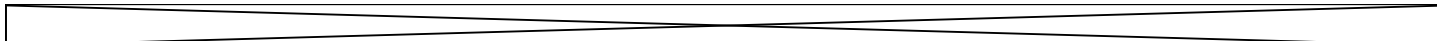
## Notes

1. This translation is from Abhayagiri Monastic Foundation. *Morning and Evening Chanting (Pūjā), Reflections, and Suttas, as Used by Buddhist Monasteries and Groups Associated with the Western Forest Sangha in the Lineage of Venerable Ajahn Chah*, 2004. The recording is of the Abhayagiri monastics.↵
2. *Women chant* dāsī.↵
3. *Women chant* vandantīhaṃ.↵
4. *Women chant* vandamānāya.↵
5. *Women chant* dāsī.↵
6. *Women chant* vandantīhaṃ.↵
7. *Women chant* vandamānāya.↵
8. *Women chant* dāsī.↵
9. *Women chant* vandantīhaṃ.↵
10. *Women chant* vandamānāya.↵

## Morning Chanting (Pāli & English)

Listen to the morning chants and follow along with the text below.<sup>1</sup>

Listen to the Morning Chanting



## Dedication of Offerings

(Yo so) bhagavā araham sammāsambuddho

To the Blessed One, the Lord, who fully attained perfect enlightenment,

Svākkhāto yena bhagavatā dhammo

To the Teaching, which he expounded so well,

Supaṭipanno yassa bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho

And to the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well,

Tammayam bhagavantam sadhammam asaṅgham

To these — the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha —

Imehi sakkārehi yathāraham āropitehi abhipūjayāma

We render with offerings our rightful homage.

Sādhu no bhante bhagavā sucira-parinibbutopi

It is well for us that the Blessed One, having attained liberation,

Pacchimā-janatānukampa-mānasā

Still had compassion for later generations.

Ime sakkāre duggata-pañṇākāra-bhūte paṭiggaṇhātu

May these simple offerings be accepted

Amhākam dīgharattam hitāya sukhāya

For our long-lasting benefit and for the happiness it gives us.

Araham sammāsambuddho bhagavā

The Lord, the Perfectly Enlightened and Blessed One,

Buddham bhagavantam abhivādemi

I render homage to the Buddha, the Blessed One.

(Bow.)

(Svākkhāto) bhagavatā dhammo

The Teaching, so completely explained by him,

Dhammaṃ namassmi  
I bow to the Dhamma.  
(Bow.)

(Supaṭipanno) bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
The Blessed One's disciples, who have practiced well,

Saṅghaṃ namāmi  
I bow to the Saṅgha.  
(Bow.)

## Preliminary Homage

(Handa maya buddhassa bhagavato pubbabhāga-namakāraṃ karomase)  
(Now let us pay preliminary homage to the Buddha.)

(Namo tassa) bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa (Three times.)  
Homage to the Blessed, Noble, and Perfectly Enlightened One.

## Homage to the Buddha

(Handa maya buddhābhithutiṃ karomase)  
(Now let us chant in praise of the Buddha.)

(Yo so) tathāgato araham sammāsambuddho  
The Tathgata is the Pure One, the Perfectly Enlightened One,

Vijjācaraṇa-sampanno  
He is impeccable in conduct and understanding,

Sugato  
The Accomplished One,

Lokavidū  
The Knower of the Worlds,

Anuttaro purisadamma-sārathi  
He trains perfectly those who wish to be trained,

Satthā deva-manussānaṃ  
He is Teacher of gods and humans,

Buddho bhagavā  
He is Awake and Holy.

Yo imaṃ lokaṃ sadevakaṃ samārakaṃ sabrahmaṃ  
In this world with its gods, demons, and kind spirits,

Sassamaṇa-brāhmaṇiṃ paṇḍitaṃ sadeva-manussaṃ sayāṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedesi  
Its seekers and sages, celestial and human beings, he has by deep insight revealed the Truth.

Yo dhammaṃ desesi ādi-kalyāṇaṃ majjhe-kalyāṇaṃ pariyosāna-kalyāṇaṃ  
He has pointed out the Dhamma: beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end.

Sāttha sabyañjānaṃ kevala-paripuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ brahma-cariyaṃ pakāsesi  
He has explained the Spiritual Life of complete purity in its essence and conventions.

Tamaṃ bhagavantaṃ abhipūjayāmi, tamaṃ bhagavantaṃ sirasā namāmi  
I chant my praise to the Blessed One, I bow my head to the Blessed One.  
(Bow.)

## Homage to the Dhamma

(Handa maya dhammbhitthuti karomase)  
(Now let us chant in praise of the Dhamma.)

(Yo so) svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo  
The Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One,

Sandiṭṭhiko  
Apparent here and now,

Akāliko  
Timeless,

Ehipassiko  
Encouraging investigation,

Opanayiko  
Leading inwards,

Paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi  
To be experienced individually by the wise.

Tamahaṃ dhammaṃ abhipūjayāmi, tamahaṃ dhammaṃ sirasā namāmi  
I chant my praise to this Teaching, I bow my head to this Truth.  
(Bow.)

## Homage to the Saṅgha

(Handa maya saghbhitthuti karomase)  
(Now let us chant in praise of the Saṅgha.)

(Yo so) supaipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
They are the Blessed One's disciples, who have practiced well,

Ujupaipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
Who have practiced directly,

Yapaipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
Who have practiced insightfully,

Sāmīcipaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
Those who practice with integrity

Yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā  
That is the four pairs, the eight kinds of noble beings,

Esa bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho  
These are the Blessed One's disciples.

Āhuṇeyyo  
Such ones are worthy of gifts,

Pāhuṇeyyo  
Worthy of hospitality,

Dakkhiṇeyyo  
Worthy of offerings,

Añjali-karaṇīyo  
Worthy of respect,

Anuttaraṃ puñṇakkhettaṃ lokassa  
They give occasion for incomparable goodness to arise in the world.

Tamaḥaṃ saṅghaṃ abhipūjayāmi, tamaḥaṃ saṅghaṃ sirasā namāmi  
I chant my praise to this Saṅgha, I bow my head to this Saṅgha.  
(Bow.)

## Salutation to the Triple Gem

(Handa mayaṃ ratanattaya-paṇāma-gāthāyo ceva saṃvega-parikittana-pāṭhañca  
bhaṇāmaṣe)  
(Now let us chant our salutation to the Triple Gem and a passage of encouragement.)

(Buddho susuddho) karuṇāmahaṇṇavo  
The Buddha, absolutely pure, with ocean-like compassion,

Yoccanta-suddhabbara-ñāṇa-locano  
Possessing the clear sight of wisdom,

Lokassa pāpūpakilesa-ghātako  
Destroyer of worldly self-corruption,

Vandāmi buddhaṃ ahamādarena taṃ  
Devotedly indeed, that Buddha I revere.

Dhammo padīpo viya tassa satthuno  
The Teaching of the Lord, like a lamp,

Yo maggapākāmata-bheda-bhinnako  
Illuminating the Path and its Fruit: the Deathless,

Lokuttaro yo ca tadattha-dīpano  
That which is beyond the conditioned world,



Vandāmi dhammaṃ ahamādarena taṃ  
Devotedly indeed, that Dhamma I revere.

Saṅgho sukhettābhyati-khetta-saññito  
The Saṅgha, the most fertile ground for cultivation,

Yo diṭṭhasanto sugatānubodhako  
Those who have realized Peace, awakened after the Accomplished One,

Lolappahīno ariyo sumedhaso  
Noble and wise, all longing abandoned,

Vandāmi saṅghaṃ ahamādarena taṃ  
Devotedly indeed, that Saṅgha I revere.

Iccevaṃ-ekantabhipūja-neyyakaṃ  
This salutation should be made,

Vatthuttayaṃ vandayatābhisaṅkhatam  
To that which is worthy,

Puññaṃ mayā yaṃ mama sabbupaddavā  
Through the power of such good action,

Mā hontu ve tassa pabhāvasiddhiyā  
May all obstacles disappear.

Idha tathāgato loka uppanno arahaṃ sammāsambuddho  
One who knows things as they are has come into this world, and he is an Arahant, a perfectly awakened being.

Dhammo ca desito niyyāniko upasamiko parinibbāniko sambodhagāmī sugatappavedito  
Purifying the way leading out of delusion, calming and directing to perfect peace, and leading to enlightenment this Way he has made known.

Mayantaṃ dhammaṃ sutvā evaṃ jānāma  
Having heard the Teaching, we know this:

Jātipi dukkhā  
Birth is dukkha,

Jarāpi dukkhā  
Ageing is dukkha,

Maraṇampi dukkhaṃ  
And death is dukkha,

Soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassupāyāsāpi dukkhā  
Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are dukkha.

Appiyehi sampayogo dukkho  
Association with the disliked is dukkha,

Piyehi vippayogo dukkho  
Separation from the liked is dukkha,

Yampiccha na labhati tampi dukkha  
Not attaining ones wishes is dukkha.

Saṅkhittena pacupādānakkhandhā dukkhā  
In brief, the five focuses of the grasping mind are dukkha.

Seyyathīdaṃ  
These are as follows:

Rūpūpādānakkhandho  
Identification with the body,

Vedanūpādānakkhandho  
Identification with feeling,

Saññūpādānakkhandho  
Identification with perception,

Saṅkhārūpādānakkhandho  
Identification with mental formations,

Viññūpādānakkhandho  
Identification with consciousness.

Yesaṃ pariññāya  
For the complete understanding of this,

Dharamāno so bhagavā  
The Blessed One in his lifetime

Evaṃ bahulaṃ sāvake vineti  
Frequently instructed his disciples in just this way.

Evaṃ bhāgā ca panassa bhagavato sāvakesu anusāsanī bahulā pavattati  
In addition, he further instructed:

Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ  
The body is impermanent,

Vedanā aniccā  
Feeling is impermanent,

Saññā aniccā  
Perception is impermanent,

Saṅkhārā aniccā  
Mental formations are impermanent,

Viññānaṃ aniccā  
Consciousness is impermanent;

Rūpaṃ anattā  
The body is not-self,

Vedanā anattā  
Feeling is not-self,

Saññā anattā  
Perception is not-self,

Saṅkhārā anattā  
Mental formations are not-self,

Viññānaṃ anattā  
Consciousness is not-self;

Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā  
All conditions are impermanent,

Sabbe dhammā anattāti  
There is no self in the created or the uncreated.

Te mayaṃ  
All of us

Otiṇṇāmhā-jātiyā jarāmaṇeṇa  
Are bound by birth, ageing, and death,

Sokehi paridevehi dukkhehi domanassehi upāyāsehi  
By sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair,

Dukkhotiṇṇā dukkhaparetā  
Bound by dukkha and obstructed by dukkha.

Appewanānimassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa antakiriyā paññāyethāti  
Let us all aspire to complete freedom from suffering.

Ciraparinibbutaṃ bhagavantaṃ saraṇaṃ gatā  
The Blessed One, who long ago attained Parinibbāna, is our refuge.

Dhammaṇca Saṅghaṇca  
So too are the Dhamma and the Saṅgha.

Tassa bhagavato sāsanaṃ yathāsati yathābalaṃ manasikaroma anupaṭipajjāma  
Attentively we follow the pathway of that Blessed One, with all of our mindfulness and strength.

Sā sā no paṭipatti  
May then the cultivation of this practice

Imassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa antakiriyāya saṃvattatu  
Lead us to the end of every kind of suffering.

(An alternative version of the preceding section, chanted only by monks and nuns:)

Ciraparinibbutampi taṃ bhagavantaṃ uddissa arahantaṃ sammāsambuddhaṃ  
Remembering the Blessed One, the Noble Lord, and Perfectly Enlightened One, who long ago attained Parinibbāna,

Saddhā agāraṣmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajitā

We have gone forth with faith from home to homelessness,

Tasmiṃ bhagavati brahma-cariyaṃ carāma

And like the Blessed One, we practice the Holy Life,

Bhikkhnaṃ sikkhāsājīva-samāpannā

Being fully equipped with the bhikkhus system of training.

Taṃ no brahma-cariyaṃ imassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa antakiriyāya saṃvattatu

May this Holy Life lead us to the end of this whole mass of suffering.

*(After a period of silent meditation, additional reflections may be chanted. Then end with the chant below.)*

## Closing Homage

(Arahaṃ) sammāsambuddho bhagavā

The Lord, the Perfectly Enlightened and Blessed One,

Buddhaṃ bhagavantam abhivādemi

I render homage to the Buddha, the Blessed One.

(Bow.)

(Svākkhito) bhagavatā dhammo

The Teaching, so completely explained by him,

Dhammaṃ namassāmi

I bow to the Dhamma.

(Bow.)

(Supaṭipanno) bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho

The Blessed One's disciples, who have practiced well,

Saṅghaṃ namāmi

I bow to the Saṅgha.

(Bow.)

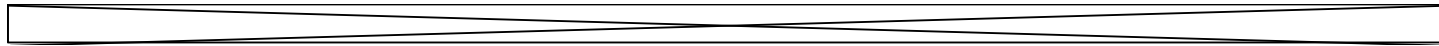
## Notes

1. This translation is from Abhayagiri Monastic Foundation. *Morning and Evening Chanting (Pūjā), Reflections, and Suttas, as Used by Buddhist Monasteries and Groups Associated with the Western Forest Sangha in the Lineage of Venerable Ajahn Chah*, 2004. The recording is of the Abhayagiri monastics. [↵](#)

## Chanting the Mettā Sutta (Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta)

Listen to the Mettā Sutta and follow along with the text below.<sup>1</sup>

Listen to the Metta Sutta



[This is what should be done]  
By one who is skilled in goodness  
And who knows the path of peace:  
Let them be able and upright,  
Straightforward and gentle in speech,  
Humble and not conceited,  
Contented and easily satisfied,  
Unburdened with duties and frugal in their ways.  
Peaceful and calm, and wise and skillful,  
Not proud and demanding in nature.  
Let them not do the slightest thing  
That the wise would later reprove,  
Wishing: In gladness and in safety,  
May all beings be at ease.  
Whatever living beings there may be,  
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,  
The great or the mighty, medium, short, or small,  
The seen and the unseen,  
Those living near and far away,  
Those born and to be born,  
May all beings be at ease.  
Let none deceive another  
Or despise any being in any state.  
Let none through anger or ill-will

Wish harm upon another.  
Even as a mother protects with her life  
Her child, her only child,  
So with a boundless heart  
Should one cherish all living beings,  
Radiating kindness over the entire world:  
Spreading upwards to the skies  
And downwards to the depths,  
Outwards and unbounded,  
Freed from hatred and ill-will.  
Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down,  
Free from drowsiness,  
One should sustain this recollection.  
This is said to be the sublime abiding.  
By not holding to fixed views,  
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,  
Being freed from all sense-desires,  
Is not born again into this world.

## Notes

1. This translation is from Abhayagiri Monastic Foundation. *Morning and Evening Chanting (Pūjā), Reflections, and Suttas, as Used by Buddhist Monasteries and Groups Associated with the Western Forest Sangha in the Lineage of Venerable Ajahn Chah*, 2004. The recording is of the Abhayagiri monastics. [☞](#)

## Integral Effort (Sammāvāyāma)

Integral effort is related to the faculty of energy (vīriyindriya) and exertion (padhāna). Effort is used to prevent unskillful qualities from arising and to abandon unskillful qualities which have arisen, as well as to develop skillful qualities which have yet to arise and maintain skillful qualities which have arisen. SN 45.8 Vibhaṅga Sutta:

And what, monks, is integral effort?

Here, monks, a monk generates desire, makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives for the non-arising of worthless unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen.

He generates desire, makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives for the

abandoning of worthless unskillful qualities that have arisen.

He generates desire, makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives for the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen.

He generates desire, makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives for the maintaining of skillful qualities that have arisen, for their non-decay, increase, expansion, and fulfillment through development.

This, monks, is called integral effort.

As already mentioned, integral effort is closely related to integral exertion (sammāppadhāna) – offering methods to support one's efforts. These are the exertion of restraint (saṃvarappadhāna), the exertion of abandoning (pahānappadhāna), the exertion of development (bhāvanāppadhāna), and the exertion of maintaining (anurakkhaṇāppadhāna). These four methods demonstrate how effort and exertion are related to the integral structure of the path. AN 4.14 Saṃvara Sutta:

Monks, there are these four exertions. Which four? The exertion of restraint, the exertion of abandoning, the exertion of development, and the exertion of maintaining.

And what, monks, is the exertion of restraint? Here monks, a monk, on seeing a form with the eye, does not grasp at any representation or features, since, if he left the eye faculty unguarded, worthless unskillful qualities such as covetousness or unhappiness might assail him. He practices the way of its restraint, he guards the eye faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the eye faculty. (Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.) This, monks, is called the exertion of restraint.

And what, monks, is the exertion of abandoning? Here monks, a monk does not give in to a thought of sensual pleasure that has arisen. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, brings about the utter cessation of its existence. He does not give in to a thought of aversion... a thought of violence... any worthless, unskillful qualities that have arisen. He abandons them, destroys them, dispels them, brings about the utter cessation of their existence. This, monks, is called the exertion of abandoning.

And what, monks, is the exertion of development? Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, cessation, resulting in



letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, cessation, resulting in letting go. This, monks, is called the exertion of development.

And what, monks, is the exertion of maintaining? Here monks, a monk maintains an auspicious representation of meditative composure when it has arisen, [such as] the recognition of a skeleton, the recognition of a worm-infested-[corpse], the recognition of a discolored-[corpse], the recognition of a rotting-[corpse], the recognition of a decayed-[corpse], the recognition of a bloated-[corpse]. This, monks, is called the exertion of maintaining.

## Integral Mindfulness (Sammā sati)

The Pāli noun *sati* is related to the verb *sarati*, which means “to remember.” Thus, an important function of mindfulness is the remembrance of what has been learned and understood. Mindfulness in this sense of remembrance connects the four applications of mindfulness with the awakening factor of mindfulness and the faculty of mindfulness. The awakening factor of mindfulness is explained in SN 46.3 *Sīla Sutta* as the recollection of the teaching heard from accomplished monks:

Abiding thus withdrawn, one recollects the dhamma and thinks it over. Whenever, monks, a monk abiding thus withdrawn recollects that dhamma and thinks it over, on that occasion the awakening factor of mindfulness is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness, on that occasion the awakening factor of mindfulness comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

The faculty of mindfulness is defined in SN 48.9 *Paṭhamavibhaṅga Sutta* as follows:

Here, monks, a noble disciple is mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and discretion, one who remembers and recollects what was done and said long ago. This is called the faculty of mindfulness.

Integral mindfulness begins with contemplation (*anupassanā*). Contemplation involves skillfully attending to the four applications of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*). These four are: contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*), and contemplation of

phenomena (dhammānupassanā). By employing these contemplations we develop the mental factors of mindfulness (sati) and full awareness (sampajañña).

## The Four Applications of Mindfulness (Cattāro Satipaṭṭhānā)

The purpose of the four applications of mindfulness is to train the mind to develop and maintain mindfulness and full awareness during all activities and in all situations. This instruction is given in MN 10 Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta:

Furthermore, monks, when walking, a monk discerns ‘I am walking;’ when standing, he discerns ‘I am standing;’ when sitting, he discerns ‘I am sitting;’ when lying down, he discerns ‘I am lying down;’ or he discerns howsoever his body is disposed....

Furthermore, monks, a monk is fully aware when going forward and returning; he is fully aware when looking toward and looking away; he is fully aware when bending and extending [his limbs]; he is fully aware when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and alms bowl; he is fully aware when eating, drinking, chewing, and tasting; he is fully aware when defecating and urinating; he is fully aware when walking, standing, sitting, going to sleep, waking, speaking, or keeping silent.

In addition to learning to remain mindful and aware during daily activities, the four applications of mindfulness are also related to the practices engaged in during regular periods of sitting and walking meditation. In this regard, the various meditation subjects listed under the section on body contemplation in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta are all subjects for developing samādhi. And all other aspects of the satipaṭṭhānas (i.e. contemplation of feelings, mind, and phenomena) can be correlated with the development of the practices listed under contemplation of the body.

That is, a practitioner picks one of the body contemplation meditation subjects as object-support, then develops the ability to differentiate between different types of feeling in order to eventually be able to abandon carnal joy and pleasure and develop non-carnal joy and pleasure. This is the contemplation of feelings. The practitioner also experientially learns to recognize the difference between limited and afflicted states of mind on the one hand, and expansive states of mind on the other. This is the contemplation of mind. In addition, one can further investigate appropriate categories of phenomena to (i) recognize and eventually abandon any occurrences of hindrances, (ii) further develop meditative composure, and (iii) develop insight. This is the contemplation of phenomena.<sup>1</sup>

For example, the instructions on differentiating between inappropriate and appropriate feelings in relation to inducing meditative composure are given in MN 10 Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as follows:

When feeling a carnal pleasurable feeling, he discerns, ‘I feel a carnal pleasurable feeling;’ when feeling a non-carnal pleasurable feeling, he discerns, ‘I feel a non-carnal pleasurable feeling.’

## Separation from the Five Strands of Sensual Pleasure (Kāmagunā)

The distinction between the five strands of sensual pleasure and the appropriate objects to be employed for mental development is indicated in SN 47.6 Sakuṇagghi Sutta, which clearly differentiates between the five strands of sensual pleasure and the four applications of mindfulness. In this discourse one is instructed to avoid wandering into the range of the five strands of sensual pleasure and instead remain in one’s own proper range of the four satipaṭṭhānas:

Do not stray, monks, into what is not your own range and is the domain of others. Māra will gain access to those who stray into what is not their own range and is the domain of others. Māra will get a hold on them.

And what, for a monk, is not his own range and is the domain of others? The five strands of sensual pleasure.... These, for a monk, are not his own range and are the domain of others.

Move, monks, in what is your own range, your own ancestral domain. Māra will not gain access to those who move in their own range, their own ancestral domain. Māra will not get a hold on them.

And what, for a monk, is his own range, his own ancestral domain? The four applications of mindfulness. Which four? Here monks, a monk remains contemplating the body in the body, ardent, fully aware, mindful, having removed covetousness and unhappiness with regard to the world. He remains contemplating feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, fully aware, mindful, having removed covetousness and unhappiness with regard to the world. This, for a monk, is his own range, his own ancestral domain.

Thus, correctly engaging in integral mindfulness by employing the four applications of mindfulness, one is secluded from the five strands of sensual pleasure. This practice creates the optimal conditions for the abandoning of the five hindrances and the arising of

the five factors of the first jhāna. This is how the full development of integral mindfulness leads to integral meditation (sammāsamādhi).

## The Development of Mindfulness and Meditative Composure (Samādhi)

This relationship between the development of the four applications of mindfulness (catunna satipaṭṭhānā bhāvanā) and integral meditative composure is presented in SN 47.4 Sāla Sutta:

Come, friends, remain contemplating the body in the body, ardent, fully aware, unified, with a limpid mind, composed, with singleness of mind, in order to know the body as it really is. Remain contemplating feelings in feelings, ardent, fully aware, unified, with a limpid mind, composed, with singleness of mind, in order to know feelings as they really are. Remain contemplating mind in mind, ardent, fully aware, unified, with a limpid mind, composed, with singleness of mind, in order to know the mind as it really is. Remain contemplating phenomena in phenomena, ardent, fully aware, unified, with a limpid mind, composed, with singleness of mind, in order to know phenomena as they really are.

The mental qualities of remaining ardent (ātāpī) and fully aware (sampajāna), which are standard in the descriptions of integral mindfulness, are here directly related to remaining unified (ekodibhūtā), with a limpid mind (vipprasannacittā), composed (samāhitā), with singleness of mind (ekaggacittā). All of these latter terms indicate the onset of integral meditative composure.<sup>2</sup>

This relationship between integral mindfulness and integral meditative composure is also embedded in the seven factors of awakening and the four jhānas. Regarding the relationship between the applications of mindfulness and the four jhānas, we find the following instructions in AN 8.63 Saṅkhittadesita Sutta:

‘I will remain contemplating the body in the body... feelings in feelings... mind in mind... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, fully aware, mindful, having removed covetousness and unhappiness with regard to the world.’ That, monk, is how you should train.

When, monk, this meditative composure is developed in this way and made much of, you should develop this meditative composure with directed thought and evaluation, you should develop it without directed thought but with mere evaluation, you should develop it without directed thought and evaluation, you should develop it with joy, you should develop it without joy, you should develop it with comfort, you should develop it with equanimity.

By employing mindfulness and dhamma-investigation we can learn to identify the mental factors which can be developed and strengthened in order to enter and remain in the first jhāna. Mindfulness and full awareness are then used to develop calm (samatha) and clear seeing (vipassanā). This further training in the development of calm and clear seeing is presented in MN 73 Mahāvaccha Sutta:

“Now may the Blessed One teach me the dhamma further.”

“Then in that case, Vacca, develop further the two qualities of calm and clear seeing. When these two qualities of calm and clear seeing are developed further they lead to the comprehension of many things.”

These two mental factors are then optimally yoked together. This is stated in MN 149 Sahāsaḷāyatanika Sutta:

These two qualities of calm and clear seeing occur in him yoked evenly together. With direct gnosis he fully understands those things which should be understood through direct gnosis. With direct gnosis he abandons those things which should be abandoned through direct gnosis. With direct gnosis he develops those things which should be developed through direct gnosis. With direct gnosis he realizes those things which should be realized through direct gnosis.

Thus, these two concomitant mental factors of calm and clear seeing lead to liberating knowledge (vijjā). This is also stated in AN 2.32 Vijjābhāgiyā Sutta:

Two qualities, monks, are conducive to knowledge. Which two? Calm and clear seeing.

When calm is developed, what purpose does it serve? The mind is developed. And what is the benefit of a developed mind? Passion is abandoned.

When clear seeing is developed, what purpose does it serve? Discernment is developed. And what is the benefit of developed discernment? Ignorance is abandoned.

Defiled by passion, the mind is not released. Defiled by ignorance, discernment does not develop. Thus, monks, from the fading away of passion there is liberation of mind (cetovimutti). From the fading away of ignorance there is liberation through discernment (paññāvimutti).

Both mindfulness and full awareness are necessary mental factors in the development of either calm or clear seeing. And both calm and clear seeing are necessary for the full development of jhāna, eventually culminating in liberation.

The necessity of the mental factors of mindfulness and full awareness right from the outset of one's meditation practice can be understood by thinking of them metaphorically as our two "legs" which we need to walk the path. These two legs, with repeated exercise, then strengthen into calm abiding and clear seeing. As for which component should be developed first, calm abiding or clear seeing, AN 4.170 Yuganaddha Sutta states:

Here, friend, a monk has developed clear seeing preceded by calm.... Or, friend, a monk has developed calm preceded by clear seeing.... Or, friend, a monk has developed calm yoked evenly together with clear seeing.

From this statement we can see that the development of meditation can begin with either the development of calm or clear seeing. We should also keep in mind that at advanced stages of practice both of these need to be united for the arising of direct gnosis.

Therefore, beginning with mindfulness, we start to apply our theoretical understanding of the dhamma in order to develop this understanding into experiential discernment (bhāvanāmayā paññā) wherein we eventually come to thoroughly understand the nature of all conditioned phenomena (dhammathitinnāṇa) according to specifically assignable conditionality (idappaccayatā). This thorough knowledge of conditioned phenomena (conditioned arising, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness) culminates in liberation through discernment (paññāvimutti). This discernment liberation is the result of the direct gnosis of nibbāna (nibbāna ñāṇa), which is synonymous with gnosis of the elimination of mental outflows (khayeññāṇa).

