CHAPTER FOUR
THE METHOD TO GET ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE
MAHĀSATIPĀṬṬHĀNA SUTTA

IV.1 General Aspects of the Mahāsatipāṭṭhāna Sutta

IV.1.1 The Structure of the Mahāsatipāṭṭhāna Sutta

The Buddha's style of teaching was generally one of skilful adaptation to the mood and concerns of his listeners, responding to the questions and even the non-verbalized thoughts of his audience and taking cues from events. By means of a dialogue with his audience, he gradually moved them towards sharing his own vision of truth. He treated questions in a careful, analytical way; some he answered directly, others he answered after first analyzing them so as to clarify the nature of the question. Some he answered with a counter-question, to reveal concealed motives and presuppositions; others he 'set aside' as question-begging and fraught with misconceptions. He did not mind if others disagreed with him, but censured misinterpretations of what he taught. He showed even-mindedness when gaining disciples. A general Śīha, who was a great supporter of Jain monks, once decided to become a lay disciple, but the Buddha advised him that such a prominent person as himself should carefully consider before changing his religious allegiances. Already impressed by the Buddha’s teaching, Śīha was even more impressed by the fact that he did not jump at the chance of gaining an

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233 A., II 46
234 Vin., I 236
influential disciple. On affirming that he still wished to be a disciple, the Buddha advised him that he should not deprive Jain monks by withdrawing his generous support, but to continue them while also supporting Buddhist monks, as he now wished to do.

While the Buddha was critical of following blind path, he did not deny a role for soundly based faith or trustful confidence (saddhā); for to test out his teachings, a person had to have at least some initial trust in them. The early texts envisage a process of listening, which arouses saddhā, leading to practice, and thus to partial confirmation of the teachings, and thus to deeper saddhā and deeper practice until the heart of the teachings are directly experienced. A person then becomes an arahat, one who has replaced faith with knowledge. Even in Theravāda Buddhism, which often has a rather rational, unemotional image, a very deep faith in the Buddha, dhamma and saṅgha is common. Ideally, this is based on the fact that some part of the Buddha’s path has been found to be uplifting, thus inspiring confidence in the rest. Many people, though, simply have calm and joyful faith (pasāda) inspired by the example of those who are well established on the path.

During the Buddha’s life, he delivered eighty four thousand suttas in which eighty two thousand suttas were spoken by the Buddha and the other two thousand were delivered by his disciples and the Buddha then approved them. Each sutta was delivered on a different nature, with the specific purpose, depending on the hearers. However, generally speaking most of the suttas consist of five parts; we can apply this general construction to the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta as follows:

1. The well known introductory words:
   "Evam me sutam"—Thus I have heard

2. The place where the sutta was delivered:
   "ekam samayam bhagavā kurusu viharitā kammāsadhammam nāma
The Exalted One was once staying among the Kurus. Kammassadhamma is a city of the Kuru country.

3. The reason why or the circumstances under which the *sutta* was delivered:

"Tatra kho bhagava bhikkhu āmantesi – ‘bhikkhavo’ ti. ‘Bhaddante’ ti [bhadanteti (sī. syā. pī.)] te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassosuṅ. Bhagavā etadavoca" – There the Exalted One addressed the brethren, saying, "Bhikkhus!" Reverend sir! Responded the brethren. And the Exalted One said:

4. The *sutta* proper containing the teaching delivered:

The proper containing teaching of the *sutta* starts with *uddeso* (introduction) in which it gives the definition about the one and only path to purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for walking on the path of truth, for the realization of *nibbāna*. That is fourfold establishing of awareness. It further defines what four mindfulness foundations are. Then it deals in detail with four methods establishing mindfulness:

- *Kāyānupassanā* (the observation of body)
- *Vedanānupassanā* (the observation of sensation)
- *Cittānupassanā* (the observation of mind)
- *Dhammanupassanā* (the observation of mental contents)

In the figure below, we have attempted to offer an overview of the structure underlying the detailed exposition of *satipaṭṭhāna* given in *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta*, with each of the sections of the discourse represented by a box and arranged from the top to bottom.

5. The effect or influence of the deliverance:

"Idamavoca bhagava. Attamanā te bhikkhū bhagavato bhāsitam abhinandunti." – Thus spoke the Exalted One. Pleased were the brethren,
delighting in that which was spoken by the Exalted One.

Figure 1: Structure of the satipaṭṭhāna given in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Diagram:

The only path to liberation

- Definition

Body

- Breathing
- Posture
- Activities
- Anatomical parts
- Elements
- Corpse in decay

Feelings

- Feeling

Mind

- Mind

Dhammas

- Hindrances
- Aggregates
- Sense-spheres
- Awakening factors
- Noble truths

Prediction

The only path to liberation

Observing
IV.1.2 The Background and Applicants Who Can Practice the Method as Depicted in *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta*

The Buddha delivered *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta* when he was staying among the Kurus at Kammassadhamma. The Buddha gave this discourse in Kura for a reason. Not only the Buddha but others also had high regard for the people of Kuru. The *Bhagavad Gita*, one of the great bibles of Hinduism, starts with the words: *Dharmakṣetre, Kurukṣetre*, which means “the field of dhamma, the field of Kuru”. In another discourse the Buddha explains how the Kuru lived a life of morality, observing *sīla*, from the king to the lowest subject. Morality was their nature. The situation in Kuru at that time was that their *sīla* was good, but had been stretched. Although that was wrong, still observing *sīla* is definitely much better than not observing it. What they lacked in *dhamma*, could be gained by the technique. The *sutta*, therefore, does not talk of *sīla*, because this strong background was already there. With such a good base, the people of Kuru would understand the details of this technique much better. Therefore the Buddha gave this *sutta* in Kuru.

The Buddha is known as the great and skilful doctor. He knows the disease that beings can face and give a suitable medicine for their treatment. Therefore, whenever he delivers any discourse, he always observes the audiences, the listeners in order to know their background and then give a right discourse for them. The audiences of the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta* are the *bhikkhus* and Kuru people, the people with a good *sīla* (*ekam samayam bhagavā kurūsu viharati...bhikkhavo*). At the very beginning of the *sutta*, the Buddha declares the method that can help beings out of suffering and lead them to *nibbāna*:

"Ekāyano ayaṁ, bhikkhave, maggo sattanaṁ visuddhiyā, sokaparidevānaṁ samatikkamāya dukkhadomanassānaṁ atthaṅgamāya nāyassa adhigamāya nibbānassā sacchikiriyāya, yadidaṁ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā."

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“Ekāyane ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo” means “this is the one and only path”. Analayo\(^{235}\) translates ‘Ekāyane ayaṃ maggo’ as the direct path; T.W.Rhys Davids\(^{236}\) and Acharya S.N. Goenka\(^{237}\), a practiced meditator translates it as the one and only path. I also support this translation. Sattānam visuddhiyā is to purify individuals at the mental level. Washing the body externally will not purify the mind. The results of this purification are to overcome sorrow and lamentation. Soka-paridevānaṃ samatikkamāya means transcending deep sorrow (soka), and its manifestation in crying and lamentation (paridevana). When meditators practice, it comes to the surface and observing, they pass beyond it, samatikkamāya. At a subtler level there are still unpleasant feelings in the mind (domanassa) and unpleasant sensation on the body (dukkha). These are also eradicated (atthaṅgamāya).

“Nāya” means truth. If practitioners work with contemplation or imagination such results will not come. Only the surface of the mind is purified. The deepest misery can only be taken out when they observe the reality of mind and matter and their interconnection, from gross apparent truth to the subtlest ultimate truth. The truth experienced by the Buddha can only liberate the Buddha. A Buddha can only show the path, people have to walk it. “Adhigama” is attainment, to be walking. Therefore, nāyassa adhigamāya means attaining the truth or walking on the path of truth.

Sacchikiriyāya is to be experienced, to be realized. Nibbāna has to be experienced, realized by the observation of truth (nibbāna sacchikiriyāya). Meditators have to reach the subtlest reality of mind and matter and then

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\(^{235}\) Analayo, Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Pulication Society, 2003), 27.
\(^{236}\) S. N. Goenka, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta: The Great Discourse on the Establishing of Awareness (Maharashtra: Vipassana research Institute, 2006), 3.
transcend it to witness something beyond. The entire field of mind and matter is that of changing and impermanent (anicca), arising and passing. At a gross level it arises, seems to stay for some time, and then passes away. At a subtler level, it passes with great rapidity. At the subtest level there is merely oscillation. The ultimate truth is beyond where nothing arises or passes. It is beyond mind and matter, beyond the entire sensorium, the sensory field. The experience of nibbāna can be for a few moments, a few minutes, a few hours; it depends, but the practitioner comes back a changed person. He can't explain it. Of course people can give long intellectual explanations, but the sense organs stop functioning in nibbāna state. They cannot be used to explain it. Thus, the last of the six qualities of dhamma is paccattam. veditabbo: it must be experienced directly and personally by each individual within him or herself. For example, if there is a blind person, he asks you to explain what the yellow is. Then, you know yellow but you cannot explain it because he has no ability to know. Nibbāna state is the same, practitioner can experience it but they can not explain it to those who do not walk on this path. Yadidam cattāro satipatthānā: that is to say, the four satipatthānas. The fourfold establishing of awareness is considered as the one and only way for the purification of beings; for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation; for the extinguishing of suffering and grief, for walking on the path of truth, for the realization of nibbāna.

The qualification of being “the one and only path” occurs in the discourses almost exclusively as an attribute of satipatthāna, thus it conveys a considerable degree of emphasis. Such emphasis is indeed warranted, since practice of the “only path” of satipatthāna is an indispensable requirement for liberation. As a set of verses in the Satipatthāna Samyutta point out, satipatthāna is the “only path” for crossing the flood in past, present, and
“The only path” is a translation of the Pāli expression ekāyano maggo, made up of the parts eka, ‘one’, ayana, ‘going’, and magga, ‘path’. The commentaries traditionally have preserved five alternative explanations for understanding this particular expression. According to them, a path qualified as ekāyano could be understood as the “only” path in the sense of leading straight to the goal; as the path to be travelled by oneself “alone”; as the path taught by the “One” (the Buddha); as the path that is found “only” in Buddhism; or as a path which leads to “one” goal, namely to nibbāna.

Ekāyano maggo, “the one and only path”, seems to be narrow minded. Those who have not walked on the path, or have not walked on it very much, may feel uncomfortable. For those who have walked on it, it is clearly the one and only path. It is after all the universal law of nature. It is to be experienced and understood by everyone, from any religion or country. Fire will burn anyone’s hand. If people don’t like being burnt, they should keep their hand away, whether they are Buddhists or Christians, Australians or Americans. The law of gravity exists with or without Newton. The law of relativity exists with or without Einstein. Similarly, the law of nature remains whether or not there is a Buddha. It is cause and effect. Two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen make water. If either is missing on a planet, there will be no water. This is a law of nature. This is dhamma. As meditators proceed and work much deeper, they will understand this. If people don’t want misery, they have to remove the cause. Then the resulting misery is automatically removed.

238 S., V 167; S., V 186
IV.2 The Method to Get Enlightenment in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

IV.2.1. Definition of Four Satipaṭṭhānas

In Buddhist tradition, there are three aspects or important steps of dhamma that everyone who wants to become a noble one (an Aryan) must go through. The first is pariyatti (sufficient intellectual knowledge of the teaching). Those who have not even heard or read the words of the enlightened person cannot understand dhamma and its universal nature. They will understand dhamma only as Buddhist religion. They will take it as a sectarian philosophical belief, or a rite, ritual, or religious ceremony, such as they themselves remain involved in. Those who have heard and understood dhamma as universal law, truth, and nature, not limited to any sect or community can practice and apply it in life.

Hearing or reading words of pure dhamma is very good to give inspiration and guidance to start practicing. However, if people remain satisfied just with that and don’t practice, because now they feel they know everything at the intellectual level, then it becomes just a devotional game. Actually, they don’t know because direct experience is missing. They have just accepted the truth without practicing, which may even become a hindrance to liberation. Therefore, the next step is patipatti (practicing dhamma).

With pariyatti, people start understanding that as a human being, as a social being, they must live a life of morality in their family and in society. If they disturb the peace and harmony of others, how can they experience peace and harmony? So they abstain from any physical or vocal action which hurts and harms other beings. they abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, harsh words, backbiting or useless, meaningless words which waste their time and that of others, and from taking any kind of
intoxicant. They also understand that by abstaining from unwholesome actions they are actually obliging themselves, not only others. Such unwholesome actions cannot be performed unless they generate great impurity in the mind; like craving, greed, aversion, ego, and fear. When they do that, they harm themselves. For this reason they understand the importance of *sīla*, which means “morality”. Practicing *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration) and *vipassanā* (insight observation) will take them to the third step which is *pativedhava* literally meaning ‘piercing, penetrating’. These three cover the entire universe of *pañña* that is wisdom. After giving a stress on the importance of the *satipaṭṭhāna*, the *sutta* goes further in detail how to set up *sati* (awereness). It reads:

"Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassi viharati atāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādamanassam, vedanāsu vedanānupassi viharati atāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādamanassam, citte cittānupassi viharati atāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādamanassam, dhammesu dhammānupassi viharati atāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādamanassam."\(^{239}\)

*Kāye kāyānupassi viharati atāpī sampajāno satimā* is to dwell ardently with awareness and constant and thorough understanding of impermanence, observing body in body. *Anupassā* comes from *passana* or *dassana*, meaning ‘to look’ or ‘to observe’. Meditators see things directly themselves. So they observe whatever reality is. *Anupassanā* means continuously, from moment to moment. Thus, *Kāye kāyānupassi* is to observe the body from moment to moment within, that is, in the body. Similarly, *vedanāsu* is in the sensations, *citte* is in the mind and *dhammesu* is in the mental contents.

*Vipassanā* uses no imagination. Meditators could imagine a sensation and that it is changing even without experiencing it, but this is not reality as it is, where it is. Their body must be experienced in their own body, sensations

\(^{239}\) *D*, II 290, Pāli Text Society.

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in their own sensations, mind in their own mind, and mental contents in their own mental contents. Therefore, the meditator lives, dwells (virahati) observing body in the body.

The term \( \text{ātāpī} \) is related to the word tapas meaning 'ardent' or 'burning' which connotes self-mortification and ascetic practices. The use of such vocabulary is surprising, since the Buddha did not consider self-mortification to be conducive to the realization of nibbāna. To better understand the Buddha’s position, the historical context should be considered.

A substantial number of wandering ascetics in ancient India regarded self-mortification as the model path to purification. Commonly accepted means for spiritual development were prolonged fasting, exposure to extremes of temperature, and the adoption of particularly painful postures. Although the Buddha did not categorically reject such practices in their entirety, he openly criticized the belief that self-mortification was necessary for realization.

Before his awakening, the Buddha himself had been influenced by the belief that spiritual purification requires self-mortification. Based on this mistaken belief, he had pursued ascetic practices to considerable extremes, without being able to realize awakening in this way. He found ultimately that awakening does not depend on mere asceticism, but requires mental development, in particular the development of sati. Therefore, the expression \( \text{ātāpī} \) might not have carried the same literal connotations for the

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241 Acharya S. N. Goenka, Discourses on Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Maharashtra: Vipassana research Institute, 2010), 27.
242 D., I 161; S., IV 330, Pāli Text Society.
243 A., II 200; M., I 81, where the Buddha, after listing the ascetic practices he had performed previous to awakening, concluded that these had not led him to realization because of the absence of wisdom.
244 M., II 93, Pāli Text Society.
245 S., I 103, Pāli Text Society.
Buddha as it did for his ascetically inclined contemporaries. In fact, in the *Kāyagatāsati*, āpatī comes up in relation to experiencing the bliss of absorption.\textsuperscript{246} Similarly, in a passage from the *Indriya Samyutta*, the quality of diligence is combined with pleasant feelings, mental and physical. In these instances, ‘ardent’ has clearly lost any relation with self-mortification and its concomitant physical pain.

