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Ānâpâna,sati Sutta

The Discourse on the Mindfulness of the In-and-out-breathing | M 118

Theme: The breath meditation in practical detail

Translated and annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 The Sutta

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE

1.1.1 Sutta summary

1.1.1.1 The Ānâpâna,sati Sutta (M 118) is an exposition of the 16 steps of breath meditation in 4 tetrads [§§15-22], constituting the “mundane” or beginner’s practice; then, the application of these tetrads to the 4 focuses of mindfulness [§§23-28], to the 7 awakening-factors [§§29-40] and, finally, to spiritual liberation [§§41-43].

1.1.1.2 These 16 steps are found as a separate set in the Sarvâstivâda Madhyama and Saṃyukta.¹ The Chinese Madhyama Āgama of the Sarvâstivâda, however, does not have a version of this Sutta; but there seems to be an isolated related text.²

1.1.2 Sutta background

The inspiring Sutta prologue takes up about a quarter of the unabridged sutta [§§1-17]. The Buddha has just completed the three-month rains retreat with various prominent elder monks who have been advising and instructing new monks [§§1-3]. He then announces that he is staying on for another month, encouraging the monks to put in more effort in their training. [§4]

On hearing about the Buddha’s presence, the monks from the surrounding countryside flock to meet him [§§5-7]. The Buddha declares that the spiritual community is filled with accomplished disciples [§§8-12]. Even those who are not yet awakened are engaged in one of the 7 sets of practices, beginning with the 4 focuses of mindfulness [§§13-14].

1.1.3 Sutta overview

1.1.3.1 The main theme of this Sutta is the attainment of “**progressively higher distinction**” (*uḷāram pubbenâparam visesam*), that is, the 4 stages of sainthood: streamwinning, once-returning, non-returning and arhathood [§2+n]. The Buddha begins by declaring that **breath meditation** brings to perfection the 4 focuses of mindfulness, which in turn perfect the 7 awakening-factors, and which brings “true knowledge and liberation,” that is, self-awakening. Finally, he singles out the breath meditation for special mention. [§§15-16]

¹ Rod Bucknell, in his “Pāli-Chinese Sutras Correspondences” (2004) lists T97.1:919 and SĀ 810 = T2.208 as “partial or doubtful cognates of the Pāli version.”

² THICH Minh Chau says that this is the “Chih-ching” (1991:347). “These miscellaneous discourses, found addended to the major collections, consist of alternative translations and sometimes texts not found in the major Āgamas. Their doctrinal affiliations are usually unknown and they have been even less studied than the major collections.” (Sujato 2004:237 n359). See also Sujato 2004:145-147.

1.1.3.2 This rest of the Sutta records the teaching given on the final night of the 4-month retreat with the Buddha himself [§§17-44]. The contents of **Ānāpāna,sati Sutta** (M 118) is as follows:

The prologue (§§1-17) [1.1.2]

- §§1-3 The Buddha just completes the 3-month rains-retreat which include some prominent elders.
 §4 The Buddha announces that he is staying on for another month.
 §§5-7 Monks from the surrounding areas flock to listen to the Buddha.
 §§8-12 The Buddha declares that the spiritual community is filled with accomplished disciples.
 §§13-14 Even the unawakened monks are engaged in practising one of the 7 sets of teachings. [1.3]
 §§15-16 The prominence of the breath meditation.

The levels of perfections through breath meditation

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|---------|--|-------------|
| §17 | Preparation for the meditation. | } [2.3.5.3] |
| §§18-23 | The mundane (basic) 16-step breath meditation. | |
| §§24-28 | Perfection of the 4 focuses of mindfulness. | |
| §§29-40 | Perfection of the 7 awakening-factors. | |
| §§41-44 | Perfection of true knowledge and liberation. Conclusion. | |

1.1.4 Sutta significance

1.1.4.1 In the **Icchā,naṅgala Sutta** (S 54.11), breath meditation is declared to be “the noble abode, the perfect abode, the Tathagata’s abode,”³ because during the rains-retreat, the Buddha “mostly dwells in the concentration by mindfulness of breathing.”⁴ It is called an “abode” (*vihāra*) because the Buddha enjoys the bliss of dhyana through it.

The key text of breath meditation (*ānāpāna,sati*) is, of course, **the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta** (the discourse on the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing) found in the Majjhima Nikāya (M 118/3:77-88), SD 7.13. There are also 4 brief versions of the breath meditation given in the Saṃyutta (S 54.13-16) [1.2].

1.2 RELATED SUTTAS

1.2.1 The *Ānāpāna,sati Sutta* (M 118) should be studied with **the Ānāpāna Saṃyutta** (S 54),⁵ the most important of which **the (Ānāpāna,sati) Ānanda Sutta 1** (S 54.13), whose contents are repeated in **S 54.14-16**, that is, 4 other versions of the mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna,sati*), differing only in their respective settings:

(Ānāpāna,sati) Ānanda Sutta 1	(S 54.13/5:328-333)	Ānanda asks a question (at Sāvattihī)
(Ānāpāna,sati) Ānanda Sutta 2	(S 54.14/5:333-335)	Unprompted, to Ānanda (at Sāvattihī?)
(Ānāpāna,sati) Bhikkhū Sutta 1	(S 54.15/5:335 f)	Monks ask a question (at Sāvattihī?)
(Ānāpāna,sati) Bhikkhū Sutta 2	(S 54.16/5:336-340)	Unprompted, to the monks (at Sāvattihī?)

The two **Ānanda Suttas** (S 54.13+14) differ only in that in the *Ānanda Sutta 2* (S 54.14), Ānanda requests the Buddha to teach him, “Bhante, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, has the Blessed One as refuge. It would be good indeed if the Blessed One were to explain its meaning.

³ *Ariya,vihāra, brahma,vihāra, tathāgata,vihāra*. Cf *ariya,vāsa* in **Ariya,vāsa S 2** (A 10.20), SD 10.15.

⁴ S 54.11/5:325 f.

⁵ See Bodhi’s intro: S:B 1516 f.

Having heard the Blessed One, the monks would remember it.”⁶ These suttas also share a pericope on the 7 awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*).⁷ The two **Bhikkhū Suttas** (S 54.15+16), too, share a similar pattern, *mutatis mutandis*, but the interlocutors there are “a number of monks” (*sambahulā bhikkhū*).

1.2.2 The Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta (M 62) closes with the section on *ānâpâna,sati*, and ends with the remark that “when mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing is cultivated and often developed in this manner, even the last breath leaves with your knowledge, not without it.” (M 62,30/1:426). That is to say, when a dying person is mindful of his breath, he dies calmly with mindfulness and clear comprehension. **The Visuddhi,-magga** says: “Herein there are three kinds of *final* breaths on account of cessation, that is to say, final in *becoming*, final in *absorption*, final in *death*. For, among the various kinds of existence, in-breaths and out-breaths occur only in the sense-sphere existence, not in the form-existence nor the formless existence.” (Vism 8.241/291 f)⁸

1.2.3 The best known explanation on the traditional practice of breath meditation is given in **the Visuddhi,-magga** (Vism 8.145-244). A good reference is Nāṇamoli’s *Mindfulness of Breathing* (3rd ed 1973). Thich Nhat Hanh gives a contemporary popular free interpretation of breath meditation in *Breathe! You Are Alive* (1988, 1990, 1996).

1.3 THE 7 SETS

1.3.1 The Ānâpâna,sati Sutta opens with an extended list based on the 7 sets⁹ [§13], and culminates in the breath meditation [§14]. The 7 sets are elaborated in **the Mahā Sakul’udāyī Sutta**.¹⁰ In **the Pāsādika Sutta** (D 29), the Buddha exhorts,

Cunda, all of you to whom I have taught these truths that I have directly known should gather together and recite them, comparing meaning with meaning, comparing text with text [comparing spirit with spirit, letter with letter], without dissension [without quarrelling], so that this holy life might endure and stand for a long time for the profit of the many, the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, and for the benefit, profit and happiness of devas and humans.

(D 29,16-18/3:127 f)

In **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), the Buddha exhorts regarding these 7 sets, thus: “You are to learn them well, associate with them, cultivate them, develop them” (D 16,3.50/2:120).

1.3.2 Various methods of meditation are then listed [§14], but only the breath meditation is explained in full. The Commentary explains the reason for this is that a large number of the monks take it as their meditation practice (MA 4:139). It should also be added that the breath meditation is the key meditation in the Buddha’s

⁶ *Bhagavam,mūlakā no bhante dhammā, bhagavaṃ nettikā, bhagavaṃ paṭisaraṇā. Sādhu vata bhante bhagavatañ-ñ’eva paṭibhātu etassa bhāsitassa attho.Bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressantīti.* This is stock (M 1:309 f, 317, 465, 3:115; S 2:80 f; S 36.6.6/4:207; A 1:199, 4:158, 351, 5:355).

⁷ **Ānâpâna,sati S**, M 118/3:85-87 (SD 7.13) = **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S**, S 46.3/5:67-70 (SD 10.15) = **Ānanda S 1**, S 5:331-333 = **Ānanda S 2**, S 5:334 f [1.2.1].

⁸ See **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62,30/1:426), SD 3.11 n.

⁹ **The 7 sets** are: the 4 satipatthanas (*satipaṭṭhāna*) (SD 13), the 4 right efforts (*padhāna*) (SD 10.2), the 4 bases of power (*iddhi,pāda*) (SD 10.3), the 5 faculties (*indriya*) (SD 10.4), the 5 spiritual powers (*bala*) (SD 10.5), the 7 awakening-factors (*bojjhaṅga*) (SD 10.1), and the noble eightfold path (*atthaṅgika ariya,magga*) (SD 6.10). These 7 sets together form the 37 limbs of awakening (*bodhi,pakkhiya,dhammā*).

¹⁰ M 77,15-21/11 f, SD 6.18.

own spiritual life. The first record we have of his meditation experience is breath meditation when he is a child of 7, and on the night of his awakening, too, he uses the breath meditation (MA 2:291).¹¹

2 The breath

2.1 ĀNĀPĀNA

2.1.1 Vedic antecedents

2.1.1.1 The key ancient Indian word for breath is the Sanskrit term, *prāṇa* (P *pāṇa*), which means both breath and life (that is, to live is to breathe). The word *prāṇa* is a derivative noun, originally meaning “the breath in front,” that is, the inhaled air, and is combined with its opposite, *apāna*, “the breath down or away,” that is, the exhaled air, to refer to *respiration*. Zysk gives this helpful point regarding the ancient Indian conception of the breath:

Observation of the vital function of these complementary aspects of respiration, combined with intuitions about the function of wind after it entered the body, eventually led Indians to conceptualize and codify the bodily winds and their operations in the human organism. *Prāṇa* assumed the character of vital breath, inhaled air in the process of respiration, and was the principal wind in the upper part of the body, on which all other breaths depended. *Apāna* was the exhaled air, and the essential wind in the lower part of the body.

Ancient Indians identified organs resembling lungs (*pupphusa*, *kloman*) as part of human and animal anatomy, but they never understood their function in respiration. They conceived the lungs to be the locus of phlegm, and usually the heart to be the seat of vital breath. Respiration was simply the intake and expulsion of vital air from the body. Once in the body, it was carried throughout the organism by a series of vessels and stimulated the vital functions of the various bodily organs and parts. Each bodily function or locus of bodily functions had a wind or breath that acted as its motivator, giving rise to innumerable vital breaths, which eventually became codified into five basic bodily winds: *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna* and *samāna*. (Zysk 1993:198)

2.1.1.2 While these terms began as metaphysical speculation in the early Upaniṣads, they have always been a clear, integral and effective methodology of early Buddhist meditation practice. The terms as such are not found in Buddhism, but what the Upaniṣads speculated on, the early Buddhist experienced directly and, more importantly, make it available, not just to the select few, but to all who would learn.

2.1.1.3 The first term, *prāṇa* [2.1.1.1], is the most common of the “5 winds,” and is a general term for the breath and for life (that which breathes) itself.¹² Although the Vedic system generally defines *prāṇa* as the in-breath, the Pali term here is usually *āna* (with the verb *assasati*, “he breathes in”).¹³ The term

¹¹ See eg **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,17.31-44/1:242-249), SD 1.12.

¹² Ṛg,veda and Sāma,veda def *prāṇa* as being threefold: (1) it indicates and motivates life (ṚV 1.48.10, 66.1, 101.5, 3.53.21, 10.121.3); (2) it represents the atmospheric air (*vāta*) or wind (*vāyu*) inside man; and (3) it is connected with respiration (ṚV 10.189.1 f; SV 2.726 f). Cf connection of human breath and atmospheric wind in the Puruṣa hymn (ṚV 10.90.13). The Buddha however defines *pāṇa* as (1) the breath; (2) life; and (3) a living being. As evident from **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62) below, atmospheric wind or air is simply called *vāta*, whether internal or external. See also Zysk 1993:199-201.

¹³ Although this distinction is not prominent in the suttas, their Comys and the Upaniṣads follow the same defs: see (2.1.2).

apāna came to mean “down-going winds” (*adho,gamā vātā*), the breath that moves down from the navel, controlling evacuation and flatus (the breaking of wind).¹⁴

Vyāna refers to the interval between inhalation and exhalation, that is, when we are very relaxed, or on a deeper meditation level.¹⁵ The Upanishadic tradition generally defines *samāna* as the breath in the abdomen (abdominal breathing) and associates it with the digestion of food and nourishment of the body.¹⁶ However, as we shall see from **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 62) below, the early Buddhists are aware of both abdominal breathing (*kucchisayā vātā*) and thoracic breathing (*koṭṭhasayā vātā*).¹⁷

2.1.1.4 Now let us look at the early Buddhist definition of the wind element and the purpose of reflecting on it, as given in **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 62):

Rāhula, what is **the wind element** [motion]?¹⁸

The wind element may be either internal or external. And what, Rāhula, is the internal wind element?

Rāhula, whatever that is wind [airy], wind-like and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,¹⁹

<i>uddhaṅgamā vātā</i>	up-going winds,
<i>adhogamā vātā</i>	down-going winds,
<i>kucchisayā vātā</i>	winds in the belly [abdominal breathing],
<i>koṭṭhasayā vātā</i>	winds in the chest [thoracic breathing], ²⁰
<i>aṅgam-aṅgānusārino vātā</i>	winds that course through the limbs, ²¹
<i>assāso passāso</i>	in-breath and out-breath,

or whatever else that is wind, wind-like and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself]—this, Rāhula, is called internal wind element.

¹⁴ For further etym, see SD 49.4 (5.2.2).

¹⁵ Cf Chāndogya Upaniṣad: *yad vai prāṇiti sa prāṇaḥ | yad apāniti so ‘pānaḥ | atha yaḥ prāṇāpānayoḥ saṁdhiḥ sa vyānaḥ | yo vyānaḥ sāvāk | tasmād aprāṇann anapānan vācam abhivyāharati ||* “the *prāṇa* is the out-breath, the *apāna* is the in-breath. The *vyāna* is where the *prāṇa* and the *apāna* meet. This *vyāna* is speech. Therefore, when one speaks, one stops the *prāṇa* and the *apāna*” (ChU 1.3.3). In ancient Indian medicine, *vyāna* is said to be responsible for blood circulation.

¹⁶ See eg Mairī Upaniṣad 2.6 & Zysk 1993:205 f. This aspect of the 5 winds is close to *aṅgam-aṅgānusārino vātā* (M 62,11 below). Its prominence in our times is found as the “Vipassana” meditation method of watching the rise and fall of the belly (two-fingers’ breath above the navel), as taught by Mahasi Sayadaw.

¹⁷ See also Bodewitz 1986:334-336. For a summary, see Olivelle 1996:l-li.

¹⁸ “Wind,” *vāyo*, or “air” element, ie, motion, in Abhidhamma, said to be “strengthening” or “supporting” (*vitthambhana,lakkhaṇa*). On how winds cause pains, see **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97,28-29/2:193), SD 4.9.

¹⁹ According to **Visuddhi,magga**, “winds” are responsible for the various internal motions of the body, viz, “up-going winds” (*uddhaṅ,gamā vātā*) for vomiting and belching, “down-going winds” (*adho,gamā vātā*) for the expelling of dung and urine (Vism 350). “Wind” here clearly refers to elemental “motion,” not to the object moved.

²⁰ *Koṭṭha* means “the stomach or abdomen” (PED); and, *kucchi* is “belly, womb.” As such, here I take *koṭṭhasayā* to be cognate with or related to Skt *koṣṭhya* (mfn), meaning “proceeding from the chest, emitted (as a sound) from the centre of the lungs” (SED), which makes clear sense here.

²¹ “Winds that course through the limbs,” *aṅgam-aṅgānusārino vātā*. In ref to this, **Peter Harvey** says, “Note that the ‘motion/air’ element might be related to the modern concept of electrical discharges of the nerves ... In that case, the mind would move the body by effecting the electrical modulation of nerve discharges.” (1993:7 digital ed). In contemporary terms, these “winds” clearly refer to the oxyhaemoglobin, ie, the oxygen in the blood, coursing through the body. Clearly, this is the *samāna* as def in Mairī Upaniṣad, where it is said to be the wind that conducts into *apāna* (the downward passing wind) the coarse element of food and distributes in each limb the most subtle element of food (MU 2.6).

Now both the internal wind element and the external wind element are simply wind element.
And that should be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

When one sees it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by the wind element and the mind becomes dispassionate towards the wind element. (M 62,11/1:422 f), SD 3.11

2.1.2 Buddhist definitions

2.1.2.1 The term *ānāpāna* (with variant readings: *ānāpāṇa*, *āṇāpāna*, *āṇāpāṇa*) means “inhaled and exhaled breath, inhalation and exhalation, inspiration and expiration, respiration, breathing” (CPD). The dvandva *ānāpāna* is resolved as *āna* + *apāna*.²² The verbs are *assasati* and *passasati*, respectively, and the Sutta instructs the meditator to first direct himself to *assasati* (“he breathes in”), and then to *passasati* (“he breathes out”). However, there are divergent opinions here.²³

2.1.2.2 The **Visuddhi, magga** says that the Vinaya Commentary takes *assāsa* (ie *āna*, Skt *prāṇa*) as the out-breath, and *passāsa* (or *apāna*), the in-breath.²⁴ The Sutta Commentaries (like the Upaniṣad tradition) [2.1.1], however, take them as the reverse. Buddhaghosa (the Vism author) himself notes that when a baby leaves its mother’s womb, the air is first expelled from within and then air enters with a fine dust, strikes the palate and is extinguished (with the baby’s sneezing) (Vism 7.164/271 f).

This divergence is also found in **the Mahāyāna**. The Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit and Tibetan texts generally seem to take *āśvāsa* or *ucchvāsa* (Tib *dbugs brñubs*) as “in-breath,” and *praśvāsa* (Tib *dbugs phyuñ*) as “out-breath.”²⁵ The Ekōttar’āgama, however, refers first to the out-breath (出息 *chū xī*) and then the in-breath (入息 *rù xī*) (EĀ17.1 = T2.582a15).

2.1.2.3 T W Rhys Davids (PED: 92 under *ā* + *pa*)²⁶ says that “both terms [*assasati* and *passasati*] are semantically alike; but in exegesis however they have been differentiated in a way which looks like a distortion of the original meaning, viz *assasati* is taken as ‘breathing out,’ *passati* as ‘breathing in.’” Among the modern dictionaries, Childers (1875, DPL 61), Trenckner et al (1924, CPD 523), and Cone (2001, DP 268) take *assasati* as “he breathes in.” The Sanskrit dictionaries,²⁷ too, take *assasati* (Skt *āśvasati*, *āśvasiti*) as “he breathes out,” and *passasati* (Skt *praśvasiti*) as “he breathes in.”

2.1.2.4 Edgerton, in his entries on *āśvāsa-praśvāsa*, remarks that “whatever may have been the meaning of the two terms, it seems clear that the [compound] (like *ānāpāna*) was commonly used in the sense of breath, collectively and as a whole,”²⁸ which **Analayo** notes, is

²² Cf Skt *prāṇāpāna*, ie *prāṇa* + *apāna* (ts), where *prāṇa* is the breath of life, the air inhaled, while *apāna* is the vital air (one of the 5 airs) [2.1.1.3] that goes down through the body and out through the anus (it also refers to the anus itself) (SED).

²³ For a detailed study on *āna* + *apāna*, see Analayo 2005 at M 1:425n = 2011:350 n53.

²⁴ *Assāso*’ti bahi nikkhamana, vāto. *Passāso* ti anto pavisana, vāto. *Suttant’atṭhakathāsu pana uppaṭṭipāṭiyā āgataṃ*, “Assāsa means out-going wind; passāsa means in-coming wind. But in the Sutta Commentaries, it is the reverse” (VA 2:408).

²⁵ For refs, see Edgerton, BHSD:110 under *āśvāsa-praśvāsa*.

²⁶ Online ed: <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/pali/>

²⁷ Böthlingk (*Sanskrit Wörterbuch*, 1855-75, 4:173), Mylius (*Wörterbuch Sanskrit-Deutsch*, 1992:250) and Monier-Williams (1899: 696): http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/indologie/tamil/mwd_search.html.

²⁸ BHSD 1953:110 under *āśvāsa-praśvāsa*.

a reasonable suggestion and certainly sufficient from a practical perspective, since whether the breath goes first in or out, the task of mindfulness remains the same. (2005:3 at M 1:425n)

The phrase, *ānâpâna*, then, can mean either “in-and-out breath” or “out-and-in breath,” or we can simply render it as simply “the breath.”²⁹ [2.1.1.3]

2.1.3 Pragmatic accuracy. In the *Ānâpâna,sati Sutta* (M 118), I have, out of necessity and for convenience, translated the future-tense *assasissāmi* as the present “I breathe in,” and *passasissāmi* as “I breathe out.” It is a common Pali feature to apply the future tense to highlight spiritual states and key practices leading to such states.³⁰

Technical exactitude is helpful where we can be certain of it, without being caught up in a scholar’s hair-splitting, attending more to the word than to the spirit of the teaching. We may aim for what is called pragmatic accuracy or practical clarity so that we are able to proceed with our Dharma practice. Perhaps, with greater mental clarity return to re-examine what appears previously to be inexact with better understanding and insight.