## Notes

1. Support for this method of satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā can be found in the Satipaṭṭhānavibhaṅga, which takes the subject of the 32 parts of the body as an example of the object-support. ↩
2. This discourse also indicates the relationship between mindfulness and meditative composure in order to know as they really are (yathābhūta ñāṇāya): the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena; fully understand (pariññāya): the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena; and remain detached from (visaṃyuttā): the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena. ↩

## The Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

One of the central and most important developmental sequences of the path is indicated by the seven factors of awakening. This sequence of mental factors illustrates how – beginning with mindfulness – we can progressively cultivate skillful mental qualities which lead up to and eventually culminate in meditative composure. These seven factors of awakening are mindfulness (*sati*), dhamma-investigation (*dhammavicaya*), energy (*vīriya*), joy (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), meditative composure (*samādhī*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

A mind that is pliant and adaptable has the capacity to discover the freedom of awakening. And it is mindfulness that assists us in being fully present and aware. When mindfulness occurs together with full awareness it is non-reactive and inclusive. This combination of mindfulness and full awareness arises through a volitional choice to be attentive to whatever objects present themselves to awareness as an open, ongoing process, without getting caught up and held captive by habitual reactions.

However, although mindfulness is a mental quality that we can allow to arise, and even learn to refine, somewhat paradoxically, it isn't something that we can forcefully control. Rather, we train the mind by recognizing the benefits and usefulness of mindfulness when it is present, and becoming accustomed to sustaining this quality of flexible, clear awareness. Therefore, this training is experiential. We have to experience and recognize it for ourselves as it is occurring.

With mindfulness and full awareness, we can further investigate our immediate experience in terms of the four applications of mindfulness, which provide our practice with a foundation to help orient us, and the four exertions, which assist us to train in the development and maintenance of skillful qualities and the abandonment of unskillful ones. These activities are aspects of dhamma-investigation.

As we develop some appreciation for these modes of mental engagement, and become accustomed to sustaining dhamma-investigation, this generates balanced enthusiasm and refined levels of energy that occur due to experiencing the flexibility of mental clarity. Attention and energy allow the mind to remain clear and stable without getting lost in the content of associated thoughts and memories. This developmental process is described in SN 46.3 *Sīlasutta*:

Abiding thus withdrawn, one recollects that dhamma and thinks it over. Whenever, monks, a monk abiding thus withdrawn recollects that dhamma and thinks it over, on that occasion the awakening factor of mindfulness is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness, on that occasion the awakening factor of mindfulness comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

Abiding thus mindfully, he discriminates that dhamma with discernment, examines it, makes an investigation of it. Whenever, monks, a monk dwelling thus mindfully discriminates that dhamma with discernment, examines it, makes an investigation of it, on that occasion the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation, on that occasion the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

While he discriminates that dhamma with discernment, examines it, makes an investigation of it, his energy is aroused without slackening. Whenever, monks, a monk's energy is aroused without slackening as he discriminates that dhamma with discernment, examines it, makes an investigation of it, on that occasion the awakening factor of energy is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of energy, on that occasion the awakening factor of energy comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

At this stage mindfulness can seem to occur effortlessly for extended periods of time. The mind and body feel light and exuberant. The joy and pleasure of simply being present arise, and we can learn to recognize and accustom ourselves to this experience as it occurs. Again, this is a natural process that arises when the conditions are appropriate, and is not effectively engendered by attempting to force the mind to be a certain way. SN 46.3 continues:

When his energy is aroused, there arises in him non-carnal joy. Whenever, monks, non-carnal joy arises in a monk whose energy is aroused, on that occasion the awakening factor of joy is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of joy, on that occasion the awakening factor of joy comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

The onset of mental joy prepares the way for the arising of the remaining factors of awakening and the occurrence of meditative composure. SN 46.3 gives a good overview of these factors, which we will begin to explore in greater detail on the next page:

For one whose mind is uplifted by joy the body becomes tranquil and the mind becomes tranquil. Whenever, monks, the body becomes tranquil and the mind becomes tranquil in a monk whose mind is uplifted by joy, on that occasion the awakening factor of tranquility is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of tranquility, on that occasion the awakening factor of tranquility comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.



For one whose body is tranquil and who is happy the mind becomes composed. Whenever, monks, the mind becomes composed in a monk whose body is tranquil and who is happy, on that occasion the awakening factor of meditative composure is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of meditative composure, on that occasion the awakening factor of meditative composure comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

He closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus composed. Whenever, monks, a monk closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus composed, on that occasion the awakening factor of equanimity is aroused by the monk, on that occasion the monk develops the awakening factor of equanimity, on that occasion the awakening factor of equanimity comes to fulfillment through development in the monk.

For some people these factors can arise fairly quickly. For others, this training process can take longer. But it's important to keep in mind that this is a natural process of mental development, and will occur when the conditions are conducive for this refined level of development. It's also important to understand that the purpose of this developmental process is not to *stop* the mind from functioning, but to *train* the mind to function with greater clarity and more subtle awareness. This is why this practice is included in the *training* in heightened mind (adhicittasikkhā).

## Integral Meditative Composure (Sammāsamādhi)

The Pāli noun samādhi is related to the verb samādahati, which means “to put together,” “to join,” “to combine,” “to collect,” and the past participle of the same verb, samāhita, meaning “collected,” “composed.” Thus, samādhi indicates “collecting” one's mind, and specifically in the context of sammāsamādhi, the mind composed in meditation. It is this composed mental unification which is termed singleness of mind (cittakaggatā). It is also called jhāna.

According to the Pāli discourses the four jhānas play an essential role in the development of the noble eightfold path. All four main Nikāyas define integral meditative composure (sammāsamādhi) as jhāna. The four jhānas are also given as the training of heightened mind (adhicittasikkhā), as well as the faculty of composure (samādhindriya) and the strength of composure (samādhibala) as practiced by a noble disciple (ariyasāvaka). According to the suttas and the earliest strata of canonical commentary and para-canonical commentary, all of these factors have to be engaged and developed for full awakening to occur.

This means that liberation through discernment (paññāvimutti) cannot happen without mastery of at least the first jhāna. This integral relationship between jhāna and discernment (paññā) is explicit in the description of the noble eightfold path, where jhāna is given as the definition of integral meditative composure, and is also explicitly stated in other discourses as well. An unequivocal example of this integral relationship is clearly expressed in Dhammapada 371-372:

Practice jhāna monk; do not be heedless.

Do not let your mind roam in strands of sensual pleasure.

Do not swallow a red-hot iron ball, heedless.

Do not burn and cry, “This is pain.”

There is no jhāna for one without discernment,

No discernment for one without jhāna.

But for one with both jhāna and discernment,

He is close to nibbāna.

And this relationship is also stated in AN 9.36 Jhāna Sutta:

I say, monks, the elimination of the mental outflows depends on the first jhāna.

DN 2 Sāmaññaphala Sutta tells us that the elimination of the mental outflows (āsavas) can occur while remaining in the fourth jhāna:

With his mind thus composed, purified and cleansed, unblemished, free from impurities, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, the monk directs and inclines it to gnosis of the elimination of the mental outflows. He discerns as it really is that, ‘This is unsatisfactoriness... This is the origination of unsatisfactoriness... This is the cessation of unsatisfactoriness... This is the way leading to the cessation of unsatisfactoriness....’

Thus knowing, thus seeing, his mind is liberated from the mental outflow of sensual pleasure, the mental outflow of existence, the mental outflow of ignorance. With liberation there is the gnosis, ‘Liberated.’ He discerns that, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.’

As the elimination of the mental outflows requires the development of meditative composure regarding the rise and fall of the five aggregates of clinging – and AN 4.41 Samādhi Sutta tells us that it does – then one is necessarily developing meditative composure regarding the rise and fall of the aggregates of clinging here, specifically in the context of the four noble truths, by engaging the *mind thus composed, purified and cleansed, unblemished, free from impurities, pliant, malleable, and steady in the fourth jhāna*.<sup>1</sup>

Again, AN 9.36 states that the elimination of the mental outflows depends on attaining at least the first jhāna. If one can end the āsavas through the fourth jhāna as stated in DN 2, then one can do the same from within the first jhāna.

This understanding of liberation through discernment requiring mastery of at least the first jhāna is also implied in discourses which state that one liberated through discernment doesn't abide in any of the formless attainments (MN 70) or have any of the five mundane higher gnoses (SN 12.70). It is also implicit in the description of the "white lotus ascetic" (samaṇapuṇḍarīka) offered in AN 4.87 Samaṇamacala Putta Sutta, where it is said that this type of arahant doesn't abide personally experiencing the eight deliverances (aṭṭha vimokkha), yet has both liberation of mind (cetovimutti) and liberation through discernment. Liberation of mind requires mastery of at least the first jhāna.

## Notes

1. The Mahāvihāra commentarial tradition maintains that one should emerge from jhāna in order to develop insight. However, this isn't stated in the suttas. Ven. Bodhi, *In the Buddha's Words* (p. 379):

"According to [MN 64], to abandon the five lower fetters, a monk first attains one of the four jhānas or one of the three lower formless attainments; the constituent factors of the fourth formless attainment are too subtle to serve as objects of insight. Directing his attention to the factors constituting the jhāna or formless attainment, he subsumes them under the five aggregates: as included in form (omitted in relation to the formless attainments), feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness. Having done so, he contemplates these factors, now classified into the five aggregates, as marked by the three characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and nonself (expanded into eleven headings). As contemplation advances, at a certain point his mind turns away from all conditioned things and focuses upon the deathless element, nibbāna."

In an endnote to this passage Ven. Bodhi differentiates between the Mahāvihāra commentaries and the suttas as follows:

"The commentarial method of explanation stipulates that the meditator emerges from the jhāna attainment and practices insight contemplation with a mind made sharp and supple by the jhāna. However, the suttas themselves say nothing about emerging from the jhāna. If one reads the suttas alone, without the commentaries, it seems as if the meditator examines the factors within the jhāna itself."

Indeed, apart from the Mahāvihāra commentaries, the Sarvāstivāda, Sautrāntika, and Yogācāra commentarial traditions have always maintained that insight should optimally be developed *within* jhāna.

## The Pāḷi Jhāna Formula

The standard jhāna formula is as follows:

Idha bhikkhave vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭhamam jhānam upasampajja vihāraṇi. (DN 22 Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta)

Here monks, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful phenomena, a monk enters and remains in the first jhāna, which includes directed thought and evaluation, as well as joy and pleasure born of seclusion.

We can examine the jhāna formula by comparing the various terms mentioned in it with other occurrences of those and related terms found throughout the suttas.

## Quite secluded from sensual pleasures (vivicceva kāmehi)

The first relevant sutta passage is one that occurs in various suttas. For example, AN 6.63 Nibbedhika Sutta states:

Monks, there are these five strands of sensual pleasure (kāmagunā). Forms cognizable by the eye: desirable, lovely, agreeable, endearing, sensually enticing, tantalizing. Sounds cognizable by the ear... odors cognizable by the nose... flavors cognizable by the tongue... tactual objects cognizable by the body: desirable, lovely, agreeable, endearing, sensually enticing, tantalizing.

It is clear that the sensual pleasures referred to in the jhāna formula that are to be withdrawn from prior to entering jhāna, include these five types of *external* objects referred to as *strands of sensual pleasure* which are *desirable, lovely, agreeable, endearing, sensually enticing, and tantalizing*.

There are a couple of points worth mentioning here. Firstly, these five strands of sensual pleasure are all *external* sensory objects. As such, they correspond to objects within the five external sensory spheres (bāhirāyatana). Thus, these five sensory objects do not include in-and-out breathing, which is considered internal, nor the internal felt-sense of the body. The strands of sensual pleasure also do not include the recognition of

unattractiveness with regard to the thirty-one parts of the body and the nine stages of corpse decomposition. The recognition of unattractiveness is a mental phenomenon. Secondly, these five strands of sensual pleasure are those external sensory objects that are considered to *bedesirable, lovely, agreeable, endearing, sensually enticing, and tantalizing*. And so it isn't *all* sensory objects whatsoever that the meditator need to withdraw from. The meditator needs to withdraw from those external sensory objects which are sensually enticing and tantalizing, as stated here. This withdrawal is facilitated by removing oneself from inappropriate environments for meditation and by abandoning the hindrance of desire for sensual pleasure (kāmacchanda). Both are necessary prerequisites for entering the first jhāna.

As for the relationship between the withdrawal from inappropriate environments and external sensory objects MN 150 Nagaravindeyya Sutta informs us that one practicing for the removal of passion resorts to a remote location:

[T]hose venerable ones resort to remote jungle-thicket resting places in the forest. For there are no forms cognizable by the eye there of a kind that they could look at and delight in. There are no sounds cognizable by the ear there of a kind that they could listen to and delight in. There are no odors cognizable by the nose there of a kind that they could smell and delight in. There are no flavors cognizable by the tongue there of a kind that they could taste and delight in. There are no tactual objects cognizable by the body there of a kind that they could touch and delight in.

Continuing with AN 6.63, we can see that a clear distinction is made between sensual pleasures (kā mā) and the five strands of sensual pleasure (kāmagunā). After defining the five strands of sensual pleasure in the previous passage, the Buddha states:

But monks, these are not sensual pleasures (kā mā). They are called strands of sensual pleasure (kāmagunā) in the discipline of the noble ones.

The resolve of passion is a man's sensual pleasure.

The world's beautiful things are not sensual pleasures.

The resolve of passion is a man's sensual pleasure.

The beauties remain as they are in the world,

While the wise remove desire for them.

Here the Buddha is differentiating sensual pleasures (kā mā) which are the resolve of passion (saṅkapparāga), from the beautiful external sensory objects of that passion, pertaining to which the wise remove desire. The removal of this passionate desire is a major theme of the dhammavinaya. This removal begins with practicing sense restraint (indriya saṁvara), developing the thought of renunciation (nekkhamma vitakka), and is

progressively accomplished through the integration of the three path aggregations of ethical conduct (sīla), meditation (samādhi), and discernment (paññā). This eventually culminates in the fruition of the path which includes the complete elimination of the mental outflow of sensual pleasure (kāmasava).

What these discourses imply is that sensory objects are not inherently “kāma” in and of themselves. MN 13 Mahādukkhakhandha Sutta tells us that the strands of sensual pleasure are the allure of kāma. SN 3.12 Pañcarāja Sutta confirms that the very forms, sounds, odors, flavors, and tactual objects which are agreeable to one person, are disagreeable to another.

Thus external sensory objects are only strands of sensual pleasure if they are agreeable, sensually enticing and tantalizing. And as Itivuttaka 72 informs us, renunciation is the escape from sensual pleasures.

In SN 36.19 Pañcakaṅga Sutta the Buddha tells Ven. Ānanda that whatever pleasure or happiness arises in dependence on the five strands of sensual pleasure is called sensual pleasure. And MN 66 Laṭukikopama Sutta states that this sensual pleasure is:

[A] filthy pleasure, a worldly pleasure, an ignoble pleasure. And I say that this pleasure is not to be cultivated, not to be developed, not to be pursued, that it is to be feared.

Based on these statements it follows that any visible objects of the nine stages of corpse decomposition (DN 22, MN 10) associated with the recognition of unattractiveness, or the visible sphere consisting of “the ridges and hollows, the rivers and ravines, the tracts of stumps and thorns, the mountains and irregular places” associated with the recognition of wilderness (MN 121), which are engaged for developing calm (samatha) in the course of attaining jhāna, cannot be strands of sensual pleasure. If they were, any concomitant pleasure and happiness which would arise in dependence upon these sensory objects would be inappropriate and not worth development (bhāvanā).

This distinction between the five strands of sensual pleasure and the appropriate objects to be employed for mental development is indicated in SN 47.6 Sakuṇagghi Sutta, which clearly differentiates between the five strands of sensual pleasure and the four applications of mindfulness (satipaṭṭhānā). In this discourse one is instructed to avoid wandering into the range of the five strands of sensual pleasure and instead remain in one’s own proper range of the four satipaṭṭhānas:

Do not stray, monks, into what is not your own range and is the domain of others. Māra will gain access to those who stray into what is not their own range and is the domain of others. Māra will get a hold on them.

And what, for a monk, is not his own range and is the domain of others? The five strands of sensual pleasure.... These, for a monk, are not his own range and are the domain of others.

Move, monks, in what is your own range, your own ancestral domain. Māra will not gain access to those who move in their own range, their own ancestral domain. Māra will not get a hold on them.

And what, for a monk, is his own range, his own ancestral domain? The four applications of mindfulness. Which four? Here monks, a monk remains contemplating the body in the body, ardent, fully aware, mindful, having removed covetousness and unhappiness with regard to the world. He remains contemplating feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, fully aware, mindful, having removed covetousness and unhappiness with regard to the world. This, for a monk, is his own range, his own ancestral domain.

With the four applications of mindfulness as the cause for entering and remaining in jhāna, one doesn't attend to, or partake in any of the five external strands of sensual pleasure. MN 26 Pāsārāsī Sutta states that this allegorically blinds Māra. And as SN 35.115 Dutiyamārapāsa Sutta tells us, if one doesn't seek delight or grasp onto any sensually enticing phenomenon, then one is said to have escaped from Māra's snare.

## Secluded from unskillful phenomena (vivicca akusalehi dhammehi)

Returning to the jhāna formula, we can next investigate the withdrawal from unskillful phenomena (akusala dhammas). MN 13 Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta states that bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct (kāyena duccharita, vācāya duccharita, manasā duccharita) have sensuality as their cause and source. MN 9 Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta elaborates on these three types of misconduct by giving the standard tenfold list of misconduct:

Taking life is unskillful, taking what is not given is unskillful, sexual misconduct is unskillful, lying is unskillful, abusive speech is unskillful, harsh speech is unskillful, gossip is unskillful, covetousness is unskillful, aversion is unskillful, wrong view is unskillful.

AN 3.102 Paṃsudhovaka Sutta tells us that this level of bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct are coarse defilements. This sutta goes on to state that thoughts of sensual pleasure, thoughts of aversion, and thoughts of harmfulness are considered middling

defilements. And thoughts of one's friends and relatives, thoughts of one's homeland, and thoughts of not wanting to be disliked are considered subtle defilements. With the abandoning of all of these types of defilement there remain only thoughts related to the dhamma. But one still has to develop one's mind so that it grows steady inwardly, settles down, and grows unified and composed.

And in SN 45.22 Akusaladhamma Sutta, we read that wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, and wrong meditative composure are unskillful phenomena. Conversely, the same discourse states that skillful phenomena are right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditative composure. And as we have already seen, right meditative composure (*sammāsamādhi*) is defined as *jhāna*.

And so it's evident that the unskillful phenomena that are to be withdrawn from prior to entering *jhāna* and while remaining in *jhāna* are all coarse, middling, and subtle defilements which are unskillful dhammas of body, speech, and mind. And this is accomplished by developing the noble eightfold path.

## The Hindrances: Five Things Abandoned in the First Jhāna

Before we investigate the *jhāna* formula any further, we can take a look at what specifically is abandoned in order to enter and remain in the first *jhāna*, namely, the five hindrances (*pañcanīvaraṇā*). MN 43 Mahāvedalla Sutta tells us:

Five factors are abandoned in the first *jhāna*.... Here, when a monk has entered the first *jhāna*, desire for sensual pleasure (*kāmacchanda*) is abandoned, aversion (*byāpāda*) is abandoned, lethargy and drowsiness (*thīnamiddha*) is abandoned, restlessness and anxiety (*uddhaccakukkucca*) is abandoned, doubt (*vicikicchā*) is abandoned.

MN 39 Mahāssapura Sutta elaborates:

Here monks, a monk resorts to a secluded dwelling: a forest, the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle grove, an open space, a heap of straw. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he sits down, crosses his legs, holds his body upright, and brings mindfulness to the fore.

Abandoning covetousness with regard to the world [a synonym for the first hindrance], he dwells with a mind devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness.

Abandoning aversion and anger, he dwells with a mind devoid of aversion, sympathetic to the welfare of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of aversion and anger. Abandoning



lethargy and drowsiness, he dwells with a mind devoid of lethargy and drowsiness, mindful, fully aware, clearly percipient. He cleanses his mind of lethargy and drowsiness. Abandoning restlessness and anxiety, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness and anxiety. Abandoning doubt, he dwells having crossed over doubt, with no perplexity with regard to skillful phenomena. He cleanses his mind of doubt.

The abandoning of the five hindrances are a necessary but not sufficient condition for the attainment of the first jhāna. The arising of the five factors of the first jhāna are also necessary. With both of these conditions satisfied – the abandoning of the five hindrances and the arising of the five jhāna factors – the meditator has fulfilled the necessary and sufficient conditions of the first jhāna.

## The Jhāna Factors: Five Phenomena the First Jhāna Is Endowed With

Returning to the jhāna formula, we can take a look at the phenomena which are present in the first jhāna. MN 43 Mahāvedalla Sutta tells us that the first jhāna is endowed with five factors:

The first jhāna has five factors. Here, when a monk has entered the first jhāna, there occurs directed thought (vitakka), evaluation (vicāra), joy (pīti), pleasure (sukha), and singleness of mind (cittakaggatā). That is how the first jhāna has five factors.

## With directed thought and evaluation (savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ)

In the thought-world of the Pāḷi discourses, directed thought (vitakka) is closely related to resolve (saṅkappa). MN 78 Samaṇamuṇḍika Sutta tells us that unskillful resolves cease in the first jhāna and that skillful resolves (kusalā saṅkappā) consisting of the resolve of renunciation (nekkhammasaṅkappa), the resolve of non-aversion (abyāpādasāṅkappa), and the resolve of harmlessness (avihiṃsāsaṅkappa) don't cease until the second jhāna. This provides some context as to the meaning and significance of directed thought and evaluation (vicāra) in the standard jhāna formula. The Samaṇamuṇḍika Sutta states:

And what are skillful resolves? Being resolved on renunciation, on non-aversion, on harmlessness. These are called skillful resolves. What is the cause of skillful resolves? Their cause, too, has been stated, and they are said to be recognition-caused. Which recognition? – for recognition has many modes and permutations. Any renunciation-recognition, non-aversion-recognition, or harmlessness-recognition: That is the cause of skillful resolves.

Now where do skillful resolves cease without trace? Their stopping, too, has been stated: There is the case where a monk, with the stilling of directed thought and evaluation, enters and remains in the second jhāna, which has internal serene-clarity and unification of mind free from thought and evaluation, and has joy and pleasure born of composure. This is where skillful resolves cease without trace.

Of course, any experienced meditator with proficiency in attention training knows that adventitious discursive thinking inhibits the calming of the mind. And so the directed thought and evaluation of the first jhāna is more refined than adventitious discursiveness. It's the skillful application of the cognitive faculty to a particular theme of focus, without lapsing from that focus. To be effective, directed thought and evaluation must necessarily work in concert with the concomitant application of mindfulness and sustained attention. In this way, directed thought and evaluation help to serve as causal factors for the abandoning of the hindrances, the arising of the other jhāna factors, as well as aiding in the maintenance of the jhāna factors once the first jhāna has been successfully entered.

This understanding of directed thought and evaluation finds support in the early para-canonical Peṭakopadesa, which in its analysis of the jhāna factors is closer to the suttas than are the definitions given in the Abhidhammapiṭaka. Regarding directed thought and evaluation in the first jhāna formula, Peṭakopadesa 7.72 offers the following word-commentary:

Here, for fulfilling non-passion he thinks the thought of renunciation. Here, for fulfilling non-aggression he thinks the thought of non-aversion. Here, for fulfilling non-delusion he thinks the thought of harmlessness.

Here, for fulfilling non-passion he is secluded from sensual pleasures. Here, for fulfilling non-aggression and fulfilling non-delusion he is secluded from unskillful phenomena. And so he enters and remains in the first jhāna, which includes directed thought and evaluation, as well as joy and pleasure born of seclusion.

Directed thought: There are three kinds of directed thought, namely the thought of renunciation, the thought of non-aversion, and the thought of harmlessness.

Here, directed thought is the first instance while evaluation is the evaluation of what is thereby received.

Just as when a man sees someone approaching in the distance he does not yet know whether it is a woman or a man, but when he has received [the recognition] that "it is a

woman” or “it is a man” or that “it is of such color” or that “it is one of such shape,” then when he has thought this he further scrutinizes, “How then, is he ethical or unethical, rich or poor?” This is examination. With directed thought he fixes. With examination he moves about and turns over [what has been thought].

And just as a winged bird first accumulates [speed] and then accumulates no more [speed when gliding], so too, directed thought is like the accumulation, and evaluation is like the outstretched wings which keeps preserving the directed thought and evaluation....

Directed thought is like a text-reciter who does his recitation silently. Evaluation is like him simply contemplating it. Directed thought is like a lack of full comprehension (apariññā). Evaluation is like full comprehension (pariññā). Directed thought is the analytical understanding of language (niruttapaṭisambhidā) and the analytical understanding of knowledge (paṭibhānapaṭisambhidā). Evaluation is the analytical understanding of dhamma (dhammapaṭisambhidā) and the analytical understanding of meaning (atthapaṭisambhidā). Directed thought is the mind’s skill in pleasantness. Evaluation is the mind’s skill in endeavor. Directed thought is about this being skillful, this unskillful, about this to be developed, this to be abandoned, this to be verified. Evaluation is like the abandoning, the development, the verification.

And so, in light of the above sutta and early commentarial passages we can see that narrowly interpreting vitakka and vicāra as “initial and sustained attention” or “initial and sustained intention” represents a later semantic shift in the meaning of these terms in the context of jhāna which isn’t supported by their occurrence in the suttas and early commentarial sources such as the Peṭakopadesa.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in the list of mental factors given in MN 111, which the meditator can discern individually as they occur by employing clear seeing (anupadadhammavipassanā) while abiding in jhāna, we find vitakka as well as attention (manasikāra) and intention (cetanā) listed. If any of these three terms were synonyms for the same mental referent then there would be no way to differentiate between them, and it would have been pointless for this discourse to mention all three phenomena.

## Joy and pleasure born of seclusion (vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ)

The discourses differentiate between carnal joy and pleasure (sāmisā pīti and sukha) and non-carnal joy and pleasure (nirāmisā pīti and sukha). SN 36.31 Nirāmisā Sutta tells us that carnal joy and pleasure arise in dependence on the five strands of sensual pleasure,

while non-carnal joy arises in the first two jhānas and non-carnal pleasure arises in the first three jhānas.

SN 48.40 Uppaṭipāṭika Sutta states that the pain faculty (dukkhindriya) ceases completely in the first jhāna, the unhappiness faculty (domanassindriya) ceases completely in the second jhāna, the pleasure faculty (sukhindriya) ceases completely in the third jhāna, and the happiness faculty (somanassindriya) ceases completely in the fourth jhāna.

SN 48.37 Dutiyavibhaṅga Sutta informs us that the pleasure and pain faculties are born of body contact (kāyasamphassaja), whereas the happiness and unhappiness faculties are born of mind contact (manosamphassaja).

Taking all of the above passages into consideration we can deduce that the non-carnal joy of the first jhāna is mental pleasure (cetasika sukha, i.e. somanassa) born of mind contact, and the non-carnal pleasure of the first jhāna is bodily pleasure (kāyika sukha) born of body contact.