The Buddha once compared the balanced effort needed for proper progress to the tuning of a lute, whose strings should be neither too tight nor too loose\textsuperscript{247}. This comparison of mental cultivation to the tuning of a musical instrument illustrates the well-adjusted effort and sensitivity required for the development of the mind. The notion of a “middle path” of wise balance, avoiding the extremes of excessive and insufficient effort, has of course been one of the Buddha’s central teachings since the time of his first discourse.\textsuperscript{248} It was this balanced “middle path” approach, avoiding the two extremes of stagnation and excessive striving, which had enabled him to gain awakening.

The practical implications of being “ardent” can best be illustrated with two maxims from the discourses, both of which use the word āpāti: “right now is the time to practice ardently; meditators themselves have to practice with ardency”. Similar, connotations underlie the occurrence of the quality of “ardent” in those passages that describe the serious commitment of a monk who retires into seclusion for intensive practice after having received an instruction from the Buddha.\textsuperscript{249}

*Sampajāna* is a present participle of the verb *sampajānati*. *Sampajānāti* can be divided into *pajāṇāti* (he or she knows) and the prefix *sam* (together), which often serves an intensifying function in Pāli compounds. Thus, *sam-*

\textsuperscript{246} *M*, III 92, Pāli Text Society.
\textsuperscript{247} *A.*, III 375, Pāli Text Society.
\textsuperscript{248} *S.*, V 421, Pāli Text Society.
\textsuperscript{249} *S.*, II 21; *S.*, III 74-79, *S.*, IV 64; *A.*, IV 299, Pāli Text Society.
pajānāti stands for an intensified form of knowing, for “clearly knowing”.

The range of meaning of “clearly knowing” (sampajāna) can be conveniently illustrated by briefly surveying some of its occurrences in the discourses. In a discourse found in the Dīgha Nikāya, clearly knowing stands for consciously experiencing one’s own life as an embryo in a womb, including the event of being born. In the Majjhima Nikāya, one finds clearly knowing representing the presence of deliberateness, when one deliberately speaks a falsehood.250 In a passage from the Samyutta Nikāya, clearly knowing refers to awareness of the impermanent nature of feelings and knowledge (sampajañña)251 for overcoming unwholesomeness and establishing wholesomeness. Finally, the Itivuttaka relates clearly knowing to following the advice of a good friend.252

A common denominator suggested by these examples selected from all five Nikāyas is the ability to fully grasp or comprehend what is taking place. Such clear knowledge can, in turn, lead to the development of wisdom (pāññā). According to the Abhidhamma, clear knowledge does in fact already represent the presence of wisdom. Considered from an etymological viewpoint, this suggestion is convincing, since pāññā and (saṃ-) pajānāti are closely related. Sampajāno means having the quality of sampajañña. The awareness must be with sampajañña, pāññā that feels the arising and passing away of vedanā, because impermanence has to be experienced at the level of vedanā. S. N. Goenka253 translates sampajāna as “understanding of impermanence”. At practicing level, I almost support this translation.

The term ‘satimā’ means ‘aware’. It is related to the verb sarati, to remember. Sati in the sense of “memory” occurs on several occasions in the

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251 Sampajañña from the word ‘sampajaññatam’ meaning consciousness or intelligence
252 Itivuttaka 10
253 Maha., 3.
discourses and also in the standard definitions of sati given in the Abhidhamma and the commentaries. This remembrance aspect of sati is personified by the Buddha’s disciple most eminent in sati, Ananda, who is credited with the almost incredible feat of recalling all the discourses spoken by the Buddha.

The connotation of sati as memory becomes particularly prominent with the recollections (anussati). The discourses often list a set of six recollections: recollection of the Buddha, of the dhamma, the sangha, of one’s ethical conduct, of one’s liberality, and of heavenly beings (devas). Another kind of recollection, usually occurring the context of the “higher knowledges” gained through deep concentration, is the recollection of one’s past lives (pubbenivāsānussati). Regard to all these, it is sati that fulfils the function of recollecting. This connotation of sati as memory appears also in its formal definition in the discourses, which relates sati to the ability of calling to mind what has been done or said long ago. A closer examination of this definition, however, reveals that sati is not really defined as memory, but as that which facilitates and enables memory. What this definition of sati points to is that, if sati is present, memory will be able to function well.

Understanding sati in this way facilitates relating it to the context of satipatthāna, where it is not concerned with recalling past events, at functions as awareness of the present moment. In the context of satipatthāna meditation, it is due to the presence of sati that one is able to remember what is otherwise only too easily forgotten: the present moment.

Sati as present moment awareness is similarly reflected in the pre-

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254 Visuddhimaga 250
255 A., I 24, Pāli Text Society
256 M.,I 356
sentations of the *Visuddhimagga*,\(^{258}\) according to which the characteristic quality of *sati* is “presence” (*upaṭṭhāna*), whether as a faculty (*indriya*), as an awakening factor (*bojjhaṅga*), as a factor of the noble eightfold path, or at the moment of realization.\(^{259}\) Thus, mindfulness being present (*upaṭṭhasati*) can be understood to imply presence of mind, in so far as it is directly opposed to absent-mindedness (*mutṭhassati*); presence of mind, in the sense endowed with *sati*, one is wide awake in regard to the present moment.\(^{260}\) Owing to such presence of mind, whatever one does or says will be clearly apprehended by the mind, and thus can be more easily remembered later on.

*Sati* can be gained by considering role and position among some of the central categories of early Buddhism. *Sati* not only forms part of the noble eightfold path as right mindfulness (*samma sati*) but also occupies a central position among the faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*), and constitutes the first member of the awakening factors (*bojjhaṅga*). In these contexts, the functions of *sati* cover both present moment awareness and memory. It is noteworthy that the term *sati* is repeated within the definition of right mindfulness (*samma sati*). This repetition is not merely accidental, but rather points to a qualitative distinction between “right” mindfulness (*samma sati*) as a path factor and mindfulness as a general mental factor. In fact, numerous discourses mention “wrong” mindfulness (*micchā sati*), which suggests that certain forms of *sati* can be quite different from right mindfulness. According

\(^{258}\) The *Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification)* is the 'great treatise' on Theravada Buddhist doctrine written by Buddhaghosa approximately in 430 CE in Sri Lanka. It is a comprehensive manual condensing and systematizing the theoretical and practical teachings of the Buddha as they were understood by the elders of the Mahavihara Monastery in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. It is described as the hub of a complete and coherent method of exegesis of the Tipitaka, using the 'Abhidhamma method' as it is called. And it sets out detailed practical instructions for developing purification of mind. It is considered the most important Theravada text outside of the Tipitaka canon of scriptures. The *Visuddhimagga*’s structure is based on the *Ratha-vinita Sutta* ("Relay Chariots Discourse," M 24), which describes the progression from the purity of discipline to the final destination of nibbana in seven steps.

\(^{259}\) *Visuddhimagga* 510

\(^{260}\) Ibid, 464
to this definition, *sati* requires the support of being adrent (*ātāpi*) and of clearly knowing (*sampājāno*). It is this combination mental quality, supported by a state of mind free from desires and discontent, and directed towards the body, feelings, the mind, and *dhammas*, which becomes the path factor of right mindfulness.

*Vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam* is to keep away from craving and aversion towards this world of mind and matter. *Vineyya* means to keep away from, or to abstain from. *Lokas* are the planes of the universe. Here, *loke* means the entire field of mind and matter, all five aggregates which constitute ‘I’: the material aggregate (*rūpa*) and the four mental aggregates of cognizing (*viññāna*), recognizing (*saññi*), feeling (*vedanā*) and reacting (*sankhāra*). All four *satipaṭṭhānas* can be practiced only with the base of *vedanā*. This is because unless something is felt (*vedanā*), craving and aversion (*abhijjhādomanassam*) cannot arise. If the sensation is pleasant, only then does craving arise; if the sensation is unpleasant, only then does aversion arise. If meditators don’t experience sensations, they won’t even know that craving or aversion has arisen, and they can’t come out of them.

The purpose of *satipaṭṭhāna* is to explore the area which is identified with ‘I’ to which so much attachment develops. There are two distinct fields: *kāya* (body) and *citta* (mind). The exploration must be done at the experiential, not the intellectual, level. If meditators try to understand body just by taking the attention, say, to the head and asserting that “This is my head”, it is only an intellectual truth, that of *saññi* (recognition). To experience reality, they must feel it. There must be *vedanā* (sensation), and *kayo* (body), therefore *vedanā* goes together in this exploration.

Similarly with *citta*, sitting down and merely asserting that this is my mind will only be imagination or at best an intellectual understanding. To experience mind, something must arise in the mind: perhaps some strong
craving or aversion, or some thought. It arises and passes away. Whatever it is is called dhamma, the literal meaning of which is dhāreti ti dhamma, “that which is contained” by citta. Just as kāya and vedana go together, citta and dhamma go together. Then, as the Buddha elsewhere announced from his own experience, another reality: vedanā-samosaraṇā sabbe dhamma which means everything that arises in the mind starts flowing with a sensation on the body. Samosaraṇā means “gets collected together and flows.”

IV.2.2. Kāyānupassanā: The Observation of Body

Starting with this part, I will consider the actual meditation practices described in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The practices listed under the first satipaṭṭhāna is kāyānupassanā (observation of the body), comprising awareness of breathing, awareness of bodily postures, clear knowledge in regard to bodily activities, analysis of the body into its anatomical parts, analysis of the body into its elementary qualities, and contemplation of a dead body in nine consecutive stages of decay. The sequence of the body contemplations is progressive, beginning with the more obvious and basic aspects of the body and continuing towards a more detailed and analytical understanding of the nature of the body.

IV.2.2.1. Mindfulness of Breathing

In ancient times, and still today, mindfulness of breathing might well be the most widely used method of body contemplation. The Buddha himself frequently engaged in mindfulness of breathing which he called a ‘noble’ and ‘divine’ way of practice. According to his own statement, even his awakening took place based on mindfulness of breathing.

The discourses present mindfulness of breathing in a variety of ways.

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261 S., V 326
262 Ibid.
263 S., V 317
The *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta* describes four kinds of the practice, to which the *ānāpānapabbata* (observation of respiration) belongs to the first kind (observation of the body). Elsewhere the discourses speak of mindfulness of breathing as cognition (*saññā*), and as a concentration practice. These various presentations demonstrate the multi-functional character of the process of breathing as a meditation object. This much is also documented in the range of its possible benefits, which include both penetrative insight and deep concentration.

As a meditation practice, mindfulness of breathing has a peace character and leads to stability of both posture and mind. The mental stability brought about through mindfulness of breathing act particular as an antidote to distraction and discursive thought. Awareness of the breath can also become a stabilizing factor at the time of death, ensuring that even one’s last breath will be a mindful one. According to the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta*, the practice of mindfulness breathing should be undertaken in the following way:

> "Here a monk, having gone into the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty room, sits down cross-legged, keeps his body upright and fixes his awareness in the area around the mouth. With this awareness, he breathes in, with this awareness, he breathes out. Breathing in a deep breath, he understands properly: "I am breathing in a deep breath.” Breathing in a shallow breath, he understands properly: “I am breathing in a shallow breath.” Breathing out a deep breath, he

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264 As one kind of meditation of *satipatthāna* in the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta* at D. II 291 and M. 159; as a sixteen-step practice in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* at M. III 79; as a *saññā* e.g. at A. V 111; and as *ānāpānasatisamādhī* in the *Ānāpāna Saṁyutta* (e.g. at S. V 317)
265 S, V 317-319
266 S, V 321 and 316
267 A, III 449
268 M, I 56
269 "Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu araṇīgatā vā rukkhamūlagatā vā suṇāgāragatā vā nissidatī pallaṁkāṁ abhujitvā ujum kāyaṁ paṇidhāya parimukhāṁ sātiṁ upajñhapetvā.... Passambhayaṁ kāyasankhāram assasissati'ti sikkhati, 'passambhayaṁ kāyasankhāram passasissati'ti sikkhati." D, II 290
understands properly: “I am breathing out a deep breath.” Breathing out a shallow breath, he understands properly: “I am breathing out a shallow breath.” In this way he trains himself: “Feeling the whole body, I shall breathe in.” “Feeling the whole body, I shall breathe out,” thus he trains himself. “With the bodily activities calmed, I shall breathe in,” thus he trains himself. “With the bodily activities calmed, I shall breathe out,” thus he trains himself.”

The instructions for mindfulness of breathing include the appropriate external environment and the suitable physical posture. The three kinds of places recommended for practice are a forest (araññagato vā), the root of a tree (rukkhamūlagato vā), and an empty hut (suññagāragato vā). In the discourses, these three usually indicate suitable conditions for the practice of formal meditation representing the appropriate degree of seclusion required for mindfulness of breathing.

Then, the meditator must sit down (nisīdati). Pallāṅkaṁ ābhujitvā means ‘cross-legged’. The lotus or half-lotus posture is not necessary. If this is possible, it is a posture that brings greater alertness, but otherwise any cross-legged posture that is comfortable for longer periods at a stretch is good enough. The upper portion of the body should be straight (ujum kāyam paṇidhāya).

There are a lot of different translations of “parimukhaṁ satīṁ upaṭṭhapetvā”. ‘Upaṭṭhapetvā’ comes from the word ‘upaṭṭhahati’ which means to serve, wait on, attend, minister to, support; to be ready, to be present. Parimukhaṁ literally means ‘before’ or ‘in front’. T.W.Rhys Davids translates it as “set his mindfulness alert”; Analayo converts it into English as “established mindfulness in front of him”; and S.N. Goenka takes “fixes

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270 Maha, 5
272 Analayo, Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Pulication Society, 2003), 126.
his awareness in the area around the mouth" for this translation.²⁷³ Anālayo explains that the injunction ‘in front’ (parimukham) can be understood literally or figuratively. Following the more literal understanding, ‘in front’ indicates the nostril area as the most appropriate for attention to the in- and out-breaths.²⁷⁴ Alternatively, ‘in front’ understood more figuratively suggests a firm establishment of sati, sati being mentally ‘in front’ in the sense of meditative composure and attentiveness. Practically, we tend to agree with Goenka’s translation and Anālayo’s explanation.

Both the Abhidhamma and the commentaries take ‘in front’ (parimukham) to indicate a precise anatomical location.²⁷⁵ In the discourses, however, the specification ‘in front’ occurs in a variety of contexts, such as, for example, in relation to overcoming the hindrances or to developing the divine abodes (brahmavihāra).²⁷⁶

Although overcoming the hindrances can occur with the aid of mindfulness of breathing, this is not necessarily the case. In fact, the standard instructions for overcoming the hindrances do not mention the breath.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ Maha., 5
²⁷⁴ Anālayo, Satipatthāna: The Direct Path to Realization (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Pulication Society, 2003), 128.
²⁷⁵ Vibhanga 252 explains it to refer to the nose tip or the upper lip; Visuddhimagga 283 further explains that the nose tip is the appropriate of observation for meditators with a longer nose, while the upper lip fulfils function for those who have a shorter nose.
²⁷⁶ D., III 49; M., 1274; and A., IV 437 relate mindfulness established ‘in front’ to overcoming the hindrances; A., I 183 to the divine abodes. Other occurrences of the expression “establishing mindfulness in front” occur in the context of forming the determination not to change one’s posture until realization is gained (at M., 1219), in relation to developing a mind set on the welfare of both oneself and others (at M., II 139), when directing the mind to the reflective understanding that the defilements have been eradicated from one’s mind (at A., I 184), or as part of the description of a monk well versed in meditation (at A., III 320).
²⁷⁷ According to the standard expositions (e.g. D., III 49; M., I 274; M., III 3; or S, V 105) the antidotes for each respective hindrance are: attending to the unattractiveness of the body, loving kindness, and clarity of cognition, mental calm. Particularly interesting in this context is M., I 421 where Rahula sat down to establish mindfulness ‘in front’ in order to contemplate the aggregates, but was only at a later point given instructions in mindfulness of breathing. This suggests that he had not previously received instructions in mindfulness of breathing, so it is not very probable that he was directing awareness to his nostrils during the contemplation of the aggregates that he had been taught previously.
Similarly, the discourses do not relate the development of the divine abodes in any way to awareness of the breath. Apart from awareness of the breath, however, to direct mindfulness to the nostril area makes little sense, whether in relation to overcoming hindrances or to developing the divine abodes. Thus, at least in these contexts, the figurative sense of ‘in front’ as a firm establishment of sati is the more meaningful alternative.

