Chapter 1

The Noble Eightfold Path

1.1 The way to the end of the suffering

The search for a spiritual path is born out of suffering. It does not start with lights and ecstasy, but with the hardtack of pain, disappointment, and confusion. However, for suffering to give birth to a genuine spiritual search, it must amount to more than something passively received from without. It has to trigger an inner realization, a perception which pierces through the facile complacency of our usual encounter with the world to glimpse the insecurity perpetually gaping underfoot. When this insight dawns, even if only momentarily, it can precipitate a profound personal crisis. It overturns accustomed goals and values, mocks our routine preoccupations, leaves old enjoyments stubbornly unsatisfying.

At first such changes generally are not welcome. We try to deny our vision and to smother our doubts; we struggle to drive away the discontent with new pursuits. But the flame of inquiry, once lit, continues to burn, and if we do not let ourselves be swept away by superficial readjustments or slouch back into a patched up version of our natural optimism, eventually the original glimmering of insight will again glare up, again confront us with our essential plight. It is precisely at that point, with all escape routes blocked, that we are ready to seek away to bring our disquietude to an end. No longer can we continue to drift complacently through life, driven blindly by our hunger for sense pleasures and by the pressure of prevailing social norms. A deeper reality beckons us; we have heard the call of a more stable, more authentic happiness, and until we arrive at our destination we cannot rest content.

But it is just then we find ourselves facing a new difficulty. Once we come to recognize the need for a spiritual path, we discover that spiritual teachings are by no means homogeneous and mutually compatible. When we browse through the shelves of humanity’s spiritual heritage, both ancient and contemporary, we do not find a single tidy volume but a veritable bazaar of spiritual systems and
disciplines each offering themselves to us as the highest, the fastest, the most powerful, or the most profound solution to our quest for the Ultimate. Confronted with this melange, we fall into confusion trying to size them up to decide which is truly liberation, a real solution to our needs, and which is a sidetrack beset with hidden flaws.

One approach to resolving this problem that is popular today is the eclectic one: to pick and choose from the various traditions whatever seems amenable to our needs, welding together different practices and techniques into a synthetic whole that is personally satisfying. Thus one may combine Buddhist mindfulness meditation with sessions of Hindu mantra recitation, Christian prayer with Sufi dancing, Jewish Kabbala with Tibetan visualization exercise. Eclecticism, however, though sometimes helpful in making a transition from a predominantly worldly and materialistic way of life to one that takes on a spiritual hue, eventually wears thin. While it makes a comfortable halfway house, it is not comfortable as a final vehicle.

There are two interrelated flaws in eclecticism that account for its ultimate inadequacy. One is that eclecticism compromises the very traditions it draws upon. The great spiritual traditions themselves do not propose their disciplines as independent techniques that may be excised from their setting and freely recombined to enhance the felt quality of our lives. They present them, rather, as parts of an integral whole that the whole of a coherent vision regards to the fundamental nature of reality and the final goal of the spiritual quest. A spiritual tradition is not a shallow stream in which one can wet one’s feet and then beat a quick retreat to the shore. It is a mighty, tumultuous river which would rush through the entire landscape of one’s life, and if one truly wishes to travel on it, one must be courageous enough to launch one’s boat and head out for the depths.

The second defect in eclecticism follows from the first. As spiritual practices are built upon visions regarding the nature of reality and the final good, these visions are not mutually compatible. When we honestly examine the teachings of these traditions, we will find that major differences in perspective reveal themselves to our sight, differences which cannot be easily dismissed as alternative ways of saying the same
thing. Rather, they point to very different experiences constituting the supreme goal and the path that must be trodden to reach that goal.

Hence, because of the differences in perspectives and practices that the different spiritual traditions propose, once we decide that we have outgrown eclecticism and feel that we are ready to make a serious commitment to one particular path, we find ourselves confronted with the challenge of choosing a path that will lead us to true enlightenment and liberation. One cue to resolving this dilemma is to clarify to ourselves our fundamental aim, to determine what we seek in a genuinely liberation path. If we reflect carefully, it will become clear that the prime requirement is a way that will end the suffering. All problems ultimately can be reduced to the problem of suffering; thus what we need is a way that will end this problem finally and completely. Both these qualifying words are important. The path has to lead to a complete end of suffering, to an end of suffering in all its forms, and to a final end of suffering, to bring suffering to an irreversible stop.

But here we run up against another question. Who are we to find such a path—a path which has the capacity to lead us to the full and final end of suffering? Until we actually follow a path to its goal we cannot know with certainty where it leads, and in order to follow a path to its goal we must place complete trust in the efficacy of the path. The pursuit of a spiritual path is not like selecting a new suit of clothes. To select a new suit one need only try on a number of suits, inspect oneself in the mirror, and select the suit in which one appears most attractive. The choice of a spiritual path is closer to marriage: one wants a partner for life, one whose companionship will prove as trustworthy and durable as the pole star in the night sky.

Faced with this new dilemma, we may think that we have reached a dead end and conclude that we have nothing to guide us but personal inclination. However, our selection need not be as blind and uninformed as we imagine, for we do have a guideline to help us. Since spiritual paths are generally presented in the framework of a total teaching, we can evaluate the effectiveness of any particular path by investigating the teaching which expounds it.
In making this investigation we can look to three criteria as standards for evaluation:

(1) First, the teaching has to give a full and accurate picture of the range of suffering. If the picture of suffering it gives is incomplete or defective, then the path it sets forth will most likely be flawed, unable to yield a satisfactory solution. Just as an ailing patient needs a doctor who can make a full and correct diagnosis of his illness, so in seeking release from suffering we need a teaching that presents a reliable account of our condition.

(2) The second criterion calls for a correct analysis of the causes giving rise to suffering. The teaching cannot stop with a survey of the outward symptoms. It has to penetrate beneath the symptoms to the level of causes, and to describe those causes accurately. If a teaching makes a faulty causal analysis, there is little likelihood that its treatment will succeed.

(3) The third criterion pertains directly to the path itself. It stipulates that the path which the teaching offers has to remove suffering at its source. This means it must provide a method to cut off suffering by eradicating its causes. If it fails to bring about this root-level solution, its value is ultimately nil. The path it prescribes might help to remove symptoms and make us feel that all is well; but one afflicted with a fatal disease cannot afford to settle for cosmetic surgery when below the surface the cause of his malady continues to thrive.

To sum up, we find three requirements for a teaching proposing to offer a true path to the end of suffering: first, it has to set forth a full and accurate picture of the range of suffering; second, it must present a correct analysis of the causes of suffering; and third, it must give us the means to eradicate the causes of suffering.

This is not the place to evaluate the various spiritual disciplines in terms of these criteria. Our concern is only with the Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha, and with the solution this teaching offers to the problem of suffering. That the teaching should be relevant to this problem is evident from its very nature; for it is formulated, not as a set of doctrines about the origin and end of things commanding belief, but as a message of deliverance from suffering claiming to be verifiable in
our own experience. Along with that message there comes a method of practice, a way leading to the end of suffering. This way is the Noble Eightfold Path (AriyaAṭṭhāṅgikaMagga). The Eightfold Path stands at the very heart of the path that gave the Buddha’s own enlightenment a universal significance and elevated him from the status of a wise and benevolent sage to that of a world teacher. To his own disciples he was pre-eminently “the arouser of the path unarisen before, the producer of the path not produced before, the declarer of the path not declared before, the knower of the path, the seer of the path, the guide along the path”\(^1\). And he himself invites the seeker with the promise and challenge: “You yourselves must strive. The Buddhas are only teachers. The meditative ones who practise the path are released from the bonds of evil.”\(^2\)

To see the Noble Eightfold Path as a viable vehicle to liberation, we have to check it out against our three criteria: to look at the Buddha’s account of the range of suffering, his analysis, and the programme he offers as a remedy.

1.2 The Noble Eightfold Path

The noble eightfold path is that of the way leading to the cessation of Dukkha(Dukkhanirodhagāminiipaṭipadāariyassaccā). This is known as the “Middle Path” (Majjhimapāṭipadā), because if avoids two extremes: Indulgence (Kāmasukhallikānuyoga) in sensual pleasures which is low, worldly and leads to harm is one extreme; self-torture (Attakilamathānuyoga) in the form of severe asceticism which is painful, low and leads to harm is the other.

Living in the palace amidst music, dance, luxury and pleasure, the Bodhisatta knew by experience that sense pleasures (Kāmasukhallikānuoga) do not lead mankind to true happiness and deliverance. Six years of rigorous mortification (Attakilamathānuyoga), which he, as an ascetic, so zealously practised in search of purification and final deliverance, brought him no reward. It was a vain and useless

\(^1\) MN, p-108So hi, bhagavānuppamassaggamaññuppaññatā, asaṅgatassamaggaasahnītā, anakkhātassamaggaakāhatā, maggojanī, maggavidi, maggakovido.
\(^2\) Dh, p-276Tumhehi kiccaṃātappamakhātattārotathāgatā patippamokkhāntihiyinomārabandhanā.
effort. Avoiding these two extremes he followed a path of moral and mental training and through self-experience discovered the Middle Path (Majjhimaññaṭṭipadā) consisting of the Three Groups. The Middle Path is as follows:

1. Right view (Sammā-diṭṭhi)
2. Right thought (Sammā-saṅkappa)
3. Right speech (Sammā-vacā)
4. Right action (Sammā-kammanta)
5. Right livelihood (Sammā-ājīva)
6. Right effort (Sammā-vayama)
7. Right mindfulness (Sammā-sati)
8. Right Concentration (Sammā-samādhi)

These Eight Factors can be divided into three groups like this - Right understanding and Right thought as Wisdom (Paññā), Right speech, Right action, and Right livelihood as Virtue (Śīla), and then Right effort, Right mindfulness, and Right concentration as Concentration (Samādhi). After he followed the Middle Path, the Bodhisattawas known Sammāsambuddha (the Enlightened One). Let us now examine the Path in detail.

1.3 Right View (Sammā-diṭṭhi)

The first step in the Path is Right View. It is right because it is suited to the purpose. Right View is the usual rendering of Pāli Sammādiṭṭhi. Diṭṭhi is what is seen. View can be what one realizes for oneself, and also what one makes of what takes place in the world of society and what is “seen”. Taking of another’s belongings is not a desirable thing. This becomes an accepted position for a law-abiding citizen. That hurting another is not desirable similarly is an accepted position. These are what are “seen” as undesirable. So Sammādiṭṭhiis as much inner View as one’s position in relation to the outer world, it is one’s “view”, of what one “sees”. In common parlance “views” are beliefs. A belief is what one “sees” as correct.