2.2 BREATH MEDITATION, SATIPATTHANA AND AWAKENING-FACTORS

2.2.1 In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas*,³¹ breath meditation (*ānâpâna,sati*) is presented as an aspect of the first satipatthana (*kāye kāyânupassī*). The breath meditation is abruptly broken off, as it were, at the end of the first tetrad. In fact, here, the breath meditation is used as a launching pad in meditation of the body, and for the rest of the satipatthanas. The key practice of satipatthana (as has been discussed elsewhere), is the reflection of impermanence.³²

However, in *Ānâpâna Saṃyutta*,³³ breath meditation is generally presented as in the *Ānâpânasati Sutta*, which gives emphasis on all 4 satipatthanas and the 7 awakening-factors (*bojjhaṅga*).³⁴ In fact, the *Ānâpâna,-sati Sutta* begins as a vehicle for the first satipatthana and ends up as a vehicle for all four:

Thus by starting with the watching of the breath as “body” the *bhikkhu* naturally progresses to the watching of feeling, mind and *dharmas* through the medium of the breath. Finally this brings to fulfillment not only the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, but also the seven factors of awakening, and knowledge and freedom (*vijjā-vimutti*). (Gethin 2001:57; cf 58 f)

2.2.2 In other words, and it is most important to note this, like the satipatthana practice, the breath meditation is complete in itself, or in the words of **Gethin**:

... in the *Ānâpânasati-sutta* watching the breathing is not a preliminary of the *satipaṭṭhānas*, it actually is the *satipaṭṭhānas*. One must ask why *ānâpâna-sati* is singled out for treatment in this way. One reason might be because it is taken as the normative (not “original” or “only”) basis on which to abandon the five *nīvaraṇas* [2.3.3.7], establish the *satipaṭṭhānas* and develop the *bojjhaṅgas*. In many ways, then, the *Ānâpânasati-sutta* is simply an expanded and full illustration of just how the

²⁹ See SD 7.13 (2.1): *Ānâpâna*.

³⁰ See eg *bhaviṣṣati*, (**Catukka**) **Doṇa S** (A 4.36), SD 36.13 (6); *anussarissati*, **Mahā’padāna S** (D 14,1.13.2 passim), SD 49.8a; *janissati*, **Acchariya,abbhuta S** (M 123,2.2), SD 52.2.

³¹ **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22/2:290-325), SD 13.2; **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10/1:55-63), SD 13.3. See Gethin 2001: 56 f, 282 f.

³² See **An Introduction to the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**, SD 12.1 (3.8).

³³ S 54/5:311-341.

³⁴ *Bojjhaṅga*, see §§30-40.

Buddhist path consists in the abandoning of the *nīvaranas*, establishing the *satipaṭṭhānas*, and developing the *bojjhaṅgas* [awakening-factors]. (Gethin 2001:59; emphases added)

2.3 PARIMUKHA

2.3.1 Abhidhamma interpretation. Unlike in Hatha Yoga, in breath meditation, the breath is *not* deliberately regulated, but a sustained effort is made to fix our awareness on the breath as it moves in and out in its natural rhythm. Those who follow the Abhidhamma and Commentarial traditions, teach that mindfulness should be focused at the nostril or the upper lip, wherever the contact of the breath is felt most distinctly. This tradition is mainly based on **the Paṭisambhidā, magga** and **Vibhaṅga** interpretation of *parimukhaṃ* as being “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip.”³⁵ **Parimukha** literally means “around (*pari*) the entrance (*mukha*),” here always used idiomatically and as an adverb, simply meaning “in front, before (us).”

This “contact-point” interpretation is upheld by U Thittila,³⁶ Maurice Walshe,³⁷ Soma Thera,³⁸ and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi.³⁹ In this connection, the Tiantai⁴⁰ master, **Zhiyi** 智顓 (538-597), in his *Tóngméng zhǐguān* 童蒙止觀 (*Śamatha and Vipāśyanā for Beginners*), gives this advice for dealing with 2 kinds of distractions:

What is a **sinking mind**? If during the meditation the mind is dull, confused or unrecordable, while the head drops, this shows a sinking mind. In such a case, it should be fixed on the tip of the nose to nail it there and to prevent it from wandering elsewhere. This is the way to regulate a sinking mind.

What is a **floating mind**? If during the meditation, it drifts about and is uneasy, while thoughts follow externals, this shows a floating mind. In such a case, it should be pushed down and fixed on the navel to prevent thoughts from rising; thus the mind will be stabilized and will be easily quieted.

Therefore, the absence of the sinking or floating state shows a regulated mind.

(Zhiyi, *Tóngmén Zhǐguān* 童蒙止觀 in Lu K’uan Yü, 1964:126,⁴¹ emphases added)⁴²

2.3.2 Modern interpretations

2.3.2.1 The most modern innovation here is that of “watching the rise and fall of the abdomen” introduced by Mingun Jetavana Sayadaw of Myanmar, but made famous by his pupil, **Mahasi Sayadaw** in the mid-20th century.⁴³ To avoid contradicting the Sutta and Commentaries, the Mahasi tradition has always taken care to present their main meditation practice as a contemplation of the wind element (*vāyo*)—that is,

³⁵ Pm 1:171,19; Vbh 537/252,13. For further discussion, see above Intro (2), & **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10), SD 13 (3.9.4).

³⁶ Vbh:T 319, 328.

³⁷ D:W 1995:335.

³⁸ 1941:42 f digital ed.

³⁹ M:ÑB 2001:527.

⁴⁰ Tiāntái 天臺.

⁴¹ Also called *Xiūxí zhǐguān zuòchán fǎyào* 修習止觀坐禪法要, *Xiǎozhǐguān* 小止觀, T1915 = T46.462-474. See Lu K’uan Yü 1969:126 & Zhiyi 1997. For Chin text: <http://www.ucchusma.idv.tw/chanzong/small.htm>.

⁴² For more details, see **Uddhacca,kukkucca**, SD 32.7 (2.2.4).

⁴³ “[T]he mind should be attentively riveted on the abdomen. It will then be noticed that the abdomen is rising and falling and that these movements take place in continual succession.” Mahāsi Sayādaw, *The Purpose of Practising Kammatṭhāna Meditation*, Rangoon: Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organization, 1980:27 f. For criticisms of the Mahasi method, see G D Bond 1988: & L S Cousins 1996:42.

one of 4 primary elements used in meditation—not as a form of breath meditation.⁴⁴ But as we have already noted [2.3.1], this method, at least its location around the navel, has been taught some 1500 years ago by Zhiyi in China.

2.3.2.2 Around the same time as Mahasi Sayadaw, although less well known, we have **Lee Dhammadharmo's** method where “the resting spots of the breath” on which we centre our attention, given as “the tip of the nose, the middle of the head, the palate, the base of the throat, the breastbone (the tip of the sternum) and the navel (or a point just above it).”⁴⁵

2.3.2.3 Mahā Boowa,⁴⁶ too, teaches a very similar method.⁴⁷ However, **Nyanadhammo** (of the Cittaviveka Forest Order) notes that:

Often people are told when meditating to watch the breath at the tip of the nose, but actually many people find this is a distraction. If you look at the suttas, the Buddha never tells us to watch the breath in a physical place. He says to know that you are breathing in and to know that you are breathing out. The important thing is to note it in time. So: “Am I breathing in at this time, or am I breathing out at this time?”
(Nyanadhammo, “The Spiritual Faculties,” 1999:3)

2.3.2.4 Brahmavaṃso similarly teaches that one should not locate the breath anywhere on the body, but simply note whether one can notice the breath or not (1999:19). This instruction is also found in the Chinese version of **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda** (M 62) instructs the meditator to be aware if the breath is present or if it is not present:

at the time when there is breath, he is aware it is there; at a time when there is no breath, he is aware it is not there. 有時有息亦復知有, 又時無息亦復知無
(EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a19)⁴⁸

2.3.3 The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

2.3.3.1 Anālayo,⁴⁹ in his comprehensive and conciliatory survey of *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization* (2003),⁵⁰ gives insightful comments on the term *parimukha*, which should be carefully studied.⁵¹ A few salient points should be noted here. In breath meditation, *parimukha*, usually translated as “in front” or “before” (oneself), may be taken literally as “around the mouth,” referring to the nostril or upper area.

⁴⁴ Despite this, the Mahasi tradition has been severely criticized for contemplating the movement of the breath at the abdomen (Kassapa, “Meditation—right and wrong,” Maha Bodhi, Calcutta, 74,11-2 1966:242-245, esp 242). However, it is important to distinguish here between academic criticism and practical efficacy since it is well known that meditation masters and methods never rely on merely one practice but are, as a rule, applied with a host of other helping practices and techniques. The question is not which method is right or wrong, but whether we have tried it or not, that is, whether it promotes mindfulness (“meditates”) in us or not.

⁴⁵ Lee Dhammadharmo, *Keeping the Breath in Mind & Lessons in Samādhi*, tr Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, 1983: 26; *Frames of Reference*, tr Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, 1987:16.

⁴⁶ Wat Pah Bahn Taad, Udorn Thani province, Thailand.

⁴⁷ Mahā Boowa, *Wisdom Develops Samādhi*, Bangkok: Pow Bhavana Foundation, 1983:14-16.

⁴⁸ See **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 26), SD 3.11 (2).

⁴⁹ Dharma scholar and German sāmaṇera ordained in Sri Lanka.

⁵⁰ Anālayo also quotes sources outside the Pāli tradition in a useful comparative manner, and this prob marks the beginning of an auspicious development within contemporary Buddhist studies by practising Buddhists. Sujāto of the Santi Forest Monastery at Bundanoon, New South Wales, Australia, is enthusiastic about such an approach, too.

⁵¹ Anālayo 2003:128 f; 2011:350 f.

However, such an interpretation is not applicable when the term is used, for example, in relation to overcoming the 5 mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*) [2.3.3.7] or in cultivating the 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*).⁵²

Other occurrences of the expression “establishing mindfulness in front” [*parimukha*] occur in the context of forming the determination not to change one’s posture until realization is gained (as at M 1:219), in relation to developing a mind set on the welfare of both oneself and others (at M 2:139), when directing the mind to the reflective understanding that the defilements have been eradicated from one’s mind (at A 1:184), or as a part of the description of a monk well versed in meditation (at A 3:320). It may also be worthwhile to point out that the qualification “in front” appears to be more than simply part of a stereotype formula, since in several passages in the *Udāna* it is missing from otherwise identical description of meditators sitting down cross-legged. (U 21, 42, 43, 46, 60, 71, 77) (Anālayo 2003:128 n47; references normalized)

2.3.3.2 As such, only in the context of breath meditation, *parimukha* may be interpreted literally as in the nostril area or upper lip.⁵³ However, such a literal interpretation would not make sense elsewhere (in overcoming the mental hindrances or cultivation of the divine abodes) where no watching of the breath is involved.

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 of breathing independent of the nostril area. Some, for example, advise their pupils to experience the breath in the chest area, others suggest contemplating the air element at the abdomen, while still others recommend directing awareness to the act of breathing itself, without focusing on any specific location. (Anālayo 2003:129)

2.3.3.3 The term *parimukha* “around the mouth,” is often mentioned in the description of beginning meditation, especially satipatthana. It is commonly found in the phrase *parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhāpeti*, “one establishes the mindfulness *parimukha*” [§17.1]. However, *mukha* also has the sense of “front,” that is, any part of the face. From this, most translators have rendered it as simply “in front,” in the sense attending to it, and not letting it be forgotten and left “behind us,” so to speak.

This meaning has probably led **the Vibhaṅga** (a canonical Abhidhamma work) to explain it as “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip” (Vbh §537/252). From this, we get the well known modern notion of watching the breath “at the nose-tip” and so on. There is, however, no such description in the suttas.

The translation of *parimukha* as “in front (of us)” is supported by its Sanskrits cognate, *pratimukha*,⁵⁴ where the prefix *prati-*, says Monier-Williams’ Sanskrit-English Dictionary (SED), has a range of senses that include: “towards; near; against; again; like (the face)” (SED 661: *prati*). Under *prati-mukha* (SED 662), SED gives “the reflected image of the face; being near, present.”

This understanding, refined by our experience of early Buddhist meditation, clearly suggests the sense of keeping our mindfulness “before us.” This is a broader and more practical sense than merely directing our attention to a particular spot (all the time), but when the breath becomes subtle, that sensation is lost, so is our attention. However, with mindfulness “before us,” it settles down and becomes more focused.

⁵² The 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) are those of lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), gladness (*muditā*) and compassion (*upekkhā*) (A 1:184): see **Brahma, vihara**, SD 38.5.

⁵³ As at Pm 3.170/2:171; Vim:ESK 160; Vism 8.161/271.

⁵⁴ Eg Skt **Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra** 27.16; Skt **Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra** 6.1; Skt **Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra** 63. BHSD, however, has neither *pratimukha* nor *parimukha*.

This practical broader sense is further supported by its context, that is, it appears in conjunction with the word *upaṭṭhāna*, meaning “establishing; presence.” Hence, we should “establish our mindfulness,” rather than being focused on any bodily point. Moreover, forest monks from Ajahn Chah’s monastery in north-east Thailand who practise breath meditation, as a rule, would advise us to determine, “Am I breathing in at this time, or am I breathing out at this time?”⁵⁵

The last word on this, then, should be to ensure that, in starting with breath meditation, we should determine that we are focused on the “knowing that we are breathing (or not).” This is a good summary of the instructions given in the 1st tetrad of **the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta** [§18], which are more fully explained in the notes [4.4.1].

2.3.4 Which method is right?

2.3.4.1 So who is right: do we attend to some bodily contact-point, or do we simply attend to the knowledge that there is the breath? In meditation, it does not help to argue such points, which is the domain of the academic. Like an Artist, the meditator simply practises the **art of minding**. In real practice (with proper guidance in keeping with the suttas and our own experience), we will know what works for us and what does not. Our experience and wisdom are the two sides of the “meditator’s stone” rubbing and smoothing one another out.

2.3.4.2 These are all methods and strategies to prevent our mind from being overwhelmed by sense-data and to free it from mental distractions and hindrances. We should not *cling* to the mere “rightness” of a method or strategy but be pragmatic in turning to the most effective approach that works for us by reflecting on the conditioned nature of all meditation methods. Only when we readily and **unconditionally** let go of even the present state can we arrive at the next one until there is no more “next.” This is called progress.

2.4 THE BREATH SIGN. In his instructive article, “The mystery of the breath nimitta” (2000), **Soṇa Bhikkhu**⁵⁶ refers (in his view) to three important texts: the Paṭisambhidā,magga, the Vimutti,magga and the Visuddhi,-magga. **The Paṭisambhidā,magga** is a book in the Khuddaka Nikāya; **the Vimutti,magga** is an ancient treatise by Upatissa (the original Pali is lost; only the Chinese translation is extant); and **the Visuddhi,magga** is by Buddhaghosa. All three texts, Soṇa Bhikkhu points out, agree in regarding the breath in meditation should be watched “either at the nose or lip”⁵⁷ (2000:7).

The reason for this interpretation is the fact that *rukha* literally means “entrance, mouth.” As such, if we breathe through the nose, we should watch the breath contact at *the nose*. If we breathe through the mouth, we should watch it at *the lip*, which is especially helpful when we have a cold: we could then breathe through the mouth and watch the breath contact at the lip.⁵⁸ Soṇa Bhikkhu concludes his instructions with this important remark on breath meditation:

Some modern teachers have suggested that it doesn’t matter where the breath contact is located, probably in response to the phrase which occurs later on in the sutta: “Experiencing the whole body, he breathes in...” etc. And since the whole body of the breath is not explicitly stated, they feel there is room for interpretation. But the breath as a “whole body” is explicitly mentioned in

⁵⁵ Nyanadhammo, “The Spiritual Faculties,” 1999:3. See Brahmavamso 2002:58; Sujato 2004:109. Soṇa, however, teaches the tradition of taking *parimukhaṃ* as air contact as “either at the nose or lip” (2000:6).

⁵⁶ Thai forest monastic tradition: Birkenhead Forest Monastery, British Columbia, Canada.

⁵⁷ Pm 3.170/2:171; Vimmi:ESK 160; Vism 8.161/271.

⁵⁸ Or, in the “Burmese” method, one could watch the rise and fall of the belly at a point two fingers-breadth above the navel. On Zhiyi’s method, see (2a) above.

the Ānāpānasati Sutta, though not in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, [but] the phrase means the same: “I say, bhikkhus, that of bodies this is one, that is to say breathing-in and breathing-out” ([M 3:83 = M:H 3:125]; the footnote states that “... breathing is a body because it is included in the field of touch”).

As well there is an explicit location of “the entrance” in the sutta, which the three commentaries agree on, whatever the later confusion may have been. It also overlooks the simile which immediately follows the explicit location, ie, “**As a turner or his apprentice, while making a long turn, knows that he is making a long turn, or in making a short turn, knows that he is making a short turn**, so too a monk, in breathing in a long breath, knows that he breathes in a long breath, in breathing a short breath, knows that he breathes in a short breath ... and so trains himself, thinking: ‘I will breathe out, calming the whole body formation.’” [D 22,2.4/2:291]

The Buddha includes this apparently redundant simile for one reason. Similes, like pictures, are worth a thousand words and usually survive the butcheries of translation. This is the Buddha's fail-safe mechanism to show that as a lathe worker fixes his attention one-pointedly with his chisel on a single spot while the wooden spindle is in ceaseless motion, the meditator does likewise at the “entrance spot” while the breath continuously flows past. Basically, all the commentaries have managed to preserve this notion in the “simile of the saw,” but unfortunately the mouth as location is overlooked by the time of the Visuddhimagga.

All of this does not mean that there is only one way to attain serenity using the breath. If someone has developed a technique that issues in jhana and which does not follow the explicit instructions that is fine too. Whatever works. (Soṇa Bhikkhu, 2000:7; slightly edited)

3 “Mental noting” and “feeling”

3.1 PAJĀNĀTI AND SIKKHATI

3.1.1 Of the 16 steps or aspects of the breath meditation, only **aspects 1-2** (the first 2 steps of the 1st tetrad) are noted by *pajānāti* (he understands, or knows); the rest (3-16) have the verb *sikkhati* (he trains), “I will breathe in ... out,” (*assasissāmi ... passasissāmi*) in the future tense (signifying mindful effort).

This clearly shows that steps 1+2 are an “active” but non-judgmental mental noting or “labelling,” while the rest are deliberate but “passive” mindful efforts in a meditative sense. This explanation is especially important for the beginners or in the early stages of our practice. This is to keep our breath meditation natural and harmonious, body and mind.

3.1.2 When we start with breath meditation (or any proper meditation), our mind is likely to be easily distracted by sense-stimuli (such as a sound or a feeling) or thoughts. We should “know” (*pajānāti*) this, acknowledge it, not get caught up with it. This is what **mental noting or labelling** means. In a sense, we are “directing” our attention back to the breath (the meditation-object).

We must keep on doing this, as it were, until our attention *naturally* stays with the breath. Then, no more “directing” is needed. Now, we are making what may be said to be a “passive” effort of keeping the “**undirected**” attention on the breath comfortably and fully. Once we can do this, we are ready to move naturally to the next step.⁵⁹

3.1.3 How do we “train” (*sikkhati*) ourself in breath meditation? Firstly, we move to this “training” stage, as we have noted [3.1.2], only *after* we have “resolved” aspects 1 and 2 (“watching” the breath in terms of length and movement). Note that the verb *sikkhati* comes from √SAK (Skt *śak*), “to be able” (eg *sakkoti*). In

⁵⁹ On “directed meditation” and “undirected meditation,” see **Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka S** (S 47.10 + SD 24.2 (1)).

fact, technically, *sikkhati* is the desiderative (expressive desire or wish, that is, having a goal) of *ṽSAK*, expressing the idea of “wanting to be able to” fully feel the full breath.

Hence, “**to train**” ourself regarding the breath means that we should ever more fully “**feel**” (*paṭisaṃvedeti*),⁶⁰ that is, directly experience, the breath before us. Then, we *allow or let* it transform itself from “a certain body amongst bodies” [§24.3] to “a certain feeling amongst feelings” [§25.3]. Note the vital phrase—“**full attention** to the in-and-out-breathing” preceding and defining that “feeling” phrase [§25.3]. Only with “full attention,” we *free* the breath from the body to be a “free” feeling (experience).⁶¹

The breath is referred to as “a certain body” (*kāy’aññatara*) in the 1st tetrad [§24.3]—because it is still a bodily or physical event. Then, in the 2nd tetrad [§25.3], it is called “**a certain feeling**” (*vedanā’ññatara*)—it is no more a physical event, but a mental one to be “felt” (directly experienced) by us.⁶²

3.2 SUBVERBALIZING AND SILENCE

3.2.1 Mental states

3.2.1.1 As in *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, so it is in the breath meditation: **the contemplating of the mind** (*cittānupassanā*), the 3rd tetrad [§26], deals directly with the abandoning of the mental hindrances. In **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10), the section on “mind contemplation,” speaks of our understanding whether our mind is *lustful, hating, deluded, narrowed (constricted), distracted, small (unexalted), unsurpassable, unconcentrated, unfreed*, and their opposite.⁶³

Further, the terms *great mind, surpassable mind, concentrated mind and freed mind* all refer to dhyana. All this clearly suggests that we are basically dealing with the overcoming of the hindrances and with engaging in concentration (*samādhi*) leading to dhyana.⁶⁴

3.2.1.2 The understanding attending the contemplation of mind is similarly shared with the preceding **contemplation of feelings** (*vedanā’nupassana*), the 2nd tetrad [§25] in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** [3.2.1.1]. There, it is said, for example, “Feeling a pleasant feeling, he understands, ‘I feel a pleasant feeling.’” In the contemplation of mind, we have similarly: “(one) understands a lustful mind as ‘Lustful mind’.”⁶⁵

The idea here is to acknowledge the mental state as it is. A beginner is likely to be drawn into the pleasantness or intrigue of such states. Intuitive teachers notice that for such meditators, it helps to subverbalize (mentally note) such states so that we are reminded of their intrusion and danger. Once we are used to identifying such states for what they are, we will be able to isolate and dispel them even silently, or with just an inner smile.

