

Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta

The Discourse on the Mindfulness Regarding the body | M 119/3:88-99

Theme: Satipatthana through watching the body

Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

1 The Satipatthānas suttas

The term *kāya,gatā sati* is usually translated as “the mindfulness directed to the body,” or more simply “the mindful regarding the body.” In the suttas, the term *kāya,gatā sati* includes all the exercises comprising the observing of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) in the **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** (D 22; M 10).¹ Here in the Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta, it is treated separately and in detail. The Commentaries (such as Vism 8.44)² generally limit the term to the meditation on the thirty-two parts of the body [7], here (and in the suttas) called *asubha,saññā*, “the perception of foulness.”

The Saṃyutta has a very short sutta of the same name, but often simply called the **Kāya Sutta** (S 43.1),³ where the Buddha speaks of “the unconditioned and the path leading to the unconditioned”:

SD 12.21.1

Kāya Sutta

The Discourse on the Body | S 43.1/4:359

At Sāvattī.

1 “Bhikshus, I will teach you the unconditioned and the path leading to the unconditioned. Listen, bhikshus, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante!” the monks replied the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

2 “And what, bhikshus, is the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*)?”

The destruction of lust, the destruction of hate, and the destruction of delusion—this is called the unconditioned.

3 And what, bhikshus, is the path leading to the unconditioned?

Mindfulness regarding the body—this is called the path leading to the unconditioned.

4 Thus, bhikshus, I have taught you the unconditioned and the path leading to the unconditioned.

5 Bhikshus, whatever a teacher should do out of compassion for the good of disciples, for the sake of their welfare, it has been done to you by me.

6 These, bhikshus, are the foot of trees;⁴ these are empty abodes [places].⁵ Meditate,⁶ bhikshus! Be not heedless! Regret not later!

This is our instruction to you.”⁷

¹ **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22) = SD 13.2; **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) = SD 13.3.

² Vism 8.44/240.

³ S 43.1/4:359.

⁴ “Those are the foot of trees,” *etāni rukkha,mūlāni*. “Foot” here is an adv, like “bottom,” and as such always singular. Bodhi curiously has “the feet of trees” here (S:B 1372).

⁵ These are the 3 basic places recommended for forest meditation. A long list of secluded dwellings is “a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle grove, the open air, a heap of straw” (D 2.67/1:71) = SD 8.10.67. For details, see §4n below, or **Sati’paṭṭhāna S** (M 10.4b/1:56) = SD 13.3 & n.

⁶ “Meditate!” *jhāyatha*, lit “cultivate *jhāna*” (M 1:45, 118; S 4:133, 4:359, 361, 362, 368, 373; A 3:87, 89, 4:139, 392). Syn *bhāveṭha* (2nd pl). “cultivate!”

⁷ These 2 well known closing paras [§§2-3] are stock: **Sallekha S** (M 8.18/1:46), **Dvedhā,vitakka S** (M 19.27/-1:118), **Āneñja,sappāya S** (M 106.15/2:266 f), **Indriya,bhāvanā S** (M 152.18/3:302) = SD 17.13, (**Nava Purāṇa**) **Kamma S** (S 35.146/4:133) = SD 4.12; **Kāya S** (S 43.1/4:359) = SD12.21.1, all suttas in the same **Asaṅkhata Saṃyutta** (S 43.2-44/4:360-373); **Bhikkhu’upassaya S** (S 47.10/5:157), **Dhamma,vihārī S 1** (A 5.73/3:87), **Dhamma,vihārī S 2** (A 5.74/3:89), **Vinaya,dhara S** (A 7.70.4/4:139), **Araka S** (A 22.70.4/3:139); cf **Mahā Palobhana J** (J 507). The sentence “regret not later” (*mā pacchā vippaṭisārino ahuvattha*), in the second para, also occurs at

The **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**,⁸ the **Ānāpāna,sati Sutta**⁹ and the **Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta**¹⁰ give three of the best known methods of (or approaches to) satipatthana practice. The two **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**¹¹ provide a “traditional” scheme of practice, contemplating progressively, as it were, beginning with watching the body, then feelings, followed by the mind, and finally dharmas. The **Ānāpāna,sati Sutta** uses the watching of the breath (= the body) as the basis for satipatthana practice, watching all satipatthanas as the occasion demands. The **Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta**¹² focusses on the first satipatthana—watching the body—to which all the other three satipatthanas are applied in due course.