Right view is one of the most important factors. According to Buddhism one should not merely believe and worship or pray. But one
should be mindful and alert. When one is mindful and wise one can understand things as they are. According to the “Right View Discourse” SammādiṭṭhiSutta\(^3\) of the MajjhimaNikāya the Venerable Sāriputta said, “Friends, a noble disciple understands what is wholesome and theroot of the wholesome, and in that way he becomes one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at the true Dhamma.”

Right view is a messenger of Enlightenment, once the Buddha said, “O monks as the sun is the harbinger of the day, right view is the harbinger of Enlightenment.”\(^4\)

1.4 Right Thought (Sammā-saṅkappa)

Thoughts on freedom from sensuous desires, lusts, … Nekkhamasaṅkappa; thoughts on non-killing, on not having desires for killing, thoughts of wishing well to others … Abyāpāda-saṅkappa; thoughts on non-cruelty, on giving protection out of pity … Avihimsa-saṅkappa. These three modes of thoughts are known as right thought (Sammā-saṅkappa).

All thoughts of good deeds such as performance of meritorious acts, seeking ordination (entering monkhood), listening to discourses on Dhamma, and practicing Dhamma, are factors of renunciation, Nekkama-saṅkappa.\(^5\)

According to the above verse, it is clear that practicing Vipassanā meditation fulfils the Nekkama-saṅkappa factor of Asmmā-

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\(^4\) SNV p.442 Suriyassa, bhikkhave, udayatoetampubbaṅgaṁmaetimpubbanimittam, yadidam- aruggaṁ. Evamevokho, bhikkhavo, bhikkhunosattamambojjhangānaṁuppaṁdisāyaetampubbaṅgametimpubbanimittam.

\(^5\) Vismiti. I p.145 Pabbajja pathamahājānaṁ, nibbānaṁcavipassanā Sabbe pukusalādhammā, nekkhammantipavuccare.
saṅkappa. Thoughts of non-killing and wishing well to others form Abyāpāda-saṅkappa. Especially when Mettābhāvanā is developed, this factor of Abyāpāda-saṅkappas is fulfilled. Thoughts of consideration and mercy form, Avihiṁsa-saṅkappa, which is especially fulfilled while engaged in DaruṇaBhāvanā.

In the course of Vipassanā meditation, as no thought of killing or cruelty with respect to the sense-object under contemplation gets the opportunity to arise, it should be considered that these two factors of Saṁmā-saṅkappas are fulfilled. But, the involvement in Vipassanā meditation is not an intentional exercise of deliberate cogitation or conceiving. It is slightly rushed bending of the mind or giving direction to it toward perceiving the true reality of Rūpa and Nāma, the nature of their origination and dissolution and the truth concerning Anicca, Dukkha and Anattā.

The Pāli text has fully the Mūlamagga as well as the Eightfold Vipassanā, otherwise called Pubbabhāgamagga. When the Vipassanāmagga is fully developed, it gets transformed into Ariyamaggaleading to the realization of Nibbāna. Therefore, Pubbabhāgamagga may be called the forerunner heralding the Ariyamagga which follows it. In other words, they form the first and last parts respectively of the same continuous Path. To attain the Ariyamagga which forms the last part of the Path, the initial portion of it, namely the Vipassanāmagga, has to be accomplished first. In this manner, the last tack of the Path, the Ariyamagga, will develop by itself.

To give an illustration, if a person wants to jump across a stream, he should come running to it with speed and jump. Once he has taken the jump, no more effort need be exerted by him. He will land automatically on the other side of the stream. Developing the Vipassanāmagga may be likened to the approach to the stream with speed and jumping. Landing on the other side of the stream is comparable to the realization of Ariyamagga in consequence of the momentum gained from the Vipassanāmagga.
1. 5Right Speech (Sammā-vācā)

Sammā-vācā or Right Speech is very important in our daily life because it is a way of communicating with others. Today most people do not talk with awareness of what they think. They deliberately tell lies, carry tales from place to place, and cause disputes among the people.

They use harsh words and spend much time in idle talks. As a consequence of this, people suspect each other and do not believe others. These are similar to enmity, jealousy. Anxiety and unfriendliness arise as a result. If one refrains from telling lies one must speak the truth. If one refrains from carrying tales one should convey good-will and should promote peace and harmony among all. If one does not waste time on useless talk, then one could spend one’s time on what is profitable, what is fruitful, and what is right.

The Buddha says that Right Speech is avoidance of telling lies, avoidance of slandering, avoidance of harsh, abusive language, avoidance of frivolous talk or useless chatter. Bhikkhus, avoidance of these four evil speeches is called Right Speech.

In this definition given by the Buddha, abstinence or avoidance constitutes Right Speech. Thus, it should be noted that, even when an occasion arises for one to utter false speech, slander, abuse or useless chatter, if one restrains oneself from doing so, one is then establishing the practice of Right speech. In reality, Right Speech is Sammā-vācāvirati, one of the fifty-two kinds of Cetasikā (mental concomitants), a member of the class of Abstinences. However, when one refrains from false speech, etc., one will be engaged only in talks which are truthful, gentle and beneficial, promoting harmony. The essential point here is that abstinence from false speech, etc., amounts to doing good deeds of observing the Sīla. One who takes the vow of refraining from false speech in observance of the five, eight or ten precepts has to refrain at the same time from the three evil vocal acts of slandering, abusing and idle talks, too.
In addition, whenever one sees, hears, smells, touches or thinks, if one realizes by contemplation the real nature of impermanence, suffering and insubstantiality concerning these sense-objects, no defilement which would cause utterance of wrong speech can arise. This amounts to temporary putting away Anusayakilesa(latent defilements), including wrong speech, by means of Vipassanā.

As the knowledge of insight, Vipassanā-ñāna, gets fully developed, Nibbāna is realized through Ariyamggañāna, knowledge pertaining to Noble Transcendental Path. When that happens, wrong speech will have been completely put away by virtue of Sammā-vācāvirati of the Transcendental Path. VisuddhimaggaCommentary, therefore, states that Sotāpatti magga, the First Path, dispels false speech; Anāgāminmagga, the Third Path, dispels slandering and abusive language. Here, ‘by speech or language’ means volition (although it is possible to utter harsh language unaccompanied by volition). Arahattamagga, the Fourth Path, dispels frivolous talks or useless chatter. (it should be understood here, however, that all kinds of lying, slandering and abusive language, which would have caused rebirths in realms of misery (Apāya-gamaniyāpisu,pharu,sampha) have already been got rid of by the First Path.) The Path of right speech (Sammā-vācāmagga) has, therefore, to be followed until all the Four Transcendental Paths have been completely established. To summarise:

1. To utter false speech, slander, abuse and useless chatter is indulgence in wrong speech.
2. Avoidance of wrong speech is right speech.

1.6Right Action (Sammā-kammanta)

It is the avoidance of killing, avoidance of stealing, and avoidance of unlawful sexual intercourse. Bhikkhus, avoidance of the said there evil physical deeds is Right Action.

There are three kinds of Right Action. They are:

(1) Pāṇātipātavirati,
(2) Adinnādānavirati and
(3) Kāmesumicchācāravirati
(1) *Pāṇātipātavirati*

*Pāṇātipātavirati* means an intentional killing or destroying beings by physical action or verbal incitement, ranging from causing abortion, destroying eggs of lice and bugs to killing and destroying living beings. Abstinence from such deeds is *Pāṇātipātavirati*.

(2) *Adinnādānavirati*

*Adinnādānavirati* means taking with the intention of stealing any animate or inanimate property in the possession of the owner, such as grass, fuel, water and so forth, without the knowledge of the owner either by physical exertion or verbal incitement. Abstinence from such deeds is *Adinnādānavirati*.

(3) *Kāmesumicchācāravirati*

*Kāmesumicchācāravirati* means improper sexual intercourse of a man with a woman, such as intercourse with the woman under the guardianship of a father, mother, etc., or improper sexual intercourse of a married woman whose husband is still living, with another man. It also includes the taking of the five kinds of intoxicants, and gambling with cards, chess, dice, etc. Abstinence from such deeds is *Kāmesumicchācāravirati*.

Here too, in the definition of Right Action given by the Buddha, avoidance of the three evil physical acts constitutes Right Action. Thus, when an occasion arises for one to commit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, if one restrains oneself from committing them, one is establishing the practice of Right Action. For example, just scaring away and not killing the mosquito which is biting you amounts to Right Action. Similarly, it should be understood with regard to avoidance of stealing or avoidance of sexual misconduct.

An explanation is needed here as to what constitutes unlawful sexual intercourse. There are twenty kinds of females with whom no male person should have sexual intercourse. Any male who has sexual
intercourse with such persons as are under the protection of father, mother, brothers, sisters, relatives, clan elders, colleagues in meditation or a married woman or a betrothed girl, commits the evil deed of sexual misconduct. A married woman or a betrothed girl, having sexual relations with another man, also commits this evil deed. Avoidance of such evil deeds is Right Action. To summarise;

(1) Killing, stealing and sexual misconduct are wrong actions.
(2) Avoidance of these evil deeds is Right Action.

The Path of Right Action should be developed by observance of the moral precepts. It should be developed too by practising Vipassanā until the four Ariyamaggas (Transcendental Paths) are completely established.

1.7 Right Livelihood (Sammā-ājīva)

The noble disciple avoids a wrong way of living, gets his livelihood by a right way of living. This is called Right Livelihood. There are four kinds of Right Livelihood. They are:

(1) Duccaritamicchājīvavirati,
(2) Anesanamicchājīvavirati,
(3) Kuhanādimicchājīvavirati and
(4) Tirachānamicchājāvavirati.

(1) Duccaritamicchājīvavirati

Duccaritamicchājīvavirati means earning a livelihood by committing any of the three-fold evil bodily actions. They are killing (Pāṇātipāta), stealing (Adinnādāna) and sexual misconduct (Kāmesumicchācāra) and four-fold evil verbal action. They are lying (Dusāvāda), back-biting (Pisunavācā), harsh speech (Pharusavācā), and idle talk (Sampaphalāpa).

Earning a livelihood by selling the five kinds of merchandise which ought not to be sold is also included in this. Abstinence from such wrongful modes of earning livelihood is Duccaritamicchājīvavirati.

(2) Anesanamicchājīvavirati

6 AN,III. p.208, Saṭṭhavanijjā, sattavanijjā, maṃsavanajjā, majjavanajjā, visavanajjā
Anesanamicchājīvavirati means earning a livelihood by Ṛṣis (Isis) and Bhikkhus by acquiring gifts and offerings by any of the twenty-one improper means (Anesana – wrong livelihood for Bhikkhus), e.g., by taking fruits and flowers, and so forth. Abstinence from such acts is a Anesanamicchājīvavirati.⁷

(3) Kuhādimicchājīvavirati

Kuhādimicchājīvavirati; There are five improper ways of earning of livelihood under this head, namely, (1) Kuhana, (2) Lapana, (3) Nimitta, (4) Nippesana, (5) Lābhena-lābhānijigīsana.