3.2.2 Reflexive awareness

3.2.2.1 We see this same reflexive “quote” in the breath meditation: “**Breathing in long, he understands ‘I breathe in long’**” [§18(1)]. The 1st-person remarks “denoted by *’ti* or *’iti*) here are simply meditation instruction of which we remind ourself. They may at the start be understood as a strategy to keep the mind to the

⁶⁰ See (4.4.2.3) n on *paṭisaṃvedī*.

⁶¹ It helps here not to delve too much into these explanations when meditating. Just take these instructions as signposts, and keep moving on naturally along the meditation path.

⁶² Further on *paṭisaṃvedeti*, see SD 17.3 (1.2.2).

⁶³ M 10,34 (SD 13.3).

⁶⁴ Comy confirms this (MA 1:279 f).

⁶⁵ M 10,32+32 (SD 13.3).

breath by way of subverbalizing [2.3.1.4] or mental noting. However, this instruction should not remain on a literal level. Once the mind is clear, there is clearly no need for any more noting.

3.2.2.2 This same 1st-person quote syntax is found in stock passages on **the formless attainments**. In plain English such an interesting Pali quote syntax would literally sound: “‘Space is infinite,’ he attains and dwells in **the base of infinite space.**” We translate the whole passage as: “By completely transcending the base of infinite space, aware that ‘Consciousness is infinite,’ he attains and dwells in **the base of infinite consciousness.**” (S 40.6,4), SD 24.16.

Clearly here, in a formless attainment, the meditator has gone well beyond thinking or noting. In such a context, this repetitive quote is merely a linguistic device suggesting a silent reflexive awareness. We not only *know* the state, but we are *aware* that we know the state or the feeling.⁶⁶

Once again, we are reminded not to be overly concerned with right terminology and strategies until we have actually tried them out to see whether they work or not, and respond accordingly. Meditation is not a technical field of science, but the reflexive art of learning and appreciating wholesome mental states and how they free our mind. We can only best learn from experience.

4 Stages of practice in the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta: A recap

4.0 The teaching section of the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta is very simple but well structured, beginning with **the Preamble** [§§15-16], which serves as a syllabus of the whole practice from the very beginning to spiritual liberation itself. The teaching is laid out in **4 stages**:

I. The basic breath meditation	§§15-23
II. The breath meditation as satipatthana	§§24-28
III. Applying satipatthana to the awakening factors	§§29-41
IV. The attainment of true knowledge and liberation	§§42-44

4.1 Part I opens with the practical instructions for the beginner, where the Buddha mentions the ideal places for meditation, the best posture and the essence of the breath meditation [§17]. Then follow the 16 aspects [4.3] of the breath meditation for the beginner [§§18-22], that is, the mundane practice of the worldly practitioner. The 4 dhyanas mentioned at this early stage are **the mundane dhyanas** (*lokiya jhāna*), that is, they are not very strong but nevertheless help us with the energy to further fine-tune our keeping of the moral precepts, and in due course lead us to the satipatthana level of practice.

It should be noted here that even if we do *not* attain dhyana at this point, our practice is still beneficial by way of **the perception of impermanence**.⁶⁷ If we constantly practise in this way, we are assured of attaining streamwinning in this life itself.

4.2 Part II deals with the breath meditation in terms of perfecting **the 4 satipatthanas** [§23], that is, when one has some experience of dhyana, one is then truly ready for the working on the focuses of mindfulness (*sati’paṭṭhāna*) [§§24-27]. At this point, the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta states that dhyana forms the basis of the satipatthana (at least here). For at the end of the passage on “contemplating the body” (*kāyānupassanā*) in this section, it is stated that it is done by “removing covetousness and displeasure for the world” [§24.2], that is, by overcoming the mental hindrances; hence, attaining dhyana.

⁶⁶ Cf Sujato 2004:149 f.

⁶⁷ See any of the 10 suttas of **Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25): eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7.

The 16 Steps of the Ānâpâna,sati as <i>satipaṭṭhâna</i>
<u>The 12 steps for getting into dhyana (mental absorption)</u>
[1. Contemplation of the body] [§24]
Step 1—Experiencing a long breath
Step 2—Experiencing a short breath
Step 3—Experiencing the whole breath (or whole “body”)
Step 4—Calming the breath
[2. Contemplation of feelings: Entry into dhyana] [§25]
Step 5—Experiencing zest [joy]
Step 6—Experiencing happiness
Step 7—Experiencing mental formation
Step 8—Calming both zest and happiness
[3. Contemplation of the mind] [§26]
Step 9—Experiencing the mind
Step 10—Shining the meditation sign (<i>nimitta</i>)
Step 11—Sustaining the sign
Step 12—Freeing the mind
[4. Contemplation of dharmas] [§27]
<u>The 4 steps to take after emerging from dhyana</u>
Step 13—Contemplating on impermanence (<i>anicca</i>)
Step 14—Contemplating on fading away (of lust) (<i>virāga</i>)
Step 15—Contemplating on cessation (of suffering) (<i>nirodha</i>)
Step 16—Contemplating on letting go (of defilements) (<i>paṭinissagga</i>)

Table 4. The 16 steps of breath meditation [2.3]

At this stage, “the in-and-out-breathing is **a certain body amongst the bodies,**” meaning that the body (manifested as the breath)⁶⁸ is seen as it really is in terms of the 4 elements, as “conscious matter”⁶⁹ [§24]. Similarly, the Buddha declares that “full attention to the in-and-out-breathing is **a certain feeling amongst the feelings,**” meaning that one’s undivided attention to the true nature of feeling, too, can bring one to dhyana⁷⁰ [§25]. In due course, too, he truly knows the nature of the mind [§26], and then he “**closely looks on with equanimity,**” alluding to the 4th dhyana [§27]. That is, emerging from the 4th dhyana, he truly experiences the mind directly as it really is.

4.3 Having mastered the dhyanas, the meditator is ready to go on to **Part III** of the breath meditation, to perfect **the 7 awakening-factors** [§§29-41]. Each of the 4 satipatthanas is now applied in terms of the 7 awakening-factors. Then, in **Part IV**, the awakening-factors, cultivated by way of **the *viveka,nissita* formula** —“that is dependent on *solitude*, dependent on *fading away* (of lust), dependent on *cessation* (of suffering), ripening in *letting go* (of defilements)” —bring about the spiritual liberation [§§41-43].

⁶⁸ See eg **Dhātu,vibhaṅga S** (M 140,17/3:241), SD 4.17 & **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (2.1.6)..

⁶⁹ See **Rūpa**, SD 17.2a (9).

⁷⁰ See eg **Daṭṭhabba S** (S 36.5/4:207), SD 17.3(5).

4.4 THE PROGRESS OF BREATH MEDITATION: THE 4 TETRADS AND 16 ASPECTS [TABLE 4]

4.4.1 The 1st tetrad: Contemplating the body (How the breath is refined) [§18]

Summary of the 1 st tetrad:	(1) long breaths;	[4.4.1.1]
	(2) short breaths;	[4.4.1.2]
	(3) whole body;	[4.4.1.3 f]
	(4) calming bodily formations.	[4.4.1.5]

4.4.1.1. (1) “Breathing *in* long [deep], he understands, ‘I breathe *in* long [Long in-breath]” (*dīghaṃ vā assasanto, dīghaṃ assasāmīti pajānāti*); **“or, breathing *out* long [deep], he understands, ‘I breathe *out* long [Long out-breath]”** (*dīghaṃ vā passasanto, dīghaṃ passasāmīti pajānāti*). [§18(1)]

Experientially, the breath meditation starts as a body-based exercise by watching the physical breath.⁷¹ Upon closer scrutiny of our breath, we will notice that it comprises of a flow of 3 sequential parts: *a beginning, a middle and ending*. Technically, this awareness is simply that of **the wind element** (*vāyo dhātu*), of external wind being drawn into our being, processed by our body and then breathed out; the whole process goes in an endless cycle as long as life lasts. This perception of the whole process is what we call the **“breath.”**

Our body—more exactly, the nerve-endings inside our nose sense the physical touch of moving air: this is an activity of body-consciousness, which is, then, at once relayed to mind-consciousness [Table 4.4.3.3]. The mind then cognizes this activity as a *bodily* activity; it perceives (re-cognizes) it as “breath,” knowing it as an *in-breath* or an *out-breath*, whether it is a *long* breath or a *short* one. [§18(1-2)]

4.4.1.2. (2) “Breathing *in* short, he understands, ‘I breathe *in* short [Short in-breath]” (*rassaṃ vā assasanto, rassaṃ assasāmīti pajānāti*); **“or, breathing *out* short, he understands, ‘I breathe *out* short [Short outbreath]”** (*rassaṃ vā passasanto, rassaṃ passasāmīti pajānāti*). [§18(2)]

When we understand that meditation is an exercise in **mental renunciation**, it greatly helps in our breath meditation.⁷² In an important sense, meditation is essentially *“letting come, letting go,”* fully experiencing the truth and beauty of the present moment of impermanence. Hence, the more relaxed and “unconditional” we are, accepting this process as it is, the quicker and greater our progress in meditation.

When we *unconditionally* accept the breath with a calm mind, the **body**, too, becomes more relaxed, so that it needs less oxygen for itself: the breath slows down and becomes shorter and subtler all by itself. The two steps—*in* and *out*—naturally follow one another. The purpose of these 2 pairs of steps (long in-breath, long out-breath; short in-breath, short out-breath) is to fully experience the breath instead of being distracted by the many facets of sense-experience. We are focused on just one thing: the breath in progress, to free our mind from the body.⁷³

Technically, the recognition of the in-breath (long or short) and the out-breath (long or short) occurs through “initial application (***vitakka***), so called because it initiates a thought, that is, it directs our attention to the breath. Then “sustained application” (***vicāra***) keeps up the perception of the breath. All this occurs on what may be called a “subverbal” level; hence, the sutta sentences (in the 1st person), such as, “I breathe in long ...” etc [§18(1-2)], is a kind of **subverbalization**, halfway between speech and feeling.⁷⁴

⁷¹ On “body-based” meditation (*kāyānupassanā*), see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,4 etc), SD 13.3; SD 30.3 (2.6.2.1).

⁷² On meditation as renunciation, see **Hālidakkāni S 1** (S 22.3), SD 10.12; **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2); **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7).

⁷³ Cf Brahmavaṃso 1999; also 2002:59 f.

⁷⁴ On subverbalizing, see SD 15.1 (8.1.2).

4.4.1.3. (3) “He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the whole body (of breath), I will breathe in’” (*sabba,kaya,paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati*). **“He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the whole body (of breath), I will breathe out’”** (*sabba,kaya,paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§18(3)]

These pair, *vitakka,vicāra*, are simply the way our mind keeps directing itself and holding itself onto the breath. Whenever we lose track of the breath, *vitakka* sets in again, then there is *vicāra*, and so on. As long as the attention is sustained, there is no need for the initial application. An important process that occurs during the “sustaining” mode is that our attention shifts from the perception of verbal constructs (just saying it) to actual perception of the breath. The mind is then effectively directed away from the diversity of sense-experience (the physical body) onto **the “the whole body” of breath**. [§18(3)]

“The whole body of breath” (*sabba,kāya*) begins to emerge from the total silence of the mind—when it is free from all words and thoughts. At first, we notice it for a while, peaking in its fullness; then, it fades away. Even at this point, we see the breath quite clearly, seeing even the spaces or pauses between the breaths. This is when the in-breath has *stopped* and the out-breath has *yet* to arise. Then, the out-breath peaks and fades away again. This is the whole body of the breath.⁷⁵

4.4.1.4 When our mind is free of all extraneous sense-data, this process of watching the whole breath [4.4.1.3] is easily sustained in a stable manner. Our attention then fixes itself onto the real and subtle features of the breath. This calming process may itself lead to dhyana, but this should not be done unless we are already well familiar with that stage. In other words, keep to the full attention of the breath: notice its beauty (radiance) and joy.

Indeed, at this stage, we can (and should) do *nothing* except feel the joy, *be* this joy. When cognition returns, then, we further calm the joyful mental object by gently subverbalizing, “Calm, calm,” or “Peaceful, peaceful.” The breath then gets even finer and more radiantly beautiful. We should take every care to master stage 3 [§18(4)] *before* going into stage 4. We must first “see” what the “whole body” of breath [§18(3)] really is *before* we can actually calm it [§18(4)]. We can only calm the breath when we have our full attention on it.⁷⁶

Otherwise, our futile efforts in trying to calm it will only tire us: this is like revving up the car in the wrong gear: we waste petrol and the car stalls on a steep gradient. We will only mentally tire ourself; we may even fall asleep! When this happens, (upon waking up) just take a step back, as it were. Go back to simply watching the breath just as it is: show it some lovingkindness, and just keep watching it unconditionally. What actually is happening here? [4.4.1.5]

4.4.1.5. (4) “He trains himself thus: ‘Calming the bodily formation (of breath), I will breathe in’” (*passambhayaṃ kaya,saṅkhāraṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*); **“He trains himself thus: ‘Calming the bodily formation (of breath), I will breathe out’”** (*passambhayaṃ kaya,saṅkhāraṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§18(4)]

Note that the first 4 tetrads [§18] constitute a “body-based meditation” [4.4.1.1]: the breath is still a bodily or physical experience. When we stop attending to the breath, the diversity of sense-experiences assail us again. To avoid this, we must “**experience the whole body (of breath)**” [4.4.1.4]. When this full atten-

⁷⁵ See Brahmavamso 2002:60. However, scholar monks and popular teachers like THICH Nhat Hanh (1990:6, 46-49), Bodhi (2001 n141) & Analayo 2019: 1685 f, tend to take *sabba,kāya* to mean “the whole physical body.” Cf the remark that the in-and-out-breathing is “a body among the bodies” [§24]. According to “New Age” transpersonal psychology (esp Bodywork and Breathwork), the whole body “breathes.” In practical meditation, it is obvious that we easily lose focus when we have to be mindful of the *whole* physical body. For the simile of the teacher and his 3 archery students illustrating the experience of the total breath, see Brahmavamso 2002:62 f. For a discussion, see Anālayo, Satipaṭṭhāna, 2003:131 f.

⁷⁶ Cf Brahmavamso 1999; 2002:65.

tion is sustained, something truly beautiful occurs: we have “**calmed the bodily formations**” [§18(4)]. In simple terms, we no more experience the breath as a “bodily” event; it becomes a **mental process**.

This switch from a *bodily* process to a mental state brings about a numinous ecstasy (or enstasy, since it *stands within* the mind). When the mind is freed from the body, it rises into an open sky of bliss like a hot-air balloon whose ballast has been jettisoned. The breath is now fully reflected in our mind, and the mind in the breath (like two mirrors facing one another): the mind *is* now the breath, its only mental object. This also marks the end of the “body contemplation” (*kāyānupassanā*) phase, that is, the 1st four aspects of the breath meditation (the 1st tetrad).

Our perception of the breath refines itself by simply ignoring the flow of unrelated data, by overcoming their unstable display and play until the mind rises to a level of endurance from its ground of changing physical states. Indeed, when we lack an understanding of the reality of nonself (*anattā*), we are likely to imagine this mental “endurance” outshining its bodily state to be some kind of Self, Soul or Essence, some abiding entity. Hence, the suttas remind us that such states are mind-made, conditioned and impermanent.⁷⁷

4.4.2 The 2nd tetrad: Contemplating feelings (How feelings are refined) [§19]

Summary of the 2 nd tetrad:	(5) experiencing zest [joy];	[4.4.2.1]
	(6) experiencing happiness;	[4.4.2.2]
	(7) experiencing the mental formations;	[4.4.2.3-5]
	(8) calming the mental formations.	[4.4.2.6]

4.4.2.1 (5) “He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing zest [joy], I will breathe in’” (*pīti, paṭisaṃvedī assa-sissāmīti sikkhati*); **“He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing zest [joy], I will breathe out’”** (*pīti, paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§19(5)]

The emergence of **the mental image** of the breath is attended by a profoundly intense and beautiful radiance. Since our eyes are closed in meditation, this can only be a mental experience. This brilliant yet subtle radiance is the pure bright mind (*pabhassara, citta*) that the suttas speak about.⁷⁸ This is the beginning of **the 2nd tetrad: the contemplation of feelings** (*vedanā’nupassanā*), when we “**experience zest [joy]**”⁷⁹ as we breathe in and out.

Now we come to challenging situation that distinguishes the Buddha Dhamma from other systems, religious or secular. As the playful uncertainties of our mind settles, change seems to be replaced by an aura of immanence and permanence. We no more see the present in terms of the “eternal” past. There seems to be no more change to define *time*. We do not feel any sense of past or future: only the universe of the timeless present! It can be said to be a “single point of time” or “one-pointed timelessness.”⁸⁰

The cognitive process, as we know it, seems to stop: we have no idea whatsoever of signs or states. **The affective process** fully takes over. We directly *feel* what is before us (like swimming underwater and not feeling the water); we *are* truly in the present; we are *the present*. In other words, we are on the threshold of a new mode of knowing, a higher level of profound awareness. In decisive ways, how we comprehend this state—even at this early stage of meditation—is still subject to how we have been cognitively conditioned: by our religious faith or by secular wisdom, or, more often, by our biases and ignorance.

We can only make sense of this immanence by names and forms that we are familiar with—perhaps God, Soul, Brahman, Form, Consciousness, and so on. In truth, it has no name: we are thrown face-to-face

⁷⁷ See S 15.2/2:179.

⁷⁸ On the radiant mind (*pabhassara, citta*), see **Cū’accharā S** (A 2.6,3-5) SD 2.13; SD 54.2e (2.3.5.1).

⁷⁹ On zest or joy (*pīti*), see §19(5) n.

⁸⁰ Cf Sujato 2001:77.

with **change**. We are that change: looking outside, the world, time and space, is, as it were, seem frozen like a diagram of the atomic structure. But there is really no such structure; it is the way our mind is able to capture the moment in a comprehensible and comprehensive way, clearly and fully. For the unawakened mind, this is a religious experience, the root and seed of a powerful religion.⁸¹ For those seeking awakening, it is only an early stage of mental liberation. More is yet to come. [4.4.4.2]

4.4.2.2 (6) “He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing happiness, I will breathe in’” (*sukha,paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati*); **“He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing happiness, I will breathe out’”** (*sukha,paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [**§19(6)**]

When we calm the breath down even further, it becomes further refined, profoundly stiller and subtler. Such a mind is naturally zestful, blissful and energized, since it has no sense-objects whatsoever to process and evaluate. Here, the mind is simply itself, pure mind. This is no ordinary happiness, unlike even the most rapturous of worldly pleasures.

The supreme worldly pleasure comes from the sexual act, which nature has hardwired in humans for the sake of procreation to perpetuate samsara. However, this act is basically body-based, climaxing in an orgasm, the greatest pleasure the body can feel.⁸² In a crude sense, zest or meditative joy (*pīti*) is our transcorporeal (beyond the body) experience of bliss. Since *pīti* is purely mind-based, we neither tire from it nor feel attached to it. Even the memory of such a bliss is profoundly gratifying in a wholesome sense.

Because of its profound and overwhelming nature, it takes some wisdom to recognize it. Those who are ignorant of the nature of the mind and impermanence, are likely to *fear* such an experience and feel a sense of awe and alienation. All that we have understood of the world, even of religion, do not seem to fit in this profoundly nameless blissful state.⁸³

If we compare zest (*pīti*) to an explosive mental rapture [§19(5)], then happiness (*sukha*) is its subsequent *resolved* state where we feel a total sense of inner peace and clarity [§19(6)]. By letting go of zest, simply letting it be, it settles down further into *happiness*. Once we have an experience of such zest, even just a glimpse of it in mindfulness practice (like the perception of impermanence), it is like meeting and being embraced by the most beautiful person we have ever admired. We will be able to feel it, at some level, in our wholesome actions, even in the mundane chores or events of our daily life. This is what empowers us with wise faith and diligence in the Buddha Dhamma.⁸⁴

4.4.2.3 (7) “He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the mental formations, I will breathe in’” (*citta,saṅkhāra,paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati*); **“He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the mental formations, I will breathe out’”** (*citta,saṅkhāra,paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [**§19(7)**]

This stage is about “experiencing the mental formations [mental functions]” (*citta,saṅkhāra,paṭisaṃvedī*).⁸⁵ The mental formations (*citta,saṅkhāra*)⁸⁶ are feeling and perception experienced in all 4 dhyanas. Here, it refers to the experience of **the breath as a mind-object (dhamma)**.

⁸¹ On how religions and philosophies arise from meditation experience, see **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1), SD 25.1 (6.1).

⁸² See **Sexuality**, SD 31.7.

⁸³ Such clearly is the case of Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) who recorded her mystical experiences in *The Interior Castle* (1588). See L S Cousins, “The stages of Christian mysticism and Buddhist purification: The Interior Castle of St Teresa of Avila and the Path of Purification of Buddhaghosa,” 1989. See also SD 38.4 (3.2.3.2); SD 53.18 (2.2.3.3).