The basic pattern of mental focussing is identical in all these suttas. The satipatthanas, as the focusing the mind, keeps away mental distractions—here through the observing of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) [4-17]—and in due course abandons all the mental hindrances (albeit temporarily, by way of suppression or displacement of mental distractions). Dhyana then sets in [18]. With the onset of dhyana, one then emerges from it and reviews (or assess) the satipatthanas in greater clarity and depth. If this is properly done, one then abandons the mental hindrances by cutting them off [29], and so one hits the path to sainthood [42].¹³

2 The Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta and the 1st satipatthana

The whole of the first focus of mindfulness—the observing on the body (*kāyānupassanā*) of the **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**,¹⁴ but without the insight refrain¹⁵—is found in the **Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta** (M 119). The insight refrain of the **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** (but omitted by the **Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta**) is as follows:

- (1) So he dwells contemplating the body in the body internally,¹⁶
 - (2) or, contemplating the body in the body externally,
 - (3) or, contemplating the body in the body both internally and externally;
 - (4) or, he dwells contemplating states that arise in the body,
 - (5) or, he dwells contemplating states that pass away in the body,
 - (6) or, he dwells contemplating states that arise and pass away in the body.
- Or else, he maintains the mindfulness that ‘There is a body,’ merely for knowing and awareness.
And he dwells independent, not clinging to anything in this world.
And that, bhikshus, is how a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body.

The absence of the insight refrain from the **Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta** can also be interpreted as the lateness of the refrains, which were added to the **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** at a later date. In place of the insight refrain, **Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta** has the following “samadhi refrain” throughout:

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

Tassa evam appamattassa ātāpino pahitatassa viharato ye te gehasitā sara,saṅkappā te pahīyanti, tesam pahānā ajjhattam eva cittam santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodi,hoti samādhiyati.

Mahā,parinibbāna S (D 16.5.19+20/2:147, 16.6.5/2:155 x3, the Buddha’s last words) = **Kusinārā S** (A 4.76/2:79 f); **Devatā S** (A 9.19/4:392). For comy, see MA 1:195 f, SA 3:111 f, 266 f.

⁸ **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22) = SD 13.2; **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) = SD 13.3.

⁹ M 118 = SD 7.13.

¹⁰ See “The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas” = SD 13.1(5A1).

¹¹ **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22 = SD 13.2); **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10 = SD 13.3).

¹² The **Kāya,gatā,sati S** has a Madhyama Āgama (Chinese tr) version, MĀ 81 = T1.554.

¹³ See “The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas” = SD 13.1(6c).

¹⁴ **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.2-10 = SD 13.2); **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.4-30 = SD 13.3).

¹⁵ On the “insight refrain” (also called “satipatthana refrain”), see SD 13.1(5A.1) & Analayo 2003:92-116 (ch 5).

¹⁶ “Internally...” See Intro (3.7) above.

Evam pi bhikkhave bhikkhu kāya,gatā satim bhāveti.

A detailed commentary on the section of the observing of the body [4-17] is given in **the Vibhaṅga Commentary** (VbhA 223-263).

3 Comparative study

3.1 FOCUS ON SAMADHI. The replacement of the “insight refrain” with the “samadhi refrain” in the Kāya,gatā.sati Sutta shows a shift in emphasis from insight (as in the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas) to samadhi. The shift is again found in the dhyanas passages [18-21], which are identical to those in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2),¹⁷ **the Mahā Assapura Sutta** (M 39)¹⁸ and **the Mahā Sakuludāyī Sutta** (M 77).¹⁹ The dhyana passages are then followed by the progress through the mindfulness regarding the body, highlighted by the passages on direct knowledges [29-31], and closes by listing ten benefits of the practice [32-43],²⁰ the most important of which is of course, the destruction of the influxes, that is, spiritual liberation [42]. In fact, speaking of the basic importance of the mindfulness regarding the body, Gethin explains:

Thus the Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta consists basically of an alternative treatment of precisely the same set of fourteen activities²¹ that are given in the (*Mahā*) *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* under the heading *kāyānupassanā*. The reason why *kāya-gatā sati* is singled out for extra treatment would seem to be that it is considered the common basis for subsequent development of all mindfulness.