Therefore, although to understand ‘in front’ to indicate the nostril area makes sense in relation to mindfulness of breathing, alternative ways of practice, based on a more figurative understanding of the term, cannot be categorically excluded. In fact, several modern teachers have developed successful approaches to mindfulness breathing independent of the nostril area. Some, for example, advise their pupils to experience the breath in the chest area, others suggest observing the air element at the abdomen, while still others recommend directing awareness to the act of breathing itself, with focusing on any specific location.

With awareness he breathes in, with awareness he breathes out (So sato va assasati sato va passati). Breathing in a deep breath (dīgha), he understands properly (pajānāti): “I am breathing in a deep breath.” Breathing out a deep breath, he understands properly: “I am breathing out a deep breath”. The long in-breath, and similarly the long out-breath, are known and understood as such: because it is felt, experienced.

Then, the breath becomes shallow, short (rassa), and is understood in the same way. You will see how each sentence signifies another station on the path, a new experience. As the mind calms, the agitation decreases, and the breath becomes short. It is not controlled as in a breathing exercise, but just observed.

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278 The instructions describe a form of radiation (e.g. at M, II 207) that does not seem to be in any way related to mindfulness of breathing.

279 Maha., 4
Now he trains himself: "Feeling the whole body (sabbakāyapaṭisamanvedi), I shall breathe in, feeling the whole body, I shall breathe out". The third and fourth steps introduce a different verb to describe the process of contemplation: in place of "he knows" (pajanati), text now uses the expression "he trains" (sikkhati). In the Ānāpānasati Sutta, this 'training' covers altogether fourteen steps, in addition to the first two steps concerned with 'knowing'. The use of the word 'training' indicates some degree of additional effort on the part of the meditator, owing to an increased degree of difficulty in these steps. Such training seems to entail a shift to a broader awareness, which also includes phenomena other than the breath itself.

The discourse compares this progress to a skilled turner who attends to his lathe with full awareness of making a long turn or a short turn. The simile of the turner suggests increasing degrees of refinement and subtlety in practicing mindfulness of breathing. Just as a turner makes progressively finer and more delicate cuts on the lathe, contemplation proceeds from long and comparatively gross breaths to shorter and subtler breaths. The Paṭisambhidāmagga compares this progressive refinement of mindfulness

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280 In fact at S., V 326, which documents the Buddha’s own practice of mindfulness of breathing, all occurrences of "he trains" are replaced by "I know". This indicates that, unlike the ordinary practitioner who has to make an effort in order to proceed through the sixteen steps, the Buddha, with his meditative expertise, was able to so effortlessly.

281 "Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, dakkho bhamakāro vā bhamakārantevasi vā dighaṃ vā aṭṭhanto ‘dighaṃ aṭṭhanto’ pajānati, rassam vā aṭṭhanto ‘rassam aṭṭhanto’ evameva kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu dighaṃ vā assasanto ‘dighaṃ assasanto’ pajānati, dighaṃ vā passasanto ‘dighaṃ passasanto’ pajānati...

282 The Patisambhidāmagga is a Buddhist scripture, part of the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism. It is included there as the twelfth book of the Sutta Pitaka's Khuddaka Nikaya. Tradition ascribes it to the Buddha's disciple Sariputta. It comprises 30 chapters on different topics, of which the first, on knowledge, makes up about a third of the book. Tradition ascribes the Patisambhidāmagga to the Buddha's great disciple, Sariputta. The text was dated by A.K. Warder to approximately 3rd century BCE. According to German tradition of Indology this text was likely composed around the 2nd century CE. L.S. Cousins in his review of Hinuber's overview of Pali literature notes that such a late dating must be a mistake based on unawareness of A.K. Warder's results, according to which the Patisambhidāmagga represent an earlier stage of development of thought than Theravada.
of breathing to the progressively fainter sound of a gong after it has been struck.

The third and fourth steps of mindfulness of breathing, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is concerned with experiencing the ‘whole body’ (*sabbakāya*) and with calming the ‘bodily formation’ (*kāyasatikharā*). In the present context, the ‘whole body’ can be taken literally to refer to the whole physical body. In this way, the instruction points out that a broadening of awareness is a shift from the breath alone to its effect on the entire body. According to the commentaries, however, the ‘whole body’ should be understood to refer, more figuratively, to the body of the breath. By understanding the ‘whole body’ as the whole breath-body the instruction then indicates full awareness of the beginning, middle, and end stages of each breath. This interpretation can claim support from the same *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, since the Buddha here identified the breath as a ‘body’ (*kāya*) among bodies. An argument against this interpretation, however, could be that the cultivation of full awareness of the length of the breath was the task of the previous two steps, knowing a long or a short breath, which already required the meditator to be aware of each breath from beginning to end. One would therefore expect this next step in the progression to introduce a distinctly new feature for contemplation, such as, for example, a shift of awareness to include the whole physical body.

In the next important station, with the help of the breath, the whole body is felt inside, or within oneself, *ājīhattām*. Then it is also felt outside, *bahiddhā*, on the surface of the body, and lastly simultaneously both inside and outside. The *sutta* runs:

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canonical *Abhidhamma* treatises. The *Patisambhidamagga* has been described as an “attempt to systematize the *Abhidhamma*” and thus as a possible precursor to the *Visuddhimagga*.

^283 Visuddhimagga 273; ^284 M., III 83

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“Thus he dwells observing body in body internally, or he dwells observing body in body externally, or he dwells observing body in body both internally and externally. Thus he dwells observing the phenomenon of arising in the body, thus he dwells observing the phenomenon of passing away in the body, thus he dwells observing the phenomenon of arising and passing away in the body. Now his awareness is established: “This is body!” Thus he develops his awareness to such an extent that there is mere understanding along with mere awareness. In this way he dwells detached, without clinging towards anything in the world [of mind and matter]. This is how, monks, a monk dwells observing body in body.”

The two expressions used in this part are internal (ajjhatta) and its complementary opposite ‘external’ (bahiddhā). The significance of these two terms is not further explained in the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta. The Abhidhamma and the commentaries associate internal with the personal and external with corresponding phenomena in other human beings.

According to the Abhidhamma and the commentarial interpretation, ‘internal’ and ‘external’ encompasses phenomena arising in oneself and in others. In this way, proper practice of satipatthāna would also include awareness of the subjective experience of others. Although this may be quite feasible in the case of observing another person’s body, to directly experience another’s feelings or states of mind seems at first sight to require psychic powers. This would, of course, significantly limit the possibility of carrying out ‘external’ satipatthāna.

Modern meditation teachers have proposed various alternative interpretations of internal and external satipatthāna. Some take ‘internal’ and ‘external’ to mean quite literally what is spatially internal and external. They suggest that external bodily feelings, for example, are those observed at skin

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285 This is, in fact, implied by the presentation at D, II 126, where internal satipatthāna contemplation leads to concentration, which then enables one to undertake external contemplation. Cf. also S., II 127, where contemplation of the states of mind of others forms part of a list of deep concentrative attainments, which suggests that here too such contemplation is understood as an exercise of psychic powers.
level (*bahiddhā*), while internal bodily feelings are those occurring deeper within the body (*ajjhatta*).\(^{286}\)

Internal (*ajjhatta*) occurs in the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta* itself in a clearly spatial sense, referring to the six internal senses in contrast to their external objects. However, the Pāli term used in this context for the external sense objects is not *bahiddhā*, but *bāhira.*\(^{287}\) In contrast, ‘internal’ (*ajjhatta*) and ‘external’ (*bahiddhā*) as qualities mentioned in this part do not seem to convey such a spatial distinction. In the case of contemplating the sense-spheres, for example, such a spatial understanding of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ does not yield a meaningful way of practice, since according to the ‘observation’ the entire sense-sphere, consisting of internal sense and external object, has to be contemplated internally and then externally. The difficulty involved in taking ‘internal’ and ‘external’ to represent a spatial distinction extends to most of the *satipatthāna* contemplations. Neither states of mind nor such *dhammas* as the hindrances or the awakening factors fit easily into a distinction between spatially internal and external occurrences, unless one were to adopt the commentarial interpretation and take ‘external’ to refer to states of mind, hindrances, or awakening factors occurring in other persons.

Other teachers suggest that the distinction between internal and external contemplation hints at the difference between apparent and ultimate truth. It is certainly true that as practice progresses distinction between apparent and ultimate truth corresponds to the original sense of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ in the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta*, firstly because neither of the two terms ever has this implication in the discourses, and secondly simply because the distinction between these two levels of truth is a late

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\(^{286}\) Acharya S. N. Goenka, *Discourses on Satipatthāna Sutta* (Maharashtra: Vipassana research Institute, 2010), 31.

\(^{287}\) *M.*, 161 “*ajjattikabāhi resu āyatan esu*”
development, belonging to the post-canonical period.\footnote{The term paramattha occurs at Sn 68; Sn 2:19; and Th 748. Elsewhere related terms occur, like paramañāpā at A III 354, paramasadhinā and parama āriyasačca at M III 245, paramasačca at M I 480, M II 173, and A 11 115, and uttamatthas at Dhp 403. All these instances are references only to Nibbiṇa. The presumption that the one-hundred-and-twenty-one types of mental states, fifty-two types of mental factors, and twenty-eight types of matter listed in the Abhidh-s can be considered ‘paramattha’, in the sense of being ultimately real, is a late development not found in the early discourses.}

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

On the other hand, the qualification ‘internal’ occurs in the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta also as part of the main instruction for contemplating the hindrances and the awakening factors. This usage does not seem to be related to the distinction between experiences by way of the mind door and that of the five sense doors, but appears to emphasize the sense that a hindrance or an awakening factor is present ‘within me’, paralleling the commentarial understanding of ‘internal’ as referring to oneself.

Elsewhere in the discourses, ajjhatta on its own does indeed denote what is internal in the sense of being a predominantly mental type of experience. A typical example of such usage is the second jhāna, which the standard descriptions qualify as a state of ‘internal’ serenity.\footnote{E.g. at D., I 74. Other examples are ‘internal’ calm of the mind at M I 213, or ‘internal’ happiness (referring to jhāna) at M., III 233.} Internal in the sense of ‘mental’ occurs also in the Uddesavibhaṅga Sutta, which contrasts an ‘internally stuck’ state of mind with consciousness being ‘externally distracted’. Yet in this discourse, ‘external’, which according to the above interpretation should stand only for the five physical senses, refers to all six senses.\footnote{E.g. M., I 346 relates internal happiness to all six senses; or S., IV 139 speaks of internal lust, anger, and delusion in relation to all six senses; or S., V 74 relates an internally steady mind to all six}

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mind door events, but is at times related to all six senses.

These passages suggest that to understand ‘internal’ and ‘external’ as respective references to mind door and five sense door events is not always appropriate. The same holds true in relation to several of the satipatthāna contemplations. Among the six sense-spheres, for example, a distinction can easily be made between the mind door and the physical sense doors. Yet it is difficult to conceive of a meaningful contemplation that treats the entire set of six sense-spheres first internally, from a purely mental viewpoint, and then externally, from the perspective of the five sense doors. In summary, although alternative ways of understanding internal and external satipatthāna have their practical value, to understand ‘internal’ as referring to oneself and ‘external’ as referring to others offers a practicable form of contemplation which can moreover claim support from the discourses, the Abhidhamma, and the commentaries.

The dhamma, the reality, or the truth of arising (samudaya) is observed within the body, “samudayavayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati - thus he dwells observing the phenomenon of arising and passing away in the body”. Then the truth of passing away is observed. The gross sensation arises, seems to stay for some time, then passes away. Arising and passing are seen as separate. Then in the stage of bhaṅga, total dissolution, the sensation is one of vibrations that arise and pass with great rapidity. Samudaya and vaya are experienced together, there is no interval. According to the Visuddhimagga, the Path of Purification, the first important station is called udayabbaya. A meditator must understand this and the next stage of bhaṅga well.

Now, his awareness is established: “This is body” (atthi kāyo’ ti). This

\[\text{senses.} \]
\[\text{291 Maha,.7} \]
is the stage in which the body is experienced as “not I,” “not mine,” but just body, just a mass of vibrations, bubbles, and wavelets. It is merely a collection of *kalāpas*, subatomic particles, arising and passing. There is nothing good or bad, beautiful or ugly, white or brown about it. Initially the acceptance of *anattā*, “not I”, is intellectual or devotional, based on the words of someone else. The actual experience starts with *anicca*, because every pleasant sensation turns into an unpleasant one. The danger of attachment to body goes away. It is a high stage when the awareness (*sati*), gets established (*paccupāṭhitā hoti*) in his truth from moment to moment. There is mere wisdom, mere knowledge, and mere observation. This is to the extent (*yāvadeva*) that there is no wise person, no one to know or experience. It is called “*yāvadeva hānāmattāya paṭissatimattāya anissito ca viharati* - he develops his awareness to such an extent that there is mere understanding along with mere awareness”.

At the stage of mere knowing, what is being cognized or the identity of who cognizes is irrelevant, there is mere understanding. The dip in *nibbāna* follows, where there is nothing to hold, no base to stand on (*anissito*). The entire field of mind and matter (*loka*) is transcended, and there is no world or universe to grasp (*upādiyati*). Whether it is for a few minutes or few hours depends on the capacity and previous work of the person. A person in *nibbāna* is as if dead: none of the senses function, although inside the person is aware, alert, awakened. After that the person returns and again starts functioning in the sensory field, but a fully liberated person has no attachment, no clinging, because there is no craving. Such a person will cling to nothing in the entire universe and nothing clings to them. This is the stage described.

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*Maha.,7*
IV.2.2.2. Posture and Activities

The next two exercises described in the discourse, awareness of the four postures and clear knowledge in regard to activities, are both concerned with directing mindfulness to the body in activity. The instructions for contemplating the four postures are:

“Again, monks, a monk while he is walking, understands properly: “I am walking”; while he is standing, he understands properly: “I am standing”; while he is sitting, he understands properly: “I am sitting”; while he is lying down, he understands properly: “I am lying down.” In whichever position he disposes his body, he understands it properly.”^293

The enumeration of the four postures in the above instruction proceeds from the more active walking to comparatively more refined and passive postures. The instruction here is to “know” each of these postures, probably implying some form of appropriate awareness. In other discourses, these four postures often convey the sense of doing something “at any time”.^294 Applied to the context of satipatthāna, this usage suggests continuity of body awareness during all activities. In fact, according to the above instruction this contemplation is not limited to the four postures, but includes any way one’s body might be positioned. Thus, what this particular contemplation means, practically speaking, is to be aware of the body in a general manner, to be “with” the body during its natural activities, instead of being carried away by various thoughts and ideas, and therefore to be mentally anchored in the body.

As mentioned above, the four postures are often used in the discourses as a way to indicate that something should be done “at any time”. In this way, they are at times related to various predominantly mental events such as fear,

[^293]: Maha.,7
[^294]: A., IV 301
unwholesome thoughts, or overcoming the five hindrances.\textsuperscript{295} These passages relate each of the four postures to awareness of the concurrent state of mind. This indicates that removing unwholesome states of mind, for example, is not confined to formal sitting meditation, but can and should be undertaken in any situation or posture. The fact that meditation does not have to be exclusively associated with the sitting posture is also recognized in the \textit{Vimuttimagga} and the \textit{Visuddhimagga}, which indicate that, depending on the character of individual meditators, other postures may be adopted for carrying out the practice of meditation.