⁸⁴ Further see Brahmavamso 1999; 2002:68.

⁸⁵ *Paṭisaṃvedī*, lit “one who experiences,” comes from the verb *paṭisaṃvedeti*, whose root is *VID*, to know. Although, it is often tr as “to experience,” it has an inherent sense of “to feel,” ie, to directly experience things. See SD 17.3 (1.2.2).

⁸⁶ On *citta,saṅkhāra*, see **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,14), SD 40a.9.

When the radiant mind [4.4.2.1] has arisen, it seems as if our breath is not present; there is only the beautiful inner stillness. In other words, we are still breathing, but not in a bodily sense; hence, we are unable to feel it in the ordinary sense. The breath is now a mental process, experienced only as a mental object.

We have already noted, in stage (5), how, with the arising of zest, the cognitive process shuts down and only the affective process works [4.4.2.1]. We stop knowing in the usual sense of reacting to sense-stimuli; we experience mind-objects directly: just as we neither “hear” good music nor “see” great art but *feel* their beauty in our whole being.

4.4.2.4 Unlike the gross processes of sense-experiences, this “**feeling**” (*paṭisaṃvedanā*),⁸⁷ since it occurs directly, without the medium of a sense-faculty, occurs smoothly in a non-reactive engaged way. This is because the mind is now fully focused on itself: it is truly “one-pointed” (*ek’agga*). **The Paṭisambhidā-magga** illustrates this with **the parable of the carpenter’s saw**:

“Just as a tree [tree-trunk] were placed on level ground and a man were to cut it with a saw—the man’s mindfulness is fixed on the saw’s teeth where they touch the tree, without giving his attention to the saw’s teeth as they come and go”⁸⁸ (Pm 1:171)

The man’s attention being fixed at the cutting point is like the famous present-moment awareness, mindfulness of the radiant mind, right where it is. The preposition “where” is a mere linguistic convenience, but really this “location” is in neither space nor time. There is no more beginning, ending or middle of the breath; there is only the radiant mind.

4.4.2.5 From the language of the 2nd tetrad, it clearly describes the stage of the arising of **the dhyanas** (*jhāna*), that is, where all physical sense-activities have stopped temporarily.⁸⁹ To the outside world, it is as if the meditator is in a kind of deep hibernation, even dead. Even when medical instruments may not detect any signs of life (by “modern” definition), the meditator will “return to life” in due course.

Taking the text as it is, we can surmise that stage (5), “experiencing zest” suggests the 1st dhyana. Although stage (6) mentions only “experiencing happiness,” it can, with the presence of zest implied, be taken to refer to the 2nd dhyana. Stage (7) refers to “experiencing mental formations” (that is, feeling and perception) may well refer to the 3rd dhyana. Stage (8), “calming the mental formations” suggests the equanimity of the 4th dhyana.⁹⁰

Alternatively, we may say that the first 3 dhyanas may (successively) arise in stage (7), and the 4th dhyana in stage (8). The point is that there no technical fixity about which dhyana arising at each of the aspects of the 2nd tetrad. Indeed, it is safe to say that these 4 tetrads [§§18-24] are actually meant for a **non-dhyana** practice [4.1]. In other words, this is still a mundane level of practice, but it’s a very good start.

Even at this early stage, it helps to maintain the habit of “contemplating impermanence” [§21(13)], that is, noticing how every effort we make at every stage involves and experiences some kind of **change** in our mental state and also our physical state, our whole being. This habitual reflection on impermanence will become very helpful when we reach stage (13). Even in itself, this reflection is the basis for our aspiration to streamwinning in this very life.⁹¹

⁸⁷ This abstract n is not a canonical word but a comy term.

⁸⁸ *Seyyathāpi rukkho same bhūmi, bhāge nikkhitto, tam enaṃ puriso kakacena chindeyya, rukkhe phuṭṭha, kakaca, dantānaṃ vasena purisassa sati upaṭṭhitā hoti, na āgate vā gate vā kakaca, dante manasikaroti.* (Pm 1:171,7-10)

⁸⁹ See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4; SD 54.2e (2.3.5).

⁹⁰ Cf Brahmvamso 2002:68 f.

⁹¹ See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

4.4.2.6 “He trains himself thus: ‘Calming the mental formations, I will breathe in’” (*passambhayam citta,saṅkhāraṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*); **“He trains himself thus: ‘Calming the mental formations, I will breathe out’”** (*passambhayam citta,saṅkhāraṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§19(8)]

In real practice, we rarely fully accomplish the breath meditation in such a neat sequence. Very often, we need to work on a particular stage for a sustained period. In the case of stage (8), we often need to re-apply it in subsequent practice, especially when the zest [4.4.2.1] becomes too strong and disturb the stillness of the mind.

Further, other distractions may arise when we get caught up with the bliss. When it grows, we may feel overwhelmed. Instead of simply watching it, we become excited. Or when it seems to fluctuate, we fear losing it. In other words, we have allowed objective thought to return: the mind starts to speak: the beautiful silence is broken.

Ajahn Chah illustrates this meditative mishap with his famous **parable of the forest pool**, where the forest animals would gather to drink. In the still twilight moments, some of the rarest and most beautiful forest animals would appear at the poolside to drink. When we, the observer, as much as gasp in wonder, these beautiful shy beings would at once disappear back into the forest.⁹²

In this parable, the still forest pool is our radiant mind; the beautiful forest animals are zest and happiness. We must simply let these forest beings drink in peace. We should be as still and silent as a forest tree on a windless day watching this drama of nature at its profoundest truth and beauty.

A potent strategy in the face of such profound joy is simply to **smile** at it. That is, when the slightest sense of cognition re-emerges, we temper it with a smile. In such a scenario, smiling is very effective in keeping our inner peace because it reflects the joyful nature of what has emerged before us, which we unconditionally accept.

4.4.3 The 3rd tetrad: Contemplating the mind (How the mind is refined) [§20]

Summary of the 3 rd tetrad:	(9) experiencing the mind;	[4.4.3.1-3]
	(10) gladdening the mind;	[4.4.3.4-5]
	(11) concentrating the mind;	[4.4.3.6]
	(12) freeing the mind.	[4.4.3.7]

4.4.3.1 (9) “He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the mind, I will breathe in’” (*citta,paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati*). **“He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the mind, I will breathe out’”** (*citta,paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§20(9)]

“Experiencing the mind” refers to attaining dhyana [4.4.2.5], since, by this time, our mind is profoundly *calm and clear*. Hence, we can actually know the mind in its profound radiant beauty. This beautiful mind began to arise earlier, in stage (6) [4.4.2.1], when zest arises in us. Although we see the mind as beautifully radiant then, it is even more so here.

The radiant mind that we “see” here—the proper word is “experience” (*paṭisaṃvedeti*), since it is all a mental phenomenon—is what is known as a “**meditation sign**” or “**mental sign**” (*nimitta*): the truth and beauty of reality reflected in our mind. This is really what we can call the beginning of true “knowing,” a direct experience of true reality.

When we look closely during our review on emerging from this stage, we will notice that there is only **knowing without any knower**. It’s like when we look into a mirror: we see an image (*nimitta*) of ourself: we *know* or re-cognize ourself. Yet, it is not really our “Self,” since it’s gone when we move away. The mirror is

⁹² See eg Brahmavamso, *The Jhanas*, Singapore, 2003:35 f.

like our mental focus free from all dust and dirt of distractions. What we see is only a virtual mental image of a passing phenomenon, “ourselves.” In our meditation, this beautiful image is a full sky of radiance and we are a single star in it. This is merely a reflection of our mind.

4.4.3.2 In a provisional sense, we can say that our mind itself (“we”) are the “**kno**wer.” This is a conditioned and relative term: we are the knower since we know the reflection before us. It is still a “**mind-made**” image in the sense it simply *reflects* our mind, and that we have ourselves *projected* this image when our mind is free from distractions.

Our image in the mirror only reflects how we look and what we are doing. When we are still, the image is still, too. Even when we try to hold the mirror still, or it is fixed on its stand or on the wall, it does not help if we are not still. Indeed, we will not be able to see our features clearly when we are *not* still. Stillness, then, comes from the “knower,” our mind itself, not from the image or reflection. The image of our mind depends on how truly we know it. A vital part of our meditation is to refine and deepen this self-knowledge.

4.4.3.3 We will here briefly examine what seems to be a technical point in early Buddhist psychology. Note that the Sutta simply speaks of the “mind” (*citta*), that is, experienced in breath meditation. Elsewhere, in the suttas, it is said that *citta*, *mano* and *viññāṇa* are all synonyms: “That which is called the *citta*, it is also *mano*, or *viññāṇa*.”⁹³ Hence, it is helpful to remember that the suttas do not always technically differentiate these 3 words: they all mean “the mind.”⁹⁴

Technically, in this meditative context, these 3 words, says the Commentaries, refer to the “**mind-base**” (*man’āyatana*), a collective term for all the different states of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (SA 2:98).⁹⁵ Now, *man’āyatana* appears quite often in the suttas but meaning simply as the “mind” as an internal faculty.⁹⁶

If the radiant mind “experienced” in breath meditation (or in any dhyana) is taken as the “mind-base,” it must clearly refer to **the mind (the inner faculty) without any sense-object** (*dhamma*). In fact, at this stage, even “mind-objects” (*dhamma, dhātu*) do *not* arise. Technically, a mind-object is an idea the mind itself creates that is not sense-based (such as most images in a dream).

This table of the 18 physical and mental elements (*dhātu*) will help us envision the nature and function of *a mind-object* (no 17). In this case, the “**mind-base**” is identical to the mind-element (no 16):

(1) eye-faculty ⁹⁷	(6) visible object	(11) eye-consciousness
(2) ear-faculty	(7) sound-object	(12) ear-consciousness
(3) nose-faculty	(8) smell-object	(13) nose-consciousness
(4) tongue-faculty	(9) taste-object	(14) tongue-consciousness
(5) body-faculty	(10) touch-object	(15) body-consciousness
(16) mind-element (<i>mano, dhātu</i>)	(17) mind-object (<i>dhamma, dhātu</i>)	(18) mind-consciousness (<i>mano, viññāṇa, dhātu</i>) ⁹⁸

Table 4.4.3.3. The 18 elements

⁹³ *Yaṃ ... idaṃ vuccati cittaṃ’ti vā maṇo’ti vā viññāṇaṃ’ti vā*, D 1:21; *Yaṃ ca kho etaṃ ... vuccati cittaṃ itī pi maṇo itī pi viññāṇa itī pi*: see **Assutava S 1** (S 12.61,4+8 with monkey simile), SD 20.2; **Assutava S 2** (S 12.61,4+7), SD 20.3. In some sutta contexts, however, we do have *citta* = thought, *mano* = mind, and *viññāṇa* = consciousness: SD 17.8a (12), esp (12.5.4) summary.

⁹⁴ The synonymy of these 3 words is also accepted in most traditions following the Abhidharma period, but they were clearly differentiated within the Yogācāra (India, 4th cent CE). See SD 17.8a (12.5).

⁹⁵ See **Viññāṇa**, SD 17.8 (4.1); also S:B 2000:769 n154.

⁹⁶ On this “mind-element” (*mano, dhātu*), see SD 17.8a (12.1.2.1, 12.1.3.3); its function SD 7.1 (4.4).

⁹⁷ For the 5-door mental process (physical sense-cognition), see SD 19.14 (2).

⁹⁸ See **Salāyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,4 f) + SD 29.5 (1.4.1), where, on the mind-base, see Table 1.4.2.

It should be noted here that that the term “**mind-base**” (*man'āyatana*) is used in a non-technical sense. Its Abhidhamma technicality arose much later on as reflected in its role in, for example, the 5-door cognitive process (*viññāṇa, kicca*).⁹⁹

4.4.3.4 (10) “He trains himself thus: ‘Gladdening the mind, I will breathe in’” (*abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*). **He trains himself thus: ‘Gladdening the mind, I will breathe out’”** (*abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§20(10)]

“Gladdening the mind” (*abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ*) refers to further refining the meditation sign, the radiant mind, by brightening it up. The mind is gladdened by **zest** when it attains the 1st or the 2nd dhyana. It can also be gladdened by the penetrating wisdom we eventually gain from insight into the **impermanence** of this beautiful state that it is still conditioned and subject to arising and passing away.

On the other hand, we may need to brighten up the meditative sign (*nimitta*) even at this stage (11), whenever it appears to be dull or unstable. We need to brighten up the sign and keep it that way. The experience of **zest** powers up the radiance of the sign, which, as it were, **feeds on joy**. The more joy we feel, the brighter the sign; the brighter the sign, the more joyful we feel. It goes both ways.

The basic technique of empowering the sign is to keep returning our attention to the breath to prevent it from losing its momentum. A second way is to focus our attention in the present moment, not letting the mind wonder about what happened before or what will happen. When the radiance returns, we should train our attention at its centre, so that we do not pick on any imperfection near its edge. As long as we embrace the radiance, just smiling the inner smile at it, it keeps us connected to the joy.¹⁰⁰

4.4.3.5 The meditation sign can also lose its radiance on account of our weak mental effort or weak moral virtue. In the case of weak mental effort, we should turn to an “**inspiring meditations**” like a reflection (*anussati*) on any of the 3 jewels, on moral virtue (*sīlānussati*) or on giving (*cāgānussati*), or cultivate lovingkindness.¹⁰¹ It also helps to ensure that our place of meditation is suitable, and our diet is balanced and healthy.

When we have persistent difficulties in our meditation, we should then examine whether we have been habitually breaking any precept or harbouring some negative emotions. If we notice some moral lapses, we should resolve this by apostrophically seeking forgiveness from the Buddha and also unconditionally forgiving ourselves by cultivating lovingkindness. A good strategy is to recall a time when we attended a study, retreat or event when we kept the precepts even for just that period.

When the “calmness” (*samatha*) approach does not seem to work, we may try getting into the “insight” (*vipassanā*) mode. This is to reflect on the conditioned nature of our meditative experience or our current state. Carefully reflect on their conditioned and impermanent nature, including applying some inspiring Dhamma passage or sutta teaching we have learned.

4.4.3.6 (11) “He trains himself thus: ‘Concentrating the mind, I will breathe in’” (*samādahaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*). **He trains himself thus: ‘Concentrating the mind, I will breathe out’”** (*samādahaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§20(11)]

“Concentrating the mind” (*samādahaṃ cittaṃ*) refers to sustaining the meditation sign (*nimitta*). This is either the dhyana state itself, or the momentary concentration¹⁰² arising from insight. The radiant sign is simply the reflection of our own mind; hence, it depends on our own inner stillness. When our mental con-

⁹⁹ SD 19.14 (2 f). See eg “mind-base” in Abhidhammattha, saṅgaha: Abhs:BRS index under “mind (*mano*).”

¹⁰⁰ See Brahmavamso 2002:76 f.

¹⁰¹ See *anussati-ṭ, ṭhāna* at SD 24.8 (2.1).

¹⁰² “Momentary concentration” (*khaṇika samādhi*), see SD 15.1 (9.4).

centration weakens, the sign fluctuates unsteadily. In fact, at the start, the sign usually only flashes momentarily and then disappears. Or, it may stray unpredictably around the mind's field of vision. The brighter the sign is the more likely it is to remain stable.

At this point, we are still not fully concentrated; hence, it's best to direct the mind to ourself, the knower, and examine our mental state. Often the distraction is either fear or excitement. If it is the *first* time the sign arises in us, we may **fear** it, like our meeting an important but total stranger and not knowing what to do. Or, we are so captivated with the sign that we get carried away with **excitement** and lose our focus.

The solution is to stop reacting and to simply, as it were, surrender ourself to the radiant mind. When we are in strange new company, we must first silently watch and learn. It's like learning to ride a bicycle the first time. We start off by holding the handlebars properly, feet on the ground, and, looking ahead, we keep on peddling without worrying about falling. And before we know it, we are well balanced and cycling around.

4.4.3.7 (12) "He trains himself thus: 'Freeing the mind, I will breathe in'" (*vimocayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*). **"He trains himself thus: 'Freeing the mind, I will breathe out'"** (*vimocayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§20(12)]

"Freeing the mind" (*vimocayaṃ cittaṃ*) means that we should overcome all the mental hindrances,¹⁰³ that is, restraining all physical sense-stimuli so that the mind settles in itself. Or, when dhyana is already attained, we should work to gently let go of the grosser dhyana-factors¹⁰⁴ by attaining successively higher levels of concentration. A third task may be that of freeing ourself from any cognitive distortions—any wrong view or negative reactions to what occurs in our meditation; this is done through application of insight knowledge, that is, regarding any of them as being "mind-made"; hence, they are impermanent; or we mentally note or subverbalize, "Let go; let go ..."

Usually, the mind here has two experiences that have the same effect, depending on our perspective. We may either find ourself "plunging" into the sign; then, the attention just sinks therein. Or else, that sign of radiance or "feeling" simply overwhelms or fully envelops us. So it seems, and "we" feel gratified, thinking, "This is it!" and so on. "We" do *nothing* in meditation; when we do nothing, *it* happens: the hindrances fall away and dhyana emerges.

Hence, the **dhyanas** are called states of "freedom" (*vimokkha*).¹⁰⁵ This is our journey into the final frontier, that of **inner space**, where the mind is free from all physical encumbrances: the mind is fully free from the body. It's more than being merely an "out-of-body" experience: we are not floating somewhere in space. Rather, it is a profound spiritual state that is free from time and space and where we come face to face with our pure bright mind (*pabhassara, citta*) [4.4.4.2]. After all, time and space only work with the conscious physical body, but there is no "body" here. We do not feel the body any more; we feel only the profound bliss of the pure mind.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ The 5 mental hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*) are (1) sensual lust (*kāma-c, chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*), (4) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*): M 3:49; M 1:274; A 4:437; see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

¹⁰⁴ The dhyana-factors (*jhān'āṅga*) are the constituent qualities of a dhyana, beginning with a total of 5 factors—(1) initial application (*vitakka*), (2) sustained application (*vicāra*), (3) zest (*pīti*), (4) happiness (*sukha*) and (5) one-pointedness (*ek'aggatā*)—which are those of the 1st dhyana, omitting (5). The 2nd dhyana has (3)-(5); the 3rd dhyana (4) + (5); and the 4th dhyana only (5). See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (6).

¹⁰⁵ **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.33), SD 9; (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Vimokkha S** (A 8.66), SD 95.11.

¹⁰⁶ See Brahmavamso 1999; 2002:79-81.

4.4.4 The 4th tetrad: Contemplating dharmas (How the mind's state is refined) [§21]

Summary of the 4 th tetrad:	(13) contemplating impermanence;	[4.4.4.1 f]
	(14) contemplating fading away;	[4.4.4.3]
	(15) contemplating cessation;	[4.4.4.4]
	(16) contemplating letting go.	[4.4.4.5]

4.4.4.1 (13) “He trains himself thus: ‘**Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe in**’ (*aniccânupassī assasissāmîti sikkhati*). “He trains himself thus: ‘**Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe out**’” (*aniccânupassī assasissāmîti sikkhati*). [§21(13)]

Remember that **the Ānâpâna,sati Sutta** comprises 4 aspects of practice and attainment [1.1.1.1], and we are just beginning with the practice. At this beginner's level, we must work with the understanding that this last tetrad deals entirely with **insight**. We now can better understand how the previous 3 tetrads work with *both* calmness and insight (*samatha,vipassanā*).¹⁰⁷ The insight we use and the insight we gain should bring us to the last aspect (16), that of **relinquishment** (*pañinissagga*), inner renunciation. [4.4.4.4].

Hence, we work with each of the first 3 aspects in this tetrad as long as we need to. Only when we have mastered stage (13) do we go to the next stage. In fact, this stage is, in a sense, on-going: we need to reflect on **impermanence** *whenever* we are slowed down or hindered in our practice. But here, it is done with a special purpose: to free our mind of defilements, at least temporarily [4.4.4.4]. Indeed, this what a “free mind” really means: a spotless pure radiant mind whose wholesome effect stays with us for good, as it were.¹⁰⁸ [4.4.4.2]

4.4.4.2 Even as we meditate and when we have just emerged from dhyana, we may notice that things seem to be so “constant” that it is as if we have attained some “timeless” state. This is only the profound effect of our “pure bright mind” (*pabhassara,citta*). What we understand as our “**self**,” which seems to be *constant* in our daily life that we do not even notice it, taking it for granted (as if it really exists). In dhyanic experience, any notion of self disappears—we may or may not be prepared for this.

This is where some understanding of the Buddha Dhamma helps us understand that there is really **no abiding self**; that is, the teaching of **non-self** (*anattā*). If we do not have such understanding or choose to reject such a truth, then, we may fall into the notion of some “abiding entity”: the Self, Soul, Godhead, Brahman, Other, etc. Only “empty” phenomena roll on, like the single frames of a long celluloid film-loop projecting themselves rapidly on our mind's screen. It's the “movies,”: but nothing is moving; only the mind is. [4.4.2.1]

When we can truly see this non-self of **change**, we are so profoundly transformed that we will abandon any notion of *self-identity*; we have no *doubt* about this reality; and we see the frivolity and futility of *rituals and vows*. We become **streamwinners**, the first-steppers on the path of awakening.¹⁰⁹

4.4.4.3 (14) “He trains himself thus: ‘**Contemplating fading away, I will breathe in**’ (*virāgânupassī assasissāmîti sikkhati*). “He trains himself thus: ‘**Contemplating fading away, I will breathe out**’” (*virāgânupassī passasissāmîti sikkhati*). [§21(14)]

¹⁰⁷ See S:B 1950 n293.