(Gethin 2001:47, cf 52 f)

This list of 14 exercises, around with the Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta centres (and which it has in common with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, is found nowhere else in the Pali Canon, indicating a strong connected between the two suttas. However, there is an important difference in the way the two suttas treat the list of exercises. The Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta omits the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta simile of the skilled turner,²² and which is also not found in both the Kāya,gatā,smṛti Sūtra (Sarvāstivāda) and the Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. Apparently, this simile appears only in the two Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas.

However, the most significant difference between the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna and Kāyagatāsati Suttas is that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, with its repeated refrain on investigating rise and fall, strongly emphasizes vipassana, while the refrain [ie the samadhi refrain] in the Theravāda Kāyagatāsati Sutta says:

“As he abides diligent, ardent, and resolute, his memories and intentions dependent on the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind becomes settled internally, quieted, unified, and brought to samadhi. That is how a develops mindfulness regarding the body.” [4 etc]

The Sarvāstivāda refrain says that diligent practice of this in a secluded place frees the mind from distress, brings samadhi, and brings knowledge according to reality. In both versions, the body contemplation exercises then lead straight to the four jhanas, each of which is also said to be a practice of mindfulness of the body. (Sujato 2005:230)

¹⁷ D 2.75b-82 = 1:73-75.

¹⁸ M 39.15-18/1:276-278.

¹⁹ M 77.25-28/2:15-17.

²⁰ M 119/3:88-99.

²¹ That is, 6 sets of exercises of *kāyānupassanā* common to both **Kāya,gatā.sati S** and Satipaṭṭhāna Ss: (1) the breath meditation, (2) the 4 postures, (3) full awareness, (4) perception of foulness (31 parts of the body), (5) the 4 elements, (6-14) the 9 charnel-ground meditations.

²² D 22.2d//2:291 = M 10.4d/1:56.

3.2 BENEFITS OF THE PRACTICE. After the section on the four dhyanas [18-21], comes the following three sections on the benefits of the practice:

§§22-28 “Progress through the mindfulness regarding the body” (with 6 similes);

§§29-31 “Realization”;

§§32-43 “The benefits of the mindfulness regarding the body.”

There are two sections²³ under the heading, “**progress through the mindfulness regarding the body**” [22-28]: the first section is the statement that this mindful exercise includes all wholesome states that partake of true knowledge, “just as one who has pervaded the great ocean with his mind has also embraced whatever streams there are that flow into the ocean” [22].

The second section (under the same first heading) [23-28] gives a **set of three similes** and their opposites, illustrating whether Māra, the personification of mental defilements, gains an opportunity to hold one’s mind or not:

(a) throwing a heavy stone ball into soft clay [23] / throwing a light ball of string into soft clay [26];

(b) trying to light a fire with a dry sapless stick [24] / trying to light a fire with a wet sappy stick [27];

(c) pouring water into an empty jar [25] / pouring water into a full water jar [28].

This section, however, is missing from the Sarvāstivāda version of the Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta.

The third section, on “**realization**,” says that this mindfulness exercise enables one, through direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), to truly see any phenomena, and illustrates this with three similes:

(a) a brimful pot tipped by a strong man [29b],

(b) a brimful tank whose bund is broken by a strong man [30], and

(c) a chariot harnessed to thoroughbreds, freely driven by a skilled charioteer [31].

This section, however, is missing from the Sarvāstivāda version of the Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta.

Both the samadhi refrain [3a above] and all these six similes concern the overcoming of worldly thoughts leading to the development of mental concentration. The importance of body-observing for the development of samadhi (or *samatha*) is shown in **the Paṭisambhidā,magga** (Pm 1:301).²⁴

The fourth section, on “**the benefits of the mindfulness regarding the body**” [32-43], lists ten benefits when the practice is cultivated and often developed, that is, the overcoming of discontent and delight [33], of fear and dread [34], of heat and cold, etc [35]; the attaining of the four dhyanas [36], of the six superknowledges [37]. This list is also found in the Sarvāstivāda version, but extended to 18, with the addition of the 4 dhyanas and the 4 stages of awakening.