This reading of these sutta sources accords with Peṭakopadesa 7.72:

The twofold bodily and mental pain does not arise in one steadied in directed thought and evaluation, and the twofold bodily and mental pleasure does arise. The mental pleasure thus produced from directed thought is joy, while the bodily pleasure is bodily feeling.

This understanding is also supported by the Vimuttimagga. The author of the Vimuttimagga was knowledgeable of and quotes from the Uppaṭipāṭika Sutta, the Paṭisambhidāmagga, the Vibhaṅga, and the Peṭakopadesa. And when commenting on the bathman simile for the first jhāna (e.g. DN 2, MN 119, etc.) he explains:

Just as the bath-powder when inside and outside saturated with moisture, adheres and does not scatter, so the body of the meditator in the first jhāna is permeated with joy and pleasure from top to bottom, from the skullcap to the feet and from the feet to the skullcap, skin and hair, inside and outside. And he dwells without falling back. Thus he dwells like a Brahma god.

[Q.] Joy (pīti) and pleasure (sukha) are said to be formless phenomena (arūpa-dhamma). How then can they stay permeating the body?

[A.] Name (nāma) depends on form (rūpa). Form depends on name. Therefore, if name has joy, form also has joy. If name has pleasure, form also has pleasure.

Again, form born from joy causes tranquility of body, and when the entire body is

tranquilized there is pleasure due to the tranquility of form. Therefore there is no contradiction.

To this we can add a couple of more points. First, due to the presence of directed thought and evaluation in the first jhāna, intermittent occurrences of mental unhappiness can still arise, as indicated in SN 48.40. Thus the singleness of mind of the first jhāna isn't necessarily as unified as in the higher jhānas. Secondly, when the meditator is steadied in the first jhāna, all of the jhāna factors work together to maintain what DN 9 calls an actual refined recognition of joy and pleasure born of seclusion (*vivekajapītisukhasukhumasaccasaññā*). Thus, while the singleness of mind of the first jhāna may not be as unified as in the higher jhānas, it is still a very refined *samādhi*. It takes considerable mental development in order to be able to successfully induce and maintain this level of heightened mind (*adhicitta*).

## Singleness of mind (*cittekaggatā*)

Although singleness of mind isn't mentioned in the standard formula of the first jhāna, likely because it isn't as prominent here as in the second jhāna, nevertheless, MN 43 lists it as one of the five jhāna factors. Moreover, MN 44 *Culavedalla Sutta*, defines meditative composure (*samādhi*) as singleness of mind:

Singleness of mind (*cittassa ekaggatā*) is meditative composure, friend Visakha; the four applications of mindfulness are its causes (*nimitta*); the four integral exertions are its requisites; and any cultivation, development, and pursuit of these qualities is its development.

It's also worth noting that the *nimittas* of meditative composure are given as the four applications of mindfulness.

Similarly, the faculty of meditative composure (*samādhindriya*) is defined as the attainment of singleness of mind by a noble disciple (*ariyasāvaka*) who has attained the path. SN 48.10 *Indriyavibhaṅga Sutta*:

And what is the faculty of meditative composure? Here monks, a noble disciple, making letting go his object, gains composure, gains singleness of mind. Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful phenomena, he enters and remains in the first jhāna....

And this definition of the faculty of meditative composure naturally includes jhāna as the eighth component of the noble eightfold path.

## Notes

1. It is also worth noting that Sautrāntika and Yogācāra commentators consistently define vitakka and vicāra as two types of “mental discourse” (manojalpa, lit: “mind-talk”). For example, Vasubandhu’s Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa defines vitakka as “mental discourse which investigates” (paryeṣako manojalpa) and vicāra as “mental discourse which reflects” (pratyavekṣako manojalpa). Vitakka is considered to be coarse (cittsyaudārikatā) and vicāra comparatively more subtle (cittsyasūkṣmatā). ↩

## The Second Jhāna

DN 22 Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta gives the standard formula for the second jhāna as follows:

With the stilling of directed thought and evaluation he enters and remains in the second jhāna, which has internal serene-clarity and unification of mind free from thought and evaluation, and has joy and pleasure born of composure.

With the elimination of directed thought and evaluation in the second jhāna, the two factors of serene-clarity (sampasādana) and mental unification (cetaso ekodibhāva) become prominent enough to be experientially distinguished. Just as the joy and pleasure born of seclusion and the concomitant expansive mind (mahaggatā citta) of the first jhāna opens up a whole new vista of experience not previously available, and display the limitations of conventional sensory cognition, now the serene-clarity and mental unification experienced by the silent mind in the second jhāna reveal another new level of meditative composure.

Here the experience of the silent mind can be likened to the surface of a completely tranquil lake. This is serene-clarity and mental unification. With this experience there is a definite sense of confidence in the quality of this internally composed level of samādhi, along with the subtle joy and pleasure thereby experienced, which DN 9 designates as an actual refined recognition of joy and pleasure born of composure (samādhijapītisukhasukhumasaccasaññā).

SN 48.40 states that any adventitious occurrence of unhappiness which may arise in the first jhāna due to the presence of directed thought and evaluation, ceases completely here in the second jhāna. What remains is the pleasure faculty (sukhindriya) and the happiness faculty (somanassindriya), which in light of SN 48.37, in the second jhāna refers to bodily pleasure (kāyika sukha) and mental happiness (cetasika sukha, i.e. somanassa).

This reading of the relevant sutta passages is also supported by the word-commentary for the second jhāna given in Peṭakopadesa 7.72:

With the constant cultivation of this same directed thought and evaluation his mind becomes inclined there. Then the directed thought and evaluation seem gross to him, as well as the joy and pleasure born of renunciation, and so joy and delight born of composure arise instead.

His mind, [which] had evaluation as an object-support, becomes internally serenely-clarified with the stilling of these [two factors of the first jhāna]. The two phenomena, directed thought and evaluation, no longer need to be recollected, and what now can be served due to their stilling is the presently arisen unification which is singleness of mind. It is through unification that joy comes to fulfillment. The joy is the happiness faculty, while the pleasure is the pleasure faculty. The singleness of mind is meditative composure. So the second jhāna possesses four factors.

## The Third Jhāna

DN 22 Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta gives the standard formula for the third jhāna as follows:

With the fading away of joy he remains equanimous, mindful and fully aware, and experiences pleasure with the body; he enters and remains in the third jhāna of which the noble ones say, ‘Equanimous and mindful, he abides pleasantly.’

AN 9.42 tells us that the pleasure commonly referred to in the descriptions of the third jhāna is actually the pleasure of equanimity (upekkhāsukha). This accords well with SN 48.40, where it states that the pleasure faculty (sukhindriya) ceases in the third jhāna. What remains is the equanimity faculty (upekkhindriya) and the happiness faculty (somanassindriya), which in light of SN 48.37, in the third jhāna refers to bodily equanimity (kāyika upekkhā) and mental pleasure (cetasika sukha). DN 9 refers to the apperception of this experience as an actual refined recognition of equanimity (upekkhāsukhasukhumasaccasaññā).

Again, this conforms to the word-commentary offered in Peṭakopadesa 7.72:

With the fading away of joy he has abandoned what is comprised of wetness (i.e. joy). But happiness of mind still arises there, and when he investigates that, he gives attention only to equanimity. With the fading away of joy he remains equanimous, and as he still feels with the body the pleasure [of equanimity] induced by joy, he remains fully aware. Mindful and fully aware, equanimity comes to fulfillment.

It is also worth noting that mindfulness and full awareness are given as dominant jhāna factors here in the third jhāna. This reveals the integral progression from the four applications of mindfulness as integral mindfulness continuing through to the third and fourth jhānas as integral meditative composure.

## The Fourth Jhāna

DN 22 Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta gives the standard formula for the fourth jhāna as follows:

With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the earlier passing away of happiness and unhappiness, he enters and remains in the fourth jhāna, which is without pleasure or pain, and includes the purity of equanimity and mindfulness.

SN 48.40 states that the happiness faculty (somanassindriya) ceases in the fourth jhāna. What remains is both bodily and mental equanimity (kāyika and cetasika upekkhā) as stated in SN 48.37, which DN 9 calls an actual refined recognition of neither pleasure nor pain (adukkhamasukhasukhumasaccasaññā).

Again, this agrees with Peṭakopadesa 7.72:

In the first jhāna the pain faculty ceases and in the second jhāna the unhappiness faculty ceases, so with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the earlier passing away of happiness and unhappiness, he enters and remains in the fourth jhāna, which is without pleasure or pain, and includes the purity of equanimity and mindfulness.

Here [previously] equanimity was still not clarified due to the presence of the four faculties, namely the pain faculty, the unhappiness faculty, the pleasure faculty, and the happiness faculty. With the cessation of these there is equanimity and full awareness.

Here, it was due to the pleasure faculty and the happiness faculty that there was a lack of mindfulness, and with their cessation he becomes possessed of mindfulness. And it was due to the pain faculty and the unhappiness faculty that there was a lack of full awareness, and with their cessation he becomes fully aware. So with the clarification of equanimity, [which is accompanied by neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling,] he becomes mindful and fully aware, and there is singleness of mind. This is called the fourth jhāna.

## Summary of the Jhāna Factors (Jhānaṅga)



As we have seen, the Peṭakopadesa’s analysis of the jhāna factors of each of the four jhānas accords well with the suttas. According to the Peṭakopadesa, the first jhāna has five factors, the second jhāna has four factors, the third jhāna has five factors, and the fourth jhāna has four factors. The jhāna factors are listed in the following table.

first jhāna (paṭhamajjhāna)	second jhāna (dutiyaajjhāna)	third jhāna (tatiyaajjhāna)	fourth jhāna (catutthajjhāna)
directed thought (vitakka)	joy (pīti)	pleasure (sukha)	equanimity (upekkhā)
evaluation (vicāra)	pleasure (sukha)	equanimity (upekkhā)	neither-pain-nor-pleasure (adukkhamasukhā)
joy (pīti)	internal clarity (ajjhata sampasādana)	mindfulness (sati)	purity of mindfulness (satipārisuddhi)
pleasure (sukha)	singleness of mind (cittakaggatā)	full awareness (sampajañña)	singleness of mind (cittakaggatā)
singleness of mind (cittakaggatā)		singleness of mind (cittakaggatā)	

## The Nimitta of Jhāna

Depending upon the context in which the term is used, nimitta can refer to either (i) a cause, or (ii) a mental representation. MN 44 tells us that one of the four applications of mindfulness is the nimitta which serves as the cause for the eventual elimination of the five hindrances and, beyond that, the arising of the five concomitant mental factors of the first jhāna. And according to AN 9.35, the nimitta as the mental representation of the first jhāna is the presence of these same five concomitant jhāna factors. AN 9.35 states that this nimitta is to be developed, pursued, and established. And when properly engaged, these five factors work in consort to refine and maintain what DN 9 calls an actual refined recognition of joy and pleasure born of seclusion (vivekajapītisukhasukhumasaccasaññā).

Therefore, according to the earliest strata of the Pāli dhamma there is no need to establish a jhāna nimitta (or samathanimitta or cittanimitta) apart from the jhāna factors. The various practices categorized under the four applications of mindfulness are the samādhinimittas which serve as the cause of jhāna. The concomitant jhāna factors themselves are the nimitta which is the cognitive sign of having attained the first jhāna. This doesn't mean that one abandons the object-support (ārammaṇa), such as the representation of the breath, when the jhāna factors arise. It just means that the most reliable and accurate sign of jhāna is the presence of the jhāna factors, and not any other phenomena.

That said, some contemporary teachers and commentators have suggested that the representation of light (obhāsanimitta) and the representation of form (rūpanimitta) mentioned in MN 128 Upakkilesa Sutta are canonical references to what later came to be designated as the counterpart representation (paṭibhāganimitta) in the commentaries, and thus establishes that these nimittas were considered an essential aspect of the development of jhāna even in the early tradition.

There are a couple of points worth mentioning in this regard. Firstly, MN 128 is the only discourse where the term nimitta is used in this context. None of the other canonical occurrences of nimitta as either samādhinimitta, samatha nimitta, or cittanimitta refer to any of these nimittas being an obhāsanimitta or rūpanimitta as explained in the Upakkilesa Sutta.

Secondly, nowhere in the Upakkilesa Sutta does it state that either the obhāsanimitta or the rūpanimitta are essential prerequisites for attaining the first jhāna. Nor does this sutta maintain that the complete elimination of any experience of the five sensory spheres is essential for the arising of either of these two mental representations. Therefore, while these representations of light and visions of form can occur during the course of meditational development, there is no explicit statement here, or elsewhere in the suttas, that such representations must arise for one to enter jhāna. Indeed, even the commentarial tradition doesn't maintain that either of these types of nimittas are essential for the first jhāna.

For example, the Vimuttimaggā takes the instructions offered in the Upakkilesa Sutta to refer to the development of the divine eye. This is understandable, as Anuruddhā, the main interlocutor in this discourse with the Buddha, was later designated as the foremost disciple endowed with the divine eye.

And not even the Visuddhimaggā limits counterpart representations to those of light or visionary forms. According to the Visuddhimaggā analysis, of the thirty meditations which

lead to jhāna, twenty-two have counterpart representations as object. And of these, only nineteen require any sort of counterpart representation which is apprehended based solely on sight, and can therefore give rise to a mental image resulting from that nimitta (the ten stages of corpse decomposition and nine kasiṇas, excluding the air kasiṇa which can be apprehended by way of either sight or tactual sensation).

And so taking all of the above into consideration, according to the early Pāli dhamma there is no need to establish a jhāna nimitta (or samathanimitta or cittanimitta) apart from the jhāna factors. And even according to the Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga — where the presentation of the method using a counterpart representation is explicitly developed — there is no suggestion that a counterpart representation necessarily must be a representation of light (obhāsanimitta) or a representation of form (rūpanimitta). Indeed, according to the Vimuttimagga, when employing mindfulness of breathing in order to attain jhāna, the counterpart representation should be concomitant with the pleasant feeling which arises as one attends to the breath at the nostril area or the area of the upper lip, which is likened to the pleasant feeling produced by a breeze. The text says that this counterpart representation doesn't depend on color or form, and any adventitious mental images which arise in the course of practice should not be attended to.

## Mindfulness and the Five Hindrances (Pañcanīvaraṇā)

The integral developmental path presented in the suttas includes developing both the cognitive and affective aspects of ourselves in order to confront and begin to skillfully work with the deep seated habitual tendencies which manifest as conflicted emotions. Through the development of clear seeing we begin to work on our self-limiting cognitive barriers. And through the development of calm we begin to confront and work on our emotional hindrances. This approach is presented in AN 2.32 Vijjābhāgiyā Sutta:

When calm is developed, what purpose does it serve? The mind is developed. And what is the benefit of a developed mind? Passion is abandoned.

When clear seeing is developed, what purpose does it serve? Discernment is developed. And what is the benefit of developed discernment? Ignorance is abandoned.

Defiled by passion, the mind is not released. Defiled by ignorance, discernment does not develop. Thus, monks, from the fading away of passion there is liberation of mind (cetovimutti). From the fading away of ignorance there is liberation through discernment (paññāvimutti).

Merely suppressing unwanted urges or conflicting emotions (kilesas) is not a very effective tool in the long term. Whatever is being suppressed has a tendency to leak out in other ways — sometimes quite unexpected ways. Therefore, at some point we have to acknowledge and begin working directly with those undesirable aspects of ourselves. This includes discovering, understanding, and working directly with the underlying factors which fuel our habitual thoughts and actions. This takes a lot of commitment and dedication to the process of actually walking the path in a realistic way. In short, we have to be very honest with ourselves if we want to be authentic. This is where a teacher can be an invaluable aid. The simple fact of the matter is that we are not always in the best position to be able to recognize and acknowledge the sources of our own difficulties. We're often too close and too involved in the habitual patterns to be able to see our own biases operating. But with the help of a skillful teacher, and plenty of time on the cushion, we can learn to see how our mind works with a more panoramic perspective.

## Working with the Hindrances

Specifically in the context of sitting meditation we soon discover that we need to work with the hindrances which arise and impede our ability to sustain mindfulness and full awareness. These impediments include the five hindrances of (i) impulsive desire for sensual pleasure, (ii) aversion, (iii) bodily lethargy and mental drowsiness, (iv) restlessness and anxiety, and (v) doubt.

Fortunately, there are many contemplative meditation themes offered in the suttas. When properly engaged they are all skillful means for abandoning these unproductive thoughts and feelings by either (i) replacing them with skillful thoughts and attitudes, (ii) attending to a non-discursive object such as the breath or one of the totalities, or (iii) choicelessly remaining mindful of the feeling or attitude without reacting to it.

In this section we will primarily focus on the first skillful method: that of replacing unproductive thoughts and feelings with skillful ones that can work as antidotes to abandon the unskillful qualities that have arisen. Some of the contemplations that we'll look at here are reflective meditation themes that protect the mind from hindrances. They include the recollection of the Buddha, the development of loving-kindness, the recognition of unattractiveness, and recollection of the uncertainty of the time of death.

## Desire for Sensual Pleasure (Kāmacchanda)

To remedy desire for sensual pleasure we are advised to attend to an unattractive object (asubhanimitta). AN 1.2 Nīvaraṇappahāṇavagga:

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen desire for sensual pleasure does not arise and arisen desire for sensual pleasure is abandoned as much as on account of this: an unattractive object. For one who attends properly to an unattractive object, unarisen desire for sensual pleasure does not arise and arisen desire for sensual pleasure is abandoned.

## Aversion (Byāpāda)

In order to abandon aversion we are instructed to develop the liberation of the mind through loving-kindness (mettāceto vimutti). AN 1.2 Nīvaraṇappahāṇavagga:

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen aversion does not arise and arisen aversion is abandoned as much as on account of this: the liberation of the mind through loving-kindness. For one who attends properly to the liberation of the mind through loving-kindness, unarisen aversion does not arise and arisen aversion is abandoned.

### *1. Giving thorough attention to the feeling*

If a feeling of bodily tension arises in meditation it is very helpful to give it thorough attention (yoniso manasikāra). This involves not only recognizing that it is present, but also examining the underlying conditions and tendencies associated with the tension. The practice here is to see if there is any mental unhappiness (domanassa) present that is associated with this bodily tension. Is there any mental aversion or resistance there? If so, is there any other emotional content there that you may not even be aware of at first? Any “deeper” emotional conditioning?

The underlying emotional content associated with this uncomfortable feeling of tension could be unacknowledged aversion, or anger, or resentment, or sadness, or grief, or loneliness, or a feeling of a lack of fulfillment. Or it could be fear. Or it could be frustration. Whatever it is – and nobody can uncover this but yourself – but whatever it is, it needs to be identified, and then acknowledged with full awareness. This involves sitting with the emotional content and feeling it – allowing it to fully express itself. See if it changes or shifts to reveal even more subtle levels of resistance or sadness or whatever there is that arises.

## *2. Accepting the feeling with mindfulness and full awareness*

Often, when the emotional conditioning associated with the tension is identified and brought fully into conscious awareness, the bodily feeling of tension, as well as the tactile sensation of tightness itself, will naturally begin to dissolve. But for this to occur, there needs to be some acceptance of the emotional content with mindfulness and full awareness (*satisampajañña*). Just let it express itself and feel it without any added judgment or aversion. If strong aversion remains towards whatever is being felt, then the associated mental conditions haven't been fully identified and acknowledged.

## *3. Releasing the feeling*

If the feeling has been identified and accepted as it is, yet it still continues, one can begin contemplating the release (*paṭinissaggānupassī*) of the feeling. It is not yours and you can let go of it. As you breathe mindfully, you can release it moment to moment without judgment. But it's important to remember that often times there is no quick fix. These types of situations usually need to be worked with again and again, using the relevant practices. Eventually, with time and continual practice, it may no longer be an issue.

Developing kindness and compassion for yourself – for the uncomfortable feeling that is present – is also very helpful. Even if you can only develop a little bit of kindness or compassion at first. With practice this can lead to more expansive kindness and compassion. You can recognize that there are many others who experience all sorts of similar feelings – and in some cases, far more painful feelings. Then you can extend kindness and compassion to them as well.

## **Lethargy and Drowsiness (Thīnamiddha)**

As an antidote to lethargy and drowsiness we are advised to develop the productive mental components of arousal (*ārambhadhātu*), persistence (*nikkāmadhātu*), and energetic endeavor (*parakkāmadhātu*). AN 1.2 *Nīvaraṇappahāṇavagga*:

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen lethargy and drowsiness does not arise and arisen lethargy and drowsiness is abandoned as much as on account of this: the component of arousal, the component of persistence, the component

of energetic endeavor. For one who has aroused energy, unarisen lethargy and drowsiness does not arise and arisen lethargy and drowsiness is abandoned.

## Restlessness and Anxiety (Uddhaccakukkucca)

The remedy for restlessness and anxiety is the development of a pacified mind (cetaso vūpasama). AN 1.2 Nīvaraṇappahāṇavagga:

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen restlessness and anxiety does not arise and arisen restlessness and anxiety is abandoned as much as on account of this: a pacified mind. For one with a pacified mind, unarisen restlessness and anxiety does not arise and arisen restlessness and anxiety is abandoned.

## Doubt (Vicikicchā)

Thorough reflection (yoniso manasikāra) is suggested in order to work with any doubts that we may have about the veracity and effectiveness of the dhamma. AN 1.2

Nīvaraṇappahāṇavagga:

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen doubt does not arise and arisen doubt is abandoned as much as on account of this: thorough reflection (yoniso manasikāra). For one who thoroughly reflects, unarisen doubt does not arise and arisen doubt is abandoned.

The following chart is a summary of the antidotes to the five main hindrances of meditation. Clicking on the link of any of the five remedial practices listed in the chart will take you to the corresponding page which discusses the development of that practice in more detail.

hindrance	remedial practice
desire for sensual pleasure	<a href="#"><u>recognition of unattractiveness</u></a>
aversion	<a href="#"><u>loving-kindness</u></a>
lethargy & drowsiness	<a href="#"><u>recognition of death</u></a>

restlessness & anxiety	<u>mindfulness of breathing</u>
doubt	<u>recollection of the Buddha</u>

When we have established a sustainable and committed regular sitting practice, integrated with and supported by ethical conduct, and are able to abandon the hindrances when we sit, then we've created the optimal conditions for the rest of the developmental processes to unfold. This optimal level of development is expressed in AN 11.2

Cetanākaraṇīya Sutta:

Monks, for one who is ethical, fully observing ethical conduct, there is no need to make the intention, 'May freedom from remorse arise in me.' Monks, it is the nature of things that freedom from remorse arises for one who is ethical, fully observing ethical conduct.

Monks, for one who is free from remorse there is no need to make the intention, 'May gladness arise in me.' Monks, it is the nature of things that gladness arises for one who is free from remorse.

Monks, for one who is glad there is no need to make the intention, 'May joy arise in me.' Monks, it is the nature of things that joy arises for one who is glad.

Monks, for one who is joyful there is no need to make the intention, 'May my body be tranquil.' Monks, it is the nature of things that for one who's mind is joyful the body becomes tranquil.

Monks, for one who's body is tranquil there is no need to make the intention, 'May I experience pleasure.' Monks, it is the nature of things that one who's body is tranquil experiences pleasure.

Monks, for one [experiencing] pleasure there is no need to make the intention, 'May my mind be composed.' Monks, it is the nature of things that for one who's [experiencing] pleasure the mind becomes composed.

Monks, for one who's mind is composed there is no need to make the intention, 'May I know and see things as they really are.' Monks, it is the nature of things that one who's mind is composed knows and sees things as they really are.



Monks, for one who knows and sees things as they really are there is no need to make the intention. ‘May I be disenchanted.’ Monks, it is the nature of things that one who knows and sees things as they really are feels disenchantment.

Monks, for one who feels disenchantment there is no need to make the intention, ‘May I grow dispassionate.’ Monks, it is the nature of things that one who feels disenchantment grows dispassionate.

Monks, for one who is dispassionate there is no need to make the intention, ‘May I realize gnosis and vision of liberation.’ Monks, it is the nature of things that one who is dispassionate realizes the gnosis and vision of liberation.

## Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpānassati)

One who resorts to empty dwellings,  
He is a sage, self-controlled.  
He should live there, letting go of everything,  
That is what is proper for him.

— SN 4.6 Sappa Sutta

The development of mental calm (samathabhāvanā) requires sustained and dedicated practice over an extended period of time. And along with sitting meditation, this practice is aided by maintaining ethical conduct (sīla), living a life of voluntary simplicity and renunciation (nekkhamma), employing sense restraint (indriya saṃvara), and thorough reflection (yoniso manasikāra). With a consistent and dedicated practice supported by the five or eight precepts, and much meditation retreat, these supporting conditions will eventually lead to the actual refined recognition of joy and pleasure born of seclusion (vivekajapītisukhasukhumasaccasaññā). With this, one has developed their meditation practice to the entryway of the first jhāna.

In SN 54.9 Vesālī Sutta, the Buddha compares the development of meditative composure through mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānassatisamādhi) to a cool rain cloud dispelling the heat and dust of the hot season:

Just as, monks, in the last month of the hot season, when a mass of dust and dirt has swirled up, a great rain cloud out of season disperses it and quells it on the spot, so too, meditative composure through mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, is peaceful and sublime, an ambrosial pleasant dwelling, and it disperses and quells on the spot worthless unskillful phenomena whenever they arise.

He then goes on to give the basic instruction for developing meditative composure through mindfulness of breathing as follows:

Here monks, a monk, having gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down. Folding his legs crosswise, he holds his body upright and brings mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

The development of calm is a process of unifying and centering the mind to calm it down and release it from its habitual discursiveness, and the practice of mindful breathing can help us do just that. But it's important to acknowledge from the outset that this is best approached without any preconceptions or expectations. This is a practice of simply softening and opening. Softening the judgmental heart-mind and opening ourselves to the unmediated experience of the mind's natural clarity, and even beginning to recognize the expansiveness of mind (*mahaggatā citta*) experienced when integral mindfulness (*sammāsati*) develops into integral meditative composure (*sammāsamādhī*).

Two qualities essential for the development of calm are those of nonjudgmental "effortless exertion" and non-striving "surrender" to the object of meditation. The initial object in this case is the nostril area (for one breathing through their nose) or upper lip (for one breathing through their mouth) where the tactual sensation of the in and out-breaths can be felt.

Begin by sitting (either on a chair or cross-legged on the floor) with your back straight but not forced or rigid. Next, simplify matters by recognizing that your experience at this time consists of four simple processes: seeing (visual consciousness), hearing (auditory consciousness), tactual sensation (tactile consciousness), and thinking (mental consciousness). And if you gently close your eyes you've simplified your experience to three. Now you can begin to enter into this experience of tactual sensation by paying attention to either the nostril area or the upper lip as the breath contacts this area. This is the first step toward unifying the mind using the breath as an object-support.

In the *Vesālī Sutta* the Buddha then gives the first specific instruction regarding mindful breathing as follows:

Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long;' or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' Breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short;' or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.'

Now we can turn to the *Paṭisambhidāmagga Ānāpānassatikathā* to see how it explains the object-support of mindfulness and where we are advised to station our mindful attention. It states:

Sign (nimitta), in-breath, and out-breath, are not objects of a single mind; one who knows these three phenomena well can thereby obtain development.

The monk sits, having established mindfulness at the tip of the nose or on the upper lip....

And so the suggested area for the placing of our mindful attention is the nostril area for one breathing through the nose, or the upper lip of the mouth for one, who for whatever reason, is unable to breathe through their nose at this time — if one has a cold for example.