¹⁰⁸ The caveat, “as it were,” means that although its beneficial effect stays with us, we may forget this when we are caught up with the world again (as in the case of Deva,datta). However, when we do get back into practice, this “past good” (*pubbe kata,puññatā*, Sn 260, SD 101.5) will facilitate our return to goodness and towards the path.

¹⁰⁹ See **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

“Fading away” (*virāga*) is also translated as “dispassion” [§42]. If our reflection on impermanence does not work, then we should go on to reflect on the “fading away.” This is when things just disappear; those things we assume to be so close to us that we thought were essentially a part of us. Then, suddenly, surprisingly, they are no more there.

Both “contemplating fading away” and the next, “contemplating cessation” (stage 15) can be seen as an insight into the momentary cessation, even destruction, of phenomena; and the supramundane path leading to nirvana is itself the fading away of lust (*virāga*) and the cessation (*nirodha*) of suffering.

4.4.4.4 (15) “He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating cessation, I will breathe in’ (*nirodhānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati*). **“He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating cessation, I will breathe out’”** (*nirodhānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§21(15)]

Broadly speaking “cessation” (*nirodha*) refers to the world as we knew it no more appears so: our false view of the world is gone. This is the world produced by our senses and directed by the mind. This is a world that demands all our attention—all our sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts. It’s like a protracted existence in a Pokemon world, running after these monsters: we want to capture them *all*. There is no end to all this; hence, this is suffering.

Specifically, “cessation” refers to the ending of suffering, the sense of lack and our insatiable drive to futilely feed and fill that lack. At this stage something that seemed to be always there has now disappeared. The world as we knew it is no more there. We are in a completely new time-space reality. We have a clearer and happier vision of what are real and good. Hence, our life is more meaningful and purposeful in the best senses of the words.¹¹⁰

“Cessation” is, of course, **the 3rd noble truth**: that of the ending of suffering—that is nirvana. Although we may have yet to attain nirvana, as *streamwinners*, we catch glimpses of it. We are like desert travelers, parched, thirsty and dirty, who have come to an oasis with a deep well, and we can see the water deep down.¹¹¹ It’s a just a matter of time and effort, we will be able to quench our thirst and have a good rest. For the moment, we have to work with the last stages of the breath meditation to move on to higher states of spiritual excellence.

4.4.4.5 (16) “He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating relinquishment, I will breathe in’ (*paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati*). **“He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating relinquishment, I will breathe out’”** (*paṭinissaggānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*). [§21(16)]

A simple word for “relinquishment” (*paṭinissaga*) is “letting go.” Hence, to “contemplate relinquishment” means that we reflect on, prepare ourself, for the giving up (*pariccāga*) or abandoning (*pahāna*) of **defilements** (wrong ways and wrong views) through insight, so that we reach the path for “leaping forward” (*pakkhandana*)¹¹² into nirvana. The idea, then, is that of ridding ourself of rubbish and baggage that we do not need for our journey toward the path and moving on to nirvana.

At this level, **renunciation** (*nekkhamma*) takes on a deeper sense. Conventional renunciation—that of leaving the world for the monastic life—is the *socially* ideal way of life for leaving behind our baggage so that we can fully engage ourself with the task of attaining arhathood or non-returning in this life itself. In fact, this is what dhyaṇa does: it empowers us to rise above the limits of our physical body so that we taste pure mental pleasures, well more pleasurable than the body that give us. Hence, we will never even think of

¹¹⁰ On the first 2 truths as the meaning of life, and the last 2 as the purpose of life, see SD 1.1 (4.0).

¹¹¹ (**Nidāna**) **Kosambī S** (S 12.68,60), SD 70.11.

¹¹² *Pakkhandana* is the noun of *pakkhandati*, (lit) “to spring or leap (forward), to jump (on to); to be after someone in pursuit; (fig) to rejoice in, find pleasure or satisfaction in, to take to.” When applied to nirvana, it connotes a joyful embrace of it.

being attracted to such bodily or worldly pleasure. Dhyana empowers renunciation; it effects our fully letting go of the world in every sense of the word.

Patinissagga has a deeper sense of renunciation, that which is found only in the arhat. He is one who has fully given up the “knower” (a broad term for the unconscious or latent tendencies), that is, how our senses engage the world—the “all” (*sabba*), the sense-faculties and their objects. This engagement then feeds the “doer” (a broad term for karma and formations).¹¹³

Although such an existential engagement seems to be with “something” out there, it is really about how we perceive the world, and then create our own virtual reality—this is a back-and-forth exchange of subjectifying and objectifying. This is an incessant and instinctive process by which we give “names” (*nāma*) to “forms” (*rūpa*) out there but “bending” (*namati* or *nameti*) and “owning” them, thus reifying them.

These **owning** and reifying aspects of our unawakened nature are the drives (as ignorance and craving) exerted by a special aspect of the “knower,” that is the **controller**, sometimes called “the will.” This is technically known as “**formations**” (*saṅkhāra*), the most potent and insidious manifestation of which is called “**mental proliferation**” (*papañca*).¹¹⁴

These are basically the on-going activities of the controller’s minions, “thoughts,” that is, the untamed mind (*citta*), that work to reify and own *all* that we experience, instead of leaving them alone and so learning from them.

These instinctive tendencies have been abandoned by the arhat. As non-arhats, we need to understand them and progressively give them up. An effective renouncing practice here is that of **not identifying** with any of our experiences—simply, letting them come, letting them go, and learning from them. This empowers us with what is known as “**not-that-ness**” (*atam,mayatā*).¹¹⁵ This is a higher form of renunciation that brings us closer to nirvana, if not, to the path.

4.4.4.6 While the previous three tetrads deal with both calm and insight, this **4th and last tetrad** deals only with insight. “Contemplating fading away ...” (stage 14) and “contemplating cessation ...” (stage 15) can be understood both as stronger insight into the **impermanence** (stage 13) of formations and, on a higher level, as *the supramundane path* leading to nirvana, that is, the fading of lust (*virāga*) and the cessation of suffering.

“**Contemplating letting go**” (stage 16) is the full and final giving up of all our defilements (basically, the 3 roots of greed, hate and delusion) through insight and the gaining of nirvana through the path. This is the end of our inner journey on the path of awakening. This is where we do not see ourself as *a* traveller or *the* Traveller: there is only *the path*. Having completed the journey, we no more feel its toils and troubles, all our burdens are put down; we are uplifted with the joy and freedom of awakening.

4.4.5 “I WILL BREATHE IN ... BREATHE OUT”

4.4.5.1 Notice that the phrase, “**I will breathe in ... breathe out,**” is present in all the 16 aspects that are the 4 tetrads of breath meditation. As characterizing our practice, this phrase represents a stable anchor for our mind so that it does not wander away from the task at hand as described in each of the 16 aspects. This dynamic sentence itself reminds us that **our breath** is always in motion. After all, it is an aspect of the wind element (*vāyo*), or simply “motion.” This is a physical aspect of a broader reality, that of universal change or **impermanence**.

¹¹³ On the “knower” and the “doer” in meditation, see *Saṅkhāra*, SD 17.6 (8.4); SD 15.1 (1.5).

¹¹⁴ The function or active nature of “mental proliferation” is known as “proliferation of conception and perception” (*papañca,saññā,saṅkha*): see SD 6.14 (3).

¹¹⁵ See *Atam,mayatā*, SD 19.13.

4.4.5.2 A deeper significance of the sentence, “I will breathe in ... breathe out,” is that it is a shorthand for **the reflection on impermanence**. Our breath gives us life: it *is* our life. We are only alive when we allow this in-breathing and out-breathing; having taken in a breath, we can and must only give it back, *every time*. This exchange is a constant reminder of a universal true reality—that of **impermanence**.

At every stage of our breath meditation, every tetrad, every aspect of each tetrad, we are experiencing the reality of impermanence by responding to it in different ways. Every breath we take, and watched mindfully, seeing its impermanence in some way, brings us closer to the truth and beauty of universal reality. In essence, this is what happens in breath meditation.

4.4.5.3 While the tetrads are sets of meditative practices for calmness or insight or both. At first, they are not really “stages,” since it takes some expertise to mastering them in their natural progression. As un-awakened beings, we need to master these “**aspects**” first by understanding them through practice. This is, in fact, how the 4 tetrads work. We can summarize the totality of the 16 aspects of breath meditation as follows: [1.1.3.2]

I. The mundane or basic <u>breath meditation</u>	streamwinning or once-returning	§§18-23
II. The breath meditation as 4 <u>satipatthana</u> ¹¹⁶	non-returning or arhathood ¹¹⁷	§§24-28
III. Applying satipatthana to the 7 awakening factors ¹¹⁸	non-returning or arhathood ¹¹⁹	§§29-41
IV. The attaining of true knowledge and liberation	arhathood	§§42-44

5 Pīti and sukha

We experience **zest** [joy] (*pīti*) in any of two ways: by attaining either the 1st or 2nd dhyana in which zest is present, we experience it in the mode of **calm** (*samatha*); by emerging from that dhyana and reflecting that zest is subject to destruction, we experience zest in the mode of **insight** (*vipassanā*).

Psychologically, *pīti* is a kind of “joyful interest,” and as such may be associated with wholesome, unwholesome or neutral states (BDict: *pīti*). Zest belongs to the formation group (*saṅkhāra-k, khandha*) while **happiness** (*sukha*) belongs to the feeling group (*vedanā-k, khandha*). Buddhaghosa compares zest to when a thirsty man lost in the desert finds water; happiness is what he feels when he is drinking the water. (Vism 4.94 ff).

6 Meditation sign (nimitta)

6.1 THE BREATH SIGN

6.1.1 In “The Mystery of the Breath Nimitta” (2000), **Bhikkhu Soṇa** explains that the simile of a clear full moon to which the dhyanic mind is compared in the Paṭisambhidā “degenerates to a mistaken literalization as internally produced visual data” in the Visuddhi, magga’s description of the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*). However, let us get the terms right first. By **nimitta** is meant “a characteristic mark or phenomenon, which accompanies and helps identify an experience” (2000:1).¹²⁰ For example, when one feels weakness, headache and nausea, nausea here is a sign of the flu.

¹¹⁶ On the 4 satipatthanas, see SD 13.1.

¹¹⁷ See **Satipatṭhāna S** (M 10,46 esp 46.2), SD 13.3.

¹¹⁸ On the 7 awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*), see **Bojjhaṅga Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.15.

¹¹⁹ See **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S** (S 46.3,12-19), SD 10.15.

¹²⁰ On defs of *nimitta*, see SD 13.1(3.1d).

6.1.2 According to *the Buddhist Dictionary*, there are 3 types of *nimitta*. The 1st type, the “preparatory image or sign” (*parikamma,nimitta*), refers to the perception of the meditation object. When the mind reaches a weak degree of concentration, a still unsteady and unclear image or “acquired sign” (*uggaha,nimitta*), also called “learning sign,” arises. This is the 2nd type of *nimitta*.

This percept precedes the arising of an entirely clear and steady image, the “counter-sign” (*paṭibhāga,-nimitta*). The appearance of this 3rd type of *nimitta* signals the arising of the “neighbourhood (or access) concentration” (*upacāra,samādhi*), the state preceding full dhyana. Both these states share the same sign and are different only in the intensity of their component factors. The countersign is more refined and clarified, resulting from greater concentration. [6.4]

6.2 THE VIMUTTI,MAGGA EXPLANATION

6.2.1 The Vimuti,magga (Vimm:ESK 68), in referring to the “discerning of qualities” for the diverse meditation subjects, states that “one of the meditation seizes the sign through contact. Namely, the mindfulness of respiration. And again, one subject of meditation seizes the sign through sight or contact. Namely, wind *kaṣiṇa*.” This distinction is critical, notes Soṇa. It shows that the breath of breath meditation is different from other meditation objects in that it is exclusively tactile.

6.2.2 Visual objects may be perceived during breath meditation as a side-effect for some meditators. However, the meditator should remain focused only on the tactile sensation (the touch) of the breath. In this connection, **the Paṭisambhidā,magga** says:

... as such, the monk sits, having established mindfulness at the nose-tip or at the sign of the mouth [lip], without paying attention to the coming and going [rising and falling] of the in-breath and the out-breath as they come and go; as he disregards the coming and going of the in-breath and the out-breath, he put forth effort, and carries out his task. Through his effort he gains excellence.¹²¹

6.2.3 The Vimutti,magga describes what happens next for a meditator who puts forth proper effort:

To the yogin who attends to the incoming breath with mind that is cleansed of the nine lesser defilements the image arises with a pleasant feeling similar to that which is produced in the action of spinning cotton or silk cotton. Also, it is likened to the pleasant feeling produced by a breeze. Thus in breathing in and out, air touches the nose or the lip and causes the setting-up of air perception mindfulness. This does not depend on colour or form. This is called the image.

If the yogin develops the image [sign] and increases it at the nose-tip, between the eyebrows, on the forehead or establishes it in several places, he feels as if his head were filled with air.

Through increasing in this way his whole body is charged with bliss. This is called perfection.

And again, there is a yogin: he sees several images from the beginning. He sees various forms such as smoke, mist, dust, sand of gold, or he experiences something similar to the pricking of a needle or to an ant’s bite.

If his mind does not become clear regarding these different images, he will be confused[!]. Thus he fulfils overturning and does not gain the perception of respiration.

If his mind becomes clear, the yogin does not experience confusion. He attends to respiration and he does not cause the arising of other perceptions [underlining mine]. Meditating thus he is

¹²¹ Pm 3.170/2:171. *Evam evaṃ bhikkhu nāsik’agge vā mukha,nimitte vā satim upaṭṭhapetvā nisinno hoti, na āgate vā gate vā assāsa,passāse manasi karoti, na āgatā vā gatā vā assāsa,passāsā aviditā honti, padhānañ ca paññāyati, payogañ ca sādheti. Visesam adhigacchati padhānañ ca.* (Pm 3.170/2:171)

able to end confusion and acquire the subtle image [sign]. And he attends to respiration with mind that is free. That image [sign] is free. Because that image [sign] is free, desire arises. Desire being free, that yogin attends respiration with equipoise. Equipoise, desire and joy being free, he attends to respiration, and his mind is not disturbed.

If his mind is not disturbed, he will destroy the hindrances, and arouse the meditation (*jhāna*) factors. Thus this yogin will reach the calm and sublime fourth meditation, *jhāna*. This is as was fully taught above. (Vimm:ESK 158 f; amplified by Bhikkhu Soṇa)

Bhikkhu Soṇa reminds us that these warnings about **not being distracted** in meditation seems directly derived from the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta (M 118) itself, where the Buddha declares:

“I do not say there is development of breathing for one who is forgetful, who lacks clear understanding.” [§26.3]

6.3 THE VISUDDHI.MAGGA EXPLANATION

6.3.1 However, in the **Visuddhi,magga**, we find a literalization of a simile that needs to be corrected so as not to confuse meditators. Let us first look at the problem passages:

... So too, the bhikkhu should not look for the in-breaths and out-breaths anywhere else than the place normally touched by them. And he should take the rope of mindfulness and the goad understanding, and fixing his mind on the place normally touched by them, he should go on giving his attention to that. For as he gives his attention in this way they reappear after no long time, as the oxen did at the drinking place where they met. So he can secure them with the rope of mindfulness, and yoking them in that same place and prodding them with the goad of understanding, he can keep on applying himself to the meditation subject.

214. When he does so in this way, the sign [see corresponding note, next paragraph] soon appears to him. But it is not the same for all; on the contrary, some say that when it appears it does so to certain people producing a light touch like cotton or silk cotton or a draught.

215. But this is the exposition given in the commentaries: It appears to some like a star or a cluster of gems or a cluster of pearls, to others with a rough touch like that of silk-cotton seeds or a peg made of heartwood, to others like a long braid string or a wreath of flowers or a puff of smoke, to others like a stretched-out cobweb or a film of cloud or a lotus flower or a chariot wheel or the moon’s disk or the sun’s disk. (Vism 8.213-215/284 f; Soṇa’s emphases)

6.3.2 A note from the **Param’attha,mañjusā**, the commentary to the Visuddhi,magga, reads:

“The sign” is the learning sign and the counterpart sign, for both are stated here together. Herein, the three similes beginning with cotton are properly the learning sign, the rest are both. “Some” are certain teachers. The similes beginning with the “cluster of gems” are properly the counterpart sign. (VismA 786, n58)

6.3.3 The similes mentioned in Vism 8.214-215 above represent both tactile and visual sense perceptions. It clearly reflects that

a mix-up came about as a result of an error in the transmission (perhaps an error in written transcription) based on data obtained from earlier commentarial material such as the Vimuttimagga and the canonical Paṭisambhidāmagga, or of having taken literally what originally was meant as a simile. (Bhikkhu Soṇa 2000:3)

6.3.4 The Vimutti,magga, in referring to the “discerning of qualities” for the diverse meditation subjects, states that

... one subject of meditation seizes the sign through contact. Namely, the mindfulness of respiration. And again, one subject of meditation seizes the sign through sight or contact. Namely, air kasiṇa.
(Vimm:ESK 68)

This distinction is critical. It shows that breath meditation is different from other concentration objects in that it is exclusively tactile.¹²²

6.4 HOW DHYANA ARISES THROUGH THE BREATH MEDITATION

6.4.1 The 2 signs

6.4.1.1 We have already spoken of the 3 kinds of mental signs (*nimitta*) [6.1]. Here, we will focus on the last two to understand, in theory, how dhyana arises. **Dhyana** (*jhāna*) is such a joyful and peaceful state of mind, freed of all sense stimuli that it is also known as “calmness” (*samatha*). In terms of actual practice of the breath meditation, this happens when the mind is said to have attained “full concentration.” This blissfully freed mind is preceded by what is known as “access concentration.”

6.4.1.2 The whole process leading up to dhyana is easy to understand in term of “access concentration” and “full concentration.” When we are focused on watching the breath, having let go of all distractions, we come closer to directly seeing the breath as it really is, that is, we do not even need to think about it. This stage is known as “access” (*upacāra*), because we are in the proximity or “neighbourhood” of full concentration or dhyana— hence, this is called “neighbourhood concentration” or “access concentration” (*upacāra,samādhi*). When the mind is totally free from the 6 senses and fully absorbed in itself, it is said to have attained dhyana, that is, “**full concentration**” (*appanā,samādhi*).¹²³

6.4.1.3 The mind becomes concentrated on the level of access by the abandonment of **the mental hindrances** [6.4.3.7], that is, when the mind is completely free (at least temporarily) from the body. The mental hindrances are the demanding and distracting activities of the 6 senses (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind). When the mind is fully free of the body, the physical senses also cease their activities, so that the mind, too, stops conceiving, that is, generating ideas with the senses-faculties. The mind, then, basically only perceives, without *conceiving*.¹²⁴ In aesthetic terms,¹²⁵ we can say that, in dhyana, the mind *feels* without thinking.¹²⁵

6.4.1.4 Dhyana is said to have arisen when all **the dhyana-factors**—initial application, sustained application, zest, joy, and one-pointedness¹²⁶ —are attained, the mind is said to have attained full concentration

¹²² For a better understanding, see Bhikkhu Soṇa’s “The Mystery of the Breath Nimitta” (2000): <http://www.birken.ca/library>. For a more detailed study of *nimitta*, see **Nimitta**, SD 19.7.

¹²³ For further details on *upacāra samādhi* and *appanā samādhi*, see **Samadhi**, SD 33.1a (3.1).

¹²⁴ On perceiving (*sañjānana*), or better, perception (*saññā*), see **Saññā**, SD 17.4. On conception (*maññanā*), see **Mūla,pariyāya S** (M 1,3) n, SD 11.9; **Ejā S 1** (S 35.90), SD 29.10 (3). See also SD 31.10 (2.6); SD 43.3 (4.2.3.5).

¹²⁵ On the usage of “feeling” in meditation, see Reflection R418, “Feeling meditation,” 2015.

¹²⁶ These dhyana-factors (*jhān’āṅga*) are also fivefold, respectively: (1) *vitakka*, (2) *vicāra*, (3) *pīti*, (4) *sukha*, and (5) *ek’aggata*: see SD 8.4 (6).

or attainment (*appanā*), that is, the first dhyana.¹²⁷ In practice, it is difficult to distinguish between the two, as they are really the two side of the same coin of the concentrated mind in deep meditation.

7 Breath meditation in practice

Box 7. PRACTICAL SUMMARY ON BREATH MEDITATION (Soṇa Bhikkhu):

- (1) Attend to the sensation of breath/air wherever it enters and exits the body.
- (2) If visual perceptions arise, ignore them.
- (3) If the mind wanders, do not allow it. Return to only the point of contact of breath.
- (4) Hold attention on the breathing process throughout the entire duration of in-breaths and out-breaths.
- (5) The sensation or perception of moving air turns into a static feeling—this is a sign of the mind stilling.
- (6) Dwell on this airy, buoyant quality, which should pervade the head, as a sense of cool and airy emptiness. This may pervade the whole body. This is a further “sign” of growing stillness.
- (7) Keep focusing on this experience of airy lightness.
- (8) All mental hindrances [4.4.3.7] will fall away and the 5 dhyana-factors¹²⁸ will arise (at any of 3 levels: weak, medium or strong).
- (9) Refer to the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta for further instructions.

7.1 SEQUENCE OF PRACTICE. The first exercise of the 16-steps of the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta closely corresponds to that the Madhyama Āgama, which speaks at first of simply knowing in-breath and out-breath, and then noting them to be long or short. This is followed by training in experiencing the “whole body” and in calming the “bodily activities.” **Anālayo** remarks on his footnote:

In regard to the last of these steps, MĀ 98 agrees with the Pali versions on instructing to train in calming the bodily activities when breathing in, but when breathing out it speaks of training in calming the verbal activities (T1.582c17: 學止口行息出). This appears to be a textual corruption, since the pattern of the instructions in all other cases simply applies what had been done during the in-breath to the out-breath.