3.3 SUTTA COMPARISON. From what has been stated above, **Sujato** concludes that

Evidently, these four divisions [sections] are of quite separate origin. There is substantial overlapping of the topics in this discourse [Kāya,gatā,smṛti Sūtra of the Sarvāstivāda], especially the jhanas and clear knowledges [*abhiññā*]. I think it is likely that the four jhanas were originally mentioned, not as a kind of mindfulness practice, but as a benefit of mindfulness practice. The conclusion is implied by the basic refrain and by the list of benefits in both versions; however, since both versions include the jhanas both as mindfulness and as a benefit of mindfulness, there is no direct textual support for this suggestion. (Sujato 2005:231)

Sujato goes on to point out that there is “a strong imagistic consistency” in many of the similes—the ocean, the full pot, the full tank, the full water jug²⁵—which is consistent with the simile for mindfulness found in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta** (the bowl brimful of oil)²⁶ and also the “saturated” imageries of the

²³ Here I follow the four sections of Sujato 2005:231 (where he called them “divisions”).

²⁴ **Ledi Sayadaw**, in his *The Requisites of Enlightenment*, stresses the importance of body-observing both for samatha and for vipassana. He compares those who practise either without a grounding in mindfulness regarding the body to driving an ox-cart yokes to a wild bull without a noose-rope. (1971:38)

²⁵ For a study of “*sati* imagery,” see Analayo 2003:53-57, 123 f.

²⁶ **Janapada,kalyāṇī S** (S 47.20/5:169 f).

well-known four dhyana similes as found in **the Sāmañña-phala Sutta (D 2)**²⁷ and elsewhere. Sujato continues:

These beautiful images lend an imminent physicality to the usual strictly psychological jhana formulas. The strong emphasis on immersion in the body no doubt prompted their inclusion in the Kāyagatāsati Suttas, and hence in the body contemplation section of the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra. However, it would be a mistake to think that this refers to the crude physical body, which completely disappears in jhana.²⁸ The Suttas use “body” in an idiomatic sense to stress the immediateness of direct personal experience; the meaning is something like “the entire field of awareness.”²⁹ Such abstract, almost mystical, usages of “body”—note too the “mind-made body,” the “body witness,” the “dhamma-body”—paved the way for the much later doctrine of the “Three-bodies” of the Buddha, a metaphysical and docetic reification of the Buddha and Nibbana.

The Sarvāstivāda Kāyagatāsmṛti Sūtra, in addition to the variations mentioned above, presents a different list of basic exercises. These correlate exactly with the section on body contemplation in the Sarvāstivāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra, just as the Theravāda Kāyagatāsati Sutta correlates with the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The Theravādins added the vipassana refrain to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the three extra similes to the Kāyagatāsati Sutta, and reversed the sequence of anapanasati and clear comprehension [*sampajañña*] in both. The Sarvāstivādins added the extra practices and padded out the final section on benefits. This clearly shows that the specific details of these lists are sectarian, although the differences are not explicitly doctrinal. Each of the schools must have edited these paired discourses conjointly. This raises the important question: what was the main direction of influence, from the Kāyagatāsati Sutta to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, or vice versa? [Sujato goes on to discuss this question.] (Sujato 2005:232)

4 The states that partake of true knowledge

Midway through the sutta, the Buddha declares:

Bhikshus, one who has cultivated, often developed, the mindfulness regarding the body has embraced whatever wholesome states there are that partake of true knowledge. [22]

The Majjhima Commentary says that these “states that partake of true knowledge” (*vijjā, bhāgiyā dhammā*) [22] are “the eight knowledges,” namely, insight knowledge (*vipassanā, ñāṇa*), the knowledge of creating the mind-made body (*mano.mayā kāya*), and the six superknowledges (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*) (MA 4:144 f).