Another possibility suggested by the fact that the discourses relate the four postures to various states of mind is to observe the interrelation between states of mind and the way one performs activities like walking, sitting, etc. Through such observation one can become aware of how a particular state of mind expresses itself through one’s bodily posture, or how the condition, position, and motion of the body affect the mind. Bodily posture and state of mind are intrinsically interrelated, so that clear awareness of the one naturally enhances awareness of the other. In this way, contemplation of the four postures can lead to an investigation of the body’s conditional interrelation with the mind.

Once mindfulness of the four postures has led to a grounding of awareness in the body, one can turn to the next contemplation introduced in the \textit{Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta}: clear knowing (sampajāna) in regard to a range of bodily activities.\textsuperscript{296} The instructions for such clear knowing are:

“Again, monks, a monk, while going forward or backward, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence... while attending to the calls

\textsuperscript{295} M., I 21 relates the four postures to overcoming fear; M., III 112 to avoiding desires and discontent; A., II 14 and II 118 is not tolerating unwholesome thoughts; and A., I 14 is overcoming the five hindrances.

\textsuperscript{296} Cf. A., III 325; according to which awareness of the four postures forms the basis for mindfulness and clear knowledge.
of nature, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence; whether he is walking, standing, sitting, sleeping or waking, speaking or in silence, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence.\textsuperscript{297}

Apart from being one of the body contemplations in the \textit{Mahāsati\-paṭṭhāna Sutta}, this exercise also forms a distinct step in the gradual path of training, referred to as “mindfulness and clear knowledge” (\textit{sati sampajañña}).\textsuperscript{298} In the sequence of this gradual path of training, mindfulness and clear knowledge in regard to bodily activities occupy a transitional place between a preparatory development and actual sitting meditation. To be more precise, mindfulness and clear knowledge complete the preliminary stages concerned with ethical conduct, restraint, and contentment, and form the starting point for the formal practice of meditation, when one resorts to a secluded place in order to overcome the hindrances, to progress through the levels of absorption, and to gain realization. Thus, the development of mindfulness and clear knowledge is a foundation for more formal meditations such as, in the present context, the remaining contemplations described in the \textit{Mahāsati\-paṭṭhāna}.

The combined expression “mindfulness and clear knowledge” indicates that, in addition to being mindful of the activities mentioned, the presence of “clear knowledge” plays an important role. Since “clearly knowing” on its own, and also in combination with \textit{sati}, occurs in the discourses in a variety of contexts and can assume a broad range of meanings, the question arises of the implications of “clear knowledge” in regard to the various activities mentioned.

We have already seen that \textit{sampajañña} has to be present everywhere, every moment. The Buddha was frequently asked about \textit{sati}. Every time his reply included \textit{sampajañña}: “kāyānupassi viharati ātāpi sampajāno satimā ...,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{297} \textit{Maha.},9
\item \textsuperscript{298} E.g. at D., I 70
\end{itemize}
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vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā..., citte cittānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā..., dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā..."²⁹⁹ Without sampajañña, sati is only the awareness of the circus girl. If there is no awareness of arising and passing, it will not lead to liberation. When asked about sampajañña itself, the Buddha used to reply with either of two explanations. One explanation was the observation with pañña of the arising, staying and passing away of three things: vedanā (sensation), sañña (perception) and vitakka (the sense object), for instance a sound at the ear sense door. These objects are also called dhamma, and they flow with sensations, “vedanā-samosaraṇā sabbe dhammā”. Again, the arising and passing of sensation is predominant in sampajañña. The paragraph in this sutta as another explanation: sampajañña embraces every activity. The meaning is that continuity is required. Therefore, S N Goenka translates³⁰⁰ “sampajāno satimā” as “constant thorough understanding of impermanence” instead of “clearly knowing”. I definitely support this translation.

Having understood the entire field of sensations, from the grossest to the subtletest, the arahat does not after death return to this field of arising and passing away. Sampajañña is therefore essential in the Buddha’s teaching. If meditators don’t understand it, they may be carried away in the wrong direction. Sometimes translations of words create difficulties. Other schools are not to be condemned but we should understand what we are doing. Sometimes sampajañña is mistranslated as “clear comprehension”. It carries unclear meaning for meditators; clear comprehension of what? It is taken to mean of gross details; while walking someone comprehends the lifting, moving, placing of one leg, then the other leg, and so forth. Actually the

²⁹⁹ Maha.,3
³⁰⁰ Maha.,9
Buddha wants the practitioners to feel *vedanā*, arising, staying, and passing away. If the understanding of *vedanā* is missed, the whole technique of meditation becomes polluted.

Therefore, *sampajañña* has to be continuous in every situation. Even when sleeping, it should be present. For beginners, they are told that they are helpless in deep sleep, and just to be aware in the waking hours, but at a high stage in meditation there is no normal sleep at all. Full rest is taken, but with *sampajañña* inside, there is awareness of sensations arising and passing, of *anicca*. Sometimes on cases, meditators start to have this experience, reporting that they had little or no sleep, but still felt quite fresh. They were with *sampajañña*. In every chapter the repetition of certain words indicates the importance of this *sampajañña*. “Ātāpi *sampajāno satimā*” applies to the observation of *kāya*, *vedanā*, *citta* and *dhamma*: *sampajañña* has to be present. Similarly *samudaya*-*, vaya*- and *samudaya-vaya-dhammānupassi*, which apply everywhere in the *sutta*, have to be with *sampajañña* and sensations.

V.2.2.3. Reflection on Repulsiveness, Material Element and Meditation on Death

The next two exercises listed in the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta*, contemplating the anatomical constitution of the body and contemplating the body in terms of the four elements, both direct mindfulness to an analysis of the body’s constitution. The first of these two analytical meditations surveys the constitution of one’s body by listing various anatomical parts, organs, and fluids. The passage reads:301

“Again, monks, a monk reflects on this very body, that is covered with skin and

301 “Pūna caparam, bhikkhave, bhikkhu imameva kāyaṃ uddham pādatālā adho kesamatthakā tacapariyantām pūram nānappakārassa asucino paccavekkhāti – ‘atthi imasmiṃ kāye kesā lomā nakkā dantā taco…. assu vasā khefo singhāñikā lasikā mutta ‘nti’”, D., II 293
full of impurities of all kinds from the soles of the feet upwards and from the hair of the head downwards, considering thus: "In this body, there are hairs of the head, hairs of the skin, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidney, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach with its contents, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, nasal mucus, synovial fluid and urine."^302

*Paṭikūla* means 'repulsive.' *Manasikāra* means 'reflection' or 'contemplation'. This will not in itself take meditators to the final goal. The Buddha teaches direct experience, not mere imagination or intellectualization. However in some cases, when the mind is very dull or agitated, it cannot start with respiration, let alone with equanimity with the feeling of sensations. In most cases such people have strong attachment to the body and are engrossed in sexual pleasures, obsessed by the outer beauty of the body. They won't try to understand, and cannot practice *dhamma*, so this contemplation of repulsiveness is used to balance the mind at least slightly. They are asked just to start thinking in the proper way.

The set of anatomical parts given in the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta* follows a natural sequence from the solid and outer parts, through the organs, to the organic liquids. This sequence represents a progressive penetration of awareness. The parts most easily accessible to awareness are mentioned first, while the aspects of the body listed further on in the sequence require a deeper degree of awareness and sensitivity. Alternatively, the sequence can also be taken to correspond to an exercise in imaginative visualization, during which one strips one's body of each part in turn.

This is just a beginning for those not in a position to observe reality inside. Impurity keeps overpowering them. Once they can think properly, they are fit to practice, either with respiration or directly with sensations. Of

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^302 Maha.,11
course, when the actual practice of observation (vipassanā) starts, there should be no aversion towards this ugly body. It is just observed as it is (yathābhūta). It is observed as body, with sensations arising and passing. The meditator is now on the path.

The Buddha gives an example of a double-mouthed provision bag which is full of different seeds and grains, such as hill paddy, paddy, green gram, cowpeas, sesame, and husked rice. Just as a man with good eyes can see all these different grains, therefore, such things are seen in this body covered with skin. When divine eye is developed, it becomes very easy to see the body.

Then, the process is the same, “iti ajjhattam vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati...pe... evampi kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati”. Although the starting point varies according to the background and mental capacity of the person, the ending stations are the same. The body is observed inside and out, ajjhatta-bahiddhā. The arising and passing away is observed: samudaya-vaya. Then attī kāyo’ ti, “This is body”. The awareness gets established, and without any support in this world of mind and matter, there is nothing to grasp (na ca kiñci loke upādiyati) in the stage of full liberation.

A progressive pattern similar to the satipaṭṭhāna instructions can be found in the Vijaya Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta, where a thorough investigation of the body leads from its outer anatomical parts to its inner organs and liquids. In the Vijaya Sutta, this investigation of the body concludes with the rhetorical question: “how else, except through lack of insight, could one exalt oneself or disparage another because of such a

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303 D. II 293  
304 Sutta Nipāta
This conclusion shows that the aim of the contemplation described is to reduce one’s attachment to the body, a suggestion that holds true also for the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta.

Several discourses categorize the whole set of thirty-one anatomical parts listed in the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta under the elements earth and water in the context of a general exposition of the four elements. This indicates that the next exercise in the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta, where the body is analyzed into its four elementary qualities, constitutes a related type of contemplation. The instructions for this contemplation are:

“Again, monks, a monk reflects on this very body, however it is placed or disposed, considering it according to the characteristic of each element: “In this body, there is the earth-element, the water-element, the fire-element and the air-element.”

The ancient Indian scheme of four elements, mentioned here, represents four basic qualities of matter: solidity, liquidity (or cohesion), temperature, and motion. Since contemplation of the thirty-one anatomical parts has covered mainly the first two of these qualities, solidity and liquidity, the four-element analysis entails a more comprehensive approach, extending awareness to aspects of the body that manifest the qualities of temperature and motion. Thus, the present exercise further develops the analysis of the body on a more comprehensive and refined level.

Contemplation of the body’s earthy and watery qualities can be undertaken by observing the physical sensations of the solid and liquid parts of the body. Awareness of its fiery quality can be developed through noting variations in bodily temperature, and to some extent also by turning awareness to the processes of digestion and ageing. Air, representing the

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305 Sutta Nipāta 206
306 Mahā., 13
307 Cf. e.g. A., III 340, according to which a tree trunk can be seen as a manifestation of each of the four elements, since each of them is but a quality of the same tree.
quality of motion, can be covered by directing awareness to the different movements that take place within the organism, such as the circulation of the blood or the cycle of the breaths. The same elementary qualities can be combined in a single contemplation, by being aware of these four qualities as characteristics of each part or particle of the body.

The corresponding simile illustrates the effect of this particular method of contemplation with a butcher who has slaughtered and cut up a cow to sell. According to the commentaries, the butcher simile indicates a change of cognition since after the slaughter the butcher thinks no longer in terms of "cow", but only in terms of meat. A similar shift of cognition takes place when a meditator dissects the body into its elementary qualities: the body is no longer experienced as ‘I’ or ‘mine’, but simply as a combination of these four qualities.

These passages show that contemplation of the four elements can be employed in a variety of ways, linking the nature of one’s body to the constitution of the whole material environment, or employing these material characteristics in order to develop wholesome mental attitudes.

The last meditation practice among the body contemplations involves some degree of visualization, or at least reflection, since meditators have to compare their own body with what they would see in a charnel ground. The instructions for such comparison are:

"Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a dead body that has been thrown in a charnel-ground, dead for one, two or three days, swollen, blue and festering...when he sees a dead body that has been thrown in a charnel-ground,

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308 M I 188; M 1422; and M III 241 explain the bodily manifestations of the elements fire and air. In some contexts the scheme of the four elements is extended to cover five or even six elements, e.g. at M III 240, by including space and consciousness. These six elements form part of the satipatthāna instructions in the Madhappa Āgama version, while the version from the Ekottara Āgama has the same four that occur in the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta. The element ‘space’, according to M III 242, refers to the empty and hollow aspects of the body.
being eaten by crows, being eaten by vultures, being eaten by falcons, being eaten by herons, being eaten by dogs, being eaten by tigers, being eaten by leopards, being eaten by jackals and being eaten by different kinds of creatures, regarding his own body considers thus: “Indeed, this body is of the same nature, it will become like that and cannot escape it.”

There were some people with so much attachment to the body that even proper thinking was impossible. Therefore a cruder, grosser starting point was given: they were just taken to a cemetery. This was of the kind where the dead body is not burned or buried, but just thrown away to be eaten by birds, animals, and so forth. Unable to work with their attention inside themselves, they were just asked to start looking at a corpse. They view a corpse reduced to a skeleton with flesh or blood attached, held together by tendons. Then they consider their own body. They think (upasamharati) about their own body: “My body too is of the same nature, it will unavoidably become like this.”

Each time, after viewing, they reflect in the same way about their own body. It is necessary to begin with just viewing in this way. People living a coarse, gross life, involved in gross impurities, cannot do it. Special cases are therefore taken to a cemetery, just to see, to keep contemplating, and to understand what they see as the ultimate result for everyone. They are asked to start thinking. With this feeling of repulsiveness and now with understanding, the mind is slightly balanced. Therefore, then they can practice: “Iti ajjhattam vā kāye kāyānupassi viharati... ‘Atthi kāyo’ti ...na ca kiñci loke upādiyati.” Now they start working through the same stations. They reach the stage of “atthi kāyo’ ti”, “This is body,” to which there was so much attachment. Then they continue until all attachments are given up at the stage of full liberation.

\[309\] D., II 294
An alternative insight to be gained through the meditation on death is the inevitability of death. The stages of decay of a dead body vividly depict the truth that whatever one clings to as an embodiment of ‘I’ or ‘mine’ will endure only a limited time. Although this seems an obvious implication of this contemplation, the discourses usually describe recollection of death without bringing in the stages of decay. The approaches to recollecting death particularly recommended by the Buddha relate to eating and breathing; bringing to mind the fact that even the next mouthful to be eaten and the next breath to be inhaled are not certain to take place.\(^{310}\) Indeed, the presence or absence of breath spells life or death, so mindfulness of breathing also has the potential to be used for recollecting death. Whatever approach one may decide to use, recollection of death helps to stir up effort in order to avoid and eradicate unwholesomeness, and can ultimately culminate in realizing the ‘deathless’.\(^{311}\)

Recollection of death also serves as a useful preparation for the time when one actually has to face death. As the concluding exercise among the body contemplations, a regular recollection of death can lead to the realization that death is fearful only to the extent to which one identifies with the body. With the aid of the body contemplations one can come to realize the true nature of the body and thereby overcome one’s attachment to it. Being free from attachment to the body, one will be freed from any fear of physical death.

IV.2.3. Veddaranupassanā: The Observation of Feelings

The Pāli term *vedanā* means ‘feeling’ or ‘sensation’ is derived from the verb *vedeti*, which means both ‘to feel’ and ‘to know’. In its usage in the

\(^{310}\) A., III 306 and A., IV 319.
\(^{311}\) A., III 308 and A., IV 230 relate recollection of death to stirring up effort to counter evil; A., III 304 and A, IV 317 relate the same exercise to realization of the deathless.
discourses, *vedanā* comprises both bodily and mental feelings.\(^{312}\) *Vedanā* does not include ‘emotion’ in its range of meaning. Although emotions arise depending on the initial input provided by feeling, they are more complex mental phenomena than bare feeling itself and are, therefore, rather the domain of the next *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of states of mind. The *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions for contemplation of feelings are:\(^{313}\)

> Here, monks, a monk, while experiencing a pleasant sensation, understands properly, “I am experiencing a pleasant sensation”;
> while experiencing an unpleasant sensation, he understands properly, “I am experiencing an unpleasant sensation”;
> while experiencing a neither-unpleasant-nor pleasant sensation, he understands properly, “I am experiencing a neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant sensation”.\(^{314}\)

The above instructions distinguish between three basic kinds of feelings: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. According to the discourses, developing understanding and detachment in regard to these three feelings has the potential to lead to freedom from *dukkha*.\(^{315}\) Since such understanding can be gained through the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*\(^{316}\), contemplation of feelings is a meditation practice of considerable potential. This potential is based on the simple but ingenious method of directing awareness to the very first stages of the arising of likes and dislikes, by clearly noting whether the present moment’s experience is felt as ‘pleasant’, or ‘unpleasant’, or neither.