Another exposition of these four steps of mindfulness of breathing, found in SĀ 810 at T2.-208a27, does have calming the bodily formations on both occasions, when breathing in and when breathing out. (2005:5 n35)

7.2 THE ĀGAMA VERSION. In the contemplating of the body of **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta**,¹²⁹ the Pāli sequence is “**the breath meditation**,” “the 4 postures,” and “clear comprehension.” The sequence in the Madhyama Āgama versions, however, is just the reverse: clear comprehension, the 4 postures, and breath meditation.¹³⁰ On this issue of practice sequence of the breath meditation, **Anālayo** notes:

A point in favour of the Madhyama Āgama presentation is that **mindfulness of the four postures and clear comprehension [full awareness] of the activities of the body** are relatively rudimentary

¹²⁷ On the dhyanas, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

¹²⁸ “Dhyana factors,” *jhān’āṅga*: **Vibhaṅga** gives a list of 5 dhyana-factors as follows: initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), zest [joyful interest, or simply “joy”] (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek’aggatā*) (Vbh 257). See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4(5-6).

¹²⁹ D 22; M 10.

¹³⁰ MĀ 98 = T1.582b21.

forms of contemplation. Due to their more elementary character, it seems reasonable to place them at the beginning of an exposition of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice. From a practical perspective, these two types of mindfulness practices would constitute convenient ways for building up a foundation in mindfulness, thereby enabling the meditator to better undertake the more sophisticated exercises listed later on.

Another point in favour of the Madhyāma Āgama sequence is that mindfulness of postures and of activities is predominantly concerned with the body in action. In contrast, the Pāli instructions for mindfulness of breathing describe the practitioner sitting down cross-legged in order to carry out this exercise.

The same requirement may well apply to the remaining exercises for mindfulness of breathing to the third position, after mindfulness of postures and activities, the description of the sitting postures would also move to the most convenient position within the Pāli list of exercises for mindfulness of the body. Such a shift of position can moreover claim for support the Pañca,viṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā and the Śāriputrābhīdharma, both of which similarly have mindfulness of postures and activities precede mindfulness of breathing.¹³¹ (2005:6 f)

8 Living and recent teachers

8.1 The Ānāpānasati Sutta describes the method used by the Buddha himself to win awakening. The best way of understanding the Ānāpānasati Sutta is to cultivate the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breath from a living master or an experienced teacher. The purpose of this Sutta is a practical one: the experience of calm and insight through mindfulness of the breath. It is like a driving manual, but one has to learn to drive under the guidance of an experienced instructor before one can learn to drive correctly and safely.

8.2 Many good teachings and commentaries have been given on this Sutta. A most comprehensive and helpful theoretical study of the breath meditation is perhaps **Anālayo's** *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct way to realization* (2003:125-136) and fully annotated, is actually an exposition on **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10), SD 13, but the common passages are valuable for a good understanding of the Ānāpānasati Sutta. Such writings highlight the historical importance of the breath meditation as an early Buddhist teachings, which are still available to us, so that we are fortunate enough to experience the benefits of the authentic practice, that is, breath meditation as taught by the Buddha and practised by the early saints.

Nyanaponika Thera's *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (1962), although dated in parts, is still a classic, containing an anthology of relevant texts translated from the Pali and Sanskrit. Chapter 6 deals with the mindfulness of breathing (pp 108-113). Part 2 contains the basic text of Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (translated with notes) (pp 115-135); Part 3.39 is the Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing (excerpts: M 118,-15-43) (pp 165-169).

Ñāṇamoli's translation, *Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpānasati): Buddhist texts from the Pali Canon and Extracts from the Pali Commentaries*¹³² is invaluable for the serious student and teacher for a more extensive study of the text. This is helpful sutta-based background reading, which gives us a good idea of the true purpose of breath meditation.

Buddhadāsa's well-known *Ānāpānasati: Mindfulness with Breathing: unveiling the secrets of life; a manual for beginners* (1989)¹³³ is written from a spiritual reformer's viewpoint and is especially readable for those who wish to make a contemporary application of the meditation. Such writings make us aware of

¹³¹ **Pañca,viṃśati,sāhasrikā**, Dutt 1934:204, tr Conze 1990:153; **Śāriputrābhīdharma**, T1548 = T28.613b3.

¹³² 1952; 2nd ed 1964 (1973).

¹³³ Tr from the Siamese by Santikaro Bhikkhu; Bangkok, 1987; 2nd ed, 1989.

a wide variety of methods and explanations available to us, and we should try them out to see which ones help us feel more calm and clear—and joyful—in mind.

Sona¹³⁴ has written an important article, “The mystery of the breath nimitta, or the case of the missing simile: an essay on aspects of the practice of breath meditation” (2000). This must-read article is found at <http://www.birken.ca/library> or its mirrors.

Brahmavaṃso’s article, “The beautiful breath: The *Ānāpānasati Sutta*,” in clear simple language, is in the *Dhamma Journal*.¹³⁵ This practical article helps put us on the right track towards improving our breath meditation, which means that we need to learn from the mistakes so that we progress in our own practice.

Thich Nhat Hanh’s *Breathe! You Are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* was first published as *Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* (1988), with commentary (1996).¹³⁶ This book is popular for the western and westernized mind for its contemporary style. It is a good non-technical introductory reading to breath meditation. However, it is wanting in some of its technical details. Whenever we are uncertain from its reading, it helps to check with the translation below (SD 7.13), along with its notes

For a comparative study of the breath meditation as taught in the Pali Canon and the method as taught in the Chinese Ekōttara Āgama, see **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda Sutta**, SD 3.11 (2).

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NOTE OF APPRECIATION

My joyful thanks to friends of the Pali Yahoo Group, especially John Kelly for his invaluable help in proof-reading the text and suggestions, and to Ong Yong Peng for his contagious enthusiasm and energy. My maiden attempt at translating this sutta was done using the trilinear method (Pali/verbatim English/idiomatic English) used during the “Pali Without Grammar” course (Pali Centre, Singapore, Feb-Mar 2003). The trilinear method was then introduced to the Pali Yahoo Group where it is well received. The trilinear edition is being used by such centres as the Bhavana Society, Washington, and the Insight Meditation Society, Barre, Massachusetts, USA. Beginning March 2005, I am deeply grateful to **Anālayo** for sharing the drafts of his forthcoming *Comparative Study of the Majjhima* in the light of Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan texts which also provide very insightful commentaries into the Suttas and early Buddhist practice. I have also been deeply moved by **Sujato**’s *A History of Mindfulness* (2004), which uncannily speaks almost every word in my mind on the issues of “vipassana,” sutta study, worldly monastics and other issues. Above all, Sujato reminds us that “silence is no option” when the truth can help us grow on the spiritual path. (Piya Tan, 2003)

¹³⁴ Birken Forest Monastery, British Columbia, Canada, belonging Ajahn Chah’s lineage.

¹³⁵ Dhamma Journal 3,1 Jan 2002:61-108 (ch 9).

¹³⁶ Tr fr the Vietnamese by Annabel Laity. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990; rev 1996. Although this is a very free tr, it is a good start to further examine meditation so as to inspire us into the actual practice of breath meditation.

Ānāpāna,sati Sutta

The Discourse on the Mindfulness of the In-and-out-breathing

M 118

[78] 1 Thus have I heard.

The Buddha and the great saints teaching

1.2 At one time, the Blessed One was staying in the Mansion of Migāra’s Mother in the Eastern Park near Sāvattihī, together with a great many very well known elder disciples:¹³⁷

the venerable Sāriputta,
the venerable Mahā Moggallāna,
the venerable Mahā Kassapa,
the venerable Mahā Kaccāna,
the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita,
the venerable Mahā Kappina,
the venerable Mahā Cunda,
the venerable [79] Anuruddha,
the venerable Revata,
the venerable Ānanda,

and other very well known elder disciples.

2 Now at that time, elder monks were advising and instructing new monks:

some elder monks were advising and instructing	10 monks;
some elder monks were advising and instructing	20 monks;
some elder monks were advising and instructing	30 monks;
some elder monks were advising and instructing	40 monks.

2.2 And the new monks, having been exhorted and instructed by the elder monks, had attained progressively higher distinction.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ “Together ... elder disciples,” *sambahulehi abhiññātehi abhiññātehi therehi sāvakehi saddhiṃ*. This phrase is stock: **Mahā Go,siṅga S** (M 32,1/1:212), SD 44.12; **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,1/3:78 f), SD 7.13; **Kaṇṭhaka S** (A 10.72,1/5:133), SD 80.17. Cf the opening of **Naḷaka,pāna S** (M 68,2/1:462), SD 37.4.

¹³⁸ “Progressively higher distinction,” *ulāraṃ pubbenāparaṃ visesaṃ*, here refers to any of the 4 stages of sainthood: streamwinner (*sot’āpanna*), once-returner (*sākad’āgāmī*), non-returner (*anāgāmī*) and arhat (*arahanta*); also, as *ulāraṃ visesaṃ*, only in **Lohicca S** (D 12/1:229-233 passim), SD 34.8. In the sense of the dhyānas (*jhāna*), see, eg, **Dhamma,cetiya S** (M 89,12+18/2:121, 124), SD 64.10; **Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka S** (S 47.3+10/5:154 f ×5), SD 24.2. For defs of the 4 types of saints, see eg **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 112,9-12/3:80) & **Mahāli S** (D 6,13/1:156). Cf the story of Sāriputta’s meeting with Assajī: when Sāriputta realizes that he does not attain any “higher [further] excellence” (*upari,visesa*), ie any higher attainment than streamwinning, he decides to meet the Buddha himself (DhA 1:94).

The Buddha extends his stay in Sāvattḥī

3 At that time—it was¹³⁹ the Uposatha day¹⁴⁰ of the fifteenth, on the full-moon night of the invitation ceremony¹⁴¹—the Blessed One was seated in the open surrounded by the community of monks.

3.2 Surveying the very silent community of monks, the Blessed One addressed them (thus):

4 “Bhikshus, I am content¹⁴² with this progress. My mind is content, bhikshus, with this progress.

4.2 So, bhikshus, assert all the more effort to attain the unattained, to achieve the unachieved, to realize the unrealized.

4.3 I will wait right here at Sāvattḥī for the Komudī full moon of the fourth month.”¹⁴³

5 The monks of the country-side heard:

“It is said that the Blessed One will remain at Sāvattḥī for the Komudī full moon of the fourth month.”

5.2 The monks of the countryside then left for Sāvattḥī to see the Blessed One.

6 And the elder monks exhorted and instructed the new monks all the more intensively:

some elder monks were advising and instructing 10 monks;

some elder monks were advising and instructing 20 monks;

some elder monks were advising and instructing 30 monks;

some elder monks were advising and instructing 40 monks.

4.2 And the new monks, having been exhorted and instructed by the elder monks, attained progressively higher distinction.

Teaching on the heartwood

7 At that time—it was the Uposatha day of the fifteenth, the full-moon night of the Komudī full moon of the fourth month—the Blessed One was seated in the open surrounded by the community of monks. [80]

7.2 Then surveying the silent community of monks, the Blessed One addressed them:¹⁴⁴

8 “Bhikshus, this assembly is without idle chatter, free from idle chatter.

8.2 Bhikshus, this assembly is pure, established in the heartwood.”¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ *Tad ahu* (cf Skt *tad ahan, tad ahar*), “that day, that very day.” See *aha(n), aha(r)* in CPD 1:527 & DPL 1:271.

¹⁴⁰ Uposatha. **The Indian year**, according to the ancient Indian system, is divided into 3 seasons (*utu*)—the hot season (*gimha*), the cold season (*hemanta*), and the rains (*vassa*) (A 4:138, SnA 317)—each lasting for 4 lunar months or “moons” (*cātu, māsa*). Each of these seasons is subdivided into eight fortnights (*pakkha*), the 3rd and the 7th containing 14 days and the others 15. Each month has 2 fortnights. Within each fortnight, the nights of the full moon (of the “bright half” or waxing moon, *sukka, pakkha*) and the new moon (either the 14th or the 15th) (of the “dark half” or waning moon, *kaṇha, pakkha*) and night of the half-moon (the 8th) are regarded as especially auspicious, called *uposatha*, Sabbath or observance day. On king Bimbisāra’s proposal, the Buddha adopted these observance days (V: 101 f), on which occasion the monks would assemble to recite the Monastic Code (*pāṭimokkha*) (V 1:101-104) and the laity would visit the monasteries to observe the Uposatha precepts (the 8 Precepts). For the Indian seasons, see **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16), SD 9 (9.4). On the monsoons, see **Vāsi, jaṭa S** (S 22.101,20/3:155) n on “the cold season,” SD 15.2a.

¹⁴¹ *Pavāraṇā*. This ceremony concludes the annual three-month monastic rains retreat, during which monks invite one another to be admonished regarding any misconduct that had been “seen, heard or suspected” of them. **Pavāraṇā S** (S 8.7/1:190-192) describes such a proceeding.

¹⁴² *Āradha*, “accomplished, achieved; pleased, satisfied” (CPD, DP), pp of *ārajhati*; not pp of *ārabhati*, “undertakes, initiates.”

¹⁴³ Komudī is the full-moon day of the month of Kattikā, the fourth month of the rainy season. It is so called because the white water-lily (*kumuda*) bloomed at that time.

¹⁴⁴ The foll whole section as at D 1:117, 133; M 3:80; A 2:183.

¹⁴⁵ “Established in the heartwood” (*sāre patitṭhitā*), ie established in moral virtue, etc (AA 3:168). *Suddhā sāre*, alt tr “of the pure essence”: *sāra*, “heartwood,” that is, the core or essence of anything; the pith or the best of wood—a

8.3 Such a community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly of monks as this, bhikshus, is difficult to see in this world.

8.4 Such a community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly of monks as this, bhikshus, is worthy of offerings,
worthy of hospitality,
worthy of gifts,
worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,¹⁴⁶
a supreme field of merit for the world.

8.5 For such a community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly of monks as this, bhikshus, even a small gift becomes great, and a great one becomes greater.¹⁴⁷

8.6 Such community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly as this, bhikshus, is worthy of going many yojanas [leagues] with only a travel-bag¹⁴⁸ just to see it.¹⁴⁹

The 4 types of saints

9 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who are **arhats** with mental influxes¹⁵⁰ destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what is to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal,¹⁵¹ destroyed the fetters of being, fully freed through true knowledge.¹⁵²

—Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks.

10 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who, with the destruction of the 5 lower fetters,¹⁵³ are **spontaneously reborn**,¹⁵⁴

simile for spiritual strength and attainment. See, for example, **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,12/1:111) and **Udumbarikā Sīha-nāda S** (D 25,15-19). The Buddha's humour is evident in such a simile given in Udumbarika Sīhanāda S (D 25,15-19/-3:47-53).

¹⁴⁶ *Añjalī*, or more fully, *kamal'añjalī*, "lotus gesture," that is, with cupped hands held between the chest level and the crown depending on one's devotion. In the Thai tradition, however, the palms are pressed close together.

¹⁴⁷ For a discussion on gifts, see, eg, **Dakkhiṇā,vibhaṅga S** (M 142) and **Dakkhiṇā S** (A 4.78/2:80 f).

¹⁴⁸ *Puṭosena*, vl *puṭamsena* (mostly Comys), a bag for carrying food when travelling, a knapsack. See foll n.

¹⁴⁹ *Puṭosenāpi tathā,rūpo ayam bhikkhave bhikkhu,saṅgho, tathā,rūpā ayam parisā* (Sī Pī Ka). As at D 1:117, 133 (= *pātheyyam gahetvā, puṭo amse assāti*, "with provision in hand, a bag over the shoulder," DA 1:288, 4:139; AA 3:168; M 3:80; A 2:183. See prec n.

¹⁵⁰ "**Mental influxes**," *āsava* (lit "in-flow, out-flow"), from *ā-savati* "flows towards" (ie either "into" or "out" towards the observer). It has been variously translated as influxes, taints ("deadly taints," RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 kinds of *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām'āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav'āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjā-sava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as "floods" (*oghā*) and "yokes" (*yogā*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is prob older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

¹⁵¹ *Sadatthā*, may be resolved as: (1) *sa-d-atthā*, "one's own goal," (2) *sant + atthā*, "the sublime goal," "the ideal."

¹⁵² "Fully free through true knowledge," *sammad-aññā*: SD 54.2g (2.2.2).

¹⁵³ They keep us within the lower realms (the sense-worlds). **The 10 fetters** (*dasa,samyojanā*) are: (1) personality view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rules and rites (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377). In some places, no 5 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*).

¹⁵⁴ As a non-returner, reborn in the pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), the 5 highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa,loka*) inhabited only by non-returners who assume their last birth to become arhats and attain nirvana. These worlds are

and there attain final nirvana, without ever returning from that world.

—Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks.

11 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who, with the destruction of the 3 fetters¹⁵⁵ and with the diminishing of lust, hate and delusion, are **once-returners**, returning only once¹⁵⁶ to this world **[81]** to make an end of suffering.

—Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks.

12 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who, with the total destruction of the 3 fetters, are **streamwinners**,

no longer bound for the lower world,¹⁵⁷ sure of going over to self-awakening.

—Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks.¹⁵⁸

The 7 sets of spiritual strategies¹⁵⁹

13 Such, bhikshus, is the nature of the monks in this community of monks:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of | <u>the 4 focuses of mindfulness</u> ¹⁶⁰ |
| (2) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of | <u>the 4 right exertions</u> . ¹⁶¹ |
| (3) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of | <u>the 4 bases for spiritual power</u> . ¹⁶² |
| (4) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of | <u>the 5 spiritual faculties</u> . ¹⁶³ |
| (5) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of | <u>the 5 spiritual powers</u> . ¹⁶⁴ |

Āviha (“Non-declining”), Ātappa (“Unworried”), Sudassā (“Clearly Visible”), Sudassī (“Clear-visioned”) and Akaññīthā (“Highest”) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46). It should be noted that one could become a non-returner in this world itself, but upon dying, one is reborn in the Pure Abodes.

¹⁵⁵ The (first) 3 fetters: see §10n.

¹⁵⁶ *Ke sakim deva*.

¹⁵⁷ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of ruin/suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*), esp as *niraya*, *tiracchāna*, *pettivisaya*, *asurakāyā* (Khpa 189,12 = DA 2:496,11 (on D 2:55,27) = SA 2:97,5 (on S 2:92,16); Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 courses (*pañca, gati*) (D 33,2.1(4)/3:234; A 9.68/4:459) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal birth (*tiracchāna, yoni*), the ghost realm (*petti-* or *pitti, visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura, kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*). For a discussion, see A:ÑB 1999:14-19. See **Pañca, gati S** (A 9.68/4:459), SD 2.20. On a late work, **Pañca, gati, dīpana**, ed L Feer (JPTS 1884:152 ff); tr Feer, *Annales du Musée Guimet* 5, 1883:514-528: sv Naraka, kaṇḍa, Tiracchāna~, Peta~, Manussa~, Deva~.

¹⁵⁸ On the noble individuals, see **Kiṭṭā, giri S** (M 70), SD 12.2 (5).

¹⁵⁹ On the 7 sets: see (1.3) above + SD 9 (10bc).

¹⁶⁰ *Sati’paṭṭhāna*. I have analyzed it as *sati* + *upaṭṭhāna* (setting up) rather than *sati* + *paṭṭhāna* (foundation). Cf Ñāṇa-moli & Bodhi 2001 n136.

¹⁶¹ *Samma-p, padhāna*, right exertion or striving, same as right effort, the 6th limb of the noble eightfold path.

¹⁶² *Iddhi, pāda*, the 4 bases for spiritual power: focus of will (*chanda*), of effort (*vīriya*), of mind (*citta*), of investigation (*vīmaṃsā*) (D 3:213 = M 1:103 = 2:11; D 3:221; Vbh 216).

¹⁶³ *Indriya*, the 5 spiritual faculties: faith (*saddhā*), effort (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*) (D 2:239, S 5:193; Tha 352).

¹⁶⁴ *Bala*, the 5 spiritual powers: same as *pañc’indriya*, but are unshakable (untouched by their opposites) in the streamwinner (A 5.15) (D 3:239, S 48.43, S 50, A 3:10, Vbh 342).

- (6) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the 7 awakening-factors.¹⁶⁵
- (7) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the noble eightfold path.
—Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks.

Meditation methods

- 14** Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks:
Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of lovingkindness.
- 14.2 Bhikshus, there are in **[82]** this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of compassion.
- 14.3 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of gladness.
- 14.4 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of equanimity.
- 14.5 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of foulness.¹⁶⁶
- 14.6 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the perception of impermanence.
- 14.7 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing.¹⁶⁷
- Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks.

¹⁶⁵ See §§30-36.

¹⁶⁶ “The cultivation of foulness,” *asubha, bhāvanā*, or “meditation on the foulness,” ie the contemplation on the 31 (Comy, 32) parts of the body. In the Suttas, this practice is called *asubha, saññā* (perception of foulness), as in **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 10,10/1:57). In the Comys, *asubha, nimitta* (the sign of foulness) refers to one or other of the 10 foul objects, ie a corpse in one of the 10 stages of bodily decomposition (Vism 6.1-11/178 f). Sometimes (eg Vism 8.2) “mindfulness regarding the body” (*kāya, gatā, sati*) is used here. Sometimes the term “perception of foulness” (*paṭik-kula, saññā*) is used here, but it specifically refers to the foulness of food (D 3:289, 291; S 5:132; A 4:49). In fact, *kāya, -gata, sati* is a general term denoting a range of practices based on the perception of the impermanence of the physical body. See BDict: kāya-gatā-sati.