(1) **Insight knowledge** (*vipassanā, ñāṇa*) is the wisdom or penetrative insight that allows one to see, beyond the “virtual reality” of the deluded senses, into reality as it truly is. Briefly, this is the seeing and knowing the arising and ceasing of phenomena. The Commentaries and post-canonical Abhidhamma works—the **Paṭisambhidā, magga**³⁰ and the **Visuddhi, magga**,³¹ and the **Abhidhamm’attha Saṅgha**³²—explain this insight knowledge as being ninefold, thus:³³

²⁷ D 2.75b-82/1:73-76 = SD 8.10.

²⁸ By “completely disappears,” Sujato obviously means that all one’s physical senses—even the mental object of meditation—are transcended, although with the gaining of the superknowledges, one could physical disappear, if one wishes. Also note in the next line, Sujato clearly mentions “the idiomatic sense” of “body” here. (Piya)

²⁹ See Sujato pp164 f [Sujato’s fn, untraced].

³⁰ Pm 1:1.

³¹ Vism 20.93-136/630-671.

³² Abhs §53. See Abhs:BRS 1999:351-354; Abhs:WG 351-355.

³³ Comys and Abhidhamma works (eg Pm 1:1; Vism 20.93-136/630-671) list 9 insight knowledges. **The Abhidhamm’attha Saṅgha** lists 10 insight knowledges (Abhs §53). For details, see **Anicca S** (A 6.98) = SD 12.13 Intro (2b).

- (i) Knowledge of arising and ending [of rise and fall] (*udaya-b,baya ñāṇa*), the knowledge of the arising and ending of the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations, consciousness).
- (ii) Knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga ñāṇa*), the knowledge of the breaking up (of the aggregates, etc), which leaving aside the arising, perceives only their ending.
- (iii) Knowledge of the fearful (*bhaya ñāṇa*), the knowledge that perceives the presence [of the aggregates]—because of their breaking up—as so many things to be feared, like lions, etc.
- (iv) Knowledge of danger (*ādīnava ñāṇa*), the knowledge that perceives what is perceived as fearful as so many kinds of danger, like a burning house.
- (v) Knowledge of disenchantment (*nibbidā ñāṇa*), the knowledge that occurs as disenchantment with what has been seen as dangerous.
- (vi) Knowledge of the desire for liberation (*muñcitu,kamyatā ñāṇa*), the knowledge that occurs by way of desire for release from the things of the three levels, like a fish desiring release from the net.
- (vii) Knowledge of reflective consideration (*paṭisaṅkhā ñāṇa*), the knowledge that occurs by way of observing again and again the things seen as dangerous with a view of effecting a means of escape, like an ocean-going bird.
- (viii) Knowledge of equanimity regarding formations (*saṅkhār'upekkhā ñāṇa*), the knowledge that occurs in the manner of looking with equanimity on those formations once their danger has been seen, like a man who has left his wife.
- (ix) Knowledge of conformity (*anuloma ñāṇa*), the knowledge that conforms to the truths, and in the [consciousness] process that attains the path, occurs prior to change of lineage by way of conforming to, [on the one hand,] the eight insight knowledges that occurred earlier, etc, and, [on the other hand,] the 37 awakening-factors that will be acquired in the subsequent moment of [attaining] the path.

(2) **The mind-made body** (*mano,maya kāya*)—or what might be called the “astral body”—is described in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2) as follows:

With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady and utterly unshakable, he directs and inclines it to creating a mind-made body.³⁴ From this body he creates another body, endowed with form,³⁵ mind-made, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties.

Maharajah, just as if a man were to draw a reed from its sheath, the thought would occur to him:

“This is the sheath, this is the reed. The sheath is one thing, the reed another, but the reed has been drawn out from the sheath.”

Or, maharajah, as if a man were to draw a sword from its scabbard. The thought would occur to him:

³⁴ “Mind-made body,” *mano,mayā kāya*. Peter Harvey: “This shows that consciousness is seen as able to leave the physical body by means of a mind-made body. Such a body could be seen as a kind of ‘subtle body,’ for a being with a mind-made body is said to feed on joy (D 1:17), not on solid nutriment (D 1:195): it thus lacks the four great elements of the physical body (solidity, cohesion, heat and motion, D 1:195). As such a body relates to the ‘realm of (pure) form,’ the subtle matter composing it can only be visible and audible matter (Vbh 405). However, the mind-made body is invisible to the normal eye (Pm 2:209). It occupies space, but does not impinge on gross physical matter, for the ‘selfhood’ of a certain god with a mind-made body is said to be as large as two or three fields, but to cause no harm to anyone (A 3:122). With such a body, a person can exercise psychic powers such as going through solid objects, being in many places at once, or flying (D 1:78).” (“The mind body relationship in Pali Buddhism: A philosophical investigation.” *Asian Philosophy* 3,1 1993:8 digital ed.)