1. Kuhana means trickery and deception by working wonders. It means fraudulently obtaining gifts and offerings by making people think that one possesses extraordinary qualities such as high virtues, although one does not possess them.

2. Lapana means impudent talk in connection with property and gift.

3. Nimitta means making gestures and hints to invite offerings.

4. Nippesana means harassing with words so that one is obliged to make offering.

5. Lābhena-lābhānijigīsana means giving a small gift to get a bigger one.

Abstinence from such wrongful modes of livelihood is Kuhādimicchājīvavirati.

(4) Tiracchānavijjāmicchājīvavirati

As the worldly acts such as prophesying from the signs of the constituents of the body, palmistry, etc., are contrary to Ṛṣis (Isis) and Bhikkhu’s practice of Dhamma, they are called tiracchānavijjā. Earning livelihood by Isis and Bhikkhus by means of such acts is called Tiracchānavijjā.

1.7.1 The five kinds of merchandise

To lead a righteous life one should choose an occupation that does not cause harm, hurt or distress to anyone. Of course it is done to bring a good income because in these days of commercial people also need money and so if one can sell alcohol one earns good money or if one can sell narcotics one can earn a lot of money. But these things are against the law and also do serious harm to people. What is harmful and condemned by many in society, is definitely not a righteous livelihood.

According to Buddhism farming is a desirable employment but cattle for flesh or poultry farming is harmful to living things. It is not a right kind of employment. In the Aṅguttara⁸ there are five kinds of wrong occupations which should not be taken up by a lay-follower of the Buddha namely:

(1) Trading with weapons (*Satthāvānījjā*),
(2) Trading in living beings (*Sattāvānījjā*),
(3) Trading in meat (*Māṃsavānījjā*),
(4) Trading in intoxicants (*Majjāvānījjā*) and
(5) Trading in poison (*Visāvānījjā*).

So abstaining from an unrighteous life by fighting against consumerism and commercialism brings forth a righteous life and true happiness.

For a lay disciple the Buddha teaches that wealth should be gained in accordance with certain standards. One should acquire it only by legal means, not illegally; one should acquire it peacefully, without coercion or violence; one should acquire it honestly, not by trickery or deceit’ and one should acquire it in ways which do not entail harm and suffering for others. The Buddha mentions five specific kinds of livelihood which bring harm to others and are therefore to be avoided: dealing in weapons, in living beings (including raising animals for slaughter as well as slave trade and prostitution), in meat production and butchery, in poisons, and in intoxicants.⁹ He further names several dishonest means of gaining wealth which fall under

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⁸†AN,III. p-208.
⁹†AN,II. p-69; AN,III. p:45; AN,IV. P-281.
wrong livelihood: practicing deceit, treachery, soothsaying, trickery, and usury.\(^{10}\) Obviously any occupation that requires violation of right speech and right action is a wrong form of livelihood, but other occupations, such as selling weapons or intoxicants, may not violate those factors and yet be wrong because of their consequences for others.

The Thai treatise discusses the positive aspects of right livelihood under the three convenient headings of rightness regarding actions, rightness regarding persons, rightness regarding objects.\(^{11}\) “Rightness regarding actions” means that workers should fulfil their duties diligently and conscientiously, not idling away time, claiming to have worked longer hours than they did, or pocketing the company’s goods. “Rightness regarding persons” means that due respect and consideration should be shown to employers, employees, colleagues, and customers. An employer, for example, should assign his workers chores according to their ability, pay them adequately, promote them when they deserve a promotion and give them occasional vacations and bonuses. Colleagues should try to cooperate rather than compete, with customers. “Rightness regarding objects” means that in business transactions and sales the articles to be sold should be presented truthfully. There should be no deceptive advertising, misrepresentations of quality or quantity, or dishonest manoeuvres.

1.7.2 Seeking wealth in consonance with moral law is right livelihood

Just like Sammā-vācā and Sammā-kammanta, Right livelihood (Sammājīva) is also a practice of avoidance (Viraticetasīkā). Therefore, avoidance is to be regarded as Right livelihood should be developed by observance of precepts. It should be developed too by Vipassanā meditation until Virati factor of the path is fulfilled.

These three factors—Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood—belong to the Sīla group of the Eightfold Noble Path.

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\(^{10}\)AN.III. P-208

\(^{11}\) The Five Precepts and the Five Ennoblers, pp. 45-47.
1.8 Right Effort (*Sammāvāyama*)

In Buddhism there is nothing to gain without effort. Suffering itself has to be eradicated by effort (*Vīriyadenadukkhamacceti*). The Buddha always exhorted us to make an effort to eradicate all defilements. "Heedfulness is the path to the deathless. Heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful die not. The heedless are as if dead already" said the Buddha. When taking his last breath he said "Now, monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay, strive on untiringly *(Vayadhammāsaṅkhārāappamādetha)*. By "untiringly" here means "with the utmost effort".

The commentators illustrate the interdependence of the three factors within the concentration group with a simple simile. Three boys go to a park to play. While walking along they see a tree with flowering tops and decide they want to gather the flowers. But the flowers are beyond the reach even of the tallest boy. The one friend bends down and offers his back. The tall boy climbs up, but still hesitates to reach for the flowers from fear of falling. So the third boy comes over and offers his shoulder for support. The fist boy whostanding on the back of another boy, then leans on the shoulder of the third boy, reaches up, and gathers the flowers.

In this simile the tall boy who picks the flowers represents concentration with its function of unifying the mind. But to unify the mind, concentration needs support: the energy provided by right effort, which is like the boy who offers his back. It also requires the stabilizing awareness provided by mindfulness, which is like the boy who offers his shoulder. When right concentration receives this support, then empowered by right effort and balanced by right mindfulness it can draw in the scattered strands of thought and fix the mind firmly on its object.
Energy (Viriya), the mental factor behind right effort, can appear in either wholesome or unwholesome forms. The same factor fuels desire, aggression, violence, and ambition on the one hand, and generosity, self-discipline, kindness, concentration, and understanding on the other. The exertion involved in right effort is a wholesome form of energy, but it is something more specific, namely, the energy in wholesome states of consciousness directed to liberation from suffering. This last qualifying phrase is especially important. For wholesome energy to become a contributor to the path it has to be guided by right view and right intention, and to work in association with the other path factors. Otherwise, as the energy in ordinary wholesome states of mind, it merely engenders an accumulation of merit that ripens within the round of birth and death; it does not issue in liberation from the round.

Time and again the Buddha has stressed the need for effort, for diligence, exertion, and unflagging perseverance. The reason why effort is so crucial is that each person has to work out his or her own deliverance. The Buddha does what he can by pointing out the path to liberation; the rest involves putting the path into practice, a task that demands energy. This energy is to be applied to the cultivation of the mind, which forms the focus of the entire path. The starting point is the defiled mind, afflicted and deluded; the goal is the liberated mind, purified and illuminated by wisdom. What comes in between is the unremitting effort to transform the defiled mind into the liberated mind.

The work of self-cultivation is not easy; there is no one who can do it for us but ourselves, but it is not impossible. The Buddha himself and his accomplished disciples provide the living proof that the task is not beyond our reach. They assure us, too, that anyone who follows the path can accomplish the same goal. But what is needed is effort, the work of practice taken up with the determination: “I shall not give up my
efforts until I have attained whatever is attainable by manly perseverance, energy, and endeavour."

In this context, the function of Right Effort has four aspects: the effort to prevent what is unwholesome, the effort to abandon what is unwholesome, the effort to develop and maintain the wholesome. Here prevention means the prevention of the arising of evil, unwholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen. Abandoning is the abandonment of evil and unwholesome thoughts that have already arisen. Development here means the putting forth of effort to produce and develop wholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen. And “maintaining” is to make an effort to keep the mind all time on a favorable object of concentration.

So the nature of the mental process effects a division of right effort into four “great endeavours”

To prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome state.

To abandon unwholesome states that has already arisen.

To arouse wholesome states that has not yet arisen.

To maintain and perfect wholesome states already arisen.

The unwholesome states (Akusalādhammā) are the defilements, and the thoughts, emotions, and intentions derived from them, whether breaking forth into action or remaining confined within. The wholesome states (Kusalādhammā) are states of mind untainted by defilements, especially those conducing to deliverance. Each of the two kinds of mental states imposes a double task.

15MN,70,Word of the Buddha p.59-60
Yaṃṭampurisathāmenapurisavīriyenaṇpurisaparakkamenapattabbhaṃṇatamapūṇīvīriyassasanṭhān ambhavissati.

16DN.II. p.290
The unwholesome side requires that the defilements lying dormant be prevented from erupting and that the active defilements already present be expelled. The wholesome side requires that the undeveloped liberating factors first be brought into being, and then persistently developed to the point of full maturity. Now we will examine each of these four divisions of right effort, giving special attention to their most fertile field of application, the cultivation of the mind through meditation.

1.8.1 Prevent the Arising of Unarisen Unwholesome States

Herein the disciple rouses his will to avoid the arising of evil, unwholesome states that have not yet arisen; and he makes effort, stirs up his energy, exerts his mind and strives.\(^{17}\)

The first side of right effort aims at overcoming unwholesome states, states of mind tainted by defilements. Insofar as they impede concentration the defilements are usually presented in a fivefold set called the “five hindrances” (Pañcanivāraṇa): sensual desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and worry, and doubt.

They receive the name “hindrances” because they block the path to liberation; they grow up and cover the mind preventing clam and insight, the primary instruments for progress. The first two hindrances, sensual desire and ill will, are the strongest of the set, the most formidable barriers to meditative growth, representing, respectively, the unwholesome roots of greed and aversion. The other three hindrances, less toxic but still obstructive, are offshoots of delusion, usually in association with other defilements.

Sensual desire is interpreted in two ways. Sometimes it is understood in a narrow sense as lust for the “five strands of sense pleasure,” i.e., agreeable sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches; sometimes a broader interpretation is given, by which the term becomes

\(^{17}\)AN 4:13; Word of the Buddha, p.57Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkuanuppannānampāpakānakusalānakasuppadāyachannājaneti. Vāyamativiriyamārabhaticittampaggñātipadahati.
inclusive of craving in all its modes, whether for sense pleasures, wealth, power, position, fame, or anything else it can settle upon.

The second hindrance, ill will, is a synonym for aversion. It comprises hatred, anger, resentment, repulsion of every shade, whether directed towards other people, towards oneself, towards objects, or towards situations.

The third hindrance, dullness and drowsiness, is a compound of two factors linked together by their common feature of mental unwieldiness. One is dullness (Thina), manifest as mental inertia; the other is drowsiness (Middha), seen in mental sinking, heaviness of mind, or excessive inclination to sleep. At the opposite extreme are the fourth hindrance, restlessness and worry. Thinamiddha too is a compound with its two members linked by their common feature of disquietude.