(Because nasal breathing seems to be somewhat more effective for establishing mindfulness and thereby calming the mind, I'm going to explain the "sign" only in terms of nasal breathing, but keep in mind that if you're not able to breathe freely through your nose at any time you can simply locate the sign on the upper lip, and proceed from there.)

The nostril area is called the sign for the anchoring of mindfulness. As such, this area is the focus of our attention while we remain mindful of the sensations of the in-breath and out-breath as we breathe, as well as the felt-sense of this area during the gap that is experienced between the out-breath and the next in-breath when breathing naturally.

Because this area of attention is obviously fairly small (the entire area at the base of the nose surrounding the nostrils), the tactual sensation experienced here between out-breath and subsequent in-breath is fairly subtle, but as the tactual sensations of the in-breath and out-breath are slightly less subtle in comparison, these sensations of the in and out-breath are what aid us to remain focused on this spot between breaths. If you have difficulty at first sensing any tactual sensation between out-breath and in-breath that's okay. Experience shows that over time one's awareness of this area increases in sensitivity, and then this will no longer be an issue.

Now the sutta states that the meditator should discern whether an in-breath and out-breath are long or short. The Paṭisambhidāmagga commentary indicates that this just refers to the relative duration of each breath. The injunction is to simply recognize that each breath is unique — no two breaths have exactly the same duration. The idea here isn't to attempt to control the breath in any way, but to just remain attentive to the natural involuntary breathing process that is occurring.

Of course, as soon as that is said one becomes self-conscious and it seems impossible to know if the breath is occurring as it usually does as an involuntary process when we aren't aware of it, or if we really are manipulating it in some way. So to remain aware of the

basic involuntary process, simply exhale normally, and wait for the next inhalation. Just watch and wait — and sure enough — there it is. Unprompted by you, the breath breathes, reaches its own level of fullness, and naturally exhales again. The entire process is effortless.

This is a very straightforward and direct form of meditation. There is no effort to manipulate the breath in any way. There is no expectation whatsoever of experiencing anything any more spectacular, or mystical, or ecstatic than the bare tactual sensation just described. Any such notions that one is going to attain or become something spectacular is just more saṃsāric craving (taṇhā) that feeds becoming (bhava), which is the antithesis of the third noble truth — the cessation of unsatisfactoriness. To practice mindful breathing one needs nothing more than a somewhat peaceful environment, working lungs, and air, preferably somewhat clean air. These are the only “paraphernalia” one ever needs to practice the pragmatic meditation that the Buddha taught as mindfulness of in and out breathing. And when practiced over some period of time, this mindfulness of breathing will naturally lead to a unified state of mind, without any added manipulation on our part.

And so returning to the process of meditation: when you’re able to remain attentive to each in-breath and out-breath and the sign between each breath, as they occur in sequence, for some period of time (twenty to thirty minutes — you have to judge for yourself what is right for you), without becoming completely distracted by discursive thinking and thereby losing awareness of the object-support as it is presently occurring, you can then expand this area of the sign to include awareness of the felt-sense of the entire body as a whole, as experienced from within.

It’s important to mention at this juncture that we’re not trying to forcibly suppress discursive thinking so as to remain with our object of mindfulness. Again, attempts at forcible manipulation or suppression are not very helpful. Unless the discursive thoughts that are arising are tainted by one of the hindrances they should simply be left alone. Just remain attentive to the tactual sensation of the present object, while not intentionally giving attention to any sounds or thoughts.

Remember what was said at the outset about simplifying your present experience to tactual sensing, hearing, and thinking, and thereby recognizing that the only spheres that presently interest you are the tactual object sphere (phoṭṭhabbāyatana) and the body sphere (kāyāyatana). These other spheres related to hearing and thinking can in no way block or hinder your full awareness of the tactual sphere and the inner felt-sense of the body unless you intentionally give attention to them. The Vesālī Sutta continues:

He trains thus, ‘Experiencing the whole body, I will breathe in;’ he trains thus, ‘Experiencing the whole body, I will breathe out.’

Simply expand your sphere of attention to include the awareness of the felt-sense of your whole body as you experience it from within, including the tip of the nose, and including the tactual sensation experienced as the breath. Remain attentive to this expanded awareness of the whole body (sabbakāya).<sup>1</sup>

As you continue to breathe mindfully, you can begin to experience the total sphere of the entire body as a flowing inner energy field. Experience this inner field/sphere as a vibrational “whole” without allowing your awareness to collapse by focusing attention on any particular point within the felt-sense of the entire sphere. Recognize that the shape of your body represents the shape and expanse of this inner field. Relax into this experience without being either for or against any particular inner sensation that’s arising. Just go deeply into this experience of the inner felt-sense of the body. When either “hearing” or “thinking” arise simply let them go by remaining with this ongoing internal flux – this inner felt-sense of the whole body.

While remaining aware of the entire felt-sense of this inner energy sphere, and without forcing the breath in any way, simply notice a subtle expansion of the whole body as you breathe in, and then a very slight deflation as you breathe out. The body is like a three-quarters filled balloon inflating slightly and deflating slightly. The inner felt-sense of the body is the airy space inside the balloon. Just remain aware of this natural process as it is occurring. Once again, this is a very straightforward and direct form of meditation. There is no effort to manipulate the breath in any way.

There is a subtle shift occurring at this stage, away from the external tactual sensations resulting from the breath contacting the nostril area, and deeper and deeper into the inner felt-sense of the body. Specifically, this is a movement away from tactile consciousness (kāyaviññāṇa, which is dependent upon external sensory contact for its arising), toward experiencing the inner body through mental consciousness (manoviññāṇa).

And with some practice, one recognizes that this expansive experience of the entire inner felt-sense of the body is one of the most rewarding, naturally satisfying, healthful, and serene states of awareness possible. With this simple recognition one naturally chooses to enter into this inner felt-sense as often as possible, and thereby experience tranquility and calm. In this way the development of calm, very naturally, over time, leads to more and more subtle and refined states of bodily and mental ease. And during sitting practice,

the experience of the breath becomes more and more refined. The Buddha expresses this with the next instruction in the Vesālī Sutta:

He trains thus, ‘Tranquilizing the bodily fabrication, I will breathe in;’ he trains thus, ‘Tranquilizing the bodily fabrication, I will breathe out.’

This concise introduction covers the basic development of calm using the breath as object, as the initial steps toward unifying the mind and developing the mental factors of the first jhāna. Exactly where the preliminary development of calm ends and jhāna begins is subjective, and therefore a matter for each meditator to discern for him or herself. That said, there are some specific mental factors that we can become aware of, which are clear indications of the first jhāna. We will investigate this more refined stage of the development of calm on the next page.

## Mindfulness of Breathing and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of mindfulness of breathing will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.66 Ānāpāna Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by mindfulness of breathing, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by mindfulness of breathing, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by mindfulness of breathing, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by mindfulness of breathing, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by mindfulness of breathing, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by mindfulness of breathing, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by mindfulness of breathing, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that

mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## Notes

1. There are differing interpretations of this third step of the first tetrad of ānāpānassati regarding ‘experiencing the whole body’ (sabbakāya-*paṭisaṃvedī*). Ven. Bodhi’s footnote to this step in the *Ānāpānassati Sutta* is relevant here. From *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, 2001 ed.:

“MA [Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā] explains ‘experiencing the whole body’ (sabbakāya-*paṭisaṃvedī*) as signifying that the meditator becomes aware of each in-breath and out-breath through its three phases of beginning, middle, and end. In the first edition I followed this explanation and added in brackets ‘of breath’ after ‘the whole body.’ In retrospect, however, this interpretation seems forced, and I now prefer to take the phrase quite literally. It is also difficult to see how *paṭisaṃvedī* could mean ‘is aware of,’ as it is based on a verb meaning ‘to experience.’”

Ven. Bodhi expands on this point in his *Majjhima Nikāya Lectures: A Systematic Study of the Majjhima Nikāya ‘Exploring the Word of the Buddha,’ Lecture On MN 118: Ānāpānasati Sutta*:

“I used to think that the commentary was completely correct on this, but then it struck me to just focus on the Pāli words *sabbakāya*, which simply means ‘whole body,’ and also the word that comes after that, *paṭisaṃvedī*. Now the word *paṭisaṃvedī* has the sense of ‘experiencing’ rather than the sense of awareness or knowing. It’s more akin to what you might call the feeling aspect of experience than to the knowing aspect of experience. In fact, the root of this word is related to the word *vedanā* which means feeling. And so what seems to me to be taking place here is that while breathing in and breathing out one’s awareness (or range of experience) is now expanding to the point that it can encompass the whole body and take in the whole body while one’s attention is still fixed at this particular point at the nostrils where one feels the breath most distinctly coming in and going out.

“And I think this can be related to one’s experience in the jhānas in that it might be suggesting a stage in the development of mindfulness of breathing either approaching close to the jhāna or within the jhāna itself. I find some support for this if one takes a look at the Mahā-Assapura Sutta, which gives a standard way of explaining the four jhānas. The text describes a monk who has abandoned the five hindrances and who ‘enters upon and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. He makes the rapture and pleasure born of seclusion drench, steep, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body...’ (it uses the expression sabbakāya), ‘... unpervaded by the rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.’ And then the text goes on to use the simile of the barber or barber’s apprentice who prepares a ball of bathing powder or shaving powder in a metal basin, sprinkles it with water, and then mixes it so that the water entirely pervades the soap powder inside and out. We get a similar simile in each of the next three paragraphs. Each paragraph includes the expression of the ‘whole body’ being completely pervaded by the qualities within each particular jhānic attainment.

“Coming back to the Ānāpānasati Sutta, I don’t think this sentence necessarily indicates that the meditator has already reached the jhāna, but it seems to indicate what I would call a widening or expanding of the range of experience so that as the pīti and sukha — the rapture and happiness, the joy and happiness — are building up along with the development of concentration, they’re now experienced as pervading the whole body. And so with attention still focused at the nostrils, or around the nostrils, he’s experiencing that joy and happiness extending through the whole body.”

And Ven. Ṭhānissaro’s footnote on the same line from the Ānāpānassati Sutta:

“The commentaries insist that ‘body’ here means the breath, but this is unlikely in this context, for the next step — without further explanation — refers to the breath as ‘bodily fabrication.’ If the Buddha were using two different terms to refer to the breath in such close proximity, he would have been careful to signal that he was redefining his terms (as he does below, when explaining that the first four steps in breath meditation correspond to the practice of focusing on the body in and of itself as a frame of reference). The step of breathing in and out sensitive to the entire body relates to the many similes in the suttas depicting jhāna as a state of whole-body awareness (see MN 119).” ↔

## **Meditative Composure Through Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpānassatisamādhī)**



A monk with a mind at peace,  
Gone to an empty place,  
Clearly seeing the dhamma thoroughly—  
His delight is more than human.

— Dhammapada 373

Jhāna, according to the Buddha, is a stable state of mental unification and composure. This state of unification proceeds through four stages of refinement, characterized by progressively greater suppleness, expansiveness, mental calm and equanimity. But before the first stage of jhāna can be attained, the meditator must be free of the five hindrances of (i) impulsive desire for sensual pleasure, (ii) aversion, (iii) bodily lethargy and mental drowsiness, (iv) restlessness and anxiety, and (v) doubt. If any one of these hindrances are present, we are advised to take up an appropriate antidote to eliminate it.

Mindfulness of breathing can itself serve as an effective antidote for all five hindrances, but if at any time one finds that it isn't sufficient there are other contemplations which can serve as effective antidotes to each hindrance. AN 1.2 Nīvaraṇappahāṇavagga lists effective remedies to employ for each hindrance:

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen desire for sensual pleasure does not arise and arisen desire for sensual pleasure is abandoned as much as on account of this: an unattractive object (asubhanimitta). For one who attends properly to an unattractive object, unarisen desire for sensual pleasure does not arise and arisen desire for sensual pleasure is abandoned.

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen aversion does not arise and arisen aversion is abandoned as much as on account of this: the liberation of the mind through loving-kindness (mettācetovimutti). For one who attends properly to the liberation of the mind through loving-kindness, unarisen aversion does not arise and arisen aversion is abandoned.

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen lethargy and drowsiness does not arise and arisen lethargy and drowsiness is abandoned as much as on account of this: the component of arousal (ārambhadhātu), the component of persistence (nikkāmadhātu), the component of energetic endeavor (parakkāmadhātu). For one who has aroused energy, unarisen lethargy and drowsiness does not arise and arisen lethargy and drowsiness is abandoned.

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen restlessness and

anxiety does not arise and arisen restlessness and anxiety is abandoned as much as on account of this: a pacified mind (*cetaso vūpasama*). For one with a pacified mind, unarisen restlessness and anxiety does not arise and arisen restlessness and anxiety is abandoned.

No other phenomenon do I know, monks, on account of which unarisen doubt does not arise and arisen doubt is abandoned as much as on account of this: thorough reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*). For one who thoroughly reflects, unarisen doubt does not arise and arisen doubt is abandoned.

The contemplation of unattractiveness is an antidote for desire regarding sensual pleasure in that it instills an attitude of renunciation. Loving-kindness is the primary antidote for aversion, and as such instills an attitude of non-aversion. The arousal of energy for abandoning bodily lethargy and mental drowsiness is straightforward. The suttas also mention other antidotes for abandoning lethargy and drowsiness such as stretching and walking meditation. Contemplating the uncertainty of the moment of death is also a very powerful antidote to re-invigorate our motivation. Regarding the hindrance of mental restlessness and anxiety, mindfulness of breathing is often given as an appropriate antidote. Finally, if doubt about the purpose or efficacy of dhamma practice arises, one can thoroughly reflect on the conditioned arising of phenomena and discern that the Buddha was correct and unerring in what he taught. Alternatively one can engender an attitude of faith by recollecting the qualities of the Buddha to inspire the heart and let go of any doubts.

When our practice has developed and there are no hindrances present we can then proceed towards entry into the first *jhāna*. DN 2 *Samaññaphala Sutta* gives us a summary overview of this progression from the abandoning of the hindrances to the entry into *jhāna*:

Seeing that [the five hindrances] have been abandoned within him, he becomes glad. Glad, he becomes joyful. Joyful, his body grows tranquil. His body tranquil, he experiences pleasure. Feeling pleasure, his mind becomes composed.

## The Four Jhānas (*Cattāri Jhānāni*)

*Jhāna* is described as “singleness of mind” (*cittakaggatā*) where the mind is unified with the the inner felt-sense of the body. This mental unification with the inner felt-sense of the body means that awareness completely suffuses the entire body, and that the felt-sense of the body is experienced in its totality. In this way the mind and the inner felt-

sense of the body are unified and expand to completely pervade each other. But this in no way means that the internal experience of the body remains fixed in a static state. The inner felt-sense of the body is experienced as a continual flux of subtle vibrational energy-sensations occurring concurrently with various mental fabrications such as mindfulness (*sati*), attention (*manasikāra*), feeling (*vedanā*), recognition (*saññā*), etc. It's this unification of the mind with the inner felt-sense of the body that gives rise to the *jhāna* factors of joy and pleasure (*pītisukha*). Accordingly, in the four *jhānas* the aggregates are still experienced, but the mind is internally centered and unified to a level of calm and sensory withdrawal wherein no external sensory phenomena distract the mind from attention to the entire felt-sense of the body and the various concomitant mental factors of *jhāna*.

The meditative composure of *jhāna* progresses through four stages of refinement wherein the mind becomes increasingly calmer and the experiential quality of the inner felt-sense of the body becomes increasingly more subtle. The attainment of the first *jhāna* is signaled by the presence of five mental factors: directed thought (*vitakka*), evaluation (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), pleasure (*sukha*), and singleness of mind (*cittakaggatā*).

As one's meditation becomes more refined the coarser of these mental factors begin to fall away and one simply remains attentive to the more subtle concomitant factors that remain. This progression is partly volitional (i.e. one intentionally begins to evaluate the drawbacks of the coarser qualities and the usefulness of the more refined qualities) and partly the spontaneous outcome of the natural calming of the mind (i.e. as the mind becomes more settled it spontaneously abandons the coarser factors). But please remember what was mentioned previously. The volitional intention required here is very subtle, being a nonjudgmental effortless exertion and a non-striving surrender to the practice. It's an open ended process of opening and unifying and is not goal oriented. Any sort of forceful exertion or expectations of a preconceived result are certainly hindrances and will bear no fruit.

The following discussion is a continuation of what was discussed previously pertaining to calming the body fabrication (the breath) as stated in the *Vesālī Sutta*. Once awareness of the entire internal felt-sense of the body has been stabilized (the experience of which isn't dependent upon any external sensory impingement), and the breath has gone from its usual quality to a more subtle quality as a result of unifying the mind with the body, we can begin to shift our frame of reference regarding the inner felt-sense of the body. Now instead of focusing on the bare inner energy-sensation of the body, we can focus on the quality of happiness that the mind is experiencing in relation to its unified contact with the inner felt-sense of the body. Specifically, we can begin to notice the mental

factor of joy (pīti) present as the mind begins to settle and become increasingly composed.

## The First Jhāna (Paṭhama Jhāna)

The standard jhāna formula in the context of the development of meditative composure through mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānassatisamādhī) is stated in SN 54.8 Paṭīpopama Sutta:

Therefore, monks, if a monk wishes, “May I, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful phenomena, enter and remain in the first jhāna, which includes directed thought and evaluation, as well as joy and pleasure born of seclusion,” this same meditative composure through mindfulness of breathing should be closely attended to.

The progression from focusing on the internal felt-sense of the body to focusing on the arisen mental factor of joy (pīti) and bodily pleasure (sukha) represents our movement toward and into the first jhāna. As this is a subjective experience, the mental and bodily qualities that we’re about to discuss will vary somewhat from person to person and even from sitting to sitting. Nevertheless, there are some general indicators that we can become aware of as we progress from a discursive mind involved in external sensory impingement, to a unified mind characterized by internal happiness and well-being, and beyond that, an experience of serene tranquility.

While the phenomenal factors of joy and pleasure may seem to be similar, there are subtle and distinctive differences that we can become aware of. And as joy (pīti) is the coarser of the two qualities, we first turn our attention to it.

Remaining unified with the entire internal felt-sense of the body, experienced in its totality, we begin to focus on the mental quality of joy when it arises. This joy is mental (i.e. not bodily) and is more than just the bare mental feeling (vedanā) of pleasure associated with the contact between the settled mind and the inner body sphere. Synonyms for this joy include: gladness (pāmojja), delight (āmodanā), joyfulness (pamodanā), shining mirth (bhāsa pabhāsa), felicity (vitti), elation (odagya), satisfaction (attamantā), and mental uplift (cittassa).<sup>1</sup>

So what we’re talking about here is an affective mental quality that can range from a sense of internal satisfaction (openness and joyous ease) to ecstatic bliss. Again, the experience will vary from occasion to occasion and person to person. But whatever this quality is for each of us individually, it arises as a direct result of the unification of mind with the inner felt-sense of the entire body. There’s nothing necessarily ecstatic or

blissful about this experience. The mind simply enjoys paying attention to the body and being free from the hindrances and all associated worldly concerns. By breathing mindfully, paying attention and surrendering to the whole felt-sense of the body, and thereby allowing the breath to calm itself, a sense of ease, lightness, and happiness spontaneously arises. It's the basic goodness of not being preoccupied by any concerns, which then leads to a sense of openness and joy as the mind continues to settle.

That said, powerful experiences of ecstatic bliss and profoundly delightful experiences of the heart area spontaneously opening and being saturated with feelings of universal love, or strong vibrational currents within the body causing it to tremble or spasm uncontrollably, or other similar occurrences *can* certainly arise. This is usually more common when one sits for long sessions in retreat (1.5 to 4 or more hours per sitting). Although some of these powerful experiences of *pīti* can be very pleasurable, some of them can be so enticing that the meditator gets stuck trying to recreate the experience in every sitting. Such experiences can also overwhelm one's mental calm. And so these very powerful types of *pīti* can actually be more of a hindrance than a help if not worked with skillfully. Therefore, it's appropriate to consult with an experienced meditation teacher should these types of experience arise.

Returning now to the less extreme experiences of joy: by intentionally focusing on this open sense of internal satisfaction, this quality of joyous happiness, the concomitant experience of the inner felt-sense of the body may begin to intensify into tingling sensations throughout the body (often along the spine and scalp), or the mental happiness itself may open into a sense of either subtle or very profound well-being (the profound type of well-being can feel like passing through an invisible "membrane" wherein all sense of constriction is simply gone). It may be blissful (colored or white lights can appear before the closed eyelids) or it may just be an experience of internal joyous pleasure.

Regardless of what presents itself, the idea is to continue to unify mind and body by paying attention to and acknowledging the mental factor of joyous well-being present, and not trying to manufacture or force something that isn't there. The suttas describe this joyous ease and pleasure permeating and pervading the entire body in the following terms:

He drenches, steeps, fills, and permeates this very body with the joy and pleasure born of seclusion so that there is no part of his whole body that is not permeated by joy and pleasure born of seclusion.

The *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* commentary on the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* explains this passage as follows:<sup>2</sup>

“This very body:” this body born of action [i.e. born of kamma]. “He drenches:” he moistens, he extends joy and pleasure everywhere. “Steeps:” to flow all over. “Fills:” like filling a bellows with air. “Permeates:” to touch all over.

“His whole body:” in this monk’s body, with all its parts, in the place where acquired [material] continuity occurs there is not even the smallest part consisting of skin, flesh, and blood that is not permeated with the pleasure of the first jhāna.

Even though these descriptions make it sound like this practice requires some amount of exertion, experience reveals that this is actually quite a passive process. The only volitional quality required here – over and above attention to the mental factor of joy presently occurring – is to simply attend to this joyous ease and pleasure permeating and pervading the entire body. MN 119 Kāyagatāsati Sutta describes this experience with the following simile:

Just as if a skilled bathman or bathman’s apprentice would heap bath powder into a brass basin and, sprinkling it again and again with water, knead it together so that the moisture wets his ball of bath powder, saturates it and permeates it within and without, yet the ball does not ooze; so too, the monk drenches, steeps, fills, and permeates this very body with the joy and pleasure born of seclusion so that there is no part of his whole body that is not permeated by joy and pleasure born of seclusion.... This too, is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

Here we recognize that this mental joy isn’t something separate from the awareness of the entirety of the felt-sense of the body. As joy pervades the entire mind, it simultaneously permeates the entire body because the mind is aware of the entire body. It’s that straightforward. And with dedicated practice, this experience naturally and spontaneously opens into a much vaster awareness than words can adequately describe.

When mental joy and bodily pleasure are sufficiently developed and refined there spontaneously occurs an opening and vast expansion of the mind. An entirely new panorama of experience opens up. The mind and the concomitant jhāna factors of joy and pleasure expand beyond the limits of one’s physical body. This is what is designated as an expansive liberation of mind (mahaggatā cetovimutti). All the jhāna factors align in complete harmony in what DN 9 refers to as the *actual refined recognition of joy and pleasure born of seclusion* (vivekajapītisukhasukhumasaccasaññā). Again, it’s difficult to put this experience into words in a text. To say the least, conventional states of awareness are constricted in comparison to this vast, expansive mind filled with joy and pleasure. When this sweet fruit of the ascetic life is experienced one understands what the terms listed as jhāna factors actually refer to.

But this is not a non-perceptive state of trance-like absorption. Employing clear seeing (*vipassanā*) one still knows the various concomitant mental phenomena arising in *jhāna* one by one as they occur (*anupadadhammavipassanā*). As the Buddha says in MN 111 *Anupada Sutta* (speaking of Ven. *Sāriputta*'s *jhāna* practice):

Whatever phenomena there are in the first *jhāna*: directed thought, evaluation, joy, pleasure, singleness of mind, contact, feeling, recognition, intention, mind, desire, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention; he defined them one by one as they occurred. Known to him they arose, known to him they remained, known to him they subsided.

And as AN 9.36 informs us, one need progress no further than the first *jhāna* in order to discern phenomena and thereby give rise to nonfashioning (*atammayatā*) and incline toward the death-free (*amatadhātu*).

Nevertheless, if we so choose, we are free to develop *jhāna* to a more refined stage of unification and calm. To do this we simply continue to intentionally focus on the concomitant mental factors of joy (*pīti*) and bodily pleasure (*sukha*). Over time, as we develop this practice, the mental factors of directed thought and evaluation will begin to subside as the mind grows increasingly satisfied and calm. When this stage is reached these factors of thought and evaluation no longer receive the fuel that they need to sustain their operation. This doesn't necessarily mean that at this point there are never any thoughts arising whatsoever. But it does mean that the mind has reached a state of unification which it realizes is superior to any state of even subtle discursive movement. The mind has abandoned attention to apperceptions associated with directed thought. It has realized the satisfaction, stillness, and internal clarity of the silent mind.

This stilling of directed thought is a natural process and doesn't need to be intentionally willed during meditation. We just surrender completely to the experience of joy and pleasure and allow the path of practice to take its course. As SN 48.10 *Dutiyavibhaṅga Sutta* states, the development of the faculty of concentration involves understanding that letting go is our object (*vossaggārammaṇa*). Over time — weeks, months, years, decades — the mind settles and lets go of discursive conceptualization during sitting meditation. This is aided by our ongoing development of sense restraint (*indriya saṃvara*), clear seeing (*vipassanā*), and the increasing integration of the entire eightfold path. Together with a committed daily meditation practice, preferably in conjunction with regular retreat periods, our integrated path allows us to be able to relinquish coarse thoughts which we realize are often a cause of further stress and becoming, and by so doing we begin to enter into the stillness of the silent mind.

And in sitting practice, when directed thought and evaluation subside, what remains is:

## The Second Jhāna (Dutiya Jhāna)

Again, returning to the Padīpopama Sutta:

Therefore, monks, if a monk wishes, “May I, with the stilling of directed thought and evaluation enter and remain in the second jhāna, which has internal serene-clarity and unification of mind free from thought and evaluation, and has joy and pleasure born of concentration,” this same concentration through mindfulness of breathing should be closely attended to.

Here the intentional focus remains on the concomitant phenomena of joy and pleasure, but the qualities of joy and pleasurable feeling begin to become more refined as the mind experiences deepening calm through unification and composure. The Kāyagatāsati Sutta supplies the following description:

Just like a lake whose waters well up from below, having no inflow from the east, west, north, or south, and without being replenished by showers from time to time, the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would drench, steep, fill, and permeate the lake with cool waters, so that there would be no part of the lake that is not permeated by the cool waters; so too, the monk drenches, steeps, fills, and permeates this very body with the joy and pleasure born of concentration so that there is no part of his whole body that is not permeated by joy and pleasure born of concentration.... This too, is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

This image clearly indicates that joy and pleasure aren’t dependent upon any external sensory impingement, but arise from the mind’s composed unification with the internal felt-sense of the body.

At this stage we can begin to shift our attention from the quality of joy to the underlying feeling tone (vedanā) of pleasure (sukha) that is present. What we’re talking about here is the basic quality of bare pleasure arising from our unification of mind and body. This is more basic than any mental fabrications (saṅkhāras) of elation or bliss which may or may not still be present. We simply remain attentive to the quality of pleasure without trying to manipulate it in any way.

And here too, our experience of the second jhāna isn’t a state of trance-like absorption. Clear seeing (vipassanā) is still able to single out the mental phenomena present in this jhāna. The Anupada Sutta:



Whatever phenomena there are in the second jhāna: internal serene-clarity, joy, pleasure, singleness of mind, contact, feeling, recognition, intention, mind, desire, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention; he defined them one by one as they occurred. Known to him they arose, known to him they remained, known to him they subsided.