³⁵ Exactly the same as the physical body (but mentally created). This mind-made body is what is mistaken for a soul or self.

“This is the sword, this is the scabbard. The sword is one thing, the scabbard another, but the sword has been drawn out from the scabbard.”

Or, maharajah, as if a man were to pull a snake out from its slough. The thought would occur to him: “This is the snake, this is the slough. The snake is one thing, the slough another, but the snake has been pulled out from the slough.” (D 2.85 f/1:77)

(3-8) **The six superknowledges** (*cha-l-abhiññā*)³⁶ [37-42] are as follows:³⁷

- (i) Psychic powers (*iddhi, vidhā*) [37];
- (ii) Clairaudience (the divine ear element) (*dibba, sota, dhātu*, or simply *dibba, sota*) [38];
- (iii) Mind-reading (*ceto, pariya, ñāṇa*) [39];
- (iv) Retrocognition (*pubbe, nivāsānussati*) [40];
- (v) Clairvoyance (*dibba, cakkhu*) [41];
- (vi) The knowledge of the destruction of the influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*) [42].

Of all these knowledges, the last—the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes—is the most important, since it liberates one from ignorance and suffering. These eight types of knowledge are given fully in **the Mahā Sakuludāyi Sutta** (M 77).³⁸

5 The perception of foulness (32 parts of the body)

The Vibhaṅga Commentary³⁹ and **the Visuddhi, magga**⁴⁰ give detailed explanations on the practice of the perception of foulness (*asubha, saññā*).⁴¹ The Vibhaṅga Commentary, following the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, calls it **the observing of the body** (*kāyānupassanā*),⁴² while the Visuddhi, magga, following the Kāya, gatā, sati Sutta, calls it **the mindfulness regarding the body** (*kāya, gatā, sati*). **The Paṭisambhidhā, magga**, too, has the same exercise and, additionally, the analysis of the four elements.⁴³

One who wishes to practise it should first memorize the 32 parts of the body [7] by first reciting them out aloud again and again. Then, one should repeat them mentally. The recitation should be done systematically in groups (as listed below). First, **the skin pentad** (the fivefold group ending with the skin) (1-5) should be learned, forwards and backwards. Then, the following should be learned in proper sequence: **the kidney pentad** (6-10), **the lung pentad** (11-15), **the brain pentad** (16-20), **the fat sestad** (21-26), and **the urine sestad** (27-32). He should discern each part of the body with regard to its colour, shape, body region (upper or lower), location and boundaries. He should not proceed too quickly for each part.

In the Suttas, this observing is generally used both as a concentration exercise (*samatha, bhāvanā*) and as an insight exercise (*vipassanā, bhāvanā*). The latter is found in **the analysis of the four elements** (*dhātu, vavatthāna*) [8], described in detail in the Visuddhi, magga.⁴⁴

³⁶ As spiritual realization, *abhiññā* is better tr as “direct knowledge.” See 6 below.

³⁷ See D 3:281; A 3:280.

³⁸ M 77.29-36/2:17-22.

³⁹ Vbh 222-263.

⁴⁰ Vism 8.42-144/239-266.

⁴¹ *Asubha, saññā* is the common canonical term for the 31 parts of the body, eg **Girimānanda S** (A 10.60/5:108-112). The **Visuddhi, magga** however uses *asubha, saññā* to refer to the charnel-ground meditations (*sīvathika*) (D 22.7-10; M 10.14-31). Later traditions have 32 parts of the body, adding the 32nd part—*mathake mattha, luṅgaṃ* (lit “the brain in the head”) (Kh 3, Pm 1:6 f; Vism 8.42-144/239-266): “brain” is not listed at S 4:111). Although “brain” is usually listed last, Comys list it as no 20, after “faeces” (KhA 60; Vism 8.126/260) in the set headed by “large intestines” since they have similar or related appearances. See **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.10/1:57) = SD 13.3.