Restlessness (Uddhacca) is agitation or excitement, which drives the mind from thought to thought with speed and frenzy; worry (Kukkacca) is remorse over past mistakes and anxiety about their possible undesired consequences. The fifth hindrance, doubt, signifies a chronic indecisiveness and lack of resolution: not the probing of critical intelligence, an attitude encouraged by the Buddha, but a persistent inability to commit oneself to the course of spiritual training due to lingering doubts concerning the Buddha, his doctrine, and his path.

The first effort to be made regarding the hindrances is the effort to prevent the unarisen hindrances from arising; this is also called the endeavour to restrain (Samvarappadhāna). The effort to hold the hindrances in check is imperative both at the start of meditative training and throughout the course of its development. For when the hindrances arise, they disperse attention and darken the quality of awareness, to the detriment of calm and clarity. The hindrances do not come from outside the mind but from within. They appear through the activation of certain tendencies constantly lying dormant in the deep recesses of the mental continuum, awaiting the opportunity to surface.

Generally what sparks the hindrances into activity is the input afforded by sense experience. The physical organism is equipped with
five sense faculties each receptive to its own specific kind of data; the eye to forms, the ear to sounds, the nose to smells, the tongue to tastes, the body to tangibles. Sense objects continuously impinge on the senses, which relay the information they receive to the mind, where it is processed, evaluated, and accorded an appropriate response. But the mind can deal with the impressions it receives in different ways, governed in the first place by the manner in which it attends to them. When the mind adverts to the incoming data carelessly, with unwise consideration (Ayonisomanasikāra), the sense objects tend to stir up unwholesome states. They do this either directly, through their immediate impact, or else indirectly by depositing memory traces which later may swell up as the objects of defiled thoughts, images, and fantasies. As a general rule the defilement that is activated corresponds to the object; attractive objects provoke desire, disagreeable objects provoke ill will, and indeterminate objects provoke the defilements connected with delusion.

Since an uncontrolled response to the sensory input stimulates the latent defilements, what is evidently needed to prevent them from arising is control over the senses. Thus the Buddha teaches, as the discipline for keeping the hindrances in check, an exercise called the restraint of the sense faculties (Indriya-saṁvara):

When he perceives a form with the eye, a sound with the ear, an odour with the nose, a taste with the tongue, an impression with the boy, or an object with the mind, he apprehends neither the sign nor the particulars. And he strives to ward off that through which evil and unwholesome states, greed and sorrow, would arise, if he remained with unguarded senses; and he watches over his senses; and restrains his senses.18

18 AN 4:14; Word of the Buddha, p.57
Restraint of the senses does not mean denial of the senses, retreating into a total withdrawal from the sensory world. This is impossible, and even if it could be achieved, the real problem would still not be solved; for the defilements lie in the mind, not in the sense organs or objects. The key to sense control is indicated by the phrase “not apprehending the sign or the particulars.”

The “sign” (Nimitta) is the object’s general appearance insofar as this appearance is grasped as the basis for defiled thoughts; the “particulars” (Anubyañjanā) are its less conspicuous features. If sense control is lacking, the mind roams recklessly over the sense fields. First it grasps the sign, which sets the defilements into motion, then it explores the particulars, which permits them to multiply and thrive.

To restrain the senses requires that mindfulness and clear understanding be applied to the encounter with the sense fields. Sense consciousness occurs in a series, as a sequence of momentary cognitive acts each having its own special task. The initial stages in the series occur as automatic functions: first the mind adverts to the object, then apprehends it, then admits the percept, examines it, and identifies it. Immediately following the identification a space opens up in which there occurs a free evaluation of the object leading to the choice of a response. When mindfulness is absent the latent defilements, pushing for an opportunity to emerge will motivate a wrong consideration. One will grasp the sign of the object, explore its details, and thereby give the defilements their opportunity: on account of greed one will become fascinated by an agreeable object, on account of aversion one will be repelled by a disagreeable object. But when one applies mindfulness to the sensory encounter, one nips the cognitive process in the bud before it can evolve into the stages that stimulate the dormant taints. Mindfulness holds the hindrances in check by keeping the mind at the level of what is sensed. It rivets awareness on the given, preventing the mind from embellishing the datum with ideas born of greed, aversion, and delusion. Then, with this lucent awareness as a

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Yatvādhikaṇaṇamanaṇimitaggāhīsattiviharandhamabhijjādhamanassāpāpakāakusalādham māanvāssaveyyuṃ, tassasaṃvarāyapaṭipajjati, rakkhatimanindiyesaṃvarāṇāpajjati.
guide, the mind can proceed to comprehend the object as it is, without being led astray.

1.8.2 Abandon the Arisen Unwholesome States

Effort to dispel, to overcome the evil, unwholesome things that have already arisen. These unwholesome things are of two kinds:

Vitakkamaakussla- responsible for evil deeds or words such as killing, stealing or lying, which one may have already committed and Pariyutthaakusala, which gives rise to thoughts of lust and sensuous desires.

Anusayaakusala- which has not yet arisen but lying dormant, and will arise as and when an opportunity offers.

Of these two kinds, Vitakkamaakusala is dispelled or put away by Sīla training. Meticulous observance of Sīlas automatically puts away the evil deeds and words arising out of Vitakkamaakusala. Evil thoughts of lust and desires belonging to Paiyutthaakusala are dispelled by Samathavipassanā (concentration and insight meditation).

Anusayaakusala may be momentarily put away by Vipassanā (insight meditation). Anusaya defilements can be entirely got rid of, rooted out, only when Ariyamaggañña (knowledge pertaining to the Noble Path) is attained. It is with this view of completely uprooting this Anusaya defilement that Vipassanā meditation should be practised. This point is subtle and deep and can be fully grasped only by those who have practiced Vipassanā meditation effectively and adequately.

Herein the disciple rouses his will to overcome the evil, unwholesome states that have already arisen and he makes effort, stirs up his energy, and exerts his mind and strives.¹⁹

Despite the effort at sense control the defilements may still surface. They swell up from the depths of the mental continuum, from the buried strata of past accumulations, to congeal into unwholesome thoughts and emotions. When this happens a new kind of effort becomes necessary, the effort to abandon arisen unwholesome states, called \( \text{(Pahānappadhāna)} \):

He does not retain any thought of sensual lust, ill will, or harmfulness, or any other evil and unwholesome states that may have arisen; he abandons them, dispels them, destroys them, causes them to disappear.\(^{20}\)

Just as a skilled physician has different medicines for different ailments, so the Buddha has different antidotes for the different hindrances, some equally applicable to all, some geared to a particular hindrance. In an important discourse the Buddha explains five techniques for expelling distracting thoughts.\(^{21}\)

The first is to expel the defiled thought with a wholesome thought which is its exact opposite, analogous of the way a carpenter might use a new peg to drive out an old one. For each of the five hindrances there is a specific remedy, a line of meditation designed expressly to deflate it and destroy it. This remedy can be applied intermittently, when a hindrance springs up and disrupts meditation on the primary subject; or it can be taken as a primary subject itself, used to counter a defilement repeatedly seen to be a persistent obstacle to one’s practice. But for the antidote to become effective in the first role, as a temporary expedient required by the upsurge of a hindrance, it is best to gain some familiarity with it by making it a primary object, at least for short periods.

For desire a remedy of general application is the meditation on impermanence, which knocks away the underlying prop of clinging, the implicit assumption that the objects clung to are stable and durable.

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\(^{20}\)AN  4: 14; Word of the Buddha, p. 58. Bhikkhave, \( \text{bhikkhunoppajatikāmavitakkovāhyādavitakkovāvīhimsāvitakkovā.} \) Taṃcebhikkhuadhivāseti, \( \text{nuppajahatinavinodinabantikarotinaanabhāvamgamet.} \)

\(^{21}\)MN 20; Word of the Buddha, p. 58.
For desire in the specific form of sensual lust the most potent antidote is the contemplation of the unattractive nature of the body. Ill will meets its proper remedy in the meditation on loving kindness (Mettā), which banishes all traces of hatred and anger through the methodical radiation of the altruistic wish that all beings be well and happy. The dispelling of dullness and drowsiness calls for a special effort to arouse energy, for which several methods are suggested: the visualization of a brilliant ball of light, getting up and doing a period of brisk walking meditation, reflection on death, or simply making a firm determination to continue striving. Restlessness and worry are most effectively countered by turning the mind to a simple object that tends to calm it down; the method usually recommended is mindfulness of breathing, attention to the in-and-out flow of the breath. In the case of doubt the special remedy is investigation: to make inquiries, ask questions, and study the teachings until the obscure points become clear.22

Whereas this first of the five methods for expelling the hindrances involves a one-to-one alignment between a hindrance and its remedy, the other four utilize general approaches. The second marshals the forces of shame (Hiri) and moral dread (Ottappā) to abandon the unwanted thought: one reflects on the thought as vile and ignoble or considers its undesirable consequences until an inner revulsion sets in which drives the thought away.

The third method involves a deliberate diversion of attention. When an unwholesome thought arises and clamours to be noticed, instead of indulging it one simply shuts it out by redirecting one’s attention elsewhere, as if closing one’s eyes or looking away to avoid an unpleasant sight.

The fourth method uses the opposite approach. Instead of turning away from the unwanted thought, one confronts it directly as an object, scrutinizes its features, and investigates its source. When this is done the thought quiets down and eventually disappears. For an unwholesomethought is like a thief: it only creates trouble when its operation is concealed, but put under observation it becomes tame.

22DN,II.p- 290; MN,I. P-55
The fifth method, to be used only as a last resort, is suppression—vigorously restraining the unwholesome thought with the power of the will in the way a strong man might throw a weaker man to the ground and keep him pinned there with his weight.

By applying these five methods with skill and discretion, the Buddha says, one becomes a master of all the pathways of thought. One is no longer the subject of the mind but its master. Whatever thought one does not want to think, that one will not think. Even if unwholesome thoughts occasionally arise, one can dispel them immediately, just as quickly as a red-hot pen will turn to steam a few drops of water.

### 1.8.3 Arouse Unarisen Wholesome States

Herein the disciple rouses his will to arouse wholesome states that have not yet arisen; and he makes effort, stirs up his energy, exerts his mind and strives. 23

Simultaneously with the removal of defilements, right effort also imposes the task of cultivating wholesome states of mind. This involves two divisions: the arousing of wholesome states not yet arisen and the maturation of wholesome states already arisen.

The first of the two divisions is also known as the endeavour to develop (Bhāvanappadhāna) thought. The wholesome states to be developed can be grouped in various ways e.g. serenity and insight, the four foundations of mindfulness, the eight factors of the path, etc.; the Buddha lays special stress on a set called the seven factors of enlightenment (Sattabojjhaṅgā): mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, and equanimity.