And if the meditator, instead of inclining toward the death-free dhātu at this point, continues to focus on the quality of the entire pleasurable felt-sense of the body, mental joy (pīti) will spontaneously begin to subside, leaving:

## The Third Jhāna (Tatiya Jhāna)

The Paṭīpopama Sutta continues:

Therefore, monks, if a monk wishes, “May I, with the fading away of joy, remain equanimous, mindful and fully aware, and experience pleasure with the body; may I enter and remain in the third jhāna of which the noble ones say, ‘Equanimous and mindful, he abides pleasantly,’” this same concentration through mindfulness of breathing should be closely attended to.

And we continue to attend to the pleasure of equanimity associated with the felt-sense of the entire body. The Kāyagatāsati Sutta adds:

Just as in a pond of blue or white or red lotuses, some of the lotuses, born and growing in the water, thrive immersed in the water without rising up out of the water, and the cool water drenches, steepens, fills, and permeates them from their roots to their tips, so that there is no part of those lotuses which would not be permeated by cool water; so too, the monk drenches, steepens, fills, and permeates this very body with pleasure divested of joy so that there is no part of his whole body that is not permeated by pleasure divested of joy.... This too, is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

What remains at this stage of jhānic unification is simply a pleasurable feeling associated with bodily equanimity and well-being. One continues to intentionally focus on the pleasure of bodily equanimity present, and also fully comprehends that this is a very refined abiding. Mindfulness and full awareness are now incredibly clear. And here too, one can clearly see the concomitant arising of the other mental factors present in this jhāna. The Anupada Sutta:

Whatever phenomena there are in the third jhāna: pleasure, mindfulness, full awareness, singleness of mind, contact, feeling, recognition, intention, mind, desire, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention; he defined them one by one as they

occurred. Known to him they arose, known to him they remained, known to him they subsided.

And finally, if the meditator, instead of inclining toward the death-free dhātu at this point, continues to focus on the quality of the entire felt-sense of the body, the experience of pleasure will eventually spontaneously subside, leaving:

## The Fourth Jhāna (Catuttha Jhāna)

The the Padīpoma Sutta:

Therefore, monks, if a monk wishes, “May I, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the earlier passing away of happiness and unhappiness, enter and remain in the fourth jhāna, which is without pleasure or pain, and includes the purity of equanimity and mindfulness,” this same concentration through mindfulness of breathing should be closely attended to.

This is the full unified attainment of jhāna. It’s the complete unification of the whole body with pure, bright awareness. Mindfulness and full awareness are now as clear and refined as possible. This is the purity of mindfulness which is the culmination of the development of right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The Kāyagatāsati Sutta continues:

Just as if a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; so too, the monk sits permeating the body with a pure, bright mind so that there is no part of his whole body that is not permeated by this pure, bright mind.

Here too we can clearly see the concomitant mental factors that are present. This requires a very precise balance between calm and clear seeing. If one absorbs too deeply into the quality of calm it will impair the mind’s ability to engage in clear seeing. The Anupada Sutta:

Whatever phenomena there are in the fourth jhāna: equanimity, neither-painful-nor-pleasurable feeling, unconcern due to tranquility of mind, purity of mindfulness, singleness of mind, contact, feeling, recognition, intention, mind, desire, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention; he defined them one by one as they occurred. Known to him they arose, known to him they remained, known to him they subsided.

At this point, or indeed at any point after the stabilization of the first jhāna, we can apply discernment (paññā), according to whichever of the three characteristics we choose to contemplate. This involves clearly seeing conditioned phenomena of body and mind as being impermanent, unsatisfactory, and therefore not-self. The Jhāna Sutta:

Here a monk ... enters and remains in the first ... second ... third ... fourth jhāna.... He sees whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, recognition, fabrications, and consciousness, as impermanent, as unsatisfactory, as a disease, as a cancer, as a dart, as painful, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as emptiness, as not-self.

He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and then directs it towards the death-free component, ‘This is peace, this is excellent: the calming of all fabrications, the release of all acquisitions, the elimination of craving, dispassion, cessation, nibbāna.’

Phrased in terms of the discernment of the four noble truths resulting in the ending of the mental outflows (āsavas), this fruitional insight process is articulated in DN 2 Samaññaphala Sutta. After describing the fourth jhāna, and the five mundane higher gnoses (lokiya abhiññā) that can arise from mastering the four jhānas, the discourse goes on to describe the supramundane higher gnosis (lokuttara abhiññā) of complete liberation, which is the extinction of the mental outflows. This liberation is described as occurring while still employing the same level of concentration as the fourth jhāna. It’s important to remember that the first noble truth includes the five aggregates of clinging:

With his mind thus concentrated, purified and cleansed, unblemished, free from impurities, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the elimination of the mental outflows. He understands as it really is that, ‘This is unsatisfactoriness... This is the origination of unsatisfactoriness... This is the cessation of unsatisfactoriness... This is the way leading to the cessation of unsatisfactoriness....’

Thus knowing, thus seeing, his mind is liberated from the mental outflow of sensual pleasure, the mental outflow of becoming, the mental outflow of ignorance. With liberation there is the gnosis, ‘liberated.’ He understands that, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.’

## Notes

1. This register of near-synonyms and synonyms for pīti is given in the Paṭisambhidāmagga Ānāpānassatikathā and the Dhammasaṅgaṇī. ↵
2. Dīghanikāya Sumaṅgalavilāsinī Sīlakkhandhavagga Aṭṭhakathā Sāmaññaphalasuttavaṇṇanā ↵

## Recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha

In order for our practice to progress to where it is truly transformational it's essential that we connect with the triple refuge deeply within ourselves. This connection sustains our practice through the pleasant times as well as the less pleasant occasions which will inevitably arise from time to time.

Regularly reflecting upon and connecting with the Buddha, the dhamma that he taught, and the monastic community which has practiced and preserved this dhamma, instills a sense of joy in our life which induces energy to keep us focused and mentally balanced. Therefore, making these devotional recollections a regular part of one's practice is extremely helpful. I highly recommend learning these recollections, reciting them, and reflecting upon them often.

## Recollection of the Buddha (Buddhānussati)

AN 11.12 Paṭhamamahānāma Sutta gives the recollection of the Buddha as follows:

He, the Blessed One, is indeed the pure one, the perfectly enlightened one;

He is impeccable in conduct and understanding, the accomplished one, the knower of the worlds;

He trains perfectly those who wish to be trained; he is teacher of gods and humans; he is awake and holy.<sup>1</sup>

After giving this instruction on the recollection of the Buddha, the benefits of this practice are described in the discourse:

On that occasion when a noble disciple is recollecting the Tathāgata, his mind is not obsessed with passion, aggression, or delusion. His mind is straight, with the Tathāgata as its object. A noble disciple whose mind is straight gains a sense of the goal, gains a sense of the dhamma, gains gladness connected with the dhamma. When he is gladdened, joy arises. In one who is uplifted by joy, the body becomes calm. One whose body is calmed experiences pleasure. In one experiencing pleasure, the mind becomes composed.

## Recollection of the Dhamma (Dhammānussati)

AN 11.12 Paṭhamamahānāma Sutta offers the recollection of the dhamma with these words:

The dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One,  
Apparent here and now, timeless, encouraging investigation,  
Leading inwards, to be experienced individually by the wise.<sup>2</sup>

Again, the benefits of practicing the recollection of the dhamma are described immediately after the above instruction:

On that occasion when a noble disciple is recollecting the dhamma, his mind is not obsessed with passion, aggression, or delusion. His mind is straight, with the dhamma as its object. A noble disciple whose mind is straight gains a sense of the goal, gains a sense of the dhamma, gains gladness connected with the dhamma. When he is gladdened, joy arises. In one who is uplifted by joy, the body becomes calm. One whose body is calmed experiences pleasure. In one experiencing pleasure, the mind becomes composed.

## Recollection of the Saṅgha (Saṅghānussati)

AN 11.12 Paṭhamamahānāma Sutta presents the recollection of the saṅgha as follows:

They are the Blessed One's disciples, who have practiced well,  
Who have practiced directly,  
Who have practiced insightfully,  
Those who practice with integrity—  
That is the four pairs, the eight kinds of noble beings—  
These are the Blessed One's disciples.  
Such ones are worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect;  
They give occasion for incomparable goodness to arise in the world.<sup>3</sup>

After giving this instruction on the recollection of the saṅgha, the benefits of the practice are described:

On that occasion when a noble disciple is recollecting the saṅgha, his mind is not obsessed with passion, aggression, or delusion. His mind is straight, with the saṅgha as its object. A noble disciple whose mind is straight gains a sense of the goal, gains a sense of the dhamma, gains gladness connected with the dhamma. When he is gladdened, joy arises. In one who is uplifted by joy, the body becomes calm. One whose body is calmed experiences pleasure. In one experiencing pleasure, the mind becomes composed.

## Notes

1. This translated section is from Abhayagiri Monastic Foundation. *Morning and Evening Chanting (Pūjā), Reflections, and Suttas, as Used by Buddhist Monasteries and Groups Associated with the Western Forest Sangha in the Lineage of Venerable Ajahn Chah*, 2004. ↩
2. Ibid. ↩
3. Ibid. ↩

## The Four God-like Abidings (Cattāri Brahmavihārā)

A monk abiding with loving-kindness,  
Devoted to the teaching of the Buddha,  
Attains a peaceful state—  
The stilling of fabrications, ease.

— Dhammapada 368

As already mentioned, awakening requires both cognitive and affective development. A liberated mind is not only released from the cognitive constrictions of ignorance, but also from self-limiting emotional constrictions as well. The latter include the conflicted emotions such as passion and aggression. The development of the four god-like abidings are indispensable aids to help us abandon habitual aggressive and addictive mental processes.

## Developing Loving-kindness (Mettābhāvanā)

Loving-kindness is considered to be an optimally skillful and meritorious mental state, and is said to be the basis for the development of the other three god-like abidings. The development of loving-kindness is praised in a number of discourses. For example, Itivuttaka 27 Mettābhāvanā Sutta:

When one develops loving-kindness,  
Measureless, ever mindful,  
The fetters are worn away  
Seeing the elimination of clinging.

The actual development of loving-kindness is described in MN 40 Cūḷaassapura Sutta as follows:

He sees himself purified of all those worthless, unskillful qualities, he sees himself liberated from them. When he sees this, gladness is born in him. When he is glad, joy is born in him; in one who is joyous, the body becomes tranquil; one whose body is tranquil feels pleasure; in one who feels pleasure, the mind becomes composed.

He abides pervading one quarter with a mind filled with loving-kindness, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he abides pervading the whole world, in every direction, with a mind filled with loving-kindness, abundant, expansive, measureless, free from hostility, free from ill-will.

The same instructions are given for the other three god-like abidings. MN 99 states that these practices comprise the path to the company of Brahmā.

## The Four God-like Abidings and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. The following discourse on loving-kindness is repeated for each of the remaining three god-like abidings. SN 46.62 Mettā Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by loving-kindness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by loving-kindness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by loving-kindness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by loving-kindness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by loving-kindness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by loving-kindness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by loving-kindness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that loving-kindness is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that loving-kindness is developed and cultivated so that one

of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that loving-kindness is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that loving-kindness is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that loving-kindness is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that loving-kindness is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Earth Totality (Paṭhavī Kasiṇa)

MN 77 Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta:

Again, Udāyin, I have proclaimed to my disciples the way to develop the ten totality spheres. One perceives the earth totality above, below, and across, undivided and immeasurable... And thereby many disciples of mine abide having reached the perfection and consummation of direct gnosis.

Terms such as totality (kasiṇa), immeasurable (appamāṇa), and expansive (mahaggatā), which are used in the descriptions of various samādhis throughout the discourses, indicate the expansiveness of jhāna. MN 127 Anuruddha Sutta explains the meaning of expansive mind-liberation (mahaggatā cetovimutti) and indicates the way of development:<sup>1</sup>

And what, householder, is the expansive liberation of mind? Here a monk abides resolved upon an area the size of the root of one tree, pervading it as expansive: this is called the expansive liberation of mind. Here a monk abides resolved upon an area the size of the roots of two or three trees, pervading it as expansive: this too is called the expansive liberation of mind. Here a monk abides resolved upon an area the size of one village, pervading it as expansive ... an area the size of two or three villages... an area the size of one major kingdom... an area the size of two or three major kingdoms... an area the size of the earth bounded by the ocean, pervading it as expansive: this too is called the expansive liberation of mind.

MN 121 Cūḷasuññata Sutta explains the step-by-step method of developing the recognition of earth as a totality representation (kasiṇanimitta) through refining one's perception:<sup>2</sup> Ānanda, just as this palace of Migāra's mother is empty of elephants, cattle, and horses, empty of gold and silver, empty of assemblies of men and women, and there is only this non-emptiness, namely, the singleness based on the community of monks; so too, Ānanda, a monk — not attending to the recognition of village, not attending to the recognition of human being — attends to singleness based on the recognition of wilderness. His mind enters into that recognition of wilderness and acquires satisfaction, clarity, and steadiness.



Accordingly, he knows, “Whatever disturbances that might occur due to the recognition of village are not present here. Whatever disturbances that might occur due to the recognition of human being are not present here. There is merely this degree of disturbance, namely, the singleness due to the recognition of wilderness.” He knows, “This recognition is empty of the recognition of village. This recognition is empty of the recognition of human being. There is only this non-emptiness, namely, the singleness due to the recognition of wilderness.” Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there, but as for that which remains, he knows it as present: “This is present.” And so this, Ānanda, is his actual, undistorted, and pure entry into emptiness.

Furthermore, Ānanda, a monk – not attending to the recognition of human being, not attending to the recognition of wilderness – attends to singleness due to the recognition of earth. His mind enters into that recognition of earth and acquires satisfaction, clarity, and steadiness. Just as a bull’s hide becomes free of wrinkles when stretched with a hundred pegs; so too, a monk – not attending to any of the ridges and hollows of the earth, to the rivers and ravines, the tracts of stumps and thorns, the mountains and uneven spots – attends to singleness due to the recognition of earth. His mind enters into that recognition of earth and acquires satisfaction, clarity, and steadiness.

Accordingly, he knows, “Whatever disturbances that might occur due to the recognition of human being are not present here. Whatever disturbances that might occur due to the recognition of wilderness are not present here. There is merely this degree of disturbance, namely, the singleness due to the recognition of earth.” He knows, “This recognition is empty of the recognition of human being. This recognition is empty of the recognition of wilderness. There is only this non-emptiness, namely, the singleness due to the recognition of earth.” Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there, but as for that which remains, he knows it as present: “This is present.” And so this too, Ānanda, is his actual, undistorted, and pure entry into emptiness.

## Notes

1. The commentary states that this is an instruction for developing the earth kasiṇa of varying sizes. It says that the expansive mind-liberation (mahaggatā cetovimutti) refers to kasiṇa jhāna: “He covers the area the size of one tree root with the whole representation (kasiṇanimitta), and he abides resolved upon that totality representation, pervading it with the expansive jhāna (mahaggatajjhāna).” ↔

2. Again, the commentary states that this is an instruction for developing the earth kasiṇa. In the later strata of commentaries a distinction is made between an “unprepared” kasiṇa, such as a large plowed field, and a “prepared” kasiṇa, which is a circular disk (maṇḍala), made out of soil or clay. In the Vimuttimagga (circa ~100 CE) both types of kasiṇa are described in detail. Later still, in the Visuddhimagga (circa ~500 CE), the unprepared kasiṇa is briefly mentioned, but is not considered to be a suitable object for development unless one had already developed this practice in previous lives. Thus, the Visuddhimagga only describes the prepared circular disk type of kasiṇa. Since the time of the Visuddhimagga, the term kasiṇa began to be identified with this type of circular disk. ↵

## The Nine Charnel Ground Contemplations (Nava Sīvathikā)

There was an heir to the Buddha, a monk in the Bhesakala forest,  
Who suffused this whole earth with the recognition of a skeleton,  
Quickly, I say, he abandoned passion for sensual pleasure.

— Sigālapita, Theragāthā 1.18

The nine charnel ground contemplations are described in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta as follows:

(1) Furthermore, monks, a monk, as if he were to see a corpse thrown away in a charnel ground, one day, two days, or three days dead, bloated, discolored, and festering, he compares this very body with that: “This body is also of the same nature, it will become like that, it is not exempt from that fate.”

(2) Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse thrown away in a charnel ground, being eaten by crows, hawks, or vultures, by dogs or jackals, or various other creatures, he compares this very body with that: “This body is also of the same nature, it will become like that, it is not exempt from that fate.”

(3) Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse thrown away in a charnel ground, a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together by sinews....

(4) Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse thrown away in a charnel ground, a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together by sinews....

(5) Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse thrown away in a charnel ground, a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together by sinews....

(6) Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse thrown away in a charnel ground, random bones scattered in all directions, a hand-bone here, a foot-bone there, a shinbone here, a thigh-bone there, a hip-bone here, a back-bone there, a rib-bone here, a breastbone there, an arm-bone here, a shoulder-bone there, a neck-bone here, a jaw-bone there, a tooth here, the skull there....

(7) Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse thrown away in a charnel ground, the bones whitened, looking like shells....

(8) Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse thrown away in a charnel ground, the bones piled up, more than a year old....

(9) Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse thrown away in a charnel ground, decomposed to a powder, he compares this very body with that: “This body is also of the same nature, it will become like that, it is not exempt from that fate.”

And again, in Theragāthā 6.4, the elder Kulla offers the following verses on this subject:

I, Kulla, having gone to the charnel ground,  
Saw [the corpse of] a woman cast away,  
Discarded in the cemetery,  
Being eaten, permeated by worms.

Diseased, impure, and rotten—  
See the body Kulla!  
Oozing, trickling,  
It is the delight of fools.

Taking the dhamma as a mirror  
For the attainment of gnosis and vision,  
I considered this body,  
Empty inside and out.

## The Recognition of a Skeleton and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of a skeleton will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.57 Aṭṭhika Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of a skeleton, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of a skeleton, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of a skeleton, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of a skeleton, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of a skeleton, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of a skeleton, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of a skeleton, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of a skeleton is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition of a skeleton is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of a skeleton is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of a skeleton is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of a skeleton is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of a skeleton is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Recognition of Unattractiveness (Asubhasaññā)

Now one who has enjoyed the stilling of thought,  
Developing a focus on unattractiveness, always mindful—  
That one will make the end—  
That one will cut the bond of Māra.

— Dhammapada 350

AN 10.60 Girimānanda Sutta:

Now what, Ānanda, is the recognition of unattractiveness? Here, Ānanda, a monk reflects upon this body, from the soles of the feet upwards, from the hair of the head down, bounded by skin, and filled with manifold impurities: ‘In this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, undigested food, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, and urine.’ Thus, regarding this body he remains contemplating what is unattractive. This, Ānanda, is called the recognition of unattractiveness.

AN 7.49 Dutiyasaññā Sutta:

‘The recognition of unattractiveness, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. In reference to what was it said?

Monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of unattractiveness, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward the attainment of sexual intercourse, and either equanimity or dislike are established. Monks, just as a cock’s feather or a piece of tendon, when thrown into a fire, shrinks away, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn in; in the same way, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of unattractiveness, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward the attainment of sexual intercourse, and either equanimity or dislike are established.

If, monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of unattractiveness, his mind inclines toward the attainment of sexual intercourse, or if admiration continues, then he should know, ‘I have not developed the recognition of unattractiveness, there is no stepwise distinction in me, I have not obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there. But if, monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of unattractiveness, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward the attainment of sexual intercourse, and either equanimity or dislike are established, then he should know, ‘I have developed the recognition of unattractiveness, there is stepwise distinction in me, I have obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there.

‘The recognition of unattractiveness, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to this it was said.

## The Recognition of Unattractiveness and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of unattractiveness will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.67 Asubha Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of unattractiveness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of unattractiveness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of unattractiveness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of unattractiveness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of unattractiveness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of unattractiveness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of unattractiveness, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of unattractiveness is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition of unattractiveness is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of unattractiveness is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of unattractiveness is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of unattractiveness is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of unattractiveness is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Recognition of Death (Maraṇasaññā)

The recollection of death is explained in AN 6.20 Dutiyamaraṇassati Sutta:

Here, monks, as day departs and night sets in, a monk reflects: ‘The [possible] causes of my death are many. A snake, scorpion, or centipede may bite me. My death could occur because of that. That would be an obstacle for me. I may stumble and fall down; the food I have eaten may trouble me; my bile may be disturbed; my phlegm may be disturbed; my [internal] winds may be disturbed. My death could occur because of that. That would be an obstacle for me.’

Then, monks, a monk should reflect: ‘Are there any worthless, unskillful qualities that I have not given up that would be an obstacle for me if I were to die tonight?’

If, monks, upon reflecting in this way, the monk knows that ‘There are worthless, unskillful qualities that I have not given up that would be an obstacle for me if I were to die tonight,’ then he should engender extra desire, effort, diligence, energy, zeal, mindfulness, and full awareness for the abandoning of those very same worthless, unskillful qualities.

Just as, monks, if someone’s turban or head was burning, they would engender extra desire, effort, diligence, energy, zeal, mindfulness, and full awareness to extinguish the fire; in the same way, the monk should engender extra desire, effort, diligence, energy, zeal, mindfulness, and full awareness for the abandoning of those very same worthless, unskillful qualities.

But if, monks, upon reflecting in this way, the monk knows that ‘There are no worthless, unskillful qualities that I have not given up which would be an obstacle for me if I were to die in the night,’ then he should abide in joy and gladness, training day and night in skillful qualities.

The benefits of the recognition of death are described in AN 7.49 Dutiyasaññā Sutta:

‘The recognition of death, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. In reference to what was it said?

Monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of death, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward longing for life, and either equanimity or dislike are established. Monks, just as a cock’s feather or a piece of tendon, when thrown into a fire, shrinks away, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn in; in the same way, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of death, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward longing for life, and either equanimity or dislike are established.

If, monks, when a monk's mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of death, his mind inclines toward longing for life, or if admiration continues, then he should know, 'I have not developed the recognition of death, there is no stepwise distinction in me, I have not obtained the strength of development.' In that way he is fully aware there. But if, monks, when a monk's mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of death, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward longing for life, and either equanimity or dislike are established, then he should know, 'I have developed the recognition of death, there is stepwise distinction in me, I have obtained the strength of development.' In that way he is fully aware there.

'The recognition of death, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.' Thus it was said. And in reference to this it was said.

## The Recognition of Death and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of death will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.68 Maraṇa Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of death, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of death, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of death, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of death, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of death, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of death, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of death, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of death is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition of death is developed and



cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of death is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of death is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of death is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of death is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Recognition of Impurity In Food (Āhāra Paṭikūlasaññā)

AN 7.49 Dutiyasaññā Sutta:

‘The recognition of impurity in food, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. In reference to what was it said?

Monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of impurity in food, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward craving flavors, and either equanimity or dislike are established. Monks, just as a cock’s feather or a piece of tendon, when thrown into a fire, shrinks away, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn in; in the same way, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of impurity in food, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward craving flavors, and either equanimity or dislike are established.

If, monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of impurity in food, his mind inclines toward craving flavors, or if admiration continues, then he should know, ‘I have not developed the recognition of impurity in food, there is no stepwise distinction in me, I have not obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there. But if, monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of impurity in food, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward craving flavors, and either equanimity or dislike are established, then he should know, ‘I have developed the recognition of impurity in food, there is stepwise distinction in me, I have obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there.

‘The recognition of impurity in food, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to this it was said.

## The Recognition of Impurity In Food and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of impurity in food will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.69

Āhārepaṭikūla Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of impurity in food, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of impurity in food, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of impurity in food, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of impurity in food, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of impurity in food, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of impurity in food, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of impurity in food, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of impurity in food is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition of impurity in food is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of impurity in food is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of impurity in food is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of impurity in food is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of impurity in food is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Recognition of Distaste for the Whole World (Sabbaloka Anabhiratisaññā)

AN 10.60 Girimānanda Sutta:

Now what, Ānanda, is the recognition of distaste for the whole world? Here, Ānanda, a monk, by abandoning, by not being attached, abstains from any concern and clinging, any mental prejudices and beliefs, any tendencies regarding the world. This, Ānanda, is the recognition of distaste for the whole world.

AN 7.49 Dutiyasaññā Sutta:

‘The recognition of distaste for the whole world, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. In reference to what was it said?

Monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of distaste for the whole world, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward worldly splendors, and either equanimity or dislike are established. Monks, just as a cock’s feather or a piece of tendon, when thrown into a fire, shrinks away, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn in; in the same way, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of distaste for the whole world, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward worldly splendors, and either equanimity or dislike are established.

If, monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of distaste for the whole world, his mind inclines toward worldly splendors, or if admiration continues, then he should know, ‘I have not developed the recognition of distaste for the whole world, there is no stepwise distinction in me, I have not obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there. But if, monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of distaste for the whole world, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward worldly splendors, and either equanimity or dislike are established, then he should know, ‘I have developed the recognition of distaste for the whole world, there is stepwise distinction in me, I have obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there.

‘The recognition of distaste for the whole world, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to this it was said.

**The Recognition of Distaste for the Whole World and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)**

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of distaste for the whole world will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.70 Anabhirati Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of distaste for the whole world, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of distaste for the whole world, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of distaste for the whole world, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of distaste for the whole world, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of distaste for the whole world, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of distaste for the whole world, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of distaste for the whole world, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of distaste for the whole world is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition of distaste for the whole world is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of distaste for the whole world is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of distaste for the whole world is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of distaste for the whole world is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of distaste for the whole world is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Four Noble Truths (Cattāri Ariyasaccāni)

The pathway of training resulting in the complete understanding and experiential penetration of the four noble truths is the main theme of the Pāḷi Nikāyas. All of the practices included in the three aggregations of ethical conduct, meditation, and discernment have this theme as their foundational structure. In MN 28

Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta we find Venerable Sāriputta comparing the four noble truths to an elephants footprint. He says, “Friends, just as the footprints of all walking animals can be placed within an elephants footprint, and the elephants footprint is declared as foremost amongst them in terms of its large size; in the same way, all skillful dhammas are included within the four noble truths.”

Specifically, all practices lead towards and culminate in the full realization of the third noble truth: the stopping of unsatisfactoriness. As SN 45.91 Pācīnaninna Sutta states, “Monks, just as the Ganges river flows, slopes, and inclines to the east; in the same way, a monk who develops and cultivates the noble eightfold path flows towards nibbāna, slopes towards nibbāna, inclines towards nibbāna.”

The first noble truth defines what the Buddha means by unsatisfactoriness (dukkha). All conditioned phenomena are impermanent (anicca), therefore they are unsatisfactory. This unsatisfactoriness is to be fully understood. The second noble truth explains how this unsatisfactoriness comes to be through ignorant self-identification and craving. This craving and ignorance are to be abandoned. The third noble truth states that once we’ve let go of self-identification and craving, we will thereby be free from all causes of further unsatisfactoriness. This truth of cessation is to be realized. And the fourth noble truth explains the way of radically letting go of this habitual identification and craving which results in unsatisfactoriness. This fourth truth of the way is to be developed. This is stated in SN 56.29 Parīññeyya Sutta:

The noble truth of unsatisfactoriness is to be fully understood. The noble truth of the origin of unsatisfactoriness is to be abandoned. The noble truth of the cessation of unsatisfactoriness is to be realized. The noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of unsatisfactoriness is to be developed.