The conditioning role of pleasant feelings (*suḥkaṁ vedanā*) in leading to likes and eventually to dogmatic attachment has some far-reaching

\(^{312}\) Cf. e.g. M., I 302 or S., IV 231

\(^{313}\) *Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu sukhāṁ vā vedanaṁ vedayāṁ na ‘suksam vedanaṁ vedayāmi’ti pajānati. Dukkhāṁ vā vedanaṁ vedayāṁ na ‘dukkhāṁ vedanaṁ vedayāmi’ti pajānati. Adukkhamasukkhāṁ vā vedanaṁ vedayāṁ na ‘adukkhamasukkhāṁ vedanaṁ vedayāmi’ti pajānati.” D., II 298

\(^{314}\) *Mahā.* 27

\(^{315}\) A., V 51. Cf. also S., 99.

\(^{316}\) According to S., V 189, for a penetrative understanding of the three types of feelings the four *satipaṭṭhāna* is to be developed. It is remarkable that according to this passage all four *satipaṭṭhāna* are required for fully understand feelings.
implications. But this does not mean that all pleasant feelings have simply to be avoided. In fact, the realization that pleasant feelings are not simply to be shunned was a direct outcome of the Buddha’s own quest for liberation.

On the eve of his awakening, the Buddha had exhausted the traditional approaches to realization, without gaining awakening. While recollecting his past experiences and considering what approach might constitute an alternative, he remembered a time in his early youth when he experienced deep concentration and pleasure, having attained the first absorption (jhāna). Reflecting further on this experience, he came to the conclusion that the type of pleasure experienced then was not unwholesome, and therefore not an obstacle to progress. The realization that the pleasure of absorption constitutes a wholesome and advisable type of pleasant feeling marked a decisive turning point in his quest. Based on this crucial understanding, the Buddha was soon able to break through to awakening, which earlier, in spite of considerable concentrative attainments and a variety of ascetic practices, he had been unable to achieve.

After his awakening, the Buddha declared himself to be one who lived in happiness. This statement clearly shows that, unlike some of his ascetic contemporaries, the Buddha was no longer afraid of pleasant feelings. As he pointed out, it was precisely the successful eradication of all mental

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317 Neither highly refined degrees of concentration, nor the pursuit of various ascetic practices, had been able to lead him to full awakening, so (at M I 246) he questioned himself: “Could there be another way to realization?” His unremitting effort to continue his quest even after exhausting all known approaches to realization might underlie M I 219 and also A I 50, both instances presenting his awakening as the outcome of undaunted striving. His departure from all hitherto known ways of approaching realization is indicated by the expression “things unheard of before” (e.g. at M II 211 and S V 422).

318 M I 246 reports him as reflecting: “Why am I afraid of a happiness that has nothing to do with sensuality and unwholesome states? I am not afraid of such happiness!” Based on this insight he realized awakening. Such understanding of the importance of an ethical evaluation of mental events is also reflected at M I 114 with his pre-awakening division of thoughts into wholesome and unwholesome ones.

319 A., I 136
un wholesomeness that caused his happiness and delight. In a similar vein, the verses composed by awakened monks and nuns often extol the happiness of freedom gained through the successful practice of the path. The presence of delight and non-sensual joy among the awakened disciples of the Buddha often found its expression in poetic descriptions of natural beauty. Indeed, the early Buddhist monks delighted in their way of life, as testified by a visiting king who described them as “smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful and plainly delighting, living at ease and unruffled”. This description forms part of a comparison made by the king between the followers of the Buddha and other ascetics, whose demeanor was comparatively gloomy. To him, the degree of joy exhibited by the Buddha’s disciples corroborated the appropriateness of the Buddha’s teaching. These passages document the significant role of non-sensual joy in the life of the early Buddhist monastic community.

Beside pleasant feelings, meditators are requested to keep their mind balanced with unpleasant feelings (dukkha vedana). In the historical context of ancient India, the wise analysis of feeling proposed by the Buddha constituted a middle path between the worldly pursuit of sensual pleasures and ascetic practices of penance and self-mortification. A prominent rationale behind the self-mortifications prevalent among ascetics at that time was an absolutist conception of kamma. Self-inflicted pain, it was believed, brings an immediate experience of the accumulated negative karmic retribution from the past, and thereby accelerates its eradication.

The Buddha disagreed with such mechanistic theories of kamma. In fact, any attempt to work through the retribution of the entire sum of one’s past unwholesome deeds is bound to fail, because the series of past lives of

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320 D., I 196
321 E.g. at M., I 212
322 E.g. M., II 214
any individual is without a discernible beginning\textsuperscript{323}, so the amount of kammic retribution to be exhausted is unfathomable. Besides, painful feelings can arise from a variety of other causes. Although kammic retribution can not be avoided and will quite probably manifest in one form or another during one's practice of the path, awakening is not simply the outcome of mechanically eradicating the accumulated effects of past deeds. What awakening requires is the eradication of ignorance \textit{(avijjā)} through the development of wisdom. With the complete penetration of ignorance through insight, \textit{arahats} go beyond the range of most of their accumulated kammic deeds, apart from those still due to ripen in this present lifetime.\textsuperscript{324}

While pleasant and unpleasant feelings can activate the respective latent tendencies to lust and irritation, neutral feelings can stimulate the latent tendency to ignorance.\textsuperscript{325} Ignorance in regard to neutral feelings is to be unaware of the arising and disappearance of neutral feelings, or not to understand the advantage, disadvantage, and escape in relation to neutral feelings.\textsuperscript{326} As the commentaries point out, awareness of neutral feelings is not an easy task and should best be approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings.

A central feature to be contemplated in regard to neutral feelings is their impermanent nature. This is of particular importance because, in actual experience, neutral feeling appears easily to be the most stable of the three types of feeling. Thus, to counteract the tendency to regard it as permanent, its impermanent nature needs to be observed. Contemplated in this way, neutral feeling will lead to the arising of wisdom, thereby counteracting the

\textsuperscript{323} S., II 178; S., III 149; and A., V 113
\textsuperscript{324} The simple logic behind this it that the karmic results bound to ripen in future lives will no longer have an opportunity to produce results. In the case of the \textit{arahant} Ángulimāla, for example, retribution for his former crimes could only take place within the limited scope of that same lifetime (cf. M II 104)
\textsuperscript{325} M., I 303
\textsuperscript{326} M., III 285
latent tendency to ignorance. The *sutta* further deals with three kinds of feelings in detail:327

While he is experiencing a pleasant sensation with attachment, he understands properly, “I am experiencing a pleasant sensation with attachment”; while he is experiencing a pleasant sensation without attachment, he understands properly, “I am experiencing a pleasant sensation without attachment”; while experiencing an unpleasant sensation with attachment, he understands properly, “I am experiencing an unpleasant sensation with attachment”; while experiencing an unpleasant sensation without attachment, he understands properly, “I am experiencing an unpleasant sensation without attachment”; while experiencing a neither-unpleasant nor-pleasant sensation with attachment, he understands properly, “I am experiencing a neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant sensation with attachment”; while experiencing a neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant sensation without attachment, he understands properly, “I am experiencing a neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant sensation without attachment.”328

In the *satipatthāna* instructions, mindfulness of these three feelings is followed by directing awareness to an additional subdivision of feelings into ‘worldly’ feelings or feelings with attachment (*sāmīsa vedaṇā*) and ‘unworldly’ feelings or feelings without attachment (*nirāmīsa vedaṇā*). In today’s India *nirāmīsa* means vegetarian and *sāmīsa* means non-vegetarian food. The meaning here is pure or impure. A pleasant sensation arising as result of properly observing meditation, if it is observed without craving or attachment, leads to purity. The same pleasant sensation, perhaps encountered through involvement in some sensual pleasure, if it is reacted to with craving and attachment, with an attempt to increase it, is unwholesome and leads to

327 *Sāmīsaṁ vā sukhaṁ vedaṇaṁ vedayamāno ‘sāmīsaṁ sukhaṁ vedaṇaṁ vedayāmi’ti pajānati, nirāmīsaṁ vā sukhaṁ vedaṇaṁ vedayamāno ‘nirāmīsaṁ sukhaṁ vedaṇaṁ vedayāmi’ti pajānati...Sāmīsaṁ vā adukkhāmasukhaṁ vedaṇaṁ vedayamāno ‘sāmīsaṁ adukkhāmasukhaṁ vedaṇaṁ vedayāmi’ti pajānati, nirāmīsaṁ vā adukkhāmasukhaṁ vedaṇaṁ vedayamāno ‘nirāmīsaṁ adukkhāmasukhaṁ vedaṇaṁ vedayāmi’ti pajānati. D., II 298
328 *Maha..27*
impurity. It leads to rotation in misery. In this sense, a pleasant sensation may be pure or impure.

A sāmisa sensation is just to be observed, so that the reaction weakens and stops. A nirāmisa sensation, towards which there is equanimity, and no reaction, is also just observed. Then naturally according to the law, this faculty of objective observation increases. Meditators do nothing. Pajānāti is mere observation, based in wisdom. Similarly, whether the unpleasant (dukkha) sensation experienced is pure or impure depends on whether there is a reaction to it. It also is just observed, understood and accepted as it is. The neutral (adukkhamasukha) sensation is understood in the same way. The sutta continues to read:

"Iti aijhattam vā vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati, bahiddhā vā vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati, aijhattabahiddhā vā vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati. Samudayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharati."

"Thus he dwells observing sensations in sensations internally, or he dwells observing sensations in sensations externally, or he dwells observing sensations in sensations both internally and externally." 

From now, in every section, similar structure will be repeated. The sensations are felt inside and on the surface of the body, and then simultaneously throughout the entire physical structure. There are some traditions which interpret aijhattam as the feeling on one’s own body, bahiddhā as the feeling on someone else’s body, and aijhatta-bahiddhā as switching between the two. However, vipassanā meditation tradition taught by S. N. Goenka does not accept this interpretation because the meditator is working alone, whether in the forest, under a tree, or in a cell. It is argued that when begging for food the monk encounters others and has this opportunity to feel their breath or sensations. However, the eyes of serious meditators are
downcast (okkhita-cakkhu) and at most they might see someone else’s legs as they walk: so this interpretation seems illogical. I agree with Goenka’s interpretation.

Of course, at a very high stage of observation the meditator becomes very sensitive to the sensations of others also, and to the vibrations of the surrounding atmosphere and of animate and inanimate objects. Possibly, it could be understood in this way. Otherwise to practice on someone else’s breath or sensations is unworkable. It is better, therefore, to take ajjhattam as ‘inside’ and bahiddhā as ‘on the surface of one’s own body’.

“Samudayadhammānapassī…vayadhāmmānapassī…Samudayavayadh ammānapassī vā vedanāsu viharati” which occurs in every section are very important. The meditator has to pass through them. The arising of vedanā, the passing of vedanā, and the arising and instant passing of vedanā are felt. Then, the stage of “Atthi vedanā’ti vā” (This is sensation!) will be reached. In kāyanupassanā, the stage of “atthi kāyo’ ti” came when the body became merely a mass of subatomic particles, with no valuation or judgment: saññā no longer recognized it as human or animal, male or female, beautiful or ugly. It became just body as body, beyond differentiation. Similarly, sensations (vedanā) are now seen just as sensations, vedanā, neither pleasant nor unpleasant. There is no judgment, no evaluation, no saññā. The awareness now established is of sensations as just sensations. Then, the same stations follow to the final goal (yāvadeva ṇāṇamattāya pāṭissatimattāya anissito ca viharati, na ca kiṃci loke upādiyati- In this way he dwells detached, without clinging towards anything in the world [of mind and matter]).
IV.2.4. *Cittānupassanā*: The Observation of Mind

*Citta*, the Pāli term used in this *satipaṭṭhāna*, usually refers in the discourses to ‘mind’ in the conative and emotional sense, in the sense of one’s mood or state of mind. During the later part of the previous *satipaṭṭhāna*, observation of feeling, awareness was concerned with the ethical distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings. The same distinction occurs at the start of the next *satipaṭṭhāna*, which directs awareness to the ethical quality of the mind, namely to the presence or absence of lust (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). The instructions are:

Here, monks, a monk understands properly mind with craving as mind with craving, he understands properly mind free from craving as mind free from craving, he understands properly mind with aversion as mind with aversion, he understands properly mind free from aversion as mind free from aversion, he understands properly mind with delusion as mind with delusion, he understands properly mind free from delusion as mind free from delusion.

The first three among the states of mind listed in the *satipaṭṭhāna* instruction are craving (*rāga*), aversion (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), the three main roots of all unwholesome mental events. The basic principle underlying the contemplation of these unwholesome roots, which also underlies the distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings in the previous *satipaṭṭhāna*, is the clear distinction between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. Systematic development of this ability nurtures an intuitive ethical sensitivity which constitutes an important asset in one’s progress on the path and a reliable guide to proper conduct in daily life.

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31 *Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu sarāgam vā cittaṁ 'sarāgam cittaṁ tī pajarānāti, vitarāgam vā cittaṁ 'vitarāgam cittaṁ tī pajarānāti. Sadosam vā cittaṁ 'sadosam cittaṁ tī pajarānāti, vitadosam vā cittaṁ 'vitadosam cittaṁ tī pajarānāti. Samohām vā cittaṁ 'samohām cittaṁ tī pajarānāti, vitamohām vā cittaṁ 'vitamohām cittaṁ tī pajarānāti. D., II 298*

32 *Maha., 29*

33 *Rāga is a synonym for lobha*
The *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta* presents each of these ‘roots’ together with its opposite: the absence of craving, aversion, or delusion. This way of presentation is common in canonical usage, allowing the negative term to cover not only the opposite notion, but also to imply a wider range of meaning. Thus, to be without anger, for example, could refer simply to a state of mind free from irritation, but also to a mind overflowing with loving kindness.

During meditation, each of these three unwholesome roots can manifest in a distinctive manner; the fever of lust may be compared to being on fire within, the physical tension of anger to being overpowered and controlled by a forceful opponent, and the confusion of delusion to being hopelessly entangled in a net.

Taken in an absolute sense, a mind without lust, anger, and delusion is the mind of an *arahat*. This way of understanding is in fact the most frequent usage of the qualification without craving (*vītarāgam*), without aversion (*vītadosam*), and without delusion (*vītamoham*) in the discourses. Thus, observation of the mind appears to be not only concerned with momentary states of mind, but also with the overall condition of the mind. Understood in this way, to observe mind unaffected by craving, aversion, or delusion would also include awareness of the degree to which these three unwholesome roots are no longer ‘rooted’ in one’s mental continuum.³³⁴

It is noteworthy that observation of the mind does not involve active measures to oppose unwholesome states of mind (such as craving or aversion). Rather, the task of mindfulness is to remain receptively aware by clearly recognizing the state of mind that underlies a particular train of thoughts or reactions. Such uninvolved receptivity is required because of

³³⁴ Cf. e.g. A., IV 404, where awareness of their absence is part of the reviewing knowledge of an *arahat*. 

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one’s instinctive tendency to ignore whatever contradicts or threatens one’s sense of importance and personal integrity. The habit of employing self-deception to maintain one’s self esteem has often become so ingrained that the first step to developing accurate self-awareness is honest acknowledgment of the existence of hidden emotions, motives, and tendencies in the mind, without immediately suppressing them. Maintaining non-reactive awareness in this way counters the impulse towards either reaction or suppression contained in unwholesome states of mind, and thereby deactivates their emotional and attention pull.\footnote{A., V 39 explains that while unwholesome conduct by way of body or speech is to be overcome by adopting more appropriate ways of conduct, the proper approach for overcoming mental defilements is repeated wise observation.}

The \textit{Vitakkasani\tthāna Sutta} offers a description of such deactivation: in order to come to grips with the repeated occurrence of unwholesome thoughts, attention turns to the nature of these thoughts and to the volitional disposition or driving force that produced them.\footnote{M., I 120} The discourse explains this simple but ingenious method of turning the full light of attention on the mental condition underlying one’s thoughts with the help of a simile. One is walking quite fast for no particular reason. Becoming fully aware of what one is doing, one might walk slower, or even stand still, or instead of standing one might sit or lie down. This progressive increase in physical comfort and tranquility vividly illustrates how the mental agitation and tension of unwholesome thought processes can be gradually reduced and overcome through direct observation. Watching an unwholesome state of mind without involvement in this way will deprive it of its fuel so that it will gradually lose its power.