Thus he develops the factors of enlightenment, based on solitude, on detachment, on cessation, and ending in deliverance, namely: the

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enlightenment factors of mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity.²⁴

The seven states are grouped together as “enlightenment factors” because they lead to enlightenment and because they constitute enlightenment. In the preliminary stages of the path they prepare the way for the great realization; in the end they remain as its components. The experience of enlightenment, perfect and complete understanding, is just these seven components working in unison to break all shackles and bring final release from sorrow.

The way to enlightenment starts with mindfulness. Mindfulness clears the ground for insight into the nature of things by bringing to light phenomena in the now, the present moment, stripped of all subjective commentary, interpretations, and projections. Then, when mindfulness has brought the bare phenomena into focus, the factor of investigation steps in to search out their characteristics, conditions, and consequences. Whereas mindfulness is basically receptive, investigation is an active factor which unflinchingly probes, analyzes, and dissects phenomena to uncover their fundamental structures.

The work of investigation requires energy, the third factor of enlightenment, which mounts in three stages. The first, inceptive energy, shakes off lethargy and arouses initial enthusiasm, as the work of contemplation advances, energy gathers momentum and enters the second stage, perseverance, wherein it propels the practice without slackening. Finally, at the peak, energy reaches the third stage, invincibility, where it drives contemplation forward leaving the hindrances powerless to stop it.

If energy increases, the fourth factor of enlightenment is quickened. This is rapture, a pleasurable interest in the object. Rapture gradually builds up, ascending to ecstatic heights: waves of bliss run through the body, the mind glows with joy, fervour and confidence intensify. But these experiences, as encouraging as they are, still contain a flaw: they create an excitation verging on restlessness. With further

²⁴ The Pāli names for the seven are: sati sambojjhaṅga, dhammavicayasambojjhaṅga, vīriyasambojjhaṅga, passaddhisambojjhaṅga, samādhisambojjhaṅga, upekkhāsambojjhaṅga. AN.4:14; Word of the Buddha, p.59.
practice, however, rapture subsides and a tone of quietness sets in signalling the rise of the fifth factor, tranquillity. Rapture remains present, but it is now subdued, and the work of contemplation proceeds with self-possessed serenity.

Tranquillity brings to ripeness concentration, the sixth factor, one-pointed unification of mind. Then, with the deepening of concentration, the last enlightenment factor comes into dominance. This is equanimity, inward poise and balance free from the two defects of excitement and inertia. When inertia prevails, energy must be aroused; when excitement prevails, it is necessary to exercise restraint. But when both defects have been vanquished the practice can unfold evenly without need for concern. The mind of equanimity is compared to the driver of a chariot when the horses are moving at a steady pace: he neither has to urge them forward nor to hold them back, but can just sit comfortably and watch the scenery go by. Equanimity has the same “on-looking” quality. When the other factors are balanced the mind remains poised watching the play of phenomena.

1.8.4 Maintain Arisen Wholesome States

Effort to maintain the wholesome things that have already arisen and to develop them to maturity and full perfection. This is plain enough. A yogī nothing everything at the moment of seeing, hearing, touching, knowing, is actually making effort to prevent, to deny opportunity to evil, unwholesome things from arising. It also means endeavouring to remove, to eradicate the unwholesome things that have already arisen. The yogi is at the same time striving to develop the higher stage of Vipassanākusalas and AriyaPath, merits which have not yet arisen. He is also striving to maintain and to bring to perfection the Vipassanākusalas which have already arisen. Thus, every time one is noting each phenomenon as a meditation exercise, one is developing the path of the Right Effort or the four Sammappadhānas, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Effort to prevent non-arisen Akusalas from arising.
2. Effort to get rid of Akusalas that have already arisen.
3. Effort to promote, to cause to arise Kusalas which have not yet arisen.
4. Effort to maintain, develop and to bring to perfection Kusalas which have already arisen.

These are called the four Sammappadhānas, the four great efforts.

Every time one is engaged in the good deeds of Dāna, Sīla and Bhāvanā, one is developing the path of Right Effort or the four great efforts. Especially so when one performs these deeds with a view to escaping from the sufferings of the cycle of Saṁsāra. The meritorious deed is, needless to say, part and parcel with the path of Right Effort. Striving to do good deed is Right Effort.

Herein the disciple rouses his will to maintain the wholesome things that have already arisen, and not to allow them to disappear, but to bring them to growth, to maturity, and to the full perfection of development; exerts his mind and strives.25

This last of the four right efforts aims at maintaining the arisen wholesome factors and bringing them to maturity. The “endeavour to maintain” (Anurakkhanappadhāna) is explained as the effort to “keep firmly in the mind a favourable object of concentration that has arisen.”26 The work of guarding the object causes the seven enlightenment factors to gain stability and gradually increase in strength until they issue in the liberating realization. This marks the culmination of right effort, the goal in which the countless individual acts of exertion finally reach fulfilment.

1.9Right Mindfulness (Sammāsati)

Sammāsati, the seventh step is right mindfulness. This is the most crucial step for one who wishes to attain and abide in the bliss of Nibbāna. According to the MahāsatipaṭṭhānaSutta27 of the DīghaNikāya “mindfulness” should be maintained in four ways, namely:

25AN 4:13; Word of the Buddha, p. 59
26AN 4:14; Word of the Buddha, p.59
27DN,II.p.290
1. Mindfulness of body (Kāyānupassanā),
2. Mindfulness of feeling (Vedanānupassanā),
3. Mindfulness of consciousness (Cittānupassanā),
4. Mindfulness of Dhamma (Dhammānupassanā).

In the Dhammapada it is said “If you hold yourself dear, you watch yourself well”.28 Mindfulness, complete awareness, and clear comprehension, these are the ways with which one brings meditation to fulfilment. He who is mindful and aware of himself at all times is already at the gates of the Deathless.

Referring to the fourfold foundations of mindfulness the Buddha said, “O monks this is one Only Way for the purification of beings”.29 There is no meditation, no way of purification without the Four Foundation of Mindfulness (Cattārosatipaṭṭhānā). Thus mindfulness or meditation is the life-blood of Buddhism. As the Buddha explains:

And what, monk, is right mindfulness? Herein, a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief concerning the world. He dwells contemplating feelings in feelings …states of mind in states of mind…phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief concerning the world.30


29DN.II. p-290Ekāyanoayaṁ, bhikkave, maggosattānaṁvisuddhiyā.
30DN.22; Word of the Buddha, p. 61
The Buddha says that the four foundations of mindfulness form “the only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering upon the right path and the realization of Nibbāna.”

Ekāyanoayambhikkhavemaggosattānambuddhiyāsokapariddavān aṃsamatikkamāyadukkhadommanassānāmatthaṅgamāyañāyassaadhiphamā yanibbānassasacchikiriyāyayadīmcattārosatiptaṭhānātiitiyantaṃvutta ṃidametamapṭiccavuttanti.

They are called “the only way” (Ekāyanomaggo), not for the purpose of setting forth a narrow dogmatism, but to indicate that the attainment of liberation can only issue from the penetrating contemplation of the field of experience undertaken in the practice of right mindfulness.

Of the four applications of mindfulness, the contemplation of the body is concerned with the material side of existence; the other three are concerned principally (though not solely) with the mental side. The completion of the practice requires all four contemplations. Though no fixed order is laid down in which they are to be taken up, the body is generally taken first as the basic sphere of contemplation; the others come into view later, when mindfulness has gained in strength and clarity. Limitations of space do not allow for a complete explanation of all four foundations. Here we have to settle for a brief synopsis.

1.9.1 Mindfulness of Body (Kāyānupassanā)

The Buddha begins his exposition of the body with contemplation of the mindfulness of breathing (Ānāpānasati). In actual practice mindfulness of breathing usually serves as the “rootmeditation subject” (Mūlakammatṭhānā), the foundation for the entire course of contemplation. It would be a mistake, however, to consider this subject merely an exercise for neophytes. By itself mindfulness of breathing can lead to all the stages of the path culminating in full awakening. In fact, it was this meditation subject that the Buddha used on the night of his own enlightenment. He also reverted to it throughout the years during

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31DN.22: Work of the Buddha, p.61
his solitary retreats, and constantly recommended it to the monks, praising it as “peaceful and sublime, an unadulterated blissful abiding, which banishes at once and stills evil unwholesome thoughts as soon as they arise.”

\[ Pītimanassakāyopipassambhāti, \text{ cattampipassambhāti.} \]

\[ Yasmiṃsamaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhunopītimanassakāyopipassambhāti, cittambhāti, \]

\[ passaddhisambojjaṅgatasmīṃsamayebhikkhunoāraddhoṭi, \]

\[ passaddhisambojjaṅgatasmīṃsamayebhikkubhāveti, \]

\[ passaddhisambojjaṅgatasmīṃsamayebhikkhunobhāvanāpāripurīṃgacch ati. \]

Mindfulness of breathing can function so effectively as a subject of meditation because it works with a process that is always available to us, the process of respiration. What it does to burn this process into a basis for meditation is simply to bring it into the range of awareness by making the breath an object of observation. The meditation requires no special intellectual sophistication, only awareness of the breath. One merely breathes naturally through the nostrils keeping the breath in mind at the contact point around the nostrils or upper lip, where the sensation of breath can be felt as the air moves in and out. There should be no attempt to control the breath or to force it into predetermined rhythms, only a mindful contemplation of the natural process of breathing in and out. The awareness of breath cuts through the complexities of discursive thinking, rescues us from pointless wandering in the labyrinth of vain imaginings, and grounds us solidly in the present. For whenever we become aware of breathing, really aware of it, we can be aware of it only in the present, never in the past or the future.

The Buddha’s exposition of mindfulness of breathing involves four basic steps. The first two (which are not necessarily sequential) require that a long inhalation or exhalation be noted as it occurs, and that a short inhalation or exhalation be noted as it occurs. One simply observes the breath moving in and out, observing it as closely as possible, nothing whether the breath is long or short. As mindfulness grows sharper, the breath can be followed through the entire course of its

\[ ^{32} \text{MN.p.118} \]
movement, from the beginning of an inhalation through its intermediary stages to its end. This third step is called “clearly perceiving the entire (breath) body.” The fourth step, “calming the bodily function,” involves a progressive quieting down of the breath and its associated bodily functions until they become extremely fine and subtle. Beyond these four basic steps lie more advanced practices which direct mindfulness of breathing towards deep concentration and insight.\(^{33}\)

Another practice in the contemplation of the body, which extends meditation outwards from the confines of a single fixed position, is mindfulness of the postures.

The body can assume four basic postures; walking, standing, sitting, and lying down; and a variety of other positions marking the change from one posture to another.