It is the five clinging-aggregates which are to be fully understood through direct gnosis. As already mentioned, it is ignorance and craving which are to be abandoned through direct gnosis. Calm (samatha) and clear seeing (vipassanā) are to be developed through direct gnosis. And knowledge (vijjā) and liberation (vimutti) are to be realized through direct gnosis. MN 149 Mahāsaḷāyatanika Sutta:

And what phenomena are to be comprehended through direct gnosis? ‘The five clinging-aggregates,’ should be the reply.... These are the phenomena that are to be comprehended through direct gnosis.

And what phenomena are to be abandoned through direct gnosis? Ignorance and craving for existence. These are the phenomena that are to be abandoned through direct gnosis.

And what phenomena are to be developed through direct gnosis? Calm and clear seeing. These are the phenomena that are to be developed through direct gnosis.

And what phenomena are to be realized through direct gnosis? Knowledge and liberation. These are the phenomena that are to be realized through direct gnosis.

## The Noble Truth of Unsatisfactoriness (Dukkha Ariyasacca)

All conditioned phenomena of body and mind are impermanent and are therefore unsatisfactory (dukkha). With sufficient reflection aided by thorough attention (yoniso manasikāra) and discernment (paññā) we can come to see for ourselves that no conditioned phenomenon can provide lasting happiness. As SN 56.11 Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta states:

Now this, monks, is the noble truth of unsatisfactoriness: birth is unsatisfactory, aging is unsatisfactory, illness is unsatisfactory, death is unsatisfactory; association with what is displeasing is unsatisfactory; separation from what is pleasing is unsatisfactory; not getting what is wanted is unsatisfactory. In brief, the five clinging-aggregates are unsatisfactory.

DN 22 Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta presents the first noble truth in even more detail. Based on this analysis, and statements from other discourses, we can investigate the noble truth of unsatisfactoriness according to the unsatisfactoriness of pain, the unsatisfactoriness of change, and the unsatisfactoriness of fabrications. In this way we can begin to understand the full range of meaning of the Pāḷi term *dukkha*.

## The Noble Truth of the Origin of Unsatisfactoriness (Dukkhasamudaya Ariyasacca)

The noble truth of the origin of unsatisfactoriness is given in SN 56.11 Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta as follows:

And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origin of unsatisfactoriness: craving which leads to further existence, associated with delight and passion, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving sensual pleasure, craving existence, craving non-existence.

Craving (taṇhā) is the origin of unsatisfactoriness (dukkha). Ignorance (avijjā) of the four noble truths is the cause of craving. Specifically, the ignorant identification with the conditioned phenomena of body and mind. This ignorant identification occurs due to deep

seated misconceptions about a permanent, autonomous self (attagāha). The belief in an independent self (attānudiṭṭhi) reinforces craving – the basic mental disposition of wanting continuous happiness and comfort, while simultaneously not wanting unhappiness and discomfort. This craving and aversion give rise to unsatisfactoriness because unhappiness and discomfort are unavoidable as long as this mistaken identification continues. The cycle of ignorance, craving, and unsatisfactoriness goes on unabated until discernment (paññā) brings about its cessation. This ongoing cycle is called saṃsāra.

## The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Unsatisfactoriness (Dukkhanirodha Ariyasacca)

SN 56.11 Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta presents the third noble truth as follows:

And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of unsatisfactoriness: the remainderless fading away and stopping of that very craving; the giving up and release of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it.

Thus, the noble truth of cessation is the elimination of craving (taṇhakkhaya). This elimination of craving and cessation of unsatisfactoriness is nibbāna, which is also explained as the elimination of passion, aggression, and delusion. SN 38.1 Nibbānapañhā Sutta:

“‘Nibbāna, nibbāna,’ friend Sāriputta, it is said. What now is nibbāna?”

“The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this, friend, is called nibbāna.”

This same explanation is presented as the definition of the nibbāna component with fuel remaining (saupādisesa nibbānadhātu) in Itivuttaka 2.44 Nibbānadhātu Sutta:

And what is the nibbāna component with fuel remaining? There is the case where a monk is an arahant whose outflows have ended, who has reached fulfillment, finished the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, ended the fetter of existence, and is liberated through right gnosis. His five sense faculties still remain and, owing to their being intact, he is cognizant of the agreeable and the disagreeable, and experiences pleasure and pain. His elimination of passion, aggression, and delusion is termed the nibbāna component with fuel remaining.

It’s also worth mentioning that once liberation has been realized an arahant cannot be measured (mīyati) or labeled (saṅkha) in terms of the five aggregates. For example, SN 22.36 Bhikkhu Sutta:

Venerable sir, if one has no underlying tendency towards form... feeling... recognition... fabrications... consciousness, then one is not measured (anumīyati) in accord with it. Whatever one is not measured by, that is not how one is labeled (saṅkha).

An arahant's consciousness is not dependent (anissita) on any findable support, and therefore, is untraceable (ananuvejja) here and now. MN 22 Alagaddūpama Sutta:

Monks, when the gods with Indra, with Brahmā and with Pajāpati seek a monk who is thus liberated in mind, they do not find [anything of which they could say], "The tathāgata's consciousness is dependent on this." Why is that? A tathāgata, I say, is untraceable even here and now.

Elsewhere this non-abiding mind is designated as consciousness which is "not established" (appatiṭṭha viññāṇa). SN 22.53 Upaya Sutta:

When that consciousness is not established, not increasing, not concocting, it is liberated. Being liberated, it is steady. Being steady, it is content. Being content, he is not excited. Unexcited, he personally attains complete nibbāna. He discerns that, 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.'

Discerning that "birth is ended" is the gnosis of elimination (khayeñāṇa) and discerning that "there is nothing further here" is the gnosis of non-arising (anuppāda ñāṇa)<sup>1</sup> — knowing that there are no remaining conditions for existence. Both of these gnosises together are designated as gnosis and vision of liberation (vimuttiñāṇadassana).

In a number of discourses<sup>2</sup> an arahant's mind is designated as a "measureless mind" (appamāṇacetasa). There is no criterion or measurement (pamāṇa) which can be used as a reference point to define a measureless cognition. SN 6.7 Kokālika Sutta:

What wise man here would seek to define  
A measureless one by taking his measure?  
He who would measure a measureless one  
Must be, I think, an obstructed worldling.

As for the nibbāna component with no fuel remaining (anupādisesa nibbānadhātu), MN 72 Aggivacchagotta Sutta informs us that any view regarding the postmortem existence or non-existence of an arahant is a fetter of view (diṭṭhisamyojana) which doesn't lead to direct gnosis, to awakening, to nibbāna:

The view that after death a tathāgata exists is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a vacillation of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by dissatisfaction, distress, despair, and fever. It does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calmness, direct gnosis, full awakening, nibbāna.



The view that after death a tathāgata does not exist is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a vacillation of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by dissatisfaction, distress, despair, and fever. It does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calmness, direct gnosis, full awakening, nibbāna.

The view that after death a tathāgata both exists and does not exist is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a vacillation of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by dissatisfaction, distress, despair, and fever. It does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calmness, direct gnosis, full awakening, nibbāna.

The view that after death a tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a vacillation of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by dissatisfaction, distress, despair, and fever. It does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calmness, direct gnosis, full awakening, nibbāna.

When the mind is completely awake and fully aware there is no urge to project or speculate about a hypothetical future. An arahant has realized that there is absolutely nothing whatsoever to be grasped at or clung to. And when the moment of death arrives he or she meets it with consciousness unestablished (appatiṭṭha viññāṇa).

## **The Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Unsatisfactoriness (Dukkhanirodhagāminīpaṭipadā Ariyasacca)**

The noble truth of the way is none other than the noble eightfold path (ariya aṭṭhaṅgikāmaṅga). SN 56.11 Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta:

And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of unsatisfactoriness: it is this noble eightfold path; that is, integral view, integral resolve, integral speech, integral action, integral livelihood, integral effort, integral mindfulness, integral meditative composure.

This path includes the progressive and fully integrated threefold development of the aggregate of ethical conduct (sīlakkhandha), the aggregate of meditation (samādhikkhandha), and the aggregate of discernment (paññākkhandha).

Ethical conduct involves the development of productive, skillful qualities of body, speech, and mind, which are conducive to meditation and which lead away from craving and aversion.

Meditation involves the development of a calm and unified mind (*samathabhāvanā*) which can be utilized to clearly see the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and empty nature of conditioned phenomena. This development of clear seeing (*vipassanābhāvanā*) takes the mind from the theoretical level of discernment to direct experiential discernment.<sup>3</sup> Through this clear seeing one turns away from and abandons ignorant identification and craving.

Discernment involves understanding the impermanent nature of the various conditioned phenomena of body and mind. When this understanding of impermanence is developed one clearly sees that all conditioned phenomena are unsatisfactory. And from this one recognizes that such impermanent, unsatisfactory phenomena are not-self (*anattā*). There is no way that they can be taken to be a permanent self. They are empty of self and what could belong to a self. Discernment also involves the understanding of conditioned arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Discernment culminates in directly knowing *nibbāna* (*nibbāna ñāṇa*) — the cessation of unsatisfactoriness. It is this which is designated as death-free (*amatadhātu*).

## Abandoning and Letting Go (*Pahāna & Vossagga*)

The Buddha's message is that if we can see the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and empty nature of this dependently arisen conditioned situation, then we can patiently begin to let go of the craving and grasping that cause endless frustration due to the fact that the objects of that grasping are always slipping through our fingers. As he instructs in SN 35.101 *Na Tumhaka Sutta*:

Whatever is not yours, abandon it. Your abandoning it will be for your long-term happiness and benefit. And what is not yours?

The eye is not yours, abandon it. Your abandoning it will be for your long-term happiness and benefit. Forms are not yours... Eye-consciousness is not yours... Eye-contact is not yours... Whatever arises in dependence on eye-contact, experienced either as pleasure, as pain, or as neither-pleasure-nor-pain, that too is not yours, so abandon it. Your abandoning it will be for your long-term happiness and benefit.

The ear is not yours, abandon it...

The nose is not yours, abandon it...

The tongue is not yours, abandon it...

The body is not yours, abandon it...

The mind is not yours, abandon it. Your abandoning it will be for your long-term happiness and benefit. Mental phenomena are not yours... Mental-consciousness is not yours... Mind-contact is not yours... Whatever arises in dependence on mind-contact, experienced either as pleasure, as pain, or as neither-pleasure-nor-pain, that too is not yours, so abandon it. Your abandoning it will be for your long-term happiness and benefit.

The Buddha's message is radical. No phenomenon (dhamma): no thought, no craving, no philosophy, nothing at all, not even our most cherished notion of selfhood should be grasped at or clung to. And how exactly are we supposed to let go? By skillfully employing the three path aggregations of ethical conduct (sīla), meditation (samādhi), and discernment (paññā).

Ethical conduct and meditation calm and stabilize the conditioned mind so that discernment can begin to uproot the ignorant identification with the body and mind. Not identifying with conditioned phenomena, and thereby breaking key links in the chain of conditioned arising constitutes the truth of the path leading to the cessation of unsatisfactoriness.

## Summary of the Four Noble Truths

### *The Noble Truth of Unsatisfactoriness*

The unsatisfactoriness of pain (dukkhadukkhatā):

- birth (jāti)
- aging (jarā)
- illness (byādhī)
- death (maraṇa)
- sorrow (soka)
- lamentation (parideva)
- pain (dukkha)
- unhappiness (domanassa)
- despair (upāyāsā)
- association with what is unpleasant (appiyehi sampayogo)

The unsatisfactoriness of change (vipariṇāmadukkhatā):

- separation from what is pleasant (piyehi vippayogo)
- not getting what is wanted (yampiccha na labhati)

The unsatisfactoriness of fabrications (saṅkhāradukkhatā):

- the five clinging-aggregates (pañcupādānakkhandhā)  
*The Noble Truth of the Origin of Unsatisfactoriness*
- craving sensual pleasure (kāmatanḥā)
- craving existence (bhavatanḥā)
- craving non-existence (vibhavatanḥā)  
*The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Unsatisfactoriness*

Nibbāna component with fuel remaining (saupādisesa nibbānadhātu):

- the elimination of passion (rāgakkhaya)
- the elimination of aggression (dosakkhaya)
- the elimination of delusion (mohakkhaya)

Nibbāna component with no fuel remaining (anupādisesa nibbānadhātu):

- view that an arahant exists postmortem is a fetter of view (diṭṭhisamyojana)
- view that an arahant does not exist postmortem is a fetter of view (diṭṭhisamyojana)  
*The Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Unsatisfactoriness*

The noble eightfold path (ariya aṭṭhaṅgikāmagga):

- integral view (sammādiṭṭhi)
- integral resolve (sammāsaṅkappa)
- integral speech (sammāvācā)
- integral action (sammākammanta)
- integral livelihood (sammāājīva)
- integral effort (sammāvāyāma)
- integral mindfulness (sammāsati)
- integral meditative composure (sammāsamādhi)

## Notes

1. Cf. Nettippakaraṇa 4.12. ⇐

2. e.g. S iv 119, S iv 186, S iv 189, S iv 199, and M i 270. ⇐

3. There are three levels of discernment (paññā): discernment obtained through hearing (sutamayā paññā), discernment obtained through reflection (cintāmayā paññā), and discernment obtained through meditative development (bhāvanāmayā paññā). The first two comprise theoretical levels of discernment where one hears the teachings and reflects on them. This reflection is the beginning of internalizing the meaning of what has been heard. But for discernment to be liberating the process of internalization must deepen through meditative development. This level is direct experiential discernment. ⇐

## The Five Aggregates (Pañcakkhandhā)

The noble truth of unsatisfactoriness includes the five clinging-aggregates (pañcupadānakkhandhā), which are to be fully understood. The five aggregates are the form aggregate, the feeling aggregate, the recognition aggregate, the fabrications aggregate, and the consciousness aggregate. This fivefold classification includes all of the fabricated bodily and mental phenomena which comprise a living human being. All of these phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.

## The Form Aggregate (Rūpakkhandha)

SN 22.56 Upādānaparivatta Sutta defines the form aggregate, as well as the condition for its arising, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation as follows:

Now monks, what is form? The four great elements and the form derived from the four great elements: this is called form. With the arising of nutriment there is the arising of form. With the cessation of nutriment there is the cessation of form. And this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of form, that is, integral view, integral resolve, integral speech, integral action, integral livelihood, integral effort, integral mindfulness, integral meditative composure.

MN 28 Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta adds the following:

Friends, just as when a space is enclosed by timber, vines, grass, and clay, it comes to be gathered under the term “house,” in the same way, when a space is enclosed by bones and sinews, flesh and skin, it comes to be gathered under the term, “form.”

And SN 22.79 Khajjanīya Sutta makes it clear that the fabricated phenomena of form included within the form aggregate primarily pertain to the body of a living human being:

And why, monks, do you call it “form”? It is “afflicted,” therefore it is called “form.” Afflicted by what? Afflicted by cold and heat and hunger and thirst, afflicted from contact

with flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and reptiles. It is afflicted, monks, therefore it is called form.

MN 62 Mahārāhulovāda Sutta offers the full definition of the four form elements as follows:

And what, Rāhula, is the earth element? The earth element can be either internal or external. What is the internal earth element? Whatever internally, within oneself, that is hard, solid, and clung-to, that is, head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach contents, feces, or whatever else internally, within oneself, that is hard, solid, and clung-to: this is called the internal earth element. Now both the internal earth element and the external earth element are simply earth element. And that should be seen as it actually is with proper discernment thus: ‘This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.’ When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the earth element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the earth element.

And what, Rāhula, is the water element? The water element can be either internal or external. What is the internal water element? Whatever internally, within oneself, that is water, watery, and clung-to, that is, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine, or whatever else internally, within oneself, that is water, watery, and clung-to: this is called the internal water element. Now both the internal water element and the external water element are simply water element. And that should be seen as it actually is with proper discernment thus: ‘This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.’ When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the water element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the water element.

And what, Rāhula, is the fire element? The fire element can be either internal or external. What is the internal fire element? Whatever internally, within oneself, that is fire, fiery, and clung-to, that is, that by which one is warmed, ages, and is consumed, and that by which what is eaten, drunk, consumed, and tasted gets completely digested, or whatever else internally, within oneself, that is fire, fiery, and clung-to: this is called the internal fire element. Now both the internal fire element and the external fire element are simply fire element. And that should be seen as it actually is with proper discernment thus: ‘This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.’ When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the fire element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the fire element.

And what, Rāhula, is the air element? The air element can be either internal or external. What is the internal air element? Whatever internally, within oneself, that is air, airy, and clung-to, that is, upward moving winds, downward moving winds, winds in the stomach, winds in the bowels, winds that course through the limbs, in-breath and out-breath, or whatever else internally, within oneself, that is air, airy, and clung-to: this is called the internal air element. Now both the internal air element and the external air element are simply air element. And that should be seen as it actually is with proper discernment thus: ‘This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.’ When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the air element and makes the mind dispassionate towards the air element.

earth	derivative forms
water	the body
fire	
air	

## The Feeling Aggregate (Vedanākkhanda)

SN 22.56 Upādānaparivatta Sutta defines the feeling aggregate, as well as the condition for its arising, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation as follows:

And what, monks, is feeling? There are these six classes of feeling: feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, feeling born of nose-contact, feeling born of tongue-contact, feeling born of body-contact, feeling born of mind-contact. This is called feeling. With the arising of contact there is the arising of feeling. With the cessation of contact there is the cessation of feeling. And this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of feeling, that is, integral view, integral resolve, integral speech, integral action, integral livelihood, integral effort, integral mindfulness, integral meditative composure.

visual feeling	bodily comfort
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auditory feeling	bodily discomfort
olfactory feeling	mental happiness
gustatory feeling	mental unhappiness

## The Recognition Aggregate (Saññākkhanda)

SN 22.56 Upādānaparivatta Sutta defines the recognition aggregate, as well as the condition for its arising, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation as follows:

And what, monks, is recognition? There are these six classes of recognition: recognition of forms, recognition of sounds, recognition of odors, recognition of flavors, recognition of tactual objects, recognition of phenomena. This is called recognition. With the arising of contact there is the arising of recognition. With the cessation of contact there is the cessation of recognition. And this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of recognition, that is, integral view, integral resolve, integral speech, integral action, integral livelihood, integral effort, integral mindfulness, integral meditative composure.

recognition of visible form	recognition of flavor
recognition of sound	recognition of tactual object
recognition of odor	recognition of mental object

## The Fabrications Aggregate (Saṅkhārakkhandha)

SN 22.56 Upādānaparivatta Sutta defines the fabrications aggregate, as well as the condition for its arising, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation as follows:

And what, monks, are fabrications? There are these six classes of volitional intention: volitional intention with regard to forms, volitional intention with regard to sounds, volitional intention with regard to odors, volitional intention with regard to flavors, volitional intention with regard to tactual objects, volitional intention with regard to phenomena. These are called fabrications. With the arising of contact there is the arising of fabrications. With the cessation of contact there is the cessation of fabrications. And



this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of fabrications, that is, integral view, integral resolve, integral speech, integral action, integral livelihood, integral effort, integral mindfulness, integral meditative composure.

volitional intention pertaining to: visible form, sound, odor, flavor, tactual object, mental object
craving or aversion pertaining to: visible form, sound, odor, flavor, tactual object, mental object
discursive thinking pertaining to: visible form, sound, odor, flavor, tactual object, mental object
emotions pertaining to: visible form, sound, odor, flavor, tactual object, mental object

## The Consciousness Aggregate (Viññāṇakkhandā)

SN 22.56 Upādānaparivatta Sutta defines the consciousness aggregate, as well as the condition for its arising, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation as follows:

And what, monks, is consciousness? There are these six classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mental-consciousness. This is called consciousness. With the arising of name-and-form there is the arising of consciousness. With the cessation of name-and-form there is the cessation of consciousness. And this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of consciousness, that is, integral view, integral resolve, integral speech, integral action, integral livelihood, integral effort, integral mindfulness, integral meditative composure.

visual consciousness	gustatory consciousness
auditory consciousness	tactile consciousness
olfactory consciousness	mental consciousness

## The Internal and External Sensory Spheres (Ajjhattikabāhirāṇi Āyatanā)

The six internal and external sensory spheres are listed in MN 115 Bahudhātuka Sutta:

There are, Ānanda, these six internal and external sensory spheres: the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and flavors, the body and tactual objects, the mind and phenomena. When he knows and sees these six internal and external sensory spheres, a monk can be called ‘skilled in the sensory spheres.’

Whereas discernment of the five aggregates is primarily concerned with investigating the aspects of the body and mind that we usually identify with and take as our self, discernment of the twelve sensory spheres and eighteen components extend this investigation further in order to see how we habitually create a world of individuated particulars, populated with people, places, and things. Unquestioningly accepting this scenario, we continually attempt to grasp onto those things which we like and want to hold dear, and push away all of the things which we dislike and consider problematic for one reason or another.

By investigating the twelve sensory spheres and learning to simplify our view, we can dismantle the diversity of our mental proliferations into these twelve spheres. Instead of seeing a manifold world of particular things, we can simplify our seeing. There is just the eye and the form sensory sphere. All that we ever see is simply the form sensory sphere. Everything else is added by our conditioned perspective. The same is true for the remaining pairs of sensory spheres. The Buddha called these twelve sensory spheres “the all.” SN 35.23 Sabba Sutta:

And what, monks, is the all? The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and flavors, the body and tactual objects, the mind and phenomena. This is called the all.

Monks, if anyone should speak thus, ‘Having rejected this all, I will make known another all,’ that would merely be an empty boast on his part. If he were questioned he would not be able to explain and, moreover, he would meet with difficulty. For what reason? Because, monks, that would not be within his reach.

But the Buddha exhorts us to go even further than just understanding and accepting this all. We are to develop dispassion towards the all and abandon it. Without doing so we will find ourselves incapable of eliminating dissatisfaction.

## The Eighteen Components (Aṭṭhārasa Dhātū)

The eighteen components are useful for understanding conditioned phenomena in that they help to illustrate how our experience arises through conditions, as well as illustrating how dissatisfaction arises. The experiential identification of these eighteen components is essential if we want to begin to break down our experience into these basic phenomenological processes. The eighteen components are listed in MN 115 Bahudhātuka Sutta:

There are, Ānanda, these eighteen components: the eye component, the form component, the eye-consciousness component; the ear component, the sound component, the ear-consciousness component; the nose component, the odor component, the nose-consciousness component; the tongue component, the flavor component, the tongue-consciousness component; the body component, the tactual object component, the body-consciousness component; the mind component, the phenomena component, the mind-consciousness component. When he knows and sees these eighteen components, a monk can be called ‘skilled in the components.’

These components are listed in the following table.

sensory object	sense faculty	sensory consciousness
visible form	eye	visual consciousness
sound	ear	auditory consciousness
odor	nose	olfactory consciousness
flavor	tongue	gustatory consciousness
tactual object	body	tactile consciousness
mental object	mind	mental consciousness

Using this framework we can begin to understand how our experience is constructed from these components. When a sense faculty, a sensory object, and a corresponding sense

consciousness come together there is contact (phassa). From contact arises feeling (vedanā), experienced as either pleasant, painful, or neutral. From feeling arises craving (taṇhā). If the feeling is pleasant it gives rise to craving as “This is good, I want this.” If it is painful it gives rise to aversion as “This is no good, I don’t want this.” And if it is neutral it gives rise to indifference. These contingent processes are described in MN 148 Chachakka Sutta:

Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. With feeling as condition there is craving.

Dependent on the ear and sounds, ear-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. With feeling as condition there is craving.

Dependent on the nose and odors, nose-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. With feeling as condition there is craving.

Dependent on the tongue and flavors, tongue-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. With feeling as condition there is craving.

Dependent on the body and tactual objects, body-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. With feeling as condition there is craving.

Dependent on the mind and phenomena, mind-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. With feeling as condition there is craving.

The Buddha’s insight into this situation involves seeing that these eighteen components which make up all of our dualistic sensory experiences are impermanent, changing, always becoming other than they were. This impermanence means that they are not dependable. And because they are impermanent and unreliable, they are unsatisfactory (dukkha) in that they will never bring any lasting happiness. And because they are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and occur conditionally, they are not-self (anatta) in that there can’t be found any permanent, fully autonomous agent or controller within any of the eighteen components. This is expressed in SN 35.93 Dutiyadvaya Sutta:

Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Forms are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is moving and wavering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

Eye-consciousness is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The cause and condition for the arising of eye-consciousness is also impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. When, monks, eye-consciousness has arisen in dependence on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

The meeting, the encounter, the occurrence of these three things is called eye-contact. Eye-contact too is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The cause and condition for the arising of eye-contact is also impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. When, monks, eye-contact has arisen in dependence on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

Contacted, monks, one feels, contacted one intends, contacted one perceives. Thus these things too are moving and wavering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

Dependent on the ear and sounds, ear-consciousness arises. The ear is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Sounds are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is moving and wavering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise...

Dependent on the nose and odors, nose-consciousness arises. The nose is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Odors are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is moving and wavering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise...

Dependent on the tongue and flavors, tongue-consciousness arises. The tongue is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Flavors are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is moving and wavering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise...

Dependent on the body and tactual objects, body-consciousness arises. The body is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Tactual objects are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is moving and wavering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise...

Dependent on the mind and phenomena, mind-consciousness arises. The mind is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Phenomena are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is moving and wavering, impermanent, changing,

becoming otherwise...

Mind-consciousness is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The cause and condition for the arising of mind-consciousness is also impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. When, monks, mind-consciousness has arisen in dependence on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent.

The meeting, the encounter, the occurrence of these three things is called mind-contact. Mind-contact too is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The cause and condition for the arising of mind-contact is also impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. When, monks, mind-contact has arisen in dependence on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

Contacted, monks, one feels, contacted one intends, contacted one perceives. Thus these things too are moving and wavering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

Again, this is why the Buddha exhorts us to develop dispassion towards these phenomena and abandon them. We are instructed to not conceive (*maññati*) of anything in terms of these phenomena which are always becoming otherwise. SN 35.31

Paṭhamasamugghātasappāya Sutta:

Now what, monks, is the way that is suitable for uprooting all conceiving? Here monks, a monk does not conceive the eye, does not conceive in the eye, does not conceive from the eye, does not conceive, 'The eye is mine.' He does not conceive forms... eye-consciousness... eye-contact... and as to whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition, whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he does not conceive that, does not conceive in that, does not conceive from that, does not conceive, 'That is mine.' For, monks, whatever one conceives, whatever one conceives in, whatever one conceives from, whatever one conceives as 'mine' — that is otherwise. The world, becoming otherwise, attached to existence, seeks delight only in existence.

He does not conceive the ear... He does not conceive the mind... and as to whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition... he does not conceive that, does not conceive in that, does not conceive from that, does not conceive, 'That is mine.' For, monks, whatever one conceives, whatever one conceives in, whatever one conceives from, whatever one conceives as 'mine' — that is otherwise. The world, becoming otherwise, attached to existence, seeks delight only in existence.

Whatever, monks, is the extent of the aggregates, the components, and the sensory spheres, he does not conceive that, does not conceive in that, does not conceive from

that, does not conceive, ‘That is mine.’

Since he does not conceive anything thus, he does not cling to anything in the world. Not clinging, he is not excited. Unexcited, he personally attains complete nibbāna. He discerns that, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.’