¹⁶⁷ Comy explains the reason why of all the meditation methods listed, only the breath meditation is expounded in full: this is because a large number of the monks take it as their meditation practice (MA 4:139). It should also be added that the breath meditation had been the key meditation in the Buddha’s own spiritual life. The first record we have of his meditation experience was breath meditation when he was a child of 7, and on the night of his awakening, too, he used the breath meditation (MA 2:291). See **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,17.31-44/1:242-249), SD 1.12.

I. THE CULTIVATION OF THE MINDFULNESS OF THE IN-AND-OUT-BREATHING

Preamble: The preliminary stages of the practice

15 (I) Bhikshus, when **the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing**¹⁶⁸ is cultivated and often developed, it is of great fruit and great benefit.¹⁶⁹ [§§15-23]

(II) When the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing is cultivated and often developed, it brings **the 4 focuses of mindfulness** to perfection. [§§24-28]

(III) When the 4 focuses of mindfulness are cultivated and often developed, they bring **the 7 awakening-factors** to perfection. [§§29-41]

(IV) When the 7 awakening-factors are cultivated and often developed, they bring **true knowledge and liberation** to perfection. [§§42-44]

16 And how, bhikshus, is the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing developed, and how is it often cultivated so that it is of great fruit and great benefit?¹⁷⁰

Physical preparation

17 Here, bhikshus, a monk¹⁷¹ who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty abode,¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ "In-and-out-breathing" *ānāpāna*. The Skt word for "breath" is *prāṇa* (Pali *pāṇa*), which also refers to "life-force" (Chin qi). Its Greek cognate is *pneuma*, from which we get "pneumatic," "pneumonia," etc. Another Indian word for breath is *āna*, as found in the dvandva *ānāpāna*, usually rendered as "in and out breath," sometimes used interchangeably as "out and in breath." The word *ānā* has the Latin cognate of *anima* (breath, soul) as found in such English words as "animal," "animated," etc. The Paṭisambhidā, magga Comy say: "*Āna* is air going inwards; *apāna* is air going outwards. Some, however, say it is the other way around" (PmA:Ce 320). See (2).

¹⁶⁹ §§15-23. See **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62,5/1:420).

¹⁷⁰ See M:ÑB, 2nd ed 2001:1190 f nn140-142. This section is identical to that of **Sati'paṭṭhāna S** (M 10,4) except for the similes in the latter. The whole section on the Mindfulness of the Breath (M 118.16-22) here is identical to that of **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62,25-29/1:425-427). The Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S ends by stating that breath meditation benefits one in that "even the final in-breaths and out-breaths are known as they cease, not unknown" (M 62,30), that is, the practitioner dies with a calm and clear mind.

¹⁷¹ DA on **Mahā Sati'paṭṭhāna S** with the identical context here says that "monk" (*bhikkhu*) indicates "whoever undertakes that practice ... is here comprised under the term *bhikkhu*." See Dh 142; also Dh 362, 260-270. Cf **Bhikkhu Vagga** (ch 25) and **Brāhmaṇa Vagga** (ch 26) of Dh.

¹⁷² This stock of 3 places (a forest, *arañña*; the foot of a tree, *rukkha,mūla*; an empty abode, *suññ'āgāra*) conducive to meditation are at **D** 2:291; **M** 1:56, 297, 398, 425, 2:263, 3:82, 89, 4:297; **S** 5:311, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 323, 329, 336; **A** 1:147, 148, 149, 3:92, 100, 4:437, 5:109, 110, 111; **Pm** 1:175, 2:36. **Pavevika Sutta** (A 3.92) mentions 7 places: a forest, the foot of a tree, a cemetery, a forest path [a remote forest], the open air, a heap of straw, a thatched shelter (*araññaṃ rukkha,mūlaṃ susānaṃ vana,pantham* [vl *vana,pattham*] *abbhokāsaṃ palāla,puñjaṃ bhusāgāraṃ*, A 3.92/-1:241 = SD 44.2). **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2), probably a very ancient account, gives 9 places suitable for meditation, and the spiritual preparation for living in such places, thus: "Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue, this aggregate of noble sense-restraint, this aggregate of noble mindfulness and full awareness, and this aggregate of noble contentment, he resorts to a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a gorge, a hillside cave, a cemetery, a remote forest [jungle grove], the open air, a heap of straw" (*so iminā ca ariyena sīla-k,khandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya,samvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati,sampajaññaṃ samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhitāya samannāgato vivittarṃ senāsanaṃ bhajati, araññaṃ rukkha,mūlaṃ pabbataṃ kandaraṃ giri,guhaṃ susānaṃ vana,pattham* *abbhokāsaṃ palāla,puñjaṃ*, D 2,67/1:71 = SD 8.10; V 2:146; M 3:3; A 2:210. These are def at DA 209-210, VbhA 366 f. The oldest reference to an ideal meditation spot is in **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26) and **Saṅgārava S**

sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.¹⁷³
17.2 —Mindfully¹⁷⁴ indeed he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out.¹⁷⁵

SYNOPSIS: THE 16 ASPECTS

A. The 1st tetrad: Contemplating the body

- 18** (1) Breathing *in long* [deep],¹⁷⁶ he understands, 'I breathe in long [Long in-breath]';¹⁷⁷
Or, breathing *out long* [deep], he understands, 'I breathe out long [Long out-breath]';¹⁷⁸
(2) Or, breathing *in short*, he understands, 'I breathe in short [Short in-breath]';¹⁷⁹
Or, breathing *out short*, he understands, 'I breathe out short [Short out-breath]';¹⁸⁰
(3) He trains himself thus: 'Experiencing **the whole body** (of breath), I will breathe *in*';¹⁸¹
He trains himself thus: 'Experiencing the whole body (of breath), I will breathe *out*';¹⁸²
(4) He trains himself thus: '**Calming the bodily formation** (of breath), I will breathe *in*';¹⁸³
He trains himself thus: 'Calming the bodily formation (of breath), I will breathe *out*';¹⁸⁴

(M 100): "still in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I walked by stages through Magadha until eventually I arrived at Senānigama near Uruvelā. There I saw an agreeable spot, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. I sat down there thinking: 'This is conducive for spiritual striving.'" (M 26,17/1:167 = 100,13/2:212).

¹⁷³ *Parimukhaṃ*, lit "around the mouth," here always used idiomatically and as an adverb, meaning "in front": so U Thittila (Vbh:T 319, 328), Walshe (D:W 1995:335), Soma Thera (1998:42 f digital ed), and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001:527). See (2.3.3.3) above.

¹⁷⁴ Ce Se Ke PTS *sato*.

¹⁷⁵ *So sato'va assasati sato passasati*. Cf the sentence for the Buddha's own breath meditation, where *va* or *eva* is omitted, in **Icchā,naṅgala S** (S 54.11,4), SD 44.9.

¹⁷⁶ The tr here is idiomatic. On these 4 tetrads and 16 aspects, see Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:133-136. See (2.3.1.2).

¹⁷⁷ *Dīghaṃ vā assasanto, dīghaṃ assasāmīti pajānāti*. I have rendered these important sentences and those of the first 2 ("noting") tetrads using very short sentences (not grammatically complete sentences) to reflect a "bare noting" (denoted by *pajānāti*) that should occur in meditation whose purpose is mental focus. Only the steps 1-4 are noted by *pajānāti* (he understands or knows); the rest (5-16) are *sikkhati* (he trains) or "training" aspects (ie one has to put in more regulated effort), "I will breathe in ... out," (*assasissāmi ... passasissāmi*). In the breath, see (2.1). See important n on "mental noting" [3].

¹⁷⁸ *Dīghaṃ vā passasanto, dīghaṃ passasāmīti pajānāti*. [4.4.1.1]

¹⁷⁹ *Rassaṃ vā assasanto, rassaṃ assasāmīti pajānāti*. [4.4.1.1]

¹⁸⁰ *Rassaṃ vā passasanto, rassaṃ passasāmīti pajānāti*. In practical terms, focusing on the first 2 factors of this tetrad, that is maintaining our undivided focus on the breath or one's conception of it can lead to dhyana. However, in **(Pabbateyyā) Gāvī S**, the Buddha warns Moggallāna not to go into the 2nd dhyana until he has thoroughly mastered the 1st dhyana (A 9.35/4:418 f qu at Vism 153 f). [4.4.1.2].

¹⁸¹ *Sabba,kāya,paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.1.3 f]

¹⁸² *Sabba,kāya,paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*. "Experiencing the whole body (of breath)," *sabba,kāya,paṭisaṃvedī*. MA glosses *sabba,kāya* as "the whole body of breath," ie, its 3 phases of each in-breath and out-breath through its 3 phases of beginning, middle and end. [4.4.1.3 f].

¹⁸³ *Passambhayaṃ kāya,saṅkhāraṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*. "The bodily formation," *kāya,saṅkhāra*. The bodily formation is the in-and-out-breathing itself (M 44,13/1:301; S 41.6/4:293,15: *assāsa,passāsa kāya,saṅkhāro*). [4.4.1.5]

¹⁸⁴ *Passambhayaṃ kāya,saṅkhāraṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*. At this point even after the breath has been calmed down but we still do not feel zest (*pīti*) or the breath's radiance (the "beautiful breath"), then, we should direct our attention to wilfully (but gently) arouse it: see (4.4.1.5).

B. The 2nd tetrad: Contemplating feelings

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|----|-----------------------------|---|---|
| 19 | (5) He trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing zest [joy], | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ¹⁸⁵ |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing zest [joy], | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ¹⁸⁶ |
| | (6) He trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing happiness , | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ¹⁸⁷ [83] |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing happiness, | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ¹⁸⁸ |
| | (7) He trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing the mental formations , ¹⁸⁹ | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing the mental formations, | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ¹⁹⁰ |
| | (8) He trains himself thus: | ‘ Calming the mental formations , | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ¹⁹¹ |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Calming the mental formations, | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ¹⁹² |

C. The 3rd tetrad: Contemplating the mind

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|----|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 20 | (9) He trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing the mind , | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ¹⁹³ |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing the mind, | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ¹⁹⁴ |
| | (10) He trains himself thus: | ‘ Gladdening the mind , | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ¹⁹⁵ |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Gladdening the mind, | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ¹⁹⁶ |
| | (11) He trains himself thus: | ‘ Concentrating the mind , | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ¹⁹⁷ |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Concentrating the mind, | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ¹⁹⁸ |
| | (12) He trains himself thus: | ‘ Freeing the mind , | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ¹⁹⁹ |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Freeing the mind, | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ²⁰⁰ |

¹⁸⁵ *Pīti, paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati*. “Zest,” *pīti*. Sometimes tr as “rapture,” but “zest” is closer to evoking a more subtle yet enthusing nature of *pīti*. We experience zest in 2 ways: by attaining either the 1st or 2nd dhyana in which zest is present, we experience it in the mode of calm (*samatha*); or, by emerging from that dhyana and reflecting that zest is subject to destruction, we experience zest by way of insight (*vipassanā*). Psychologically, *pīti* is a kind of “joyful interest,” as such may be associated with wholesome, unwholesome or neutral states (BDict: *pīti*). Zest belongs to the formation group (*saṅkhāra-k, khandha*) while happiness (*sukha*) belongs to the feeling group (*vedanā-k, khandha*). Zest is compared to when a thirsty man lost in the desert finds water; happiness (*sukha*) is what he feels when he is drinking the water. See Vism 4.94 ff. [4.4.2.1]

¹⁸⁶ *Pīti, paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.2.2].

¹⁸⁷ *Sukha, paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.2.2]

¹⁸⁸ *Sukha, paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.2.2].

¹⁸⁹ Or, “mental functions.” On *kaya, saṅkhāra*, see **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,14); see (4.4.2.3).

¹⁹⁰ *Citta, saṅkhāra, paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.2.3-5].

¹⁹¹ *Passambhayam citta, saṅkhāraṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*. “Calming the mental formations [mental functions],” *passambhayam citta, saṅkhāraṃ*. [4.4.2.6].

¹⁹² *Passambhayam citta, saṅkhāraṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*.

¹⁹³ *Citta, paṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati*. “Experiencing the mind,” *citta, paṭisaṃvedī*. Here, it refers to the 4 dhyanas. See (2.3.3.1-3).

¹⁹⁴ *Citta, paṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.3.1-3]

¹⁹⁵ *Abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*. “Gladdening the mind” (*abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ*), ie refining the meditation sign. See (4.4.3.4).

¹⁹⁶ *Abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.3.4 f]

¹⁹⁷ *Samādahaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.3.6]

¹⁹⁸ *Samādahaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*. “Concentrating the mind” (*samādahaṃ cittaṃ*), ie, sustaining the meditation sign (*nimitta*). See (4.4.3.6).

¹⁹⁹ *Vimocayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*. “Freeing the mind” (*vimocayaṃ cittaṃ*). See (4.4.3.7).

²⁰⁰ *Vimocayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.3.7]

D. The 4th tetrad: Contemplating dharmas²⁰¹

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|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 21 (13) He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating impermanence , | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ²⁰² |
| He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating impermanence, | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ²⁰³ |
| (14) He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating fading away (of lust), | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ²⁰⁴ |
| He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating fading away (of lust), | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ²⁰⁵ |
| (15) He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating cessation (of suffering), | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ²⁰⁶ |
| He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating cessation (of suffering), | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’; ²⁰⁷ |
| (16) He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating letting go ²⁰⁸ (of defilements), | I will breathe <i>in</i> ’; ²⁰⁹ |
| He trains himself thus: | ‘Contemplating letting go (of defilements), | I will breathe <i>out</i> ’. ²¹⁰ |

22 Bhikshus, this is how the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing, when developed, often cultivated, is of great fruit and great benefit.

II. THE PERFECTION OF THE 4 FOCUSES OF MINDFULNESS

23 And how, bhikshus, is the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing developed, often cultivated, to bring the 4 focuses of mindfulness to perfection?²¹¹

(A) Contemplating the body

- 24 Bhikshus, a monk,
- | | |
|--|--|
| (1) when breathing in long, he understands, | ‘I breathe in long [Long in-breath]’; ²¹² |
| or, when he is breathing out long, he understands, | ‘I breathe out long [Long out-breath]’; |
| (2) or, when he is breathing in short, he understands, | ‘I breathe in short [Short in-breath]’; |
| or, when he is breathing out short, he understands, | ‘I breathe out short [Short out-breath]’; |
| (3) when he trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing the whole body, I will breathe in’; |

²⁰¹ These last 4 aspects that is the 4th tetrad relate to the meditator who has just emerged from the dhyana. The first thing we should do then is to review that state: “What was that?” “How did that arise?” “How do I feel?” “Why do I feel that way?” “What have I been doing all this time?” “What worked and what failed?” “What was the result of the meditation?” “Why is it happy?” All such reflections give rise to deep insight. Having reflected thus, we either take up *satipaṭṭhāna* (the 4 focuses of mindfulness) or just go directly to the last 4 aspects of breath meditation (as taught here). We have any one of these 4 aspects, (13)-(16), to contemplate on after emerging from dhyana. See SD 13.1 (5D.4). See also Brahmavaṃso 1999; 2002:81-85).

²⁰² *Aniccânupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati*. “Contemplating impermanence,” *aniccânupassī*, ie contemplating the 5 aggregates as impermanent because they undergo rise, fall and change, or momentary dissolution. See (4.4.4.1).

²⁰³ *Aniccânupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.4.1 f]

²⁰⁴ *Virāgânupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati*. “Contemplating fading away,” *virāgânupassī*.“ See (4.4.4.3).

²⁰⁵ *Virāgânupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.4.3]

²⁰⁶ *Nirodhânupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.4.4].

²⁰⁷ *Nirodhânupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.4.4]

²⁰⁸ Alt tr: “relinquishment.”

²⁰⁹ *Paṭinissaggânupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati*. “Contemplating relinquishment [letting go],” *paṭinissaggânupassī*, ie the giving up (*pariccāga*) or abandoning (*pahāna*) of defilements through insight and the entering into (*pakkhandana*) nirvana by attaining the path. [4.4.4.5].

²¹⁰ *Paṭinissaggânupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati*. [4.4.4.5 f].

²¹¹ “Bring ... to perfection,” PTS *paripūreti*.

²¹² See §18(1-2) n.

- when he trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the whole body, I will breathe out’;
 (4) when he trains himself thus: ‘Calming the bodily formation (of breath), I will breathe in’;²¹³
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Calming the bodily formation (of breath), I will breathe out’;
 24.2 —then, bhikshus, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful,²¹⁴ the monk dwells **contemplating the body in the body**,²¹⁵ removing²¹⁶ covetousness and displeasure²¹⁷ for the world.²¹⁸
 24.3 Bhikshus, this in-and-out-breathing is a certain body amongst the bodies,²¹⁹ I say.

²¹³ Kāya, saṅkhāra, see §18(4) n.

²¹⁴ *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassaṃ* here is essentially synonymous with *vigatābhijjho vigata, vyāpādo asammūho sampajāno patissato* mentioned in connection with the 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) (**Kesa, puttiyā S**, A 3.65, 15.1/1:192). Their application, however, differ: the former points to the result of meditation, while the latter is a part of the meditation process itself. On *sampajāno satimā*, see *Vism* 4.174/163 which explains that full awareness (*sampajañña*) has the characteristic of non-confusion; its function is to investigate and manifested as scrutiny. Mindfulness (*sati*) has the characteristic of remembering. Its function is not to forget and is manifested as guarding. *Sampajāno* is also tr as “clearly comprehending,” “fully understanding” (see M:ÑB 2001 n147).

²¹⁵ “Contemplating the body in the body,” *kāye kāyānupassī*, ie “one who contemplates the body as the body”; §25 “contemplating feeling in the feeling,” §26 “contemplating mind in the mind, and §27 “contemplating dharma in the dharma.” In each case, they are not to be seen as “This is mine” (*etam mama*) (which arises through craving, *taṇhā*), or as “This I am” (*eso’ham asmi*) (due to conceit, *māna*), or as “This is my self” (*eso me attā*) (due to wrong view, *ditṭhi*) (**Anattā Lakkhaṇa S**, S 3:68 @ SD 1.2). In short, such experiences are not “beliefs” but direct experiences of reality. See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f. For detailed studies, see **I: The nature of identity**, SD 19.1; **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a; **Mine: The nature of craving**, SD 19.3.

²¹⁶ *Vineyya*, this means that the 5 hindrances [2.3.3.7] have to be abandoned prior to practising *satipaṭṭhāna*. This is because the hindrances, in the form of mental impurities (*cetaso upakkilesa*), weaken wisdom (*paññāya dubbālī, karaṇe*) (D 2:83, 3:49, 101, A 2:211, 3:93, 100, 386 f, Vbh 245, 256). In **Naḷaka, pāna S** (M 68 @ SD 37.4), the Buddha tells Anuruddha, “While [a son of good family] still does not attain joy [zest] and happiness on account of being secluded from sensual pleasures and secluded from unwholesome states, or some other state that is more peaceful than that, covetousness [and the other four hindrances] will invade his mind and remain ...” (M 68,6.2/1:463).

²¹⁷ “Covetousness and displeasure,” *abhijjhā, domanassaṃ*, which Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders as “hankering and fretting for the world”; alt tr “covetousness and displeasure” or “longing and loathing.” MA says that “covetousness and displeasure” here signify the first two hindrances—sensual desire and ill will—principal hindrances to be overcome for the practice to succeed. They thus represent the contemplation of dharmas, which begins with the 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*: sensual lust, desire, ill will, restless and worry, sloth and torpor, doubt): see **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55 @ SD 3.12). Cf M 1:274/39.13; see also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,13) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,36) on how to deal with the hindrances in one’s meditation. The monk effects the abandoning of the hindrances by the contemplations of impermanence, fading away (of lust), cessation (of suffering) and letting go (of defilements), and thus comes to look upon the object with equanimity. On *abhijjhā, domanassa*, there is an interesting related passage from **Pubba or Pubb’eva Sambodha S**: “Bhikshus, before my awakening, when I was still a bodhisattva, this thought occurred to me ... ‘Whatever physical joy and mental joy (*sukha, somanassa*) there is in the world, that is the gratification (*assāda*) in the world; that the world is impermanent, suffering and of the nature to change, that is the wretchedness (*ādinava*) in the world—the removal and abandoning of desire and lust for the world, that is the escape from the world.’” (A 3.101/1:258, pointed out to me by Robert Eddison). My understanding here regarding the naming of the first two mental hindrances as *abhijjhā, domanassa* is to show that with their elimination the other hindrances are eliminated, too.

²¹⁸ “World” (*loka*). **The Vibhaṅga** says: “This very body is the world, and the 5 aggregates of clinging (ie form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) is the world—this is called the world.” (Vbh 195). However, in his amplified tr at Vbh 105, U Thittila has “world (ie, in ideational objects)” as *dhammā*, mental objects (Vibh:T 139).