Mindfulness of the postures focuses full attention on the body in whatever position it assumes: when walking one is aware of walking, when standing one is aware of standing, when sitting one is aware of sitting, when lying down one is aware of lying down, when changing postures one is aware of changing postures.

The contemplation of the postures illuminates the impersonal nature of the body. It reveals that the body is not a self or the belonging of a self, but merely a configuration of living matter subject to the directing influence of volition.

The next carries the extension of mindfulness a step further. This exercise, called “mindfulness and clear comprehension” (Sati-sampajañña), adds to the bare awareness an element of understanding. When performing any action, one performs it with full awareness or clear comprehension. Going and coming, looking ahead and looking aside, bending and stretching, dressing, eating, drinking, urinating, defecating, falling asleep, waking up, speaking, remaining silent—all become occasions for the progress of meditation when done with clear comprehension.

\(^{33}\) Vism VIII, p-145-244
In the commentaries clear comprehension is explained as fourfold: (1) understanding the purpose of the action, i.e., recognizing its aim and determining whether that accords with the Dhamma; (2) understanding suitability, i.e., knowing the most efficient means to achieve one’s aim; (3) understanding the range of meditation, i.e., keeping the mind constantly in a meditative frame even when engaged in action; and (4) understanding without delusion, i.e., seeing the action as an impersonal process devoid of a controlling ego-entity.34

The next two sections on mindfulness of the body present analytical contemplations intended to expose the body’s real nature. One of these is the meditation on the body’s unattractiveness, already touched on in connection with right effort; the other, the analysis of the body into the four primary elements.

The first, the meditation on unattractiveness, is designed to counter infatuation with the body, especially in its form of sexual desire. The Buddha teaches that the sexual drive is a manifestation of craving, thus a cause of Dukkha that has to be reduced and extricated as a precondition for bringing Dukkha to an end.

The meditation aims at weakening sexual desire by depriving the sexual urge of its cognitive underpinning, the perception of the body as sensually alluring. Sensual desire rises and falls together with this perception. It springs up because we view the body as attractive; it declines when this perception of beauty is removed. The perception of bodily attractiveness in turn lasts only so long as the body is looked at superficially, grasped in terms of selected impressions. To counter that perception we have to refuse to stop with these impressions but proceed to inspect the body at a deeper level, with a probing scrutiny grounded in dispassion.

Precisely this is what is undertaken in the meditation on unattractiveness, which turns back the tide of sensuality by pulling away its perceptual prop. The meditation takes one’s own body as object, since for a neophyte to start off with the body of another, especially a member of the opposite sex, might fail to accomplish the desired result.

Using visualization as an aid, one mentally dissects the body into its components and investigates them one by one, bringing their repulsive nature to light. The texts mention thirty-two parts: head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, stomach contents, excrement, brain, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, snot, spittle, synovial fluid, and urine. The repulsiveness of the parts implies the same for the whole: the body seen close-up is truly unattractive, its beautiful appearance a mirage. But the aim of this meditation must not be misapprehended. The aim is not to produce aversion and disgust but detachment, to extinguish the fire of lust by removing its fuel.35

The other analytical contemplation deals with the body in a different way. This meditation, called the analysis into elements (Dhātuvatthāna), sets out to counter our innate tendency to identify with the body by exposing the body’s essentially impersonal nature.

This means it employs, as its name indicates, the mental dissection of the body into the four primary elements, referred to by the archaic names earth, water, fire, and air, but actually signifying the four principal behavioural modes of matter: solidity, fluidity, heat, and oscillation. The solid element is seen most clearly in the body’s solid parts—the organs, tissues, and bones; the fluid element, in the bodily fluids; the heat element, in the body’s temperature; the oscillation element, in the respiratory process.

The break with the identification of the body as “I” or “my self” is effected by a widening of perspective after the elements have come into view.

Having analyzed the body into the elements, one then considers that all four elements, the chief aspects of bodily existence, are essentially identical with the chief aspects of external matter, with which the body is in constant interchange. When one vividly realizes this through prolonged meditation, one ceases to identify with the body, ceases to cling to it. One sees that the body is nothing more than a particular configuration

35Vism VIII, 42-144
of changing material processes which support a stream of changing mental processes. There is nothing here that can be considered a truly existent self, nothing that can provide a substantial basis for the sense of personal identity.\textsuperscript{36}

The last exercise in mindfulness of the body is a series of “cemetery meditations,” contemplations of the body’s disintegration after death, which may be performed either imaginatively, with the aid of pictures, or through direct confrontation with a corpse. By any of these means one obtains a clear mental image of a decomposing body, then applies the process to one’s own body, considering: “This body, now so full of life, has the same nature and is subject to the same fate. It cannot escape death, cannot escape disintegration, but must eventually die and decompose.” Again, the purpose of this meditation should not be misunderstood. The aim is not to indulge in a morbid fascination with death and corpses, but to sunder our egoistic clinging to existence with a contemplation sufficiently powerful to break its hold. The clinging to existence subsists through the implicit assumption of permanence. In the sight of a corpse we meet the teacher who proclaims unambiguously: “Everything formed is impermanent.”

1.9.2 Mindfulness of Feeling (Vedanānupassanā)

The next foundation of mindfulness is feeling (Vedanā). The word “feeling” is used here, not in the sense of emotion (a complex phenomenon best subsumed under the third and fourth foundations of mindfulness), but in the narrower sense of the effective tone or “hedonic quality” of experience. This may be of three kinds, yielding three principal types of feeling: the Buddha teaches that feeling is an inseparable concomitant of consciousness, since every act of knowing is coloured by some affective tone. Thus feeling is present at every moment of experience; it may be strong or weak, clear or indistinct, but some feeling must accompany the cognition.

Feeling arises in dependence on a mental event called “contact” (Phassa). Contact marks the “coming together” of consciousness with the object via a sense faculty; it is the factor by virtue of which consciousness

\textsuperscript{36}Vism., XI. 27-117
“touches” the object presenting itself to the mind through the sense organ. Thus there are six kinds of contact distinguished by the six sense faculties—eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, and mind-contact—and six kinds of feeling distinguished by the contact from which they spring.

Feeling acquires special importance as an object of contemplation because it is feeling that usually triggers the latent defilement into activity. The feelings may not be clearly registered, but in subtle ways they nourish and sustain the dispositions to unwholesome states. Thus when a pleasant feeling arises, we fall under the influence of the defilement greed and cling to it.

When a painful feeling occurs, we respond with displeasure, hate, and fear, which are aspects of aversion.

And when a neutral feeling occurs, we generally do not notice it, or let it lull us into a false sense of security—states of mind governed by delusion. From this it can be seen that each of the root defilements is conditioned by a particular kind of feeling: greed by pleasant feeling, aversion by painful feeling, delusion by neutral feeling.

But the link between feelings and the defilements is not a necessary one. Pleasure does not always have to lead to greed, pain to aversion, neutral feeling to delusion. The tie between them can be snapped, and one essential means for snapping it is mindfulness. Feeling will stir up a defilement only when it is not noticed, when it is indulged rather than observed. By turning it into an object of observation, mindfulness defuses the feeling so that it cannot provoke an unwholesome response. Then, instead of relating to the feeling by way of habit through attachment, repulsion, or apathy, we relate by way of contemplation, using the feeling as a springboard for understanding the nature of experience.

In the early stages the contemplation of feeling involves attending to the arisen feelings, noting their distinctive qualities: pleasant, painful, neutral. The feeling is noted without identifying with it, without taking it to be “I” or “mine” or something happening “to me.” Awareness is kept at the level of bare attention: one watches each feeling that arises, seeing
it as merely a feeling, a bare mental event shorn of all subjective references, all pointers to an ego. The task is simply to note the feeling’s quality, its tone of pleasure, pain, or neutrality.

But as practice advances, as one goes on noting each feeling, letting it go and noting the next, the focus of attention shifts from the qualities of feelings to the process of feeling itself. The process reveals a ceaseless flux of feelings arising and dissolving, succeeding one another without a half. Within the process there is nothing lasting.

Feeling itself is only a stream of events, occasions of feeling flashing into being moment by moment, dissolving as soon as they arise. Thus begins the insight into impermanence, which, as it evolves, overturns the three unwholesome roots. There is no greed for pleasant feelings, no aversion for painful feelings, no delusion over neutral feelings. All are seen as merely fleeting and substanceless events devoid of any true enjoyment or basis for involvement.

1.9.3Mindfulness of Consciousness (Cittānupassanā)

With this foundation of mindfulness we turn from a particular mental factor, to the general state of mind to which that factor belongs. To understand what is entailed by this contemplation it is helpful to look at the Buddhist conception of the mind. Usually we think of the mind as an enduring faculty remaining identical with itself through the succession of experiences. Though experience changes, the mind which undergoes the changing experience seems to remain the same, perhaps modified in certain ways but still retaining its identity. However, in the Buddha’s teaching the notion of a permanent mental organ is rejected. The mind is regarded, not as a lasting subject of thought, feeling, and volition, but as a sequence of momentary mental acts, each distinct and discrete, their connections with one another causal rather than substantial.

A single act of consciousness is called a Citta, which we shall render “a state of mind.” Each Citta consists of many components, the chief of which is consciousness itself, the basic experiencing of the object; consciousness is also called Citta, the name for the whole
being given to its principal part. Along with consciousness every Citta contains a set of concomitants called Cetasikās, mental factors. These include feeling, perception, volition, the emotions, etc.; in short, all the mental functions except the primary knowing of the object, which is Citta or consciousness.

Since consciousness in itself is just a bare experiencing of an object, it cannot be differentiated through its own nature but only by way of its associated factors, the Cetasikās. The Cetasikās colour the Citta and give it its distinctive character; thus when we want to pinpoint the Cittas an object of contemplation, we have to do so by using the Cetasikāsas indicators. In his exposition of the contemplation of the state of mind, the Buddha mentions, by reference to Cetasikās, sixteen kinds of Citta to be noted: the mind with lust, the mind without lust, the mind with aversion, the mind without aversion, the mind with delusion, the mind without delusion, the cramped mind, the scattered mind, the developed mind, the undeveloped mind, the surpassable mind, the unsurpassable mind, the concentrated mind, the un-concentrated mind, the freed mind, the unfreed mind, for practical purposes it is sufficient at the start to focus solely on the first six states, noting whether the mind is associated with any of the unwholesome roots or free from them. When a particular Cittas is present, it is contemplated merely as a Citta, a state of mind. It is not identified with as “I” or “mine,” not taken as a self on as something belonging to a self. Whether it is a pure state of mind or a defiled state, a lofty state or a low one, there should be no elation or dejection, only a clear recognition of the state. The state is simply noted, then allowed to pass without clinging to the desired ones or resenting the undesired ones.