## Conditioned Arising (Paṭiccasamuppāda)

The standard description of conditioned arising with twelve links presented in forward sequence (anuloma) and reverse sequence (paṭiloma) is an illustration of the principle of specific conditionality (idappaccayatā). In practice, it is this principle which needs to be understood. Phenomena arise according to specific conditionality:

When this is, that is.

From the arising of this comes the arising of that.

Therefore, phenomena aren’t utterly non-existent.

Phenomena cease according to specific conditionality:

When this isn’t, that isn’t.

From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.

Therefore, phenomena aren’t ultimately existent.

Noble disciples (ariyasāvakas) have penetrated conditioned arising in both forward and reverse sequence. Having discerned conditioned arising in forward sequence they no longer cling to notions regarding non-existence (lit. “it is not”). Having discerned conditioned arising in reverse sequence they no longer cling to notions regarding existence (lit. “it is”). In this way they let go of adherence to any and all ontological views.<sup>1</sup> SN

12.15 Kaccānagotta Sutta:

This world, Kaccāna, for the most part depends upon a duality – upon the notion of existence and the notion of non-existence. But for one who sees the origin of the world as it really is with correct discernment, there is no notion of non-existence with regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct discernment, there is no notion of existence with regard to the world.

Ud 3.10 Loka Sutta:

Although becoming otherwise, the world is held by existence,  
Afflicted by existence, yet delights in that very existence.

Where there is delight, there is fear.  
What it fears is unsatisfactory.  
This holy life is lived for the abandoning of that existence.

Whatever ascetics or brāhmaṇas say that emancipation from existence is by means of existence, all of them are not liberated from existence, I say.

And whatever ascetics or brāhmaṇas say that escape from existence is by means of non-existence, all of them have not escaped from existence, I say.

“Reality” is a relative notion, the value of which depends entirely upon the significance one ascribes to the objects, contents, or processes of perception.<sup>2</sup> The forward sequence of conditioned arising beginning with ignorance is a diagnosis of deluded cognition, and an illustration of how such delusion is always associated with craving, clinging, and dissatisfaction. The Buddha exhorts us to see the delusion clearly for what it is, and in this way proceed to abandon all infatuation and distress regarding its manifold colorful and dramatic representations.

What most worldlings unquestioningly take to be “real,” due to ascribing significance to the contents of deluded cognition, is nothing more than deluded cognition. Learners and arahants have understood deluded cognition to be false and have abandoned it (or are in the process of abandoning it in the case of learners). In this way they develop a “measureless mind.” Seeing through the limitations of signs and symbols and language, they realize that there is no need — and no possible way — of trying to pin down this measureless freedom of absence by using signs and language. There is no point in attempting to construct and systematize a valid “reality.” They’ve done what was needed to be done. The teachings they offer diagnose the problems of deluded cognition and point out the ways to unravel and eventually abandon passion, aggression, and delusion.

Thoughts are just thoughts. Designations help to show the way leading to the cessation of unsatisfactoriness. But there is no need to create any sort of “world” out of these designations. Creating a “world” is part of the problem, not the solution. Sn 3.12  
Dvayatānupassanā Sutta:

Entrenched in name and form,  
They conceive that “This is true.”

In whatever way [worldlings] conceive it,  
It turns out other than that.  
For that is what is false about it.  
Whatever is transitory certainly has a false nature.



But nibbāna does not have a false nature.  
That the noble ones truly know.  
Through fully comprehending the truth,  
They are without hunger, quenched.

When the four noble truths are fully penetrated – when one has fully comprehended the truth of cessation – the entire deluded cognitive and conflicted affective edifice of the forward sequence of conditioned arising immediately falls like a house of cards. Thus, the arahant can't be measured (na pamāṇameti). SN 35.188 Dutiyasamudda Sutta:

For whomever passion, aggression, and ignorance have faded away—  
He has crossed over this ocean which is hard to cross  
With its dangerous sharks, demons, and waves.

He has overcome attachment, conquered death, and is without acquisitions;  
Has abandoned dissatisfaction, for the sake of no further existence.  
“Gone,” he cannot be measured,  
I say that he has bewildered the king of death.

## Notes

1. The philosophical realist may object, citing SN 22.94 in support of the notion that phenomena ultimately exist. The sutta in question opens up with:

“Monks, I do not dispute with the world; rather, it is the world that disputes with me. A proponent of the dhamma does not dispute with anyone in the world. Of that which the wise in the world agree upon as not existing, I too say that it does not exist. And of that which the wise in the world agree upon as existing, I too say that it exists.”

But worldly paṇḍitas (loka paṇḍitas) are not noble disciples (ariyasāvakas). There are wise khattiyas, wise brāhmaṇas, wise householders, and wise ascetics (khattiyapaṇḍitā, brāhmaṇapaṇḍitā, gahapatipaṇḍitā, samaṇapaṇḍitā) who haven't penetrated conditioned arising in *both* forward and reverse sequence. An arahant uses worldly designations in order to teach the way to eliminate unsatisfactoriness. But these are merely designations (paññattimatta). They are not to be taken as “the given.” ↔

2. It is vital to understand this point if one is to fully appreciate the early Pāli dhamma. Cf. Ven. Nāṇananda, *The Magic of the Mind*:

“The question of ‘seeing what-is-shown,’ brings us to the relationship between sign and significance. Sense-perception at all levels relies largely on signs. This statement might even appear as a truism since the Pāli word *saññā* denotes perception as well as ‘sign,’ ‘symbol,’ ‘mark’ or ‘token.’ It is due to the processes of grasping and recognition implicit in sense-perception that the sign has come to play such an important part in it. Grasping – be it physical or mental – can at best be merely a symbolical affair. The actual point of contact is superficial and localized, but it somehow props up the conceit of grasping. Recognition too, is possible only within arbitrarily circumscribed limits. The law of impermanence is persistently undermining it, but still a conceit of recognition is maintained by progressively ignoring the fact of change....

“Furthermore, as the Suttas often make it clear, all percepts as such are to be regarded as mere signs (*saññā*, *nimitta*). Hence while the worldling says that he perceives ‘things’ with the help of signs, the Tathāgata says that all we perceive are mere signs. Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas are, all of them, signs which consciousness pursues. But still the question may be asked: ‘What do these signs signify?’ ‘Things, of course’ – the Tathāgata would reply. ‘Things,’ however, are not those that the worldling has in mind when he seeks an answer to this question. Lust, hatred and delusion are the ‘things’ which, according to the teaching of the Tathāgata, are signified by all sense-percepts. ‘Lust, friend, is a something; hatred is a something; delusion is a something.’ (M i 298, Mahāvedalla S.) ‘Lust, friends, is something significative, hatred is something significative, delusion is something significative’ (ibid).

“It is a fact often overlooked by the metaphysician that the reality attributed to sense-data is necessarily connected with their evocative power, that is, their ability to produce effects. The reality of a thing is usually registered in terms of its impact on the experiential side. This is the acid-test which an object is required to undergo to prove its existence in the Court of Reality. In the reference to materiality as ‘manifestative and offering resistance’ (D iii 217, Sangiti S.) the validity of this test seems to have been hinted at. Now, the ‘objects’ of sense which we grasp and recognize as existing out-there, derive their object-status from their impact or evocative power. Their ability to produce effects in the form of sense-reaction is generally taken to be the criterion of their reality. Sense-objects are therefore signs which have become significant in themselves owing to our ignorance that their significance depends on the psychological mainsprings of lust, hatred and delusion.

This, in other words, is a result of reasoning from the wrong end (ayoniso manasikāra) which leads both the philosopher and the scientist alike into a topsy-turvydom of endless theorising.” ↔

## The Recognition of Impermanence (Aniccasaññā)

When one thoroughly knows  
The rise and fall of the aggregates,  
He attains joy and gladness.  
For those who know, that is death-free.

— Dhammapada 374

The recognition of impermanence is explained in AN 10.60 Girimānanda Sutta as follows:

Now what, Ānanda, is the recognition of impermanence? Here, Ānanda, a monk, gone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, discriminates thus: ‘Form is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, recognition is impermanent, fabrications are impermanent, consciousness is impermanent.’ Thus he abides contemplating impermanence with regard to the five clinging-aggregates. This, Ānanda, is called the recognition of impermanence.

This is expanded upon in SN 22.102 Aniccasaññā Sutta:

And how, monks, is the recognition of impermanence developed and cultivated so that it exhausts all passion for sensual pleasure, exhausts all passion for existence, exhausts all ignorance, exhausts and uproots all conceit of ‘I am’? ‘Such is form, such its origin, such its passing away. Such is feeling, such its origin, such its passing away. Such is recognition, such its origin, such its passing away. Such are fabrications, such their origin, such their passing away. Such is consciousness, such its origin, such its passing away.’

This recognition of impermanence is also called the contemplation of rise and fall (udayabbayānupassinā) in MN 122. In both of these discourses we are being instructed to experientially understand and attend to each of the aggregates as they are present, and also reflect upon their conditional origin and cessation by giving thorough attention to specific conditionality (idappaccayatā). This is further explained in SN 22.57 Sattaṭṭhāna Sutta (abridged):

With the arising of nutriment there is the arising of form. With the cessation of nutriment there is the cessation of form. And this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of form.

The pleasure and happiness that arise in dependence on form: this is the allure of form. That form is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change: this is the drawback of form. The subduing and abandoning of desire and passion for form: this is the escape from form.

With the arising of contact there is the arising of feeling. With the cessation of contact there is the cessation of feeling. And this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of feeling.

The pleasure and happiness that arise in dependence on feeling: this is the allure of feeling. That feeling is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change: this is the drawback of feeling. The subduing and abandoning of desire and passion for feeling: this is the escape from feeling.

With the arising of contact there is the arising of recognition. With the cessation of contact there is the cessation of recognition. And this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of recognition.

The pleasure and happiness that arise in dependence on recognition: this is the allure of recognition. That recognition is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change: this is the drawback of recognition. The subduing and abandoning of desire and passion for recognition: this is the escape from recognition.

With the arising of contact there is the arising of fabrications. With the cessation of contact there is the cessation of fabrications. And this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of fabrications.

The pleasure and happiness that arise in dependence on fabrications: this is the allure of fabrications. That fabrications are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change: this is the drawback of fabrications. The subduing and abandoning of desire and passion for fabrications: this is the escape from fabrications.

With the arising of name-and-form there is the arising of consciousness. With the cessation of name-and-form there is the cessation of consciousness. And this noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of consciousness.

The pleasure and happiness that arise in dependence on consciousness: this is the allure of consciousness. That consciousness is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to

change: this is the drawback of consciousness. The subduing and abandoning of desire and passion for consciousness: this is the escape from consciousness.

It's important to understand that it is the noble eightfold path which is the way leading to the cessation of the aggregates, and that our engagement with this path involves comprehending both the allure and drawbacks of the aggregates. After having recognized that the drawback in each case is that they are impermanent and can't be relied upon, we can come to discern the escape from the aggregates, which consists of subduing and abandoning desire and passion for these bodily and mental processes. The method of contemplation to be reflected upon and then discerned in meditative composure is further explained in SN 22.5 Samādhī Sutta:

Monks, develop meditative composure. A monk who is composed in meditation discerns things as they really are. And what does he discern as it really is? The origin and passing away of form. The origin and passing away of feeling. The origin and passing away of recognition. The origin and passing away of fabrications. The origin and passing away of consciousness.

And what, monks, is the origin of form? What is the origin of feeling? What is the origin of recognition? What is the origin of fabrications? What is the origin of consciousness? Here monks, a monk seeks delight, welcomes, remains attached.

And what does one seek delight in, welcome, and remain attached to? One seeks delight in form, welcomes it, and remains attached to it. Due to seeking delight in form, welcoming it, and remaining attached to it, delight arises. Delight in form is clinging. With clinging as a condition, existence; with existence as a condition, birth; with birth as a condition, aging and death, sorrow, grieving, pain, unhappiness, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this entire heap of unsatisfactoriness.

One seeks delight in feeling, welcomes it, and remains attached to it... One seeks delight in recognition, welcomes it, and remains attached to it... One seeks delight in fabrications, welcomes them, and remains attached to them... One seeks delight in consciousness, welcomes it, and remains attached to it. Due to seeking delight in consciousness, welcoming it, and remaining attached to it, delight arises. Delight in consciousness is clinging. With clinging as a condition, existence; with existence as a condition, birth; with birth as a condition, aging and death, sorrow, grieving, pain, unhappiness, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this entire heap of unsatisfactoriness.

This, monks, is the origin of form, this is the origin of feeling, this is the origin of

recognition, this is the origin of fabrications, this is the origin of consciousness.

And what, monks, is the passing away of form? What is the passing away of feeling? What is the passing away of recognition? What is the passing away of fabrications? What is the passing away of consciousness? Here monks, a monk does not seek delight, does not welcome, does not remain attached.

And what does one not seek delight in, not welcome, and not remain attached to? One does not seek delight in form, does not welcome it, and does not remain attached to it. Due to not seeking delight in form, not welcoming it, and not remaining attached to it, delight in form ceases. With the cessation of delight, the cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, the cessation of existence... Such is the cessation of this entire heap of unsatisfactoriness.

One does not seek delight in feeling, does not welcome it, and does not remain attached to it... One does not seek delight in recognition, does not welcome it, and does not remain attached to it... One does not seek delight in fabrications, does not welcome them, and does not remain attached to them... One does not seek delight in consciousness, does not welcome it, and does not remain attached to it. Due to not seeking delight in consciousness, not welcoming it, and not remaining attached to it, delight in consciousness ceases. With the cessation of delight, the cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, the cessation of existence... Such is the cessation of this entire heap of unsatisfactoriness.

This, monks, is the passing away of form, this is the passing away of feeling, this is the passing away of recognition, this is the passing away of fabrications, this is the passing away of consciousness.

The development of discernment includes understanding that the passing away of the aggregates results from not seeking delight in the aggregates, not welcoming and not remaining attached to them. This again emphasizes that it's our engagement in, and development of the noble eightfold path which leads to the cessation of the aggregates. It also highlights the importance of frequently reflecting upon how specific conditionality pertains to our practice: "When this isn't, that isn't. From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that."

## Alteration and Change (Aññathatta & Vipariṇāma)

The recognition of impermanence requires the development of agile and refined discernment. And discernment requires skill in the analytical understanding of phenomena (dhammapaṭisambhidā) – which necessarily includes knowing and comprehending what is occurring as it occurs in one’s mind-stream (viññāṇasota). To this end, AN 4.41 Samādhībhāvanā Sutta instructs us on how to develop meditative composure which leads to mindfulness and full awareness:

And what, monks, is the development of meditative composure that, when developed and cultivated, leads to mindfulness and full awareness? Here, monks, feelings are known to a monk as they arise, known as they are present, known as they disappear. Recognitions are known to him as they arise, known as they are present, known as they disappear. Thoughts are known to him as they arise, known as they are present, known as they disappear. This, monks, is the development of meditative composure that, when developed and cultivated, leads to mindfulness and full awareness.

AN 7.38 Paṭhamapaṭisambhidā Sutta adds that one who is endowed with knowing feelings, recognitions, and thoughts as they arise, are present, and disappear will soon realize analytical understanding (paṭisambhidā) for himself through direct gnosis.

The subtlest recognition of impermanence pertains to the fluctuations of presently occurring fabrications. It’s important to understand that this recognition of impermanence attends to an object, and is therefore none other than a refinement of the recognition of that object through the development of discernment. SN 22.37 Ānanda Sutta:

Friends, with form an arising is discerned, a falling away is discerned, and an alteration of what is present is discerned. With feeling an arising is discerned, a falling away is discerned, and an alteration of what is present is discerned. With recognition an arising is discerned, a falling away is discerned, and an alteration of what is present is discerned. With fabrications an arising is discerned, a falling away is discerned, and an alteration of what is present is discerned. With consciousness an arising is discerned, a falling away is discerned, and an alteration of what is present is discerned. These, friends, are things for which an arising is discerned, a falling away is discerned, and an alteration of what is present is discerned.

In the context of meditative composure, the recognition of impermanence and change pertaining to the object-basis (ārammaṇa) occurs when the development of clear seeing (vipassanābhāvanā) is conjoined with the development of calm (samathabhāvanā). For example, when engaging in mindfulness of breathing, the breath is the object-basis being attended to, and is the cause (nimitta) for the development of meditative composure (samādhi). As previously mentioned, the breath isn’t a static, unchanging thing. It’s in continual flux, changing from moment to moment as we breathe. And as the breath

fluctuates and changes (vipariṇāmeti), the mind and mental factors which are attending to the breath also fluctuate and change. As the breath moves, the mind also moves.

It's precisely because of the subtlety of the breath, and the interdependent relationship between the breath and the mind, that the breath is considered to be one of the best objects to attend to for the development of meditative composure. When our breathing is coarse, the mind reflects this. When our breathing is subtle and fine, the mind attending to the breath is likewise subtle and fine. And this is why the breath is also one of the most suitable objects to attend to for the development of clear seeing. As the mind attends to the breath and both become more and more refined and subtle, this process offers an ideal situation for simultaneously developing clear seeing pertaining to these progressively subtle fabrications.

And this same development of meditative composure, mindfulness, and full awareness is to be continued without interruption in each of the four jhānas. MN 111 Anupada Sutta informs us that this is the clear seeing of phenomena one by one as they occur (anupadadhammavipassanā):

Now Sāriputta's clear seeing of phenomena one by one as they occurred was this:

Whatever phenomena there are in the first jhāna: directed thought, evaluation, joy, pleasure, singleness of mind, contact, feeling, recognition, intention, mind, desire, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention; he analyzed these phenomena one by one as they occurred. Known to him they arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He discerned, 'So this is how these phenomena, not having been, come to arise. Having been, they vanish.'

Regarding those phenomena, he remained unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated, with a mind rid of barriers.

Just as the breath fluctuates and changes as it's being experienced, the mental factors occurring within jhāna also undergo continual alteration and change. The concomitant jhāna factors of joy and pleasure fluctuate even while being experienced. They don't remain static. There is no stasis that can be experientially discerned when these phenomena are occurring. And when one refines one's discernment (paññā) to where one is aware of this alteration, then the alteration of recognition (saññā) is also discernible.

While abiding in jhāna, we can clearly see the subtlest recognition of impermanence of the mind and concomitant mental factors present in jhāna. This subtle level of change is indicated in SN 35.93 Dutiyadvaya Sutta:



The mind is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise; phenomena are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is moving (calañceva) and wavering (byathañca), impermanent (aniccam), changing (vipariṇāmi), becoming otherwise (aññathābhāvi).

Consciousness is reflexive — meaning that consciousness can be fully aware of the mental factors present without any need to “step back” and engage in a separate cognitive process in order to do so. As the development of clear seeing matures, clear seeing becomes reflexive. The meditating mind directly discerns the process of knowing itself. This requires a highly refined meditative composure, one in which the reflexiveness of the mind and cognitive factors becomes apparent. Comprehension is essential for this development and refinement of the mental factor of vipassanā. The soteriological purpose of integral meditative composure (sammāsamādhi) as part of the noble path is just this mental development (bhāvanā) which culminates in gnosis.

AN 7.49 Dutiyasaññā Sutta:

‘The recognition of impermanence, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. In reference to what was it said?

Monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of impermanence, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward gain and honor and fame, and either equanimity or dislike are established. Monks, just as a cock’s feather or a piece of tendon, when thrown into a fire, shrinks away, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn in; in the same way, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of impermanence, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward gain and honor and fame, and either equanimity or dislike are established.

If, monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of impermanence, his mind inclines toward gain and honor and fame, or if admiration continues, then he should know, ‘I have not developed the recognition of impermanence, there is no stepwise distinction in me, I have not obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there. But if, monks, when a monk’s mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of impermanence, his mind shrinks away from, recoils, pulls back, and is not drawn toward gain and honor and fame, and either equanimity or dislike are established, then he should know, ‘I have developed the recognition of impermanence, there is stepwise distinction in me, I have obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there.

‘The recognition of impermanence, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to this it was said.

## The Recognition of Impermanence and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of impermanence will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.71 Anicca Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of impermanence, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of impermanence, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of impermanence, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of impermanence, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of impermanence, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of impermanence, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of impermanence, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of impermanence is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition of impermanence is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of impermanence is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of impermanence is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of impermanence is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of impermanence is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Recognition of Unsatisfactoriness (Dukkhasaññā)

The Pāli term dukkha has a range of connotations depending upon the context in which it is used. The most basic meaning of dukkha is “pain.” Pain can be differentiated as being either physical pain or mental pain. Dukkha as a physical condition includes bodily feelings related to the following inescapable aspects of existence: birth, old age, sickness, and death. The very fact that the body is born — fabricated from causes and conditions — means that it will be prone to pain and sickness, old age, and eventual death. Furthermore, throughout one’s life the body is also subject to various kinds of aches and pains, and other types of bodily discomfort such as hunger and thirst.

In terms of mental feeling, dukkha includes the sorrow and other kinds of distress that arise from having to face these uncomfortable physical conditions, as well as having to confront a variety of other experiences that are considered unpleasant. This includes association with any kind of situation that is deemed unpleasant for whatever reason. This elementary level of physical and mental dissatisfaction is referred to as the unsatisfactoriness of pain (dukkhadukkhatā).

In addition, saṃsāric existence involves experiences of separation from what is pleasant and not getting what is wanted. In this case, that which is deemed pleasant or desirable either slips away from us or is eluding our grasp altogether. These aspects of dissatisfaction are referred to as the unsatisfactoriness of change (vipariṇāmadukkhatā).

And finally, because our bodies and minds have been fabricated by causes and conditions, they are subject to falling apart even after the causes of dissatisfaction have been removed by the noble eightfold path. This level of dissatisfaction is referred to as the unsatisfactoriness of fabrications (saṅkhāradukkhatā).<sup>1</sup>

All of these types of dissatisfaction are mentioned in SN 56.11 Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, pertaining to the noble truth of unsatisfactoriness:

Now this, monks, is the noble truth of unsatisfactoriness: birth is unsatisfactory, aging is unsatisfactory, illness is unsatisfactory, death is unsatisfactory; association with what is displeasing is unsatisfactory; separation from what is pleasing is unsatisfactory; not getting what is wanted is unsatisfactory. In brief, the five clinging-aggregates are unsatisfactory.

SN 22.122 Sīla Sutta offers a number of expressions which indicate the unsatisfactoriness of the five clinging-aggregates, and instructs us on how to regard them with appropriate attention:

Friend Koṭṭhika, an ethical monk should appropriately attend to the five clinging-aggregates as impermanent, unsatisfactory, a disease, a cancer, a dart, painful, an affliction, alien, disintegrating, emptiness, not-self.

And so the recognition of unsatisfactoriness follows directly from clearly seeing that all phenomena of body and mind are impermanent, and therefore cannot provide a basis for lasting happiness and security. Thus, even pleasurable states and situations are unsatisfactory because they are fleeting and don't last.

AN 7.49 Dutiyasaññā Sutta describes the benefits of developing the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent as follows:

‘The recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. In reference to what was it said?

Monks, when a monk's mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, an acute recognition of dread is established in him toward laziness, idleness, indolence, carelessness, lack of practice, and lack of consideration, just as if toward an executioner with a raised sword.

If, monks, when a monk's mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, there is not an acute recognition of dread established in him toward laziness, idleness, indolence, carelessness, lack of practice, and lack of consideration, just as if toward an executioner with a raised sword, then he should know, ‘I have not developed the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, there is no stepwise distinction in me, I have not obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there. But if, monks, when a monk's mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, there is an acute recognition of dread established in him toward laziness, idleness, indolence, carelessness, lack of practice, and lack of consideration, just as if toward an executioner with a raised sword, then he should know, ‘I have developed the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, there is stepwise distinction in me, I have obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there.

‘The recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to this it was said.

## The Recognition of Unsatisfactoriness In What Is Impermanent and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.72 Dukkha Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## Notes

1. Cf. Nettippakaraṇa: “Herein, the world is, at one time or another, somewhat free from to the unsatisfactoriness of pain as well as the unsatisfactoriness of change. Why is that? Because there are those in the world who have little sickness and are long-lived. But only the nibbāna component with no fuel remaining (anupādisesa nibbānadhātu) liberates from the unsatisfactoriness of fabrications.” ↔

## The Recognition of Selflessness (Anattasaññā)

Look at the world and see its emptiness Mogharāja, always mindful,  
Eliminating the view of self, one goes beyond death.  
One who views the world this way is not seen by the king of death.

— Sutta Nipāta 5.15, Mogharājamāṇavapucchā

The contemplation of selflessness is given in AN 10.60 Girimānanda Sutta:

Now what, Ānanda, is the recognition of selflessness? Here, Ānanda, a monk, gone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, discriminates thus: ‘The eye is not-self, forms are not-self; the ear is not-self, sounds are not-self; the nose is not-self, odors are not-self; the tongue is not-self, flavors are not-self; the body is not-self, tactual objects are not-self; the mind is not-self, phenomena are not-self.’ Thus he abides contemplating selflessness with regard to the six internal and external sensory spheres. This, Ānanda, is called the recognition of selflessness.

In practice, we need to be able to recognize this absence of self in our immediate experience: When seeing, there is the coming together of visible form, the eye, and visual consciousness. When hearing, there is the coming together of sound, the ear, and auditory consciousness. When touching, there is the coming together of tactual sensation, the body, and tactile consciousness. When thinking, there is the thought, the mind, and mental consciousness. These processes arise simply through ‘contact.’ When a sense faculty and a sensory object make contact, the corresponding sensory consciousness arises. This entire process occurs through specific conditionality (idappaccayatā). There is no independent, fully autonomous agent or self controlling any of this.

An independent, autonomous self would, by definition, be:

1. permanent
2. satisfactory
3. not prone to dis-ease

#### 4. fully self-determining (be in complete autonomous control of itself)

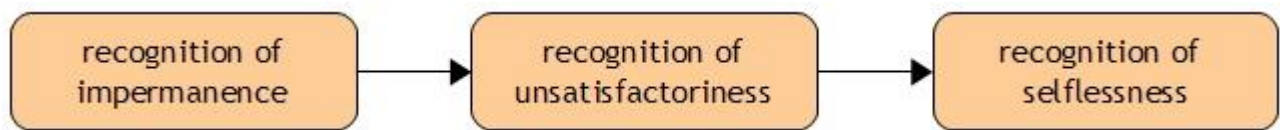
Thus, what is being negated is a permanent, satisfactory self which is not prone to old age, sickness, and death. As SN 22.59 Pañcavaggiya Sutta (abridged) states:

Monks, form, feeling, recognition, fabrications, and consciousness are not-self. Were form, feeling, recognition, fabrications, or consciousness self, then this form, feeling, recognition, fabrications, and consciousness would not lead to dis-ease.

This criterion of dis-ease is the context for the following statement that:

None can have it of form, feeling, recognition, fabrications, or consciousness: ‘Let my form, feeling, recognition, fabrications, or consciousness be thus, let my form, feeling, recognition, fabrications, or consciousness be not thus.’

By engaging in sustained, dedicated contemplation we find only impermanent processes, conditionally arisen, and not fully self-determining. First we clearly see that all conditioned phenomena of body and mind are impermanent. Next we come to see that whatever is impermanent is unsatisfactory in that it can provide no lasting happiness. Then we realize that all impermanent, unsatisfactory phenomena of body and mind are not-self – they can’t be the basis for a self, which by definition would be permanent and (one would hope) satisfactory. This relationship between the recognition of impermanence, the recognition of unsatisfactoriness, and the recognition of selflessness is illustrated in the following diagram.