Such mindful observation without involvement is illustrated in a simile in the discourses in which the Buddha compared awareness of one’s states of
mind to the use of a mirror to see one’s reflection.\textsuperscript{337} Just as a mirror simply reflects whatever is presented to it, meditators should try to maintain bare awareness of the present condition of their mind without allowing reactions to arise.

The two states of mind listed next for observation, collected (\textit{saṅkhitta}) and scattered (\textit{vikkhitta}), both appear to have negative implications. The same two terms occur elsewhere in the discourses, with inward ‘collection’ being the result of sloth-and-torpor, and external ‘scatter’ the outcome of pursuing sensual pleasures.\textsuperscript{338} The commentaries on the \textit{Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta} indeed relate the collected state of mind to sloth-and-torpor, while according to them the scattered state of mind represents restlessness.

The ability to balance the mind, by avoiding both contraction and distraction, is an important skill required for the development of deeper levels of concentration or insight. The placing of these two states of mind at this point in the instructions for contemplation of the mind indicates the need to cultivate such balance, once one has at least temporarily moved beyond the reach of the grosser types of mental unwholesomeness and is aiming towards the development of higher states of mind, such as are described in the remainder of this \textit{satipaṭṭhāna}:\textsuperscript{339}

he understands properly expanded mind as expanded mind, he understands properly unexpanded mind as unexpanded mind, he understands properly surpassable mind as surpassable mind, he understands properly unsurpassable mind as unsurpassable mind he understands properly concentrated mind as concentrated mind, he understands properly unconcentrated mind as

\textsuperscript{337} A., V 92; the same simile occurs also at D., I 80 and M., I 100
\textsuperscript{338} S., V 279; The relation of these two to ‘internal’ and ‘external’ occurs again at A., IV 32
\textsuperscript{339} \texttt{Mahaggataṃ vā cittam 'mahaggataṃ citta'ṇti pajānāti, amahaggataṃ vā cittam 'amahaggataṃ citta'ṇti pajānāti... Vimuttaṃ vā cittam 'vimuttaṃ citta'ṇti pajānāti. Avimuttaṃ vā cittam 'avimuttaṃ citta'ṇti pajānāti. D., II 298}
unconcentrated mind, he understands properly freed mind as freed mind, he understands properly not freed mind as not freed mind.\textsuperscript{340}

The next qualification is expanded (mahaggata). "Mahaggatam cittam" (expanded mind) means literally: 'mind having become great' i.e., by the practice and development of jhāna (the practice of absorption samādhi). It refers to a mind expanded by the practice of these deep samādhis rather than the stage transcending mind and matter. Amahaggatam cittam (unexpanded mind) thus means a mind not having become expanded in this way. Similarly, in the Anuruddha Sutta 'expanded' represents the ability to pervade a broad area with one's meditation object, in this case apparently as the result of kasīṇa meditation.\textsuperscript{341} These instances support the commentarial explanation of this part of the satipatthana instructions, according to which an expanded state of mind (mahaggata) is related to the development of absorption.

The same commentaries relate to the next category mentioned for observation, the 'surpassable' (sa-uttaram) state of mind, to the development of concentration. Sa-uttaram (surpassable) means 'having something higher than that' or 'not superior'. This type of mind is still connected with the mundane field. 'Surpassable', then, indicates the need to clearly recognize the constituents of a particular level of absorption to be left behind in order to proceed to a higher level of absorption.\textsuperscript{342} Anuttaram (unsurpassable), correspondingly, is a mind that has reached a very high stage of meditation, where nothing is superior. This finds support in the Sekha Sutta, which refers to the fourth absorption as a state of 'unsurpassable' equanimity and mindfulness.\textsuperscript{343} On the other hand, in the discourses the qualification

\textsuperscript{340} Maha., 29
\textsuperscript{341} M., III 146; A kasīṇa is a meditation device, for example a colored disk, used to help develop concentration.
\textsuperscript{342} The need to abandon lower absorption attainments is described e.g. at M., I 455.
\textsuperscript{343} E.g. at M., I 357; The fourth jhāna as a level of concentration is indeed 'unsurpassable', since the immaterial attainments take place with the same level of concentration, but directed towards progressively more refined objects.
'unsurpassable' frequently occurs in relation to full awakening. Understood in this way, the present category also includes the reviewing knowledge after realization, when one investigates the degree to which the mind has been freed from fetters and mental defilements.

The next terms in the series are *samāhitam* (concentrated) and *asamāhitam* (unconcentrated) which are related to the type of *samādhi* (concentration) that one has gained; states of concentration that are called *upacāra* (neighborhood concentration, i.e. approaching a level of absorption) and *appanā samādhi* (absorption, or attainment, concentration). *Asamāhitam cittam* therefore describes a mental state without that depth of concentration. According to the commentaries, this expression includes access concentration and full absorption. Since in the discourses *samādhi* refers to concentration in the context of the development of both calm and insight, the expression ‘concentrated mind’ has a fairly broad range of reference.

The qualification ‘liberated’ (*vimutta*) frequently occurs in the discourses in relation to full awakening. Understood in this way, the ‘liberated’ mind parallels the more frequent usage of the expression ‘unsurpassable mind’ and also the mind that is forever ‘without craving’, ‘without aversion’, and ‘without delusion’, all these referring to the mind of an *arhat*. The commentaries, moreover, relate the qualification ‘liberated’ to temporary freedom from defilements during insight meditation. Elsewhere in the discourses the qualification of being ‘liberated’ occurs also in relation to the development of concentration, as ‘freedom of the mind’

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344 E.g. at D., II 83; M., 1163; M., I 303; M., II 237; S., I 105; S., 1124; A., I 168; A., III 435
345 E.g. at M., I 141; S., III 45-51
346 The standard descriptions of full awakening use the expression ‘liberated’ to describe the *arhat’s* knowledge of his or her realization (e.g. at D., I 84). At times the expression ‘liberated’ is combined with ‘unsurpassable’ as references to full awakening, cf. e.g. M., I 235; S., I 105; or A., IV 106; D., III 270 and A., V 31 relate the well liberated mind to freedom from the three unwholesome roots.
Thus, the expression ‘liberated mind’ can be taken to refer to experiences of mental freedom in relation to both calm and insight.

The theme underlying the observation of these four higher states of mind is the ability to monitor the more advanced stages of one’s meditative development. In this way, within the scope of observation of the mind, sati can range from recognition of the presence of lust or anger to awareness of the most lofty and sublime types of mental experience, each time with the same basic task of calmly noticing what is taking place.

The emphasis given in this satipatthana to mindful observation of deep levels of concentration is noteworthy. Among the Buddha’s contemporaries, experiences of absorption often gave rise to speculative views. The Buddha’s distinctive departure from these speculations was his thoroughly analytical treatment of the meditative absorptions, aimed at understanding their composite and conditioned nature. This analytical treatment is exemplified in the Atthakanāgara Sutta, which states that one should regard the experience of absorption as merely a product of the mind, a conditioned and volitionally produced experience.\(^{348}\) Such understanding then leads to the conclusion that whatever is a product of conditions is also impermanent and subject to cessation. Insight into the impermanent nature of deep levels of concentration also forms part of satipatthana practice, when the instruction in the observation to contemplate the nature of arising and passing away is applied to the higher states of mind listed for contemplation. Undertaken in this way, satipatthana in regard to higher states of mind becomes a practical expression of the Buddha’s analytical attitude towards the entire range of mental experience.

\(^{347}\) Various types of ‘freedom of the mind’ are listed at M., I 296. Similarly, A, I 16 refers to the absence of the five hindrances as a mind ‘liberated’ from them.

\(^{348}\) M., I 350; Cf. also M., I 436, which analyses jhānic experience with the help of the aggregate scheme, followed by the consideration that all these phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.
"Iti ajjhattam vā citte cittānupassi viharati, bahiddhā vā citte cittānupassi viharati, ajjhattabahiddhā vā citte cittānupassi viharati."

The same stations follow. Mind is observed inside and outside. Again as mentioned above, we do not accept bahiddhā as the mind of someone else. At a high stage of purification the meditator does develop the psychic power to read the minds of others, but this is not a final station. Mind inside (ajjhattaṃ) is a mind experiencing something within the framework of the body. Mind is taken as outside when it experiences an object from outside; when it feels a sound coming into contact with the ear, a shape with the eye, a smell with the nose, a taste with the tongue, something tangible with the body, or a thought of something outside. However the whole process is still within the framework of the body. Mind itself always remains inside the body, even when its object is outside.

Then arising and passing is experienced and the stage of "atthi citta'nti" (This is mind) is reached: it is just viññāna, just mind, not ‘I’ or ‘my’ mind. The awareness gets established in this. Then, there is mere wisdom or understanding, mere observation. There is nothing to support or to grasp. A satipaṭṭhāna meditator understands how, when there is mere awareness, only cognition (viññāna) functions (‘atthi citta’nti... na ca kiñci loke upādiyati). There is no process of multiplication of misery and liberation will be reached.

IV.2.5. Dhammānupassanā: The Observation of Mental Contents

The next observation in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta is concerned with a specific set of mental qualities, the five hindrances (nīvarana). These come as the first among the observation of ‘dhammas’. The Pāli term dhamma can assume a variety of meanings, depending on the context in which it occurs.

349 D., II 298
350 ibid
Most translators take the term *dhammas* in the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta* to mean ‘mental objects’\(^{351}\) or ‘mental contents’\(^{352}\), in the sense of whatever can become an object of the mind, in contradistinction to the objects of the other five senses. What mind contains is called *dhamma*. Many words used by the Buddha are difficult to translate, because they have no equivalents in other languages. Of these, *dhamma* is the most difficult. Its range of meaning is vast. Its root meaning is “*dhāreti’ti dhammo*”\(^{353}\) (that which is contained). It is what is contained in the mind. A further meaning became the nature or the characteristic of whatever arises in the mind: “*Attano sabhāvam attano lakkhaṇam dhāreti’ti dhammo*”\(^{354}\). *Dhamma* means the self-nature, the self-characteristic that is contained.

In *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta*, *dhammas* are actually concerned with specific mental qualities such as the five hindrances and the seven awakening factors, and analyzed of experience into specific categories such as the five aggregates, the six sense-spheres, and the four noble truths. These mental factors and categories constitute central aspects of the Buddha’s way of teaching, the *dhamma*. These classificatory schemes are not in themselves the objects of meditation, but constitute frameworks or points of reference to be applied during observation. During actual practice, one is to look at whatever is experienced in terms of these *dhammas*. Thus, the *dhammas* mentioned in this *sutta* are not ‘mental objects’, but are applied to whatever becomes an object of the mind or of any other sense door during observation.

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\(^{351}\) Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization* (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003), 183

\(^{352}\) *Maha.*, 31

\(^{353}\) *D.*, I 229; *M.*, I 130; *A.*, II 107

\(^{354}\) Acharya S. N. Goenka, *Discourses on Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Maharashtra: Vipassana Research Institute, 2010), 59
IV.2.5.1. The Observation of the Hindrances, the Aggregates and the Sense Spheres

The first of the observations of *dhammas* is a more specific version of contemplation of states of mind, since it turns awareness to the five hindrances (five manifestations of the three unwholesome roots). In contrast to the preceding observation of the mind, however, observation of the hindrances covers not only the presence or absence of a hindrance, but also the conditions underlying the presence or absence of each hindrance. The *satipatthāna* instructions for observation the hindrances are:

> "How, monks, does a monk dwell, observing mental contents in mental contents, as regards the five hindrances?

Here, monks, a monk, whenever sense desire is present in him, he understands properly that, "Sense desire is present in me." ... Whenever aversion is present in him, he understands properly that, "Aversion is present in me." ... Whenever sloth and torpor are present in him, he understands properly that, "Sloth and torpor are present in me." ... Whenever agitation and remorse are present in him, he understands properly that, "Agitation and remorse are present in me". Whenever doubt is present in him, he understands properly that, "Doubt is present in me". Whenever doubt is absent from him, he understands properly that, "Doubt is absent from me". He understands properly, how doubt that has not yet arisen in him comes to arise. He understands properly, how doubt that has now arisen in him gets eradicated. He understands properly, how doubt that has now been eradicated will in future no longer arise in him."\(^{355}\)

*Nīvaraṇa* means a ‘curtain’ or ‘cover’: that which prevents the reality from being seen. The *nīvaraṇa* refers to the five enemies: craving (*kāmacchanda*), aversion (*byāpādāṇī*), drowsiness (*thīna-midda*), agitation (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*). An example is given.\(^{356}\) At that time, there were no mirrors, and people used to look at the reflection of their

\(^{355}\) Maha., 31-32

\(^{356}\) S., V 121; and A., III 230

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faces in a pot of clean water with a light. If the water is dirty, colored, or agitated, people can’t see properly. Similarly, these nīvarānas are enemies to a meditator’s progress on the path of observing reality because they color or prevent them from seeing it.

The use of the term ‘hindrance’ (nīvarāṇa) clearly indicates why these mental qualities have been singled out for special attention: they ‘hinder’ the proper functioning of the mind. Under the influence of the hindrances, one is unable to understand one’s own good or that of others, or to gain concentration or insight.\(^{357}\) Learning to withstand the impact of a hindrance with awareness is therefore an important skill for one’s progress on the path. According to the discourses, difficulties in counterbalancing a hindrance are a good reason for approaching an experienced meditator to ask for practical guidance.\(^{358}\)

These five hindrances actually cover seven distinct mental qualities. That these seven are subsumed under a fivefold presentation is probably due to the similarities in effect and character between sloth (thīna) and torpor (middha), and between restlessness (uddhacca) and worry (kukkucca). The hindrances not only obstruct absorption attainment, they also impede the establishment of the awakening factors (bojjhāṅga)\(^{359}\). This antagonistic relationship between the hindrances and the awakening factors is of considerable importance, since the removal of the former and the development of the latter are necessary conditions for realization.

Two sets of similes in the discourses depict the specific character and effect of the five hindrances. The first set of similes illustrates the effect of

\(^{357}\) M., II 203; S., V92; S., V127; and A., III 63
\(^{358}\) A., III 317 and 321
\(^{359}\) This is especially the case for sloth-and-torpor versus energy; restlessness-and-worry versus tranquillity; and doubt versus investigation-of-dhammas (e.g. at S V 104). In numerous instances throughout the Bojjhāṅga Sutta (S V 63-140) the awakening factors and the hindrances are presented as diametrically opposed mental qualities.
each hindrance through the image of a bowl filled with water and used as a mirror in order to look at the reflection of one’s face. According to these similes, the effect of sensual desire is similar to water mixed with dye; aversion resembles water heated to the boil; sloth-and-torpor is compared to water overgrown with algae; restlessness-and-worry affect the mind like water stirred by wind; and doubt is like dark and muddy water. In all five cases, one is unable to see one’s reflection properly in the water. These similes vividly illustrate the individual character of each hindrance: sensual desire colours one’s perception; because of aversion one gets heated; sloth-and-torpor result in stagnation; through restlessness-and-worry one is tossed about; and doubt obscures.