²¹⁹ “A certain body amongst the bodies,” *kāyesu kāy’aññatara*. Nyanaponika: “one of the bodily processes” (1962: 167). **SA** on **Kimbila S** (S 54.10 @ SD 16.11): “I call it the wind body (*vāyo, kāya*) among the bodies of the 4 elements. Or else, it is a ‘certain kind of body’ because it is included in the tactile base amongst the various components of the form body” (SA 3:271). This sentence is missing from Thich Nhat Hanh, 1990. The breath is “a body” because it is a part of the “body of air” (*vāyo, kāya*) or the wind element (*vāyo dhātu*), one of the 4 primary elements (*mahā, bhūta*) making up the body (and everything else). It is included in the base of tangibles among bodily phenomena because the

24.4 Therefore, bhikshus, on that occasion, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells contemplating the body in the body,²²⁰ *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.*

(B) Contemplating feelings [Entry into dhyana]

25 Bhikshus, when a monk [84]

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (5) trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing zest [joy], | I will breathe in’; ²²¹ |
| when he trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing zest [joy], | I will breathe out’; |
| (6) when he trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing happiness, | I will breathe in’; |
| when he trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing happiness, | I will breathe out’; |
| (7) when he trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing the mental formations, | I will breathe in’; ²²² |
| when he trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing the mental formations, | I will breathe out’; |
| (8) when he trains himself thus: | ‘Calming the mental formations, | I will breathe in’; |
| when he trains himself thus: | ‘Calming the mental formations, | I will breathe out’; |

25.2 —then, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating feeling in the feeling**,²²³ *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.*

25.3 Bhikshus, full attention²²⁴ to the in-and-out-breathing²²⁵ is a certain feeling amongst the feelings,²²⁶ I say .

25.4 Therefore, bhikshus, on that occasion, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells contemplating feeling in the feeling, *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.*

object of attention is the touch sensation of the breath entering and exiting the nostrils, that is, it is included in the sense of touch (or “tangible object base,” *phoṭṭabb’āyatana*). (M:ÑB 2002 n1122). See MA 4:140. Cf §18(3) n & esp (3.1.3). See discussion in **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**, SD 13.1 (3.4).

²²⁰ DA (on Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S) explains why “body” is used twice here: “For determining the object and isolating it,” which Ñānamoli paraphrases as “This means not confusing, during meditation, body with feeling, mind, etc. The body is contemplated just as body, feeling just as feeling, etc.” (2001 n138 on Satipaṭṭhāna S).

²²¹ “Zest,” *pīti*, see §19(5)n.

²²² Or, “Mental functions,” *citta,saṅkhāra*, see §19(7)n.

²²³ “Contemplating feeling in the feeling,” *vedanāsu vedanā’nupassī*, ie “one who contemplates feeling as feeling.” See §24n.

²²⁴ MA explains that full (or “bare”) attention (*sādhuka manasikāra*) is not itself actually feeling, but is spoken of as such only figuratively. In the 2nd tetrad, the actual feeling is the happiness mentioned in the 2nd clause and also the feeling connoted by the expression “mental formations” in the 3rd and 4th clauses.

²²⁵ “Full attention to the in-and-out-breathing” (*assāsa,passāsaṃ sādhukaṃ manasikāraṃ*). Comy: Attention is not really pleasant feeling, but this is a heading of the teaching. In this tetrad, in the 1st verse (*pada*) feeling is alluded to under the heading of ‘rapture’; in the 2nd verse, it is directly found as ‘happiness.’ In 3rd and 4th verses, feeling is included in the mental formation [*saññā ca vedanā ca citta,saṅkhāro*, S 4:293].” (SA 3:271)

²²⁶ “A certain feeling amongst the feelings,” *vedanāsu vedanā’nīṇatara*. There are 3 types of feelings: pleasant (*su-kha*), unpleasant (*dukkha*) and neutral (*adukkham-asukha*)—we contemplate on any of these as each arises. Cf §24 n on “a certain body amongst the bodies.” Comy on Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S says that it is not easy to be mindful of a neutral feeling, and that it should be best approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Comy illustrates with the example of a hunter seeing tracks before and after a rock, thereby inferring the track of an animal (MA 1:277). **Dhamma,saṅgaṇī** says that only the sense of touch is accompanied by pain or pleasure, while feelings arising at the other 4 sense-doors are invariably neutral (Dhs 139-145; Abhds 2). The suttas, however, speak of pleasant and unpleasant sights, sounds, smells, and tastes, that in turn condition the arising of corresponding feelings of pleasure or displeasure (S 4:115, 119, 125, 126). “This Abhidhammic presentation offers an intriguing perspective on contemplation of feeling, since it invites an inquiry into the degree to which an experience of delight or displeasure in regard to sight, sound, smell or taste is simply the outcome of one’s own mental evaluation” (Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:171). See **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**, SD 13.1 (3.4). See esp (3.1.3).

(C) Contemplating the mind

26 Bhikshus,

- (9) when a monk trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the mind, I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the mind, I will breathe out’;
 (10) when he trains himself thus: ‘Gladdening the mind, I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Gladdening the mind, I will breathe out’;
 (11) when he trains himself thus: ‘Concentrating the mind, I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Concentrating the mind, I will breathe out’;
 (12) when he trains himself thus: ‘Freeing the mind, I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Freeing the mind, I will breathe out’; —

26.2 then, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating the mind in the mind**,²²⁷ *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world*.

26.3 I do not say, bhikshus, that there is the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing for one who is forgetful [confused], who lacks clear understanding.²²⁸

26.4 Therefore, bhikshus, on that occasion, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells contemplating mind in the mind, *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world*.

(D) Contemplating dharmas [Emerging from dhyana]

27 Bhikshus,

- (13) when a monk trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe out’;
 (14) when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating fading away (of lust),²²⁹ I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating fading away (of lust), I will breathe out’;
 (15) when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating cessation (of suffering),²³⁰ I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating cessation (of suffering), I will breathe out’;
 (16) when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating letting go (of defilements), I will breathe in’;²³¹
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating letting go (of defilements), I will breathe out’;

27.2 —then, bhikshus, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating dharmas in the dharmas**,²³² *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world*.

27.3 Having seen with wisdom the abandonment of covetousness and displeasure, **[85] he closely looks on with equanimity**.²³³

²²⁷ “Contemplating the mind in the mind.” See §24n. MA says that although the meditator takes as his object the sign of the in-and-out-breathing, he is said to be “contemplating mind in the mind” because he maintains his mind on the object by arousing mindfulness and full understanding, two factors of mind.

²²⁸ *Nāham bhikkhave muṭṭha-s, satissa asampajānassa ānāpāna.sati, bhavanāṃ vādāmi.*

²²⁹ “Fading away,” *virāga*, also translated as “dispassion” (see §42).

²³⁰ “Cessation,” *nirodha*: see §21 (15).

²³¹ See §21 (16) n.

²³² “Dharmas” (*dharmā*) here refers to “mind-objects” or “the nature of things” that arises in the mind. See **Sati-paṭṭhāna S** (M 10), SD 10.1 (5D).

²³³ Saṃyutta Comy on **Kimbila S** (S 54.10), SD 16.11: Here “**covetousness**” (*abhijjhā*) is only the hindrance of sensual lust; by “**displeasure**” (*domanassa*) is meant the hindrance of ill will.* This tetrad is stated by way of insight only. These two hindrances are the first of the 5 hindrances [2.3.37], the first section in the contemplation of dharmas. Thus he says this to show the beginning of the contemplation of dharmas. By “abandonment” (*pahānaṃ*) is meant the knowledge that effects abandoning, eg, one abandons the perception of permanence by the contemplation of impermanence. By the words “having seen with wisdom” (*paññāya divā*), he shows the sequence of insights, thus: “With one

27.4 Therefore, bhikshus, on that occasion, the monk dwells exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, contemplating dharmas in the dharmas, *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world*.

28 Bhikshus, when the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing is thus cultivated, thus often developed, it brings **the 4 focuses of mindfulness** to perfection.

III. PERFECTION OF THE 7 AWAKENING-FACTORS

29 And how, bhikshus, are **the 4 focuses of mindfulness** cultivated and often developed to bring the 7 awakening-factors to perfection?²³⁴

(A) Contemplating the body

30 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating the body in the body**,²³⁵ then *unconfused*²³⁶ mindfulness is established in him.

(1) Bhikshus, when unconfused mindfulness is established in a monk, then **the awakening-factor of mindfulness** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of mindfulness, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the mindfulness awakening-factor is perfected.

31 (2) Living thus mindful, he investigates and examines²³⁷ that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it.

Bhikshus, when, a monk, living thus mindful, investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, then **the awakening-factor of dharma-investigation**²³⁸ is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of dharma-investigation, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the dharma-investigation awakening-factor is perfected in him.

insight knowledge, he sees the knowledge of abandonment, that is, the knowledges of impermanence, dispassion, ending and letting go; and that, too, he sees by yet another.” “He closely looks on with equanimity” (*sādhukam ajjhupekkhitā hoti*): one is said to look on with equanimity when one has fare along the path, and when one has established oneness (of mind). “Looking on with equanimity” (*ajjhupekkhanā*) can also refer to the conascent mental states (in meditation) or to the object. Here, the looking on at the object is intended. (SA 3:272 f). [*Although “**covetousness and displeasure**” is taken by the Sutta’s Comy to refer to only the first two mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*), sensual lust and ill will, in the early Suttas, the dvandva is clearly a synecdoche (or short form) for all the 5 hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇā*) [2.3.3.7] themselves, whose removal leads to mindfulness (*sati*), mental concentration (*samādhi*) and dhyana (*jhāna*). See SD 13.1 (4.2.5).]

²³⁴ This section (M 118,29-40/3:85-87) is a pericope = **Sīla S**, S 5:67-70 = **Ānanda S 1**, S 331-333 = **Ānanda S 2**, S 334 f. The closing section (M 118,41-44/3:88) is also found in the 2 **Ānanda Ss** (S 54.13-14/S 333, 335).

²³⁵ “Contemplating the body in the body.” See §24n.

²³⁶ Be Ce Ee *asammuttā*; Se Ke *appamattā*.

²³⁷ Thus Ke Ce Se PTS. Be *pavicarati*.

²³⁸ *Dhamma, vicaya*. Sometimes this is taken as “investigation of the teaching,” but the meaning here actually is “investigation of bodily and mental phenomena” (Walshe 1995 n690). This is the key awakening-factor, ie, “awakening” itself, while the others are “factors” that help this awakening to be realized (Nm 456). **Milinda, pañha** compares *dhamma, vicaya sambojhaṅga* to a sword, which in order to cut needs the use of the hands (representing the other 5 factors) (Miln 83): see Gethin 2001:185. On the two applications of *dhamma, vicaya*—in the teaching and in the meditation contexts—see (**Bojjhaṅga**) **Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.1(1).

32 (3) In one who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused.

Bhikshus, when tireless effort is aroused in a monk who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused, then **the awakening-factor of effort**²³⁹ is aroused in him.

Then, too, the monk cultivates that awakening-factor of effort, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the effort awakening-factor is perfected in him.

33 (4) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual²⁴⁰ zest [joy] arises.

Bhikshus, when spiritual zest arises **[86]** in a monk who has aroused effort, then **the awakening-factor of zest** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of zest, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the zest awakening-factor is perfected in him.

34 (5) In one whose mind is zestful, the (mental) body is tranquil.²⁴¹

Bhikshus, when the body is tranquil in a monk who is zestful, then **the awakening-factor of tranquillity** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of tranquillity and at the same time, by cultivating it, the tranquillity awakening-factor is perfected in him.

35 (6) In one whose body is tranquil and happy, the mind becomes concentrated.

Bhikshus, when the mind becomes concentrated in a monk whose body is tranquil and happy, then **the awakening-factor of concentration** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of concentration, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the concentration awakening-factor is perfected in him.

36 (7) He closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated.

Bhikshus, when the monk closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated then **the awakening-factor of equanimity** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of equanimity, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the equanimity awakening-factor is perfected in him.²⁴²

²³⁹ *Vīriya sambojjhaṅga*. This is identical to the 4 right efforts of the noble eightfold path.

²⁴⁰ *Nirāmisa*, “not of the flesh,” here meaning ‘non-carnal’ or ‘spiritual’, which according to Comy refers to the six zestful feelings connected with the sense-doors, but not dependent on sense-desire (MA 1:279). Its opp is *s’āmisa* = *sa-āmisa*, “sensual,” lit “with flesh,” thus connoting some sense of the carnal, ie connected to the pleasures of the five senses (*kāma, guṇā*) (S 4:235, 236). In **Sal-āyatana, vibhaṅga S** (M 137), *s’āmisa* and *nirāmisa* refer to the household life and to the renounced life respectively. Elsewhere, as in **Suddhika Nirāmisa S** (S 36.29), *nirāmisa pīti*, *nirāmisa sukha* and *nirāmisa upekkhā* are experienced in the dhyanas (S 36.29.8-15/4:236 f). See D 2:298; M 1:59; S 4:235, 236 (x2); A 1:81, 3:412l Pm 2:233. See also Sue Hamilton, *Identity and Experience*, 1996:43 f. On *āmisa* and *nirāmisa*, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,32/1:59) and **Dhamma, dāyāda S** (M 3). See also MA 1:89, 279.

²⁴¹ On the (mental) body (*nāma, kāya*), see SD 10.15 (2.3.2) esp 2.3.2.1.

²⁴² On this *sambojjhaṅga* passage, cf the shorter *nīvaraṇa, pahīna* passage at **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.76/1:73), SD 8.10n for other refs.

(B) Contemplating feelings

37 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating feeling in the feeling**,²⁴³ *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world*, then unconfused mindfulness is established in him.

(1) Bhikshus, when unconfused mindfulness is established in a monk, then **the awakening-factor of mindfulness** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of mindfulness, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the mindfulness awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(2) Living thus mindful, he investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it.

Bhikshus, when, a monk, living thus mindful, investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, then **the awakening-factor of dharma-investigation** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of dharma-investigation, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the dharma-investigation awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(3) In one who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused.

Bhikshus, when tireless effort is aroused in a monk who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused, then **the awakening-factor of effort** is aroused in him.

Then, too, the monk cultivates that awakening-factor of effort, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the effort awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(4) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual²⁴⁴ zest arises.

Bhikshus, when spiritual zest [joy] arises in a monk who has aroused effort, then **the awakening-factor of zest** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of zest, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the zest awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(5) In one whose mind is zestful, the (mental) body is tranquil.

Bhikshus, when the body is tranquil in a monk who is mentally zestful, then **the awakening-factor of tranquillity** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of tranquillity and at the same time, by cultivating it, the tranquillity awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(6) In one whose (mental) body is tranquil and happy, the mind becomes concentrated.

Bhikshus, when the mind becomes concentrated in a monk whose body is tranquil and happy, then **the awakening-factor of concentration** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of concentration, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the concentration awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(7) He closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated.

Bhikshus, when the monk closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated, then **the awakening-factor of equanimity** is aroused in him.

²⁴³ "Contemplating feelings in the feeling." See §24n.

²⁴⁴ *Nirāmisā*, "not of the flesh," here meaning 'non-carnal' or 'spiritual', see above §33(iv) n.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of equanimity, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the equanimity awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(C) Contemplating the mind

38 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating the mind in the mind**,²⁴⁵ *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world*, then unconfused mindfulness is established in him.

(1) Bhikshus, when unconfused mindfulness is established in a monk, then **the awakening-factor of mindfulness** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of mindfulness, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the mindfulness awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(2) Living thus mindful, he investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it.

Bhikshus, when, a monk, living thus mindful, investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, then **the awakening-factor of dharma-investigation** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of dharma-investigation, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the dharma-investigation awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(3) In one who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused.

Bhikshus, when tireless effort is aroused in a monk who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused, then **the awakening-factor of effort** is aroused in him.

Then, too, the monk cultivates that awakening-factor of effort, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the effort awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(4) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual²⁴⁶ zest arises.

Bhikshus, when spiritual zest [joy] arises in a monk who has aroused effort, then **the awakening-factor of zest** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of zest, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the zest awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(5) In one whose mind is zestful, the (mental) body is tranquil.

Bhikshus, when the (mental) body is tranquil in a monk who is mentally zestful, then **the awakening-factor of tranquillity** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of tranquillity and at the same time, by cultivating it, the tranquillity awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(6) In one whose body is tranquil and happy, the mind becomes concentrated.

Bhikshus, when the mind becomes concentrated in a monk whose (mental) body is tranquil and happy, then **the awakening-factor of concentration** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of concentration, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the concentration awakening-factor is perfected in him.

²⁴⁵ "Contemplating the mind in the mind." See §24n & §25n.

²⁴⁶ *Nirāmisā*, "not of the flesh," here meaning 'non-carnal' or 'spiritual', see above §33(iv) n.

(7) He closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated.

Bhikshus, when the monk closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated, then **the awakening-factor of equanimity** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of equanimity, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the equanimity awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(D) Contemplating dharmas

39 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating dharma in the dharma**,²⁴⁷ *removing covetousness and displeasure for the world*, then unconfused mindfulness would be established in him.

(1) Bhikshus, when unconfused mindfulness is established in a monk, then **the awakening-factor of mindfulness** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of mindfulness, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the mindfulness awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(2) Living thus mindful, he investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it.

Bhikshus, when a monk, living thus mindful, investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, then **the awakening-factor of dharma-investigation** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of dharma-investigation, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the dharma-investigation awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(3) In one who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused.

Bhikshus, when tireless effort is aroused in a monk who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, then **the awakening-factor of effort**²⁴⁸ is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of effort, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the effort awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(4) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual²⁴⁹ zest arises.

Bhikshus, when spiritual zest arises in a monk who has aroused then **the awakening-factor of zest** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of zest, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the zest awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(5) In one whose mind is zestful, the (mental) body is tranquil.

Bhikshus, when the (mental) body is tranquil in a monk who is mentally zestful, then **the awakening-factor of tranquillity** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of tranquillity, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the tranquillity awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(6) In one whose body is tranquil and happy, the mind becomes concentrated.

Bhikshus, when the mind becomes concentrated in a monk whose body is tranquil and who is happy, then **the awakening-factor of concentration** is aroused in him.

²⁴⁷ "Contemplating dharmas in the dharma." See §24n.

²⁴⁸ *Vīriya sambodjjaṅga*. See §32n.

²⁴⁹ *Nirāmisā*, See §33(iv) n.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of concentration, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the concentration awakening-factor is perfected in him.

(7) He closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated.

Bhikshus, when the monk closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated, then **the awakening-factor of equanimity** is aroused in him.

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of equanimity, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the equanimity awakening-factor is perfected in him.

40 Bhikshus, when the 4 focuses of mindfulness are thus cultivated, thus often developed, they bring **the 7 awakening-factors** to perfection.²⁵⁰

IV. PERFECTION OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND LIBERATION

Conclusion

[88] 41 And how, bhikshus, are the 7 awakening-factors cultivated and often developed to bring **true knowledge and liberation** to perfection?²⁵¹

42 Here, bhikshus,

(1) a monk cultivates the awakening-factor of mindfulness that is dependent on solitude,²⁵² dependent on fading away (of lust) [dispassion],²⁵³ dependent on cessation (of suffering),²⁵⁴ ripening in letting go (of defilements).²⁵⁵

(2) He cultivates the awakening-factor of dharma-investigation that is dependent on solitude, dependent on fading away (of lust), dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements).

(3) He cultivates the awakening-factor of effort that is dependent on solitude, dependent on fading away (of lust), dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements).

²⁵⁰ MA says that this passage shows that the awakening-factors exist together in each mind-moment in the practice of insight-meditation.

²⁵¹ This closing section (M 118,41-44/3:88) is a pericope = **Ānanda S 1** (S 54.13-14/5:333) = **Ānanda S 2** (S 54.14/-5:335).

²⁵² Here “solitude” (**viveka**) (or seclusion) has a special reference to the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*). This whole phrase, beginning with “dependent on solitude”—*viveka, nissitaṃ virāga, nissitaṃ nirodha, nissitaṃ vossagga, nissitaṃ vossagga, pariṇāmiṃ dhamma, vicaya, sambojjhaṅgaṃ*—is called **the viveka, nissita formula**. See Gethin 2001:162-168. According to **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, there are 5 kinds of “solitude” (*viveka*), ie overcoming of the hindrances [2.3.3.7]: (1) solitude through suppression (*vikkhambhana viveka*); (2) solitude through the substitution of opposite or displacement by opposites (*tad-aṅga viveka*); (3) solitude through cutting off (*samuccheda viveka*); (4) solitude through tranquillization (*paṭipassaddhi viveka*); and (5) solitude through escape (*nissaraṇa viveka*) (Pm 1:27, 2:219-224; Vism 13.12/410, 22.110/693). See also **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (Intro), SD 13.1 §4.2.3.

²⁵³ **Virāga**, also tr as “dispassion.” [2.3.4.3]

²⁵⁴ **Nirodha**, ie, “cessation of suffering.” [2.3.4.4]

²⁵⁵ MA says that there are 2 kinds of letting go or relinquishment (of suffering) (**vossagga**): “giving up” (*pariccāga*), ie the abandonment of defilements, and “entering into” (*pakkhandana*), ie culminating in nirvana. **Gethin** notes that this phrase is not unique to the 7 *bojjhaṅgā*, but is also found in connection with the factors of the noble eightfold path, the *indriyā* and *balā* (2001:162 f). This formula shows that each *bojjhaṅga* is to be developed successively “as dependent on solitude, dispassion [fading away] and cessation” (Gethin 2001:166).

(4) He cultivates the awakening-factor of **zest** that is dependent on solitude, dependent on fading away (of lust), dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements).

(5) He cultivates the awakening-factor of **tranquillity** that is dependent on solitude, dependent on fading away (of lust), dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements).

(6) He cultivates the awakening-factor of **concentration** that is dependent on solitude, dependent on fading away (of lust), dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements).

(7) He cultivates the awakening-factor of **equanimity** that is dependent on solitude, dependent on fading away (of lust), dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements).

43 Bhikshus, when the 7 awakening-factors are thus cultivated, thus often developed, they bring **true knowledge and liberation** to perfection.²⁵⁶

44 This is what the Blessed One said. Satisfied, the monks rejoiced in the Blessed One's word.

— evaṃ —

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²⁵⁶ MA says that the mindfulness that comprehends breathing is mundane. The mundane mindfulness of the breath perfects or fulfills the mundane focuses of mindfulness. The mundane focuses of mindfulness perfect the supramundane awakening-factors, and the supramundane awakening-factors perfect true knowledge and liberation, ie the fruit and nirvana.

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