With the recognition of selflessness there is an emptying out of both the “subject” and “object” aspects of experience. We come to understand that “I-making” and “mine-making” with regard to the mind and body as well as all external representations is deluded. When the recognition of selflessness is fully developed there is no longer any reification of substantial referents to be experienced in relation to subjective grasping. Whatever is seen is merely the seen (*diṭṭhamatta*). Whatever is heard or sensed is merely the heard (*sutamatta*) and merely the sensed (*mutamatta*). Whatever is known is merely the known (*viññātamatta*). This is explained in Ud 1.10 Bāhiya Sutta:

‘The seen will be merely the seen, the heard will be merely the heard, the sensed will be merely the sensed, the known will be merely the known.’ This is how you should train, Bāhiya.

When, Bāhiya, for you the seen will be merely the seen, the heard will be merely the heard, the sensed will be merely the sensed, the known will be merely the known, then Bāhiya, you will not be that. When, Bāhiya, you are not that, then Bāhiya, you will not be there. When, Bāhiya, you are not there, then Bāhiya, you will be neither here nor beyond nor between-the-two. Just this is the end of unsatisfactoriness.

When there is no self to be found one's experience becomes very simple, direct, and uncluttered. When seeing, there is the coming together of visible form, the eye, and visual consciousness, that's all. There is no separate "seer." The seer is entirely dependent upon the seen. There can be no seer independent of the seen. There is no separate, independent subject or self.

This is also the case for the sensory object. The "seen" is entirely dependent upon the eye faculty and visual consciousness. There can be no object seen independent of the eye faculty and cognition. This is the case for all possible sensory objects. There is no separate, independent sensory object.

The same holds true for sensory consciousness as well. "Seeing" is entirely dependent upon the eye and visible form. There can be no seeing independent of the eye and cognition. This is the case for all possible sensory cognitions. There is no separate, independent sensory consciousness.

It's important to understand this experientially. Let's take the straightforward empirical experience of you looking at this screen right now as an example. Conventionally speaking, you could describe the experience as "I see the computer screen." Another way of describing this is that there's a "seer" who "sees" the "seen." But look at the screen: are there really three independent and separate parts to your experience? Or are "seer," "sees," and "seen," just three conceptual labels applied to this experience in which the three parts are entirely interdependent?

The "seer," "seen," and "seeing" are all empty and insubstantial. The eye faculty, visible form, and visual consciousness are all interdependent aspects of the same experience. You can't peel one away and still have a sensory experience — there is no separation. AN 4.24 Kāḷakārāma Sutta:

Thus, monks, the Tathāgata does not conceive an [object] seen when seeing what is to be seen. He does not conceive an unseen. He does not conceive a to-be-seen. He does not conceive a seer.

He does not conceive an [object] heard when hearing what is to be heard. He does not conceive an unheard. He does not conceive a to-be-heard. He does not conceive a



hearer.

He does not conceive an [object] sensed when sensing what is to be sensed. He does not conceive an unsensed. He does not conceive a to-be-sensed. He does not conceive a senser.

He does not conceive an [object] known when knowing what is to be known. He does not conceive an unknown. He does not conceive a to-be-known. He does not conceive a knower.

Sensory consciousness can't be isolated as separate and independent. Nor can any of these other interdependent phenomena. Even the designations that we apply to these various phenomena are entirely conventional, dependent designations. But this doesn't mean that we should now interpret our experience as being some sort of cosmic oneness or unity consciousness or whatever one may want to call it. That's just another empty, dependent label isn't it? The whole point of this analysis is to see the emptiness of all referents, and thereby stop constructing and defining a "self."

The purpose of correctly engaging in the contemplation of selflessness is stated in AN 7.49 Dutiyasaññā Sutta:

'The recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.' Thus it was said. In reference to what was it said?

Monks, when a monk's mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, his mind is rid of "I-making" and "mine-making" with regard to this conscious body and externally with regard to all representations, and has transcended conceit, is at peace, and is well liberated.

If, monks, when a monk's mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, his mind is not rid of "I-making" and "mine-making" with regard to this conscious body and externally with regard to all representations, and has not transcended conceit, is not at peace, and is not well liberated, then he should know, 'I have not developed the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, there is no stepwise distinction in me, I have not obtained the strength of development.' In that way he is fully aware there. But if, monks, when a monk's mind frequently remains acquainted with the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, his mind is rid of "I-making" and "mine-making" with regard to this conscious body and externally with regard to all representations, and has transcended conceit, is at peace, and is well

liberated, then he should know, ‘I have developed the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, there is stepwise distinction in me, I have obtained the strength of development.’ In that way he is fully aware there.

‘The recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, monks, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit; it merges with the death-free, has the death-free as its end.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to this it was said.

Here we get to the heart of the matter, which is one of the most subtle aspects of the Buddhadhamma. Simply stated: when ignorance ceases, belief in self simultaneously ceases. And when there is no self to be found, then there is no self to die or take birth. This right here is “death-free.” And it is precisely this that the Buddha is declaring when he says to Mogharāja:

Look at the world and see its emptiness Mogharāja, always mindful,  
Eliminating the view of self, one goes beyond death.  
One who views the world this way is not seen by the king of death.

When one completely abandons the underlying tendencies which give rise to mistaken apprehensions of a self — any and all notions of “I am” — then there is no self to die. This stilling of the “currents of conceiving” over one’s imagined self, and the resulting peace that is empty of birth, aging, and death, is straightforwardly presented in MN 140 Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta:

‘He has been stilled where the currents of conceiving do not flow. And when the currents of conceiving do not flow, he is said to be a sage at peace.’ Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said?

Monk, “I am” is a conceiving. “I am this” is a conceiving. “I shall be” is a conceiving. “I shall not be” ... “I shall be possessed of form” ... “I shall be formless” ... “I shall be percipient” ... “I shall be non-percipient” ... “I shall be neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient” is a conceiving. Conceiving is a disease, conceiving is a cancer, conceiving is an arrow. By going beyond all conceiving, monk, he is said to be a sage at peace.

Furthermore, a sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die. He is unagitated, and is free from longing. He has nothing whereby he would be born. Not being born, how could he age? Not aging, how could he die? Not dying, how could he be agitated? Not being agitated, for what will he long?

So it was in reference to this that it was said, ‘He has been stilled where the currents of

conceiving do not flow. And when the currents of conceiving do not flow, he is said to be a sage at peace.’

Truly, “a sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die.” In this way, when ignorance ceases, the entire complex of conditioned arising bound up with dissatisfaction also ceases. When all traces of “I-making” and “mine-making” are abandoned through the fully integrated threefold training of ethical conduct, meditation, and discernment, just this is dispassion (virāga). Just this is cessation (nirodha). Just this is extinguishment (nibbāna). Just this is without outflows (anāsava). Just this is not-born (ajāta), not-become (abhūta), not-made (akata), not-fabricated (asaṅkhata), endless (ananta), indestructible (apalokita), and yes, death-free (amata). It is freedom (mutti).

## The Recognition of Selflessness and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of selflessness will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.73 Anatta Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition

of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Recognition of Dispassion (Virāgasaññā)

The best of dhammas is dispassion.

— Dhammapada 273

With sustained and dedicated commitment to the recognition of impermanence, the recognition of unsatisfactoriness in what is impermanent, and the recognition of selflessness in what is unsatisfactory, we will eventually begin to realize the gnosis and vision of things as they are (yathābhūtañāḍassana). And it is precisely this discernment into all facets of our experience which leads to disenchantment, which in turn gives rise to dispassion. The recognition of dispassion is explained in AN 10.60 Girimānanda Sutta:

Now what, Ānanda, is the recognition of dispassion? Here, Ānanda, a monk, gone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, discriminates thus: ‘This is peace, this is excellent, that is: the calming of all fabrications, the release of all acquisitions, the elimination of craving, dispassion, nibbāna.’ This, Ānanda, is called the recognition of dispassion.

At this stage of our development a profound and deep transition begins wherein we come to really understand and directly experience the utter futility of craving and clinging. Sustaining and further developing this weariness with regard to all fabricated things leads to complete disenchantment (ekantanibbidā), dispassion (virāga), cessation (nirodha), peace (upasama), direct gnosis (abhiññā), awakening (sambodha), and the full extinguishment (parinibbāna) of the three metaphorical fires of passion, aggression, and delusion. Therefore, this transitional stage, beginning with the onset of knowing and seeing things as they are, is extremely important because it’s completely transformational. It’s at this mature stage of practice that we start to really understand

the dhamma at the gut level of experience. We begin to intuit and even taste freedom, and understand just what authentic freedom entails.

This transformation begins with the experience of disenchantment (nibbidā). Thus, it's necessary to understand what disenchantment means. The Pāḷi term nibbidā is related to nibbindati, which is derived from the negative prefix nis-, meaning “not,” and the verb root vindati, meaning “to find.” And so nibbindati means “without finding,” and carries the connotations of “becoming weary of” and “turning away from.” When we clearly see each and every experience as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and empty, we no longer find satisfaction in fabricated things. We grow weary of trying to propagate and seek delight in worldly comforts and worldly concerns. This sense of weariness is expressed in Dhammapada 277-279:

‘All fabrications are impermanent.’  
Seeing this with discernment  
One grows weary of unsatisfactoriness.  
This is the path to purity.

‘All fabrications are unsatisfactory.’  
Seeing this with discernment  
One grows weary of unsatisfactoriness.  
This is the path to purity.

‘All phenomena are not-self.’  
Seeing this with discernment  
One grows weary of unsatisfactoriness.  
This is the path to purity.

This weariness with what is unsatisfactory is disenchantment, which arises due to knowing and seeing things as they are. We begin to feel the hollowness of engaging in affairs which aren't directly related to the development of the path. Even before disenchantment has fully matured into dispassion we start to sense and feel superficial entertainments and superficial conversations as being hollow, and quite pointless. This beginning stage of experiencing disenchantment can be confusing at times, and somewhat unsettling. The things that we once pursued and delighted in are now, at times, seen as pale and anemic. This can be disorienting. All the messages in the world are telling us to continue heading in the old familiar direction, but there is a gnawing feeling that that habitual direction will never lead to genuine happiness. At this point it's helpful – often necessary – to have the guidance of an experienced teacher to assist us in working through these conflicting desires and messages.

Also, for disenchantment to actually be transformational and liberating it needs to be moistened and enriched with kindness, compassion, empathy, and equanimity. Without awakening and embodying these qualities we will not be able to successfully face the remaining challenges which will inevitably confront us as we work through these latter stages of profound transformation.

But with time and patient endurance, continuing to learn and develop our practice in the arena of everyday experience, disenchantment will lead to dispassion. The experience of dispassion is visceral, deep, and profound. It isn't some weak intellectual head-trip. Discernment at this stage of the path is fully present and naked. There is a directness and clarity of understanding which engenders confidence. We become confident that our practice won't be easily shaken by any unexpected bumps on the road. We are able to handle situations which previously created emotional upheavals and moments of uncertainty or hesitation. And when difficult situations do arise we know that we have the necessary insight and skills to work with whatever presents itself. We come to understand just why the Buddha said that "Dispassion is the best of dhammas."

The development of meditative composure and discernment which sustains disenchantment, and the concomitant development of a measureless mind, is explained in MN 38 Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta:

On seeing a form with the eye, he is not attached to it if it is pleasing, he is not averse to it if it is displeasing. He remains with mindfulness of the body present, with a measureless mind, and he discerns as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation through discernment where those worthless, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

On hearing a sound with the ear, he is not attached to it if it is pleasing, he is not averse to it if it is displeasing. He remains with mindfulness of the body present, with a measureless mind, and he discerns as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation through discernment where those worthless, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

On smelling an odor with the nose, he is not attached to it if it is pleasing, he is not averse to it if it is displeasing. He remains with mindfulness of the body present, with a measureless mind, and he discerns as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation through discernment where those worthless, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

On tasting a flavor with the tongue, he is not attached to it if it is pleasing, he is not averse to it if it is displeasing. He remains with mindfulness of the body present, with a measureless mind, and he discerns as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation through discernment where those worthless, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

On touching a tactual object with the body, he is not attached to it if it is pleasing, he is not averse to it if it is displeasing. He remains with mindfulness of the body present, with a measureless mind, and he discerns as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation through discernment where those worthless, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

On cognizing a phenomenon with the mind, he is not attached to it if it is pleasing, he is not averse to it if it is displeasing. He remains with mindfulness of the body present, with a measureless mind, and he discerns as it really is the liberation of mind and liberation through discernment where those worthless, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

Having thus abandoned favoring and opposing, whatever feeling he feels, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he does not delight in that feeling, welcome it, or remain attached to it. As he does not delight in that feeling, welcome it, or remain attached to it, delight in feelings ceases in him. With the cessation of delight, the cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, the cessation of existence; with the cessation of existence, the cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging and death, sorrow, grieving, pain, unhappiness, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this entire heap of unsatisfactoriness.

MN 148 Chachakka Sutta:

Seeing thus, monks, a well-taught noble disciple grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with eye-consciousness, disenchanted with eye-contact, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with craving.

He grows disenchanted with the ear... He grows disenchanted with the nose... He grows disenchanted with the tongue... He grows disenchanted with the body... He grows disenchanted with the mind, disenchanted with phenomena, disenchanted with mind-consciousness, disenchanted with mind-contact, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with craving.

Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion he is liberated. When liberated, there is the gnosis, 'Liberated.' He discerns that, 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.'

**The Recognition of Dispassion and the Seven Factors of Awakening  
(Satta Bojjhaṅgā)**

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of dispassion will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.75 Virāga Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of dispassion, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of dispassion, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of dispassion, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of dispassion, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of dispassion, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of dispassion, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of dispassion, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of dispassion is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition of dispassion is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of dispassion is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of dispassion is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of dispassion is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of dispassion is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Recognition of Cessation (Nirodhasaññā)

For whom there is neither a far shore,  
Nor a near shore, nor both,  
Who is free from distress, without ties,  
Him I call a brāhmaṇa.



When the recognition of dispassion is fully developed and realized, and with no self to be found, nothing to be identified with, one realizes the gnosis and vision of liberation (vimuttiñāṇadassana). This is non-referential inner peace (ajjhattasanti). This is the full recognition of cessation. AN 10.60 Girimānanda Sutta:

Now what, Ānanda, is the recognition of cessation? Here, Ānanda, a monk, gone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, discriminates thus: ‘This is peace, this is excellent, that is: the calming of all fabrications, the release of all acquisitions, the elimination of craving, cessation, nibbāna.’ This, Ānanda, is called the recognition of cessation.

This is the complete absence of agitation (calita natthi). Ud 8.4 Nibbāna Sutta:

There being no agitation, there is tranquility. There being tranquility, there is no inclination. There being no inclination, there is no coming or going. There being no coming or going, there is no passing away or arising. There being no passing away or arising, there is neither a here nor a beyond nor a between-the-two. Just this is the end of unsatisfactoriness.

This is the calming of all specific fabrication and volitional intention. MN 140 Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta:

One does not form any specific fabrication or volitional intention towards either existence or non-existence. Not forming any specific fabrication or volitional intention towards either existence or non-existence, he does not cling to anything in this world. Not clinging, he is not excited. Unexcited, he personally attains complete nibbāna. He discerns that, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.’

This is the freedom of absence which is revealed through the complete recognition of selflessness. Ud 1.10 Bāhiya Sutta:

‘The seen will be merely the seen, the heard will be merely the heard, the sensed will be merely the sensed, the known will be merely the known.’ This is how you should train, Bāhiya.

When, Bāhiya, for you the seen will be merely the seen, the heard will be merely the heard, the sensed will be merely the sensed, the known will be merely the known, then Bāhiya, you will not be that. When, Bāhiya, you are not that, then Bāhiya, you will not be there. When, Bāhiya, you are not there, then Bāhiya, you will be neither here nor beyond nor between-the-two. Just this is the end of unsatisfactoriness.

This is noble liberation which is the elimination of craving and clinging. MN 106 Āneñjasappāya Sutta:

This is death-free, namely, the liberation of mind through not clinging.

This is the effortless clarity of consciousness which is non-abiding and not established (appatiṭṭha viññāṇa). SN 22.53 Upaya Sutta:

When that consciousness is not established, not increasing, not concocting, it is liberated. Being liberated, it is steady. Being steady, it is content. Being content, he is not excited. Unexcited, he personally attains complete nibbāna. He discerns that, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.’

There is no more seeking of any kind. There is no more personal agenda. There is no identifying with any phenomena or turning anything into a fixed reference point. There is no “here” nor “beyond” nor “between-the-two.”

The awakened mind is measureless (appamāṇacetasa), free from any sort of measuring (pamāṇa). In evocative terms, an awakened one is deep (gambhīra), boundless (appameyya), and fathomless (duppariyogāḷha). Utterly free from any reference to specifically fabricated consciousness (viññāṇasaṅkhayavimutta). “Gone” (atthaṅgata), the measureless mind is untraceable (ananuvejja) even here and now. It doesn’t abide in the head, or in the body, or anywhere else for that matter. It doesn’t have size or shape. It’s not an object or a subject.

Just as the sky is formless and non-illustrative, the measureless mind is non-illustrative and non-indicative (anidassana). This effortless clarity is unmediated by any specific fabrication or volitional intention. It is unaffected knowing: The seen is merely the seen (diṭṭhamatta). The heard is merely the heard (sutamatta). The sensed is merely the sensed (mutamatta). The known is merely the known (viññātamatta). But there is no *you* there. Of course, this liberating gnosis and vision can’t adequately be pointed out or indicated by words alone. It is to be individually experienced (paccatta veditabba).

## The Recognition of Cessation and the Seven Factors of Awakening (Satta Bojjhaṅgā)

Sustained, dedicated practice of the recognition of cessation will gradually create the optimal conditions for the arising of all seven factors of awakening. SN 46.76 Nirodha Sutta (abridged):

Here monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness accompanied by the recognition of cessation, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of dhamma-investigation accompanied by the recognition of cessation, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of energy accompanied by the recognition of cessation, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of joy accompanied by the recognition of cessation, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of tranquility accompanied by the recognition of cessation, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of meditative composure accompanied by the recognition of cessation, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the awakening factor of equanimity accompanied by the recognition of cessation, dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go.

It is in this way that the recognition of cessation is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit. It is in this way that the recognition of cessation is developed and cultivated so that one of two fruits is to be expected: either final gnosis in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning. It is in this way that the recognition of cessation is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great good. It is in this way that the recognition of cessation is developed and cultivated so that it leads to great security from bondage. It is in this way that the recognition of cessation is developed and cultivated so that it leads to a great sense of urgency. It is in this way that the recognition of cessation is developed and cultivated so that it leads to dwelling in great comfort.

## The Recognition of Release (Paṭinissaggasaññā)

Dry up what was before.  
May there be nothing after.  
If you do not grasp anything in the middle,  
You will wander calmed.

— Suttanipāṭa 5.11, Jatukaṇṇimāṇavapucchā

Like all of the developmental qualities of the path, the recognition of release is progressive, becoming more and more effective and subtle as our practice develops. In the process of the development of discernment, the recognition of release follows

naturally after the recognition of impermanence, the recognition of dispassion, and the recognition of cessation. For example, MN 37 Cūḷataṇhāsaṅkhaya:

Here, ruler of gods, a monk has heard that, ‘All things are unworthy of attachment.’ When a monk has heard that, ‘All things are unworthy of attachment,’ he directly knows every thing. Having directly known every thing, he fully understands every thing. Having fully understood every thing, whatever feeling he feels, whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he remains contemplating the impermanence of those feelings, contemplating dispassion, contemplating cessation, contemplating release. Contemplating thus, he does not cling to anything in this world. Not clinging, he is not excited. Unexcited, he personally attains complete nibbāna. He discerns that, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.’

The recognition of release involves letting go (vossagga), which is also the result of the seven factors of awakening. Thus, the standard refrain we’ve seen repeated for each of the factors of awakening: “Dependent upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go,” is directly related to the recognition of release. Dhammapada 89:

Those whose mind is thoroughly well-developed  
In the factors of awakening,  
Who release grasping,  
Enjoy non-clinging,  
—Brilliant, free of outflows—  
They, in the world, have completely gone out.

The fruition of the path is to be cooled (sītibhūta), satisfied (nicchāta), completely gone out (parinibbuta) here and now.

## The Destination (Parāyana)

The noble eightfold path has a clearly defined and very specific final goal (pariyosāna), a precise destination (parāyana). This goal is the elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, and the elimination of delusion. The realization of this goal is variously called the “gnosis and vision of liberation” (vimuttiñāṇadassana), the “gnosis of elimination” (khaññāṇa), and the “gnosis of nibbāna” (nibbāna ñāṇa).

The Asaṅkhata Saṃyutta of the Saṃyuttanikāya offers thirty-three epithets for this goal, almost all of which are either metaphors or evocative terms suggestive of the various facets of this goal. But each of these epithets is then explicitly and unequivocally defined as the elimination of passion, aggression, and delusion. SN 43 Asaṅkhata Saṃyutta (1-44 combined & abridged):

And what, monks, is the not-fabricated (asaṅkhata)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the not-fabricated.

And what, monks, is the not-inclined (anata)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the not-inclined.

And what, monks, is the outflowless (anāsava)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the outflowless.

And what, monks, is the truth (sacca)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the truth.

And what, monks, is the farther shore (pāra)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the farther shore.

And what, monks, is the subtle (nipuṇa)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the subtle.

And what, monks, is the very hard to see (sududdasa)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the very hard to see.

And what, monks, is the unaging (ajajjara)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the unaging.

And what, monks, is the stable (dhuva)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the stable.

And what, monks, is the undisintegrating (apalokita)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the undisintegrating.

And what, monks, is the non-indicative (anidassana)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the non-indicative.

And what, monks, is the unproliferated (nippapañca)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the unproliferated.

And what, monks, is the peaceful (santa)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the peaceful.

And what, monks, is the death-free (amata)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the death-free.

And what, monks, is the sublime (paṇīta)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the sublime.

And what, monks, is the auspicious (siva)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the auspicious.

And what, monks, is the secure (khema)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the secure.

And what, monks, is the elimination of craving (taṇhākkhaya)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the elimination of craving.

And what, monks, is the wonderful (acchariya)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the wonderful.

And what, monks, is the amazing (abbhuta)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the amazing.

And what, monks, is the calamity-free (anītika)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the calamity-free.

And what, monks, is the dhamma free of calamity (anītikadhamma)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the dhamma free of calamity.

And what, monks, is the extinguishment (nibbāna)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called extinguishment.

And what, monks, is the unafflicted (abyāpajjha)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the unafflicted.

And what, monks, is dispassion (virāga)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called dispassion.

And what, monks, is purity (suddhi)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of

aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called purity.

And what, monks, is freedom (mutti)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called freedom.

And what, monks, is the unadhesive (anālaya)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the unadhesive.

And what, monks, is the island (dīpa)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the island.

And what, monks, is the cave (leṇa)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the cave.

And what, monks, is the shelter (tāṇa)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the shelter.

And what, monks, is the refuge (saraṇa)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the refuge.

And what, monks, is the destination (parāyana)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the destination.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, the most commonly used of these epithets is nibbāna.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond the attainment of this goal, early Pāḷi Buddhism has nothing to say. SN 48.42 Uṇṇābhabrāhmaṇa Sutta informs us as follows:

“But master Gotama, what is it that nibbāna takes recourse in?”

“You have gone beyond the range of questioning, brāhmaṇa. You were unable to grasp the limit of questioning. For, brāhmaṇa, the holy life is lived with nibbāna as its ground, nibbāna as its destination, nibbāna as its final goal.”

There are two reasons why the Buddha had nothing to say about any matters beyond the attainment of this goal. The first is that any view regarding the postmortem existence or non-existence of an awakened arahant is not conducive to actually attaining the goal. It “does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calmness, direct gnosis, full awakening, nibbāna.” It is considered a fetter of view (diṭṭhisamyojana). MN 72 Aggivacchagotta Sutta:

The view that after death a tathāgata exists is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a vacillation of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by dissatisfaction, distress, despair, and fever. It does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calmness, direct gnosis, full awakening, nibbāna.

The view that after death a tathāgata does not exist is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a vacillation of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by dissatisfaction, distress, despair, and fever. It does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calmness, direct gnosis, full awakening, nibbāna.

The view that after death a tathāgata both exists and does not exist is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a vacillation of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by dissatisfaction, distress, despair, and fever. It does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calmness, direct gnosis, full awakening, nibbāna.

The view that after death a tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a vacillation of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by dissatisfaction, distress, despair, and fever. It does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calmness, direct gnosis, full awakening, nibbāna.

The other reason, as suggested by the Buddha's exchange with the brāhmaṇa Uṇṇābha already mentioned, is that there is no way to describe or designate or define anything beyond the attainment of this goal.

The most elegant and subtle aspect of the dhamma expounded in the Nikāyas is that it doesn't impose any sort of metaphysical view regarding the nature of the liberated mind. This is clear in the sense of the liberated, measureless mind → appamāṇacetasa, being free from any sort of measuring → pamāṇa.

It is precisely this which differentiates early Buddhism from every other religious and secular worldview. An arahant cannot be measured even while alive, and specifically, cannot be measured using the criteria of the aggregates. Since this is the case, there is nothing whatsoever that can be posited about the postmortem arahant. Language and logical inference don't apply to that which cannot be qualified or measured. There is no criteria for measurement.

## Notes



1. This same definition is also given in the Abhidhammapiṭaka, where the preferred term is asaṅkhatā dhātu. For example, the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga 184: “What, there, is the not-fabricated component (asaṅkhatā dhātu)? The elimination of passion, the elimination of aggression, the elimination of delusion: this is called the not-fabricated component.” ⇐
2. Ven. Ñāṇamoli gives the following etymology for the term nibbāna. *The Path of Purification*, p. 790, note 72:

“Modern etymology derives the word nibbāna (Skr. nirvana) from the negative prefix nir plus the root vā (to blow). The original literal meaning was probably ‘extinction’ of a fire by ceasing to blow on it with bellows (a smith’s fire for example). It seems to have been extended to extinction of fire by any means, for example, the going out of a lamp’s flame (nibbāyati – M iii 245).”

Cf. Hwang, Soonil. *Metaphor and Literalism in Buddhism: The Doctrinal History of Nirvana*, p. 9:

“Western scholars tend to agree on the etymological meaning of nirvāṇa as ‘going out’: the noun nirvāṇa is derived from the negative prefix nir plus the root vā (to blow). Its original meaning seems to be, as Ñāṇamoli suggested, “‘extinction’ of a fire by ceasing to blow on it with bellows (a smith’s fire, for example).’ When a smith stops blowing on a fire, it goes out automatically. In this respect, this word nirvāṇa should be understood as intransitive: a fire going out due to lack of cause, such as fuel or wind.

“If we accept this etymological meaning, which is probably pre-Buddhist, what does the term refer to within the early Buddhist tradition? One of the common misunderstandings of nirvāṇa is to assume that it refers to the extinction of a person or soul. This view may be caused by the words nibbuta and nibbuti, which can be used of the person or soul. However, both words are derived not from nir/vā (to blow) but from nir/vṛ (to cover) and their meaning in these cases is, as K. R. Norman suggests, ‘satisfied, happy, tranquil, at ease, at rest’ for the former and ‘happiness, bliss, rest, ceasing’ for the latter. Moreover, not only does this view lack any textual evidence, it is also the mistaken opinion identified in the early canon as annihilationism (ucchedavāda).” ⇐