The other set of similes illustrates the absence of the hindrances. According to this set, to be free from sensual desire is like being relieved from a debt; to be free from aversion is like recovering from physical illness; to be unobstructed by sloth and torpor is akin to being released from prison; to be free from the agitation of restlessness-and-worry is like being liberated from slavery; and to overcome doubt resembles crossing a dangerous desert safely. This second set of similes provides additional illustrations of the hindrances: sensual desire agitating the mind is comparable to being heavily in debt; the tension created through aversion is quite literally a disease; sloth and torpor dulls and imprisons the mind; restlessness-and-worry can control the mind to such an extent that one is completely at its mercy; and doubt leaves one in a state of insecurity, not knowing which way to turn. Since the first set of similes illustrates the presence of the hindrances (in terms of their debilitating effect), while the second describes the relief of being free of them, these two sets correspond to the two alternatives for contemplating the

360 S., V 121; and A., III 230
361 D., I 71; and M., I 275
hindrances: awareness of their presence or of their absence.

The most important thing in this process is the recognizing of the presence and absence of a hindrance. According to the discourses, if a hindrance is present and one does not recognize it, one is ‘mis-meditating’, a form of practice the Buddha did not approve of. But if one does recognize the presence of a hindrance and contemplates it as a satipaṭṭhāna meditation, one’s practice will lead to purification of the mind.

A passage in the Aṅguttara Nikāya demonstrates the importance of clearly recognizing mental defilements for what they are. This discourse reports the monk Anuruddha complaining to his friend Śāriputra that despite concentrative attainments, unshaken energy, and well-established mindfulness, he was unable to break through to full realization. In reply, Śāriputra pointed out that Anuruddha’s boasting of concentration attainments was nothing but a manifestation of conceit, his unshaken energy was simply restlessness, and his concern about not yet having awakened was just worry. Helped by his friend to recognize these as hindrances, Anuruddha was soon able to overcome them and achieve realization.

Once the hindrances are at least temporarily removed, the alternative aspect of contemplating the hindrances becomes relevant: awareness of their absence. In several expositions of the gradual path, such absence of the hindrances forms the starting point for a causal sequence that leads via delight, joy, tranquillity; and happiness (pāmojja, pīti, passaddhi, and sukha) to concentration and the attainment of absorption. The instruction in this context is “to contemplate the disappearance of the five hindrances within oneself”. This suggests a positive act of recognizing and even rejoicing in

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362 M., III 14
363 A., I 272
364 A., I 282
365 E.g. at D., I 73. The use of the Pāli verb sam-anupassati in this instruction indicates that a form of
the absence of the hindrances, which then paves the way for deep concentration. Such a conscious act of recognizing and rejoicing in the absence of the hindrances is vividly illustrated in the second set of similes mentioned above, which compare this state of mental freedom to freedom from debt, disease, imprisonment, slavery, and danger.

It should be clear that for every dhamma, anything that arises on the mind (even a slight thought) starts flowing with a sensation on the body: “vedanā samosaraṇā sabbe dhammā”. This law of nature was realised but not created by the Buddha. Whatever arises (anger, passion, or anything else) if the sensation is observed, the meditator is working properly. Otherwise it is an intellectual game. Anger may have gone away at the surface level, but deep inside the sensation remains, and the mind continues to react with anger to this sensation without the meditator even knowing. Therefore, so far as this tradition is concerned, the sensation on the body cannot be missed. Every moment, meditators must be aware of sensation arising and passing.

Whether meditators are practising any section of kāyānupassanā or vedanānupassanā, or cittānupassanā or dhammānupassanā, without the understanding of arising and passing of sensation, the accumulated impurities at the depth of the mind can be neither reached nor eradicated. The practice will just be a surface game. The same stations follow: “Iti ajjhattam vā dhammesu dhammānupassi viharati, bahiddhā vā dhammesu dhammānupassi viharati... ‘atthi dhammā’ti... na ca kiñci loke upādiyati.”

Observing inside and on the surface, and then arising and passing, the stage of ‘atthi dhammā’ti is reached: neither good nor bad, mine nor yours, just the law of nature, mere mental contents and their nature. The same stations follow until there is nothing to grasp.

\( ^{36} \) D., II 300

contemplation (anupasanā) is intended here.
When craving has arisen, meditators can not take it out with aversion; otherwise they generate a new *saṅkhāra* of aversion. If they just accept that there is craving in the mind, then they are just observing, and the reaction, which is the nature of craving, is not being multiplied. It is weakened and becomes feeble. Any mental impurity is similarly observed. Even the practice of intellectually contemplating the body as repulsive, as in some opening paragraphs of *kāyānupassanā*, was given by the Buddha merely as a beginning to bring people on the right path. Once *vipassanā* starts, there is no aversion to this ugly body; it is just observed as it is with the wisdom of arising and passing (*yathābhūta-ñāna-dassanam*). The *ñāna*, as in *pajanāti*, is just awareness with the understanding of *anicca*. Whatever arises (whether good or bad, pure or impure) there is mere observation, no attempt to retain or push it out. This is the proper path to the final goal.

The next objects for observation of mental contents are the five aggregates, it reads:

How, monks, does a monk dwell, observing mental contents in mental contents, as regards the five aggregates of clinging?

Here, monks, a monk [understands properly]: “Such is matter, such is the arising of matter, such is the passing away of matter; such are sensations, such is the arising of sensations, such is the passing away of sensations; such is perception, such is the arising of perception, such is the passing away of perception; such are reactions, such is the arising of reactions, such is the passing away of reactions; such is consciousness, such is the arising of consciousness, such is the passing away of consciousness”.

*Khandha* means an aggregate, an accumulation, or a heap of something. We are called individual beings. This is an apparent truth: but at a deeper level every living individual (I, you, he, or she is just *pañca khandhā*, the five aggregates). The Buddha wants practitioners to go to the depth of this reality, where they can’t differentiate or identify by name, where they...
merely the five aggregates.

Clearly recognizing and understanding the five aggregates is of considerable importance, since without fully understanding them and developing detachment from them, it will not be possible to gain complete freedom from dukkha.\(^{367}\) Indeed, detachment and dispassion regarding these five aspects of subjective personality leads directly to realization.\(^{368}\) The discourses, and the verses composed by awakened monks and nuns, record numerous cases where a penetrative understanding of the true nature of the five aggregates culminated in full awakening.\(^{369}\) These instances highlight the outstanding potential of this particular satipatthana contemplation.

These five aggregates are often referred to in the discourses as the ‘five aggregates of clinging’ (pancupādānakkhandha).\(^{370}\) In this context ‘aggregate’ (khandha) is an umbrella term for all possible instances of each category, whether past, present, or future, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, near or far. The qualification ‘clinging’ (upādāna) refers to desire and attachment in regard to these aggregates.\(^{371}\) Such desire and attachment in relation to the aggregates is the root cause for the arising of dukkha.

The sequence of these five aggregates leads from the gross physical body to increasingly subtle mental aspects. The first of the aggregates, material form (rūpa), is usually defined in the discourses in terms of the four elementary qualities of matter. A discourse in the Khandha Saṃyutta explains

\(^{367}\) S., III 27
\(^{368}\) A., V 52. Cf. also S., III 19-25, where several discourses relate an understanding of the aggregates to full realization
\(^{369}\) At M., III 20, a detailed exposition on the aggregates led sixty monks to full realization. At S., III 68, the Buddha’s first five disciples became arahants after an exposition of anatta, again by way of the five aggregates.
\(^{370}\) E.g. at D., II 305. The expression ‘five aggregates’ seems to have been easily intelligible in ancient India, since it occurs in the Buddha’s first discourse, at S., V 421, apparently without any need for elaboration or explanation.
\(^{371}\) M., I 300; M., III 16; S., III 47; and S., III 167
that material form (*rupa*) refers to whatever is affected (*ruppati*) by external conditions such as cold and heat, hunger and thirst, mosquitoes and snakes, emphasizing the subjective experience of *rupa* as a central aspect of this aggregate.\textsuperscript{372}

Next in the sequence of the aggregates come feeling (*vedanā*) and cognition (*saññā*), which represent the affective and the cognitive aspects of experience. In the context of the process of perception, cognition (*saññā*) is closely related to the arising of feeling, both depending on stimulation through the six senses by way of contact (*phassa*). The standard presentations in the discourses relate feeling to the sense organ, but cognition to the respective sense object. This indicates that feelings are predominantly related to the subjective repercussions of an experience, while cognitions are more concerned with the features of the respective external object. That is, feelings provide the ‘how’ and cognitions the ‘what’ of experience. To speak of a ‘cognition’ of an object refers to the act of identifying raw sensory data with the help of concepts or labels, such as when one sees a coloured object and ‘re-cognizes’ it as yellow, red, or white, etc.\textsuperscript{373} Cognition to some extent involves the faculty of memory, which furnishes the conceptual labels used for recognition.

The fourth aggregate comprises volitions (*sañkhārā*), representing the conative aspect of mind.\textsuperscript{374} These volitions or intentions correspond to the reactive or purposive aspect of the mind, that which reacts to things or their potentiality. The aggregate of volitions and intentions interacts with each of the aggregates and has a conditioning effect upon them. In the subsequent

\textsuperscript{372} S., III 86. Strictly speaking, *ruppati* and *rupa* are not etymologically related. Nevertheless, this passage offers an illustrative explanation of the term.

\textsuperscript{373} S., III 87

\textsuperscript{374} E.g. M., I 389 distinguished between afflicting and non-afflicting volitions by way of body, speech, and mind. S., III 60 and S., III 63 explain ‘volitions’ to comprise intentions related to visible form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental objects.
developments of Buddhist philosophy, the meaning of this term expanded until it came to include a wide range of mental factors.

The fifth aggregate is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Although at times the discourses use 'consciousness' to represent mind in general, in the context of the aggregate classification it refers to being conscious of something. This act of being conscious is most prominently responsible for providing a sense of subjective cohesiveness, for the notion of a substantial 'I' behind experience. Consciousness depends on the various features of experience supplied by name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*), just as name-and-form in turn depends on consciousness as their point of reference. This conditional interrelationship creates the world of experience, with consciousness being aware of phenomena that are being modified and presented to it by way of name-and-form.

The discourses describe the characteristic features of these five aggregates with a set of similes. These compare material form to the insubstantial nature of a lump of foam carried away by a river; feelings to the impermanent bubbles that form on the surface of water during rain; cognition to the illusory nature of a mirage; volitions to the essenceless nature of a plantain tree (because it has no heartwood); and consciousness to the deceptive performance of a magician.

This set of similes points to central characteristics that need to be understood with regard to each aggregate. In the case of material form, contemplating its unattractive and insubstantial nature corrects mistaken

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375 M., I 292 explains that "feeling" just feels, whereas 'consciousness' is conscious of such a feeling. S., III 87 alternatively illustrates the activity of consciousness by it being conscious of various tastes.

376 D., II 56: "Consciousness conditions name-and-form name-and-form conditions consciousness." ('Name', according to M., I 53, comprises feeling, cognition, volition, contact, and attention.)

377 S., III 142; with further explanations in *Vism.* 479
notions of substantiality and beauty. Concerning feelings, awareness of their impermanent nature counteracts the tendency to search for pleasure through feelings. With regard to cognition, awareness of its deluding activity uncovers the tendency to project one’s own value judgements onto external phenomena as if these were qualities of the outside objects. With volitions, insight into their selfless nature corrects the mistaken notion that willpower is the expression of a substantial self. Regarding consciousness, understanding its deceptive performance counterbalances the sense of cohesiveness and substantiality it tends to give to what in reality is a patchwork of impermanent and conditioned phenomena.

Owing to the influence of ignorance, these five aggregates are experienced as embodiments of the notion “I am”. From the unawakened point of view, the material body is “Where I am”, feelings are “How I am”, cognitions are "What I am" (perceiving), volitions are “Why I am” (acting), and consciousness is “Whereby I am” (experiencing). In this way, each aggregate offers its own contribution to enacting the reassuring illusion that “I am”.

By laying bare these five facets of the notion “I am”, this analysis of subjective personality into aggregates singles out the component parts of the misleading assumption that an independent and unchanging agent inheres in human existence, thereby making possible the arising of insight into the ultimately selfless (anattā) nature of all aspects of experience.

According to the Mahasatipatthāna Sutta, to observe the five aggregates requires a dear recognition of each, followed by directing awareness to their arising (samudaya) and their passing away (atthagama). After analyzing into five aggregates (material form, feeling, cognition volitions and consciousness), the second stage of practice reveals the impermanent character of the aggregates and to some extent thereby also points to their
conditioned nature.

In the discourses, contemplation of the impermanent nature of the aggregates, and thereby of oneself, stands out as a particularly prominent cause for gaining realization.\(^{378}\) Probably because of its powerful potential for awakening, the Buddha spoke of this particular contemplation as his 'lion's roar'.\(^{379}\) The reason underlying the eminent position of contemplating the impermanent nature of the aggregates is that it directly counters all conceit and 'I' or 'mine' making. The direct experience of the fact that every aspect of oneself is subject to change undermines the basis on which conceit and 'I' or 'mine'-making take their stand. Conversely, to the extent to which one is no longer under the influence of 'I' or 'mine' notions in regard to the five aggregates, any change or alteration of the aggregates will not lead to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. As the Buddha emphatically advised: “give up the aggregates, since none of them is truly your own!”\(^{380}\)

In practical terms, contemplating the arising and passing away of each aggregate can be undertaken by observing change taking place in every aspect of one's personal experience, be these, for example, the cycle of breaths or circulation of the blood, the change of feelings from pleasant to unpleasant, the variety of cognitions and volitional reactions arising in the mind, or the changing nature of consciousness, arising at this or that sense door. Such practice can then build up to contemplating the arising and passing away of all five aggregates together, when one comprehensively surveys the five aggregate-components of any experience and at the same time witnesses the impermanent nature of this experience.

\(^{378}\) At D., II 35 the former Buddha Vipassī realized full awakening by contemplating the impermanence of the five aggregates. The potential of this contemplation to lead to full awakening is documented also at D., III 223; S., II 29; S., II 253; A., II 45; and A., IV 153

\(^{379}\) S., III 84

\(^{380}\) M., I 140; and S., III 33
The previous satipatthāna exercise was concerned with analyzing subjective personality with the help of the aggregate scheme. An alternative or complementary approach is to turn to the relationship between oneself and the outer world. This is the topic covered by observation of the sense-spheres which directs awareness to the six ‘internal’ and ‘external’ sense-spheres (ājīvattikabāhira āyatana), and to the fetter arising in dependence on them. Here are the instructions for this practice.

How, monks, does a monk dwell, observing mental contents in mental contents, as regards the six internal and external sense spheres?

Here, monks, a monk understands properly the eye, he understands properly the visible object ... He understands properly the ear, he understands properly sound ... He understands properly the nose, he understands properly smell ... He understands properly the tongue, he understands properly taste ... He understands properly the body, he understands properly touch ... He understands properly the mind, he understands properly the contents of the mind and he understands properly the bondage that arises dependent on these two. He understands properly how the bondage that has not yet arisen, comes to arise. He understands properly how the bondage that has now arisen, gets eradicated. He understands properly how that bondage that has now been eradicated will in future no longer arise.381

According to the discourses, to develop understanding and detachment in regard to these six internal and external sense-spheres is of central importance for progress towards awakening.382 An important aspect of such understanding is to undermine the misleading sense of a substantial ‘I’ as the independent experiencer of sense objects. Awareness directed to each of these sense-spheres will reveal that subjective experience is not a compact unit, but rather a compound made up of six distinct ‘spheres’, each of which is dependently arisen.

381 Maha., 37-39
382 S., IV 89 and A., V 52 present insight and detachment regarding the six sense-spheres as enabling one to make an end of dukkha.
Each of these sense-spheres includes both the sense organ and the sense object. Besides the five physical senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) and their respective objects (sight, sound, smell, flavor, and touch), the mind (mano) is included as the sixth sense, together with its mental objects (dhamma). In the present context, mind (mano) represents mainly the activity of thought (maññati). While the five physical senses do not share each other's respective field of activity, all of them relate to the mind as the sixth sense. That is, all perceptual processes rely to some extent on the interpretative role of the mind, since it is the mind which 'makes sense' out of the other senses. This shows that the early Buddhist scheme of six sense-spheres does not set pure sense perception against the conceptual activity of the mind, but considers both as interrelated processes, which together bring forth the subjective experience of the world.