As contemplation deepens, the contents of the mind become increasingly rarefied. Irrelevant flights of thought, imagination, and emotion subside, mindfulness becomes clearer, the mind remains intently aware, watching its own process of becoming. At times there might appear to be a persisting observer behind the process, but with continued practice even this apparent observer disappears. The mind itself – the seemingly solid, stable mind dissolves into a stream of Cittas flashing in and out of being moment by moment, coming from nowhere and going nowhere, yet continuing in sequence without pause.
1.9.4 Mindfulness of Dhamma (Dhammānupassanā)

In the context of the fourth foundation of mindfulness, the multivalent word Dhammā (here intended in the plural) has two interconnected meaning, as the account in the Sutta shows. One meaning is Cetasikās, the mental factors, which are now attended to in their own right apart from their role as colouring the state of mind, as was done in the previous contemplation. The other meaning is the elements of actuality, the ultimate constituents of experience as structured in the Buddha’s teaching. To convey both senses we render Dhammā as “phenomena.” for lack of a better alternative but when we do so this should not be taken to imply the existence of some phenomenon or substance behind the phenomena. The point of the Buddha’s teaching of Anttā, egolessness, is that the basic constituents of actuality are bare phenomena (Suddhadhammā) occurring without any nominal support.

The Sutta section on the contemplation of phenomena is divided into five sub-sections, each devoted to a different set of phenomena: the five hindrances, the five aggregates, the six inner and outer sense bases, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the Four Noble Truths. Among these, the five hindrances and the seven enlightenment factors are Dhammā in the narrower sense of mental factors; the others are Dhammā in the broader sense of constituents of actuality.

The five hindrances and seven factors of enlightenment require special attention because they are the principal impediments and aids to liberation. The hindrances – sensual desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and worry, and doubt – generally become manifest in an early stage of practice, soon after the initial expectations and gross disturbances subside and the subtle tendencies find the opportunity to surface. Whenever one of the hindrances crops up, its presence should be noted; then, when it fades away, a note should be made of its disappearance. To ensure that the hindrances are kept under control an element of comprehension is needed: we have to understand how the hindrances arise, how they can be removed, and how they can be prevented from arising in the future.  

37 Soma There, The Way of Mindfulness, p.116-127
A similar mode of contemplation is to be applied to the seven factors of enlightenment: mindfulness, investigation, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity. When any one of these factors arises, its presence should be noted. Then, after noting its presence, one has to investigate to discover how it arises and how it can be matured.\(^\text{38}\)

When they first spring up, the enlightenment factors are weak, but with consistent cultivation they accumulate strength. Mindfulness initiates the contemplative process.

When it becomes well-established, it arouses investigation, the probing quality of intelligence. Investigation in turn calls forth energy, energy gives rise to rapture, rapture leads to tranquillity, tranquillity to one-pointed concentration, and concentration to equanimity.

Thus the whole evolving course of practice leading to enlightenment begins with mindfulness, which remains throughout as the regulating power ensuring that the mind is clear, cognizant, and balanced.

1.10 Right Concentration (*Sammāsamādhi*)

The eighth factor of the path is right concentration, in *Pāli* *Sammāsamādhi*. Concentration represents an intensification of a mental factor present in every state of consciousness. This factor, one-pointedness of mind (*Cittekaggtā*), has the function of unifying the other mental factors in the task of cognition. It is the factor responsible for the individuating aspect of consciousness, ensuring that every *Citta* or act of mind remains centred on its object. At any given moment the mind must be cognizant of something - a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or a mental object.

The factor of one-pointedness unifies the mind and its other concomitants in the task of cognizing the object, while it simultaneously exercises the function of centring all the constituents of the cognitive act on the object. One-pointedness of mind explains the fact that in any act of

\(^{38}\)Soma There.*The Way of Mindfulness*, p. 131-146
consciousness there is a central point of focus, towards which the entire objective datum points from its outer peripheries to its inner nucleus.

However, *Samādhi* is only a particular kind of one-pointedness; it is not equivalent to one-pointedness in its entirety. A gourmet sitting down to a meal, an assassin about to slay his victim, a soldier on the battlefield: these all act with a concentrated mind, but their concentration cannot be characterized as *Samādhi*. *Samādhi* is exclusively wholesome one-pointedness, the concentration in a wholesome state of mind. Even then its range is still narrower: it does not signify every form of wholesome concentration, but only the intensified concentration that results from a deliberate attempt to raise the mind to a higher, more purified level of awareness.

The commentaries define *Samādhi* as the centring of the mind and mental factors rightly and evenly on an object. *Samādhi*, as wholesome concentration, collects together the ordinarily dispersed and dissipated stream of mental states to induce an inner unification. The two salient features of a concentrated mind are unbroken attentiveness to an object and the consequent tranquillity of the mental functions, qualities which distinguish it from the unconcentrated mind. The mind untrained in concentration moves in a scattered manner which the Buddha compares to the flapping about of a fish taken from the water and thrown onto dry land. It cannot stay fixed but rushes from idea to idea, from thought to thought, without inner control. Such a distracted mind is also a deluded mind. Overwhelmed by worries and concerns, a constant prey to the defilements, it sees things only in fragments, distorted by the ripples of random thoughts. But the mind that has been trained in concentration, in contrast, can remain focused on its object without distraction. This freedom from distraction further induces a softness and serenity which make the mind an effective instrument for penetration. Like a lake unruffled by any breeze, the concentrated mind is a faithful reflector that mirrors whatever is placed before it exactly as it is.

1.10.1 The Development of Concentration

Concentration can be developed through either of two methods: either as the goal of a system of practice directed expressly towards the
attainment of deep concentration at the level of absorption or as the incidental accompaniment of the path intended to generate insight. The former method is called the development of serenity (Samatha-bhāvanā), the second the development of insight (Vipassanā-bhāvanā).

Both paths share certain preliminary requirements. For both, moral discipline must be severed, the meditator must seek out suitable instruction (preferably from a personal teacher), and must resort to a dwelling conducive to practice. Once these preliminaries have been observed with, the meditator on the path of serenity has to obtain an object of meditation, something to be used as a focal point for developing concentration.\(^{39}\)

If the meditator has a qualified teacher, the teacher will probably assign him an object judged to be appropriate for his temperament. If he doesn’t have a teacher, he will have to select an object himself, perhaps after some experimentation. The meditation manuals collect the subjects of serenity meditation into a set of forty, called “places of work” (Kammatṭhāna) since they are the places where the meditator does the work of practice. The forty may be listed as follows:

1. Ten Kasinas
2. Ten unattractive objects (Dasaasubhā)
3. Ten recollections (Dasaanussatiyo)
4. Four sublime states (Cattārobrahmavihārā)
5. Four immaterial states (Cattāroāruppā)
6. One perception (Ekāsaññā)
7. One analysis (Ekavavatṭhāna).

The Kasinas are devices representing certain primordial qualities. Four represent the primary elements; the earth, water, fire, and air Kasina; four represent colours; the blue, yellow, red, and white Kasina; the other two are the light and the space Kasina. Each Kasinais a concrete object representative of the universal quality it signifies. Thus an earthKasinerould be a circular disk filled with clay. To develop concentration on the earth Kasinathe meditator sets the disk in front of him, fixes his gaze on it, and contemplates “earth, earth.” A

\(^{39}\)Vism, III-27-90.
similar method is used for the other *Kasina*, with appropriate changes to fit the case.

The ten “unattractive objects” are corpses in different stages of decomposition. This subject appears similar to the contemplation of bodily decay in the mindfulness of the body, and in fact in olden times the cremation ground was recommended as the most appropriate place for both. But the two meditations differ in emphasis. In the mindfulness exercise stress falls on the application of reflective thought, the sight of the decaying corpse serving as a stimulus for consideration of one’s own eventual death and disintegration. In this exercise the use of reflective thought is discouraged. The stress instead falls on one-pointed mental fixation on the object, the less thought the better.

The ten recollections form a miscellaneous collection. The first three are devotional meditations on the qualities of Triple Gem – the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha; they use as their basis standard formulas that have come down in the *Suttas*. The next three recollections also rely on ancient formulas: the meditations on morality, generosity, and the potential for divine-like qualities in oneself. Then comes mindfulness of death, the contemplation of the unattractive nature of the body, mindfulness of breathing, and lastly, the recollection of peace on Nibbāna.

The four sublime states or “divine abodes” are the outwardly directed social attitudes; loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity; developed into universal radiations which are gradually extended in range until they encompass all living beings. The four immaterial states are the objective bases for certain deep levels of absorption: the base of infinite space, the base of infinite consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. These become accessible as objects only to those who are already adept in concentration. The “one perception” is the perception of the repulsiveness of food, a discursive topic intended to reduce attachment to the pleasures of the plate. The “one analysis” is the contemplation of the body in terms of the four primary elements, already discussed in the chapter on right mindfulness.
When such a variety of meditation subjects is presented, the aspiring meditator without a teacher might be perplexed as to which to choose. The manuals divide the forty subjects according to their suitability for different personality types. Thus the unattractive objects and the contemplation of the parts of the body are judged to be most suitable for a lustful type, the meditation on loving kindness to be best for a hating type, the meditation on the qualities of the Triple Gem to be most effective for a devotional type, etc. But for practical purposes the beginner in meditation can generally be advised to start with a simple subject that helps reduce discursive thinking. Mental distraction caused by restlessness and scattered thoughts is a common problem faced by persons of all different character types; thus a meditator of any temperament can benefit from a subject which promotes a slowing down and stilling of the thought process.

The subject generally recommended for its effectiveness in clearing the mind of stray thoughts is mindfulness of breathing, which can therefore be suggested as the subject most suitable for beginners as well as veterans seeking a direct approach to deep concentration. Once the mind settles down and one’s thought patterns become easier to notice, one might then make use of other subjects to deal with special problems that arise: the meditation on loving kindness may be used to counteract anger and ill will, mindfulness of the bodily parts to weaken sensual lust, the recollection of the Buddha to inspire faith and devotion, the meditation on death to arouse a sense of urgency. The ability to select the subject appropriate to the situation requires skill, but this skill evolves through practice, often through simple trial-and-error experimentation.

1.10.2 The Stages of Concentration

Concentration is not attained all at once but develops in stages. To enable our exposition to cover all the stages of concentration, we will consider the case of a meditator who follows the entire path of serenity meditation from start to finish, and who will make much faster progress than the typical meditator is likely to make. After receiving his meditation subject from a teacher, or selecting it on his own, the meditator retires to a quiet place. There he assumes the correct meditation
posture; the legs crossed comfortably, the upper part of the body held straight and erect, hands placed one above the other on the lap, the head kept steady, the mouth and eyes closed (unless a Kasina or other visual object is used), the breath flowing naturally and regularly through the nostrils.