⁴² So called because it is part of **Satipaṭṭhāna Vibhaṅga**, the chapter on satipaṭṭhana (ch 7). The *Kāyānupassanā* chapter of **Vibhaṅga** in fact deals only with the observing of the 32 parts of the body.

⁴³ Vbh 193 & Pm 2:232. It is noteworthy that this presentation forms part of the Vbh’s Suttanta, bhājanīya, its “exposition according to the method of the discourses” (Anālayo’s fn). On **the 4 elements**, see **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62) = SD 3.11. On the age of such developments, see “The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas” = SD 13.1(5A.2).

⁴⁴ Vism 11.27-126/347-372; see also **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62) = SD 3.11.

The first dhyana may arise during the observing of any of the 32 parts of the body. The Visuddhi,-maggā notes:

If, when all the parts of the body appear distinctly, he directs his attention externally, all humans, animals, etc, lose their appearance of living beings, and appear as heaps of diverse body parts. And it looks as if the food and drinks swallowed by them were being inserted into these heaps of body parts.

Now while repeatedly considering the thought, “Repulsive! Repulsive!” and leaving out several parts, one after the other, there will arise after a while full concentration (*appanā samādhi*) (ie the first dhyana). (Vism 8.140 f/265)

In this exercise, the visualization of colour, shape, region, location, or boundaries are regarded as the acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*), and the visualizing of the loathsomeness of all the body parts, however, are regarded as the counter-image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). While developing the counter-image, there may arise full concentration, that is, the first dhyana.

6 Direct knowledge

The Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta states the benefit of the practice of the mindfulness regarding the body thus:

Bhikshus, when one has cultivated, often developed, the mindfulness regarding the body, then he gains the ability to witness [personally experience] any state realizable by **direct knowledge** (*abhiññā*), to which he inclines his mind, when the occasion obtains.

Yassa kassaci bhikkhave kāya,gatā sati bhāvitā bahulī,katā, so yassa yassa abhiññā,sacchikaraṇīyassa dhammassa cittaṃ abhininnāmeti abhiññā,sacchikiriyāya, tatra tatr’eva sakkhi,-bhavyatam pāpuṇāti sati sati āyatane. [29a]

The phrase *tatra tatr’eva sakkhi,bhavyatam* [vl -*bhabbatam*] *pāpuṇāti sati sati āyatane* is stock.⁴⁵ It refers to the preliminary conditions (*āyatana*) for the six direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) which usually follow later. The preliminary condition for the first five knowledges (the mundane ones) is the fourth dhyana; for the fifth (the only supramundane one), it is insight. A similar statement is made in **the Tika Nipāta** of the Aṅguttara:

If he wishes, “Having right here and now realized for myself through direct knowledge, having attained the liberation of mind and the liberation by wisdom⁴⁶ that are influx-free with the

⁴⁵ See **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73.19/1:494 = SD 27.4); **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119.29 f/3:96 f = SD 12.21); **Paṃsu,dhovaka S** (A 3.100a.4/1:255 = SD 19.11a); **Upakkilesa S** (A 5.23/3:16-19); **Dutiya Iddhi,pāda S** (A 5.68/3:82 f); **Sakkhi,bhabba S** (A 6.71/3:426 f); **Gāvī Upamā S** (A 9.35/4:421 f).

⁴⁶ “**Liberation of mind and liberation through wisdom**,” respectively, *ceto,vimutti* (or, liberation by concentration, ie through destruction of the mental hindrances) and *paññā,vimutti* (liberation through insight) (A 1:60). One who is *liberated by wisdom* “may not have reached the 8 deliverances (*vimokkha = jhāna*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed” (M 70.16/1:478). All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain **the 8 deliverances** (*aṭṭha,vimokkha*), which include the four formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called *liberated both ways*, that is, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Saḷha, like the arhats Sāriputta and Moggallāna, is “liberated both ways” (*ubhato,bhāga,vimutta*). The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 2:70 f) and **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 1:477 f). For full list of the 8 deliverances, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/2:70 f). For full list of the 8 deliverances, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/2:70 f) = SD 5.17.35. See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/4:306; also M 120.37/3:103 = SD 3.4.37.

destruction of the mental influxes, may I dwell in them”⁴⁷ he gains the ability for realizing that state of direct knowledge, when the occasion obtains.