It is particularly intriguing that early Buddhism treats the minds just like the other sense organs. Thought, reasoning, memory, and reflection are dealt with in the same manner as the sense data of any other sense door. Thus, the thinking activity of the mind shares the impersonal status of external phenomena perceived through the five senses.

Insight into this impersonal character of "one's own" thoughts can be gained even with the first few attempts at meditation, when one discovers how difficult it is to avoid getting lost in all kinds of reflections, daydreams, memories, and fantasies, despite being determined to focus on a particular object of meditation. Just as it is impossible only to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch what is wished for, so too, with an untrained mind, it is not possible to have thoughts only when and how one would like to have them. For precisely this reason a central purpose of meditative training is to remedy this situation by gradually taming the thinking activity of the mind and bringing it more

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383 M., I 295 and S., V 218
under conscious control.\footnote{This has found its expression in various passages such as at M., I 122, where to develop mastery of the mind means to be able to think only what one wishes to think; or at M., I 214, which speaks of gaining control over the mind and thereby being no longer controlled by it.}^\textsuperscript{384}

The above passage from the \textit{Mahasatipatthāna Sutta} lists both the sense organs and sense objects for contemplation. On the face of it, the instruction to “understand” (pajānāti) eye and forms, ear and sounds, etc. seems rather flat, but on further consideration this instruction may reveal some deeper implications.

Often these six senses and their objects occur in descriptions of the conditioned arising of consciousness (vīññāna).\footnote{E.g. at M., I 111}^\textsuperscript{385} An intriguing aspect of this conditional situation is the role that subjective influence plays in the perceptual process. Experience, represented by the six types of consciousness, is the outcome of two determinant influences: the “objective” aspect on the one hand, that is, the in-coming sensory impressions; and the “subjective” aspect on the other hand, namely, the way in which these sense impressions are received and cognized. Supposedly objective perceptual appraisal is in reality conditioned by the subject as much as by the object. One’s experience of the world is the product of an interaction between the “subjective” influence exercised by how one perceives the world, and the “objective” influence exercised by the various phenomena of the external world.

Understood in this way, the fact that the \textit{satipatthāna} instruction directs awareness to each sense organ could have deeper implications, in the sense of pointing to the need to recognize the subjective bias inherent in each process of perception. The influence of this subjective bias has a decisive effect on the first stages of perception and can lead to the arising of a fetter (samyojana). Such subsequent reactions are often based on qualities and
attributes assumed to belong to the perceived object. In actual fact, these qualities and attributes are often projected on the object by the perceiver.

_Satipaṭṭhāna_ contemplation of the six sense-spheres can lead to recognizing this influence of personal biases and tendencies on the process of perception. Contemplating in this way will uncover the root cause for the arising of unwholesome mental reactions. This reactive aspect forms in fact part of the above instructions, where the task of _sati_ is to observe the fetter that can arise from dependence on sense and object.

Although a fetter arises from dependence on sense and object, the binding force of such a fetter should not be attributed to the senses or objects per se. The discourses illustrate this with the example of two bulls, bound together by a yoke. Just as their bondage is not caused by either of the bulls, but by the yoke, so too the fetter should not be imputed to either its inner or its outer conditions (for example eye and forms), but to the binding force of desire.\(^{386}\)

In the discourses, there is considerable variation in the usage of the term 'fetter', which suggests that to speak of fetters does not always necessarily refer to a fixed set, but may sometimes include whatever falls under the same principle, in the sense of fettering and causing bondage. The most common presentation of 'fetters' in the discourses lists altogether ten types: belief in a substantial and permanent self, doubt, dogmatic clinging to particular rules and observances, sensual desire, aversion, craving for fine-material existence, craving for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance.

The eradication of these ten fetters takes place with the different stages of realization. Since all these ten fetters might not necessarily manifest in the context of actual _satipaṭṭhāna_ practice, and since the term 'fetter' has a certain

\(^{386}\) S., IV 163; S., IV 164; and S., IV 283
breadth of meaning in the discourses. During contemplation of the sensespheres awareness can be directed in particular to the fettering force of desire and aversion in regard to whatever is experienced.

“Iti aṭṭhattāṃ vā dhammesu dharmānupassī viharati... ‘atthi dharmā’ti...na ca kiñci loke upādiyati”\textsuperscript{387}; The same process follows. “This is dhamma.” All the six sense doors and their objects are mere dhamma, with no ‘I,’ ‘mine’, ‘he’, or ‘she’, no individual there. Dividing, dissecting, disintegrating and dissolving, analysing each sense door separately, the individual becomes just a mass, a process, an interaction of all of the āyatanas combined. With mere intellectual understanding, ignorance will prevent the witnessing of this dhamma, this process, and the escape from this bondage.

IV.2.5.2. The Observation of the Factors of Enlightenment and Four Noble Truths

The mental qualities that form the topic of the next contemplation of dhammas provide the conditions conducive to awakening, which is why they are termed “awakening factors”.\textsuperscript{388} Just as a river inclines and flows towards the ocean, so the awakening factors incline towards nibbāna. The instructions for contemplating the awakening factors are:

Again, monks, a monk dwells observing mental contents in mental contents, as regards the seven factors of enlightenment. How, monks, does a monk dwell observing mental contents in mental contents, as regards the seven factors of enlightenment?

Here, monks, a monk understands properly that, when the factor of enlightenment, awareness, is present within him, “The factor of enlightenment, awareness, is present in me.” He understands properly that, when the factor of enlightenment, awareness, is absent from him, “The factor of enlightenment, awareness, is absent from me.” He understands properly, how the factor of enlightenment, awareness,
that has not yet arisen in him, comes to arise. He understands properly, how the
factor of enlightenment, awareness, that has now arisen, is developed and
perfected.  
Observation of the awakening factors proceeds similarly to the
observation of the hindrances, first awareness turns to the presence or
absence of the mental quality in question, and then to the conditions for its
presence or absence. However, while in the case of contemplating the
hindrances awareness is concerned with the conditions for their future non-
arising. With the awakening factors, the task is to know how to develop and
firmly establish these beneficial mental qualities. There are two stages in
observation of awakening factors. The first is “knowing the presence or
absence of mindfulness (sati), investigation of dhammas (dhammavicaya),
energe (viriya), joy (pīṭi), tranquility (passaddhi), concentration (samādhi),
equanimity (upekkhā). The second stage is “knowing the conditions that lead
to further development and perfection if they are present” or “knowing the
conditions that lead to arising if they are absent”.

Like the observation of the hindrances, the instructions for observing
the awakening factors do not mention any active endeavour to set up or
maintain a particular awakening factor, apart from the task of setting up
awareness. However, just as the mere presence of sati can counter a
hindrance, so the presence of sati can promote the arising of the other
awakening factors. In fact, according to the Ānāpānasati Sutta, the seven
awakening factors form a conditionally related sequence, with sati as its
initial cause and foundation. This suggests that the development of the
awakening factors is a natural outcome of practising satipaṭṭhāna.

Besides providing the foundation for the other factors, sati is,

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389 Maha., 41
390 M., III 85 and S., V 68
391 According to S., V 73 and A., V 116, development of the four satipaṭṭhāana fulfils the seven
awakening factors.
moreover, the awakening factor whose development is beneficial at any time and on all occasions.\(^{392}\) The remaining six factors can be split into two groups of three: investigation of dhammas (dhammavicaya), energy (viriya), and joy (pīti) are particularly appropriate when the mind is sluggish and deficient in energy, while tranquillity (passaddhi), concentration (samādhi), and equanimity (upekkhā) are suitable for those occasions when the mind is excited and over-energetic.\(^{393}\)

In the conditional sequence of the awakening factors, "investigation of dhammas" (dhammavicaya) develops out of well-established mindfulness. Such investigation of dhammas seems to combine two aspects: on the one hand, an inquiry into the nature of experience (by taking 'dhammas' to stand for 'phenomena'), and on the other, a correlation of this experience with the teachings of the Buddha (the 'dhamma').\(^{394}\) This twofold character also underlies the word 'investigation' (vicaya), derived from the verb vicināti, whose range of meaning includes both 'investigating' and 'discriminating'. Thus, "investigation of dhammas" can be understood as an investigation of subjective experience based on the discrimination gained through familiarity with the dhamma. Such discrimination refers in particular to the ability to distinguish between what is wholesome or skilful for progress on the path, and what is unwholesome or unskilful. This directly contrasts investigation of dhammas with the hindrance doubt (vicikiccha), which arises owing to lack of clarity about what is wholesome and what is unwholesome.\(^{395}\)

The development of investigation of dhammas in turn arouses the
awakening factor of energy (viriya). The arising of such 'energy' is related to putting forth effort. The discourses further qualify such energy with the attribute 'unshaken'. This qualification draws attention to the need for effort or energy to be applied with continuity, a specification which parallels the quality of being diligent (ātāpi) mentioned in the 'definition' part of the Mahasatipatthāna Sutta. According to the discourses, energy can manifest either mentally or physically. As an awakening factor, energy stands in direct opposition to the hindrance sloth and torpor (thinamiddha).

In the sequence of the awakening factors, energy in turn leads to the arising of joy (pīti). Joy as an awakening factor is clearly a non-sensual type of joy, such as the joy that can be experienced during absorption attainment. The progression of the awakening factors then leads from joy (pīti), via tranquillity (passaddhi), to concentration (samādhi). This echoes a causal sequence often described elsewhere in the discourses, which similarly proceeds from joy, tranquillity, and happiness to concentration, and culminates with the arising of wisdom and realization.

As an awakening factor, tranquillity (passaddhi) is related to physical and mental calmness and is, therefore, a direct antidote to the hindrance of restlessness and worry (uddhaccakukkucca). As part of the causal sequence

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396 S., V 66 recommends endeavour and exertion as nutriments for the awakening factor of energy. The Chinese Agama version of this discourse mentions the four right efforts as nutriment for the awakening factor of energy. This presentation fits well with the distinction between wholesomeness and unwholesomeness gained through cultivating the previous awakening factor, investigation of dhammas, since the same distinction underlies the four right efforts.

397 S., V 68
398 S., V 111
399 S., V 104 describes the nutriment for the awakening factor of energy in the same terms used at S., V 105 for the anti-nutriment for sloth-and-torpor. S., V 104 identifies physical and mental tranquillity as nutriment for the awakening factor of tranquillity, while S., V 106 speaks of calmness of the mind (cetaso vāpasamo) as anti-nutriment for restlessness-and-

400 S., V 68 speaks of 'unworldly joy'; which S., V 111 relates to the presence or absence of initial and sustained mental application, i.e. to the experience of absorption. 'Joy' in this context is, however, not confined to jhanic joy only, since non-sensual joy can also be the result of insight meditation, cf e.g. Dhp 374.

401 E.g. at S., II 32
402 S., V 104 identifies physical and mental tranquillity as nutriment for the awakening factor of tranquillity, while S., V 106 speaks of calmness of the mind (cetaso vāpasamo) as anti-nutriment for restlessness-and-
leading to concentration, the awakening factor tranquillity leads to a happy state of mind, which in turn facilitates concentration. Concentration then, arises because of the development of calmness and lack of distraction. According to the discourses, concentration with and without initial mental application (vitakka) can serve as an awakening factor.

The culmination of the development of the awakening factors comes with the establishment of equanimity (upekkhā), a balanced state of mind resulting from concentration. Such refined mental balance and equipoise corresponds to a level of well-developed satipaṭṭhāna, when the meditator is capable of dwelling 'independently, without clinging to anything in the world’, as stipulated in the 'refrain'.

Practically applied, the whole set of the seven awakening factors can be understood to describe the progress of satipaṭṭhāna practice to this level of deep equanimity. On the basis of well-established mindfulness, one investigates the nature of subjective reality viz. investigation of dhammas. Once sustained investigation gains momentum viz. energy, with growing insight the object of contemplation becomes clearer and the meditator feels inspired, viz. joy to continue with the practice. If at this point the danger of getting carried away by elation and agitation can be avoided, continued contemplation leads to a state of calmness, when the mind stays effortlessly with its meditation object without succumbing to distraction, viz. concentration. With maturing insight, this process culminates in a state of

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403 S., V 69
404 S., V 105 recommends the ‘sign of calmness’ (samathanimitta) as nutriment for the awakening factor of concentration. This "sign of calmness" is mentioned again at D III 213 and S V 66. The ‘sign’ (nimitta) occurs also in various other passages, often in apparent relation to the development of concentration. Frequently a ‘sign of concentration’ (samādhinimitta) can be found at D III 226; D III 242; D III 279; M I 249; M I 301; M III 112; A I 115; A I 256; A II 17; A III 23; and A III 321
firm equanimity and detachment.

It is at this point, when the inspired momentum of mindful investigation takes place against a background of tranquil composure, the mental equipoise needed for the breakthrough to awakening comes about. At this level of practice, a deep sense of completely letting go prevails. In the discourses, such ‘letting go’ as a central purpose of developing the bojjhaṅgas forms the culmination of a set of attributes frequently associated with the awakening factors. These attributes stipulate that, in order to actualize the awakening potential of the bojjhaṅgas, they need to be based on ‘seclusion’ (viveka), on ‘fading away’ (virāga), and on ‘cessation’ (nirodha), since in this way they will lead to ‘letting go’ (vossagga).

Equanimity and mental balance as the consummation of the other six awakening factors also constitutes the climax in the commentarial scheme of the insight knowledges, in which “equanimity in regard to all conditioned phenomena” (sāṅkhārupekkhāna) marks the culmination of the series and the suitable mental condition for the event of realization.

The profitable effect of the awakening factors stands in direct opposition to the detrimental repercussions of the hindrances, a contrast frequently mentioned in the discourses. Both these sets form aspects of satipatthāna observation and are of central importance in cultivating the mental conditions conducive to realization. According to the Buddha, these two aspects from among the contemplations of dhammas (removal of the hindrances and an establishment of the awakening factors) are the necessary conditions not only for realization, but also for developing mundane types of

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405 E.g. at M III 88. The same awakening dynamics can be related to the noble eightfold path (S I 88; S., IV 367; and S., V 1-62); and to the five faculties (S., IV 365; S., V 239; and S., V 241); or the five powers (S., IV 366; S V 249; and S., V 251)
406 S., V 128 points out that the awakening factors lead to knowledge and vision, while the hindrances lead to the absence of knowledge and vision.
knowledge.

Developing the awakening factors can be combined with a broad range of meditation exercises, including, for example, contemplation of a decaying corpse, the divine abodes, mindfulness of breathing, or contemplation of the three characteristics.\(^{407}\) This indicates that to contemplate the awakening factors does not mean relinquishing one’s primary object of meditation. Rather, one is aware of these seven mental qualities as facets of progress towards insight during actual practice, and consciously develops and balances them so that the contemplation of one’s primary object can give rise to awakening.

There is a sense of mental mastery in this ability to oversee the development of insight during satipaṭṭhāna practice and to supervise the harmonious interaction of the awakening factors. The discourses illustratively compare this sense of mental mastery to being able to choose any garment from a full wardrobe.

As indicated by the discourses, a revelation of the awakening factors takes place only when a Buddha and his teaching have arisen. Hence, in the eyes of the early Buddhists, the development of the awakening factors was a specifically a Buddhist teaching. That other contemporary ascetics were also instructing their disciples to develop the awakening factors was, according to the commentaries, simply a case of imitation.

The relation of the seven awakening factors to the Buddha, together with their qualification as treasures on another occasion, is reminiscent of the universal monarch (cakkavatti rāja), who is similarly in the possession of seven precious treasures. Just as the realization of universal sovereignty depends on those seven precious possessions and is heralded by the arising of

\(^{407}\) Cf. S., V 129-33
the wheel-treasure *(cakkaratana)*, so too the realization of awakening depends on seven mental treasures, the awakening factors, and is heralded by the arising of *sati*.

With a help of seven awakening factors, it is easier for ones to observe the four noble truths. In this stage, they not only understand the Four Noble truths but also experience and see them as they really are without any attachment as we already mentioned in the chapter two.