He then focuses his mind on the object and tries to keep it there, fixed and alert. If the mind strays, he notices this quickly, catches it, and brings it back gently but firmly to the object, doing this over and over as often as is necessary. This initial stage is called preliminary concentration (Parikkamma-samādhi) and the object the preliminary sign (Parikkamma-nimitta).

Once the initial excitement subsides and the mind begins to settle into the practice, the five hindrances are likely to arise, bubbling up from the depths. Sometimes they appear as thoughts, sometimes as images, sometimes as obsessive emotions: surges of desire, anger and resentment, heaviness of mind, agitation, doubts. The hindrances pose a formidable barrier, but with patience and sustained effort they can be overcome. To conquer them the meditator will have to be adroit. At times, when a particular hindrance becomes strong, he may have to lay aside his primary subject of meditation and take up another subject expressly opposed to the hindrance. At other times he will have to persist with his primary subject despite the bumps along the road, bringing his mind back to it again and again.

As he goes on striving along the path of concentration, his exertion activates five mental factors which come to his aid. These factors are intermittently present in ordinary undirected consciousness, but there they lack a unifying bond and thus do not play any special role. However, when activated by the work of meditation, these five factors pick up power, link up with one another, and steer the mind towards Samādhi, which they will govern as the Jhāna factors, the factors of absorption (Jhānaṅga). Stated in their usual order the five are: initial application of mind (Vitakka), sustained application of mind (Vicāra), rapture (Pīṭi), happiness (Sukha), and one-pointedness (Ekaggatā).
Initial application of mind does the work of directing the mind to the object. It takes the mind, lifts it up, and drives it into the object the way one drives a nail through a block of wood. This done, sustained application of mind anchors the mind on the object, keeping it there through its function of examination. To clarify the difference between these two factors, initial application is compared to the striking of a bell, sustained application to the bell’s reverberations. Rapture, the third factor, is the delight and joy that accompany a favourable interest in the object, while happiness, the fourth factor, is the pleasant feeling that accompanies successful concentration. Since rapture and happiness share similar qualities they tend to be confused with each other, but the two are not identical. The difference between them is illustrated by comparing rapture to the joy of a weary desert-farer who sees an oasis in the distance, happiness to his pleasure when drinking from the pond and resting in the shade. The fifth and final factor of absorption is one-pointedness, which has the pivotal function of unifying the mind on the object. When concentration is developed, these five factors spring up and counteract the five hindrances. Each absorption factor opposes a particular hindrance. Initial application of mind, through its work of lifting the mind up to the object, counters dullness and drowsiness.

Sustained application, by anchoring the mind on the object, drives away doubt. Rapture shuts out ill will, happiness excludes restlessness and worry, and one-pointedness counters sensual desire, the most alluring inducement to distraction. Thus, with the strengthening of the absorption factors, the hindrances fade out and subside. They are not yet eradicated: eradication can only be effected by wisdom, the third division of the path; but they have been reduced to a state of quiescence where they cannot disrupt the forward movement of concentration.

At the same time that the hindrances are being over-powered by the Jhāna factors inwardly, on the side of the object too, certain changes are taking place. The original object of concentration, the preliminary sign, is a gross physical object; in the case of a Kasina, it is a disk representing the chosen element or colour, in the case of mindfulness of breathing the touch sensation of the breath, etc. But with the strengthening of

\[^{40}Vism IV, 88-109\]
concentration the original object gives rise to another object called the “learning sign” (Uggaha-nimitta). For a Kasina, this will be a mental image of the disk seen as clearly in the mind as the original object was with the eyes; for the breath it will be a reflex image arisen from the touch sensation of the air currents moving around the nostrils.

When the learning sign appears, the meditator leaves off the preliminary sign and fixes his attention on the new object. In due time still another object will emerge out of the learning sign. This object, is called the “counterpart sign” (Paṭibhāga-nimitta). Purified mental image is many times brighter and clearer than the learning sign. The learning sign is compared to the moon seen behind a cloud, the counterpart sign to the moon freed from the cloud. Simultaneously with the appearance of the counterpart sign, the five absorption factors suppress the five hindrances, and the mind enters the stage of concentration called Upacāra-samādhi, “access concentration.” Here, in access concentration, the mind is drawing close to absorption. It has entered the “neighbourhood” (a possible meaning of Upacāra) of absorption, but more work is still needed for it to become fully immersed in the object, the defining mark of absorption.

With further practice the factors of concentration gain in strength and bring the mind to absorption (Appanā-samādhi). Like access concentration, absorption takes the counterpart sign as object.

The two stages of concentration are differentiated neither by the absence of the hindrances nor by the counterpart sign as object; these are common to both. What differentiates them is the strength of the Jhāna factors. In access concentration the Jhāna factors are present, but they lack strength and steadiness. Thus the mind in this stage is compared to a child who has just learned to walk: he takes a few steps, falls down, gets up, and walks some more, and again falls down. But the mind in absorption is like a man who wants to walk: he just gets up and walks straight ahead without hesitation.

Concentration in the stage of absorption is divided into eight levels, each marked by greater depth, purity, and subtlety than its predecessor.
The first four forms a set called the four *Jhānas*, a word best left un-translated for lack of a suitable equivalent, though it can be loosely rendered “meditative absorption.” The second four also form a set, the four immaterial states (*Arūpa*). The eight have to be attained in progressive order, the achievement of any later level being dependent on the mastery of the immediately preceding level. The four *Jhānas* make up the usual textual definition of right concentration.

Thus the Buddha says:

“And what, monks, is right concentration? Herein, secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and dwells in the first *Jhāna*, which is accompanied by initial and sustained application of mind and filled with rapture and happiness born of seclusion.”\(^{41}\)

*Katamo ca* bhikkhuvesammāsamādhi?Idhabhikkhavebhikkuviviccevakāmehiviv iccaakusaladhammehisavitakkamavicākajampītisukhampāṭhamāṃ *jhānaṃ*upasampajjaviharati.

Then, with the subsiding of initial and sustained application of mind, by gaining inner confidence and mental unification, he enters and dwells in the second *Jhāna*, which is free from initial and sustained application but is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration.

With the faking out of rapture, he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending; and he experiences in his own person that bliss of which the noble ones say: “Happily lives he who is equanimous and mindful”; thus he enters and dwells in the third *Jhāna*.

With the abandoning of pleasure and pain and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and dwells in the fourth *Jhāna*, which has neither-pleasure-nor-pain and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. This, monks, is right concentration.\(^{42}\) The *Jhānas* are

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\(^{41}\) *DN*, 22; *World of the Buddha*, p. 61

\(^{42}\) *DN*, p- 22; *Word of the Buddha*, p. 80-81.
distinguished by way of their component factors. The first Jhāna is constituted by the original set of five absorption factors: initial application, sustained application, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness. After attaining the first Jhāna the meditator is advised to master it. On the one hand he should not fall into complacency over his achievement and neglect sustained practice; on the other, he should not become over-confident and rush ahead to attain the next Jhāna. To master the Jhāna he should enter it repeatedly and perfect his skill in it, until he can attain it, remain in it, emerge from it, and review it without any trouble or difficulty.

After mastering the first Jhāna, the meditator then considers that his attainment has certain defects. Though the Jhāna is certainly far superior to ordinary sense consciousness, more peaceful and blissful, it still stands close to sense consciousness and is not far removed from the hindrances. Moreover, two of its factors, initial application and sustained application, appear in time to be rather coarse, not as refined as the other factors.

Then the meditator renews his practice of concentration intent on overcoming initial and sustained application.

When his faculties mature, these two factors subside and he enters the second Jhāna. This Jhāna contains only three component factors: rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness. It also contains a multiplicity of other constituents, the most prominent of which is confidence of mind. In the second Jhāna the mind becomes more tranquil and more thoroughly unified, but when mastered even this state seems gross, as it includes rapture, an exhilarating factor that inclines to excitation. So the meditator sets out again on his course of training, this time resolved on overcoming rapture. When rapture fades out, he enters the third Jhāna.

Here there are only two absorption factors, happiness and one-pointedness, while some other auxiliary states come into ascendancy, most notably mindfulness, clear comprehension, and equanimity. But still, the meditator sees, this attainment is defective in that it contains the feeling of happiness, which is gross compared to neutral feeling, feeling that is neither pleasant not painful. Thus he strives to get beyond even the sublime happiness of the third Jhāna. When he
succeeds, he enters the fourth *Jhāna*, which is defined by two factors – one-pointedness and neutral feeling – and has a special purity of mindfulness due to the high level of equanimity.

Beyond the four *Jhānas* lie the four immaterial states, levels of absorption in which the mind transcends even the subtlest perception of visualized images still sometimes persisting in the *Jhānas*. The immaterial states are attained, not by refining mental factors as are the *Jhānas*, but by refining objects, by replacing a relatively gross object with a subtler one. The four attainments are named after their respective objects: the base of infinite space, the base of infinite consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither perception nor non-perception. These states represent levels of concentration as subtle and remote as to elude clear verbal explanation. The last of the four stands at the apex of mental concentration; it is the absolute, maximum degree of unification possible for consciousness. But even so, these absorptions reached by the path of serenity meditation, as exalted as they are, still lack the wisdom of insight, and so are not yet sufficient for gaining deliverance.

The kinds of concentration discussed so far arise by fixing the mind upon a single object to the exclusion of other objects. But apart from these there is another kind of concentration which does not depend upon restricting the range of awareness. This is called “momentary concentration” (*Khanika - samādhi*). To develop momentary concentration the meditator does not deliberately attempt to exclude the multiplicity of phenomena from his field of attention. Instead, he simply directs mindfulness to the changing states of mind and body, noting any phenomenon that presents itself; the task is to maintain a continuous awareness of whatever enters the range of perception, clinging to nothing.

As he goes on with his noting, concentration becomes stronger, moment after moment until it becomes established one-pointedly on the constantly changing stream of events.

Despite the change in the object, the mental unification remains steady, and in time acquires a force capable of suppressing the hindrances to a degree equal to that of access concentration. This
fluid, mobile concentration is developed by the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness, taken up along the path of insight; when sufficiently strong it issues in the breakthrough to the last stage of the path, the arising of wisdom.

To conclude with, it can be said that the Right view refers to the correct way of looking at the things. It is the wisdom that comes from the knowledge and comprehension of the Four Noble Truths and the Dependent Origination.

The Truth of the Way (Maggasacca) refers to the extinction of suffering, to the path of practice to attain Nibbāna. This path is termed as the Noble Eightfold Path. For eradication of suffering it is not sufficient to abandon craving. In addition to uprooting craving practice of all the eight constituents of the Noble Path is necessary. Just as medication alone does not cure the disease; in addition to medication one has to take proper diet, moderate sleep etc., similarly eradication of craving is to be accompanied by the practice of all the constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path.

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