So sace ākaṅkhati—āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavānaṃ ceto, vimuttiṃ paññā, vimuttiṃ diṭṭh’eva dhamme sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja vihareyyan ti—tatra tatr’eva sakkhi, bhabbataṃ pāpuṇāti sati sati āyatane. (A 3.100.10/1:256-258)⁴⁸

As shown earlier [5], the mindfulness regarding the body can lead to dhyana, having attained which one could then turn one’s attention to the insight exercise, ending in mental liberation.

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The Discourse on the Mindfulness Regarding the body

M 119/3:88-99

1 Thus have I heard.

Opening discussion

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha, piṇḍika’s Park in Jeta’s Forest near Sāvattihī.

2 Now at that time a large number of monks, having returned from their alms round, after their meal, had gathered at the meeting hall, whereupon this discussion arose:

“Isn’t it amazing, friends! Isn’t it astounding! What the Blessed One, who knows, who sees—the worthy one, fully self-awakened—says regarding the extent to which mindfulness regarding the body, when cultivated, often developed, is of great fruit and great benefit.”

But this discussion of the monks was unfinished [came to an uncertain conclusion].⁴⁹

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his retreat in the late afternoon, went to the meeting hall and, having gone there, sat down on a prepared seat.

Having sat down, he said this to the monks:

“Bhikshus, what is the subject of your talk that you have gathered together for just now? What is the discussion that is unfinished?”⁵⁰ [89]

“Just now, bhante, after the meal, on returning from our alms round, we gathered at the meeting hall when this discussion arose:

‘Isn’t it amazing, friends! Isn’t it astounding! What the Blessed One, who knows, who sees—the worthy one, fully self-awakened—says regarding the extent to which mindfulness regarding the body, when cultivated, often developed, is of great fruit and great benefit.’

⁴⁷ “**Mental influxes,**” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints”, RD), corrupt-ions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsavas*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.1.12/2:82, 16.2.4/2:91, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is probably 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*.

⁴⁸ See also A 3.100.10/1:256; VbhA 230; Vism 15.5/482.

⁴⁹ *Ayañ ca h’idaṃ tesañ bhikkhūnaṃ antarā, kathā vipakatā hoti.*

⁵⁰ *Kāya nu’ttha bhikkhave etarahi kathāya sannisinnā? Kā ca pana vo antarā, kathā vipakatā ti?* This episode of the Buddha interrupting a “unfinished conversation” (*antarā, kathā vipakatā*) is stock, eg, D 1.1.4/1:2; D 2.7a/ 3:39 f; M 119.2/3:89, U 2.2/11.

This, bhante, was the unfinished discussion when the Blessed One arrived.”

OBSERVING THE BODY

(1) The breath meditation

3 “And, bhikshus, how is mindfulness regarding the body cultivated, how is it often developed, so as to be of great fruit, of great benefit?

4 Here, bhikshus, a monk⁵¹ who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty abode,⁵² sits down, and having crossed his legs⁵³ and keeping his body upright,⁵⁴ establishes mindfulness before him.⁵⁵

—Mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out.

(1) Breathing in long [deep],⁵⁶ he knows: ‘I breathe in long [Long in-breath]’,⁵⁷

⁵¹ DA on **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** with the identical context here says that “monk” (*bhikkhu*) indicates either an ordained monastic or “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 the **Brāhmaṇa Vagga** (ch 26) of Dh.

⁵² This stock phrase of 3 places conducive to meditation are at D 2:29; 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. In **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2), probably an older account, the following instruction is given: “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 seeks out a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a gully [gorge], a hillside cave, a cemetery [charnel ground], 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,sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhitāya samannāgato vivittam senāsanam bhajati, araññam rukkha,mūlam pabbatam kandaram giri,guham susanam vana,pattham abbhokāsam palāla,puñjam*, D 2.67/ 1:71) = SD 8.10. The oldest ref to an ideal meditation spot is in **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26) and **Saṅgārava S** (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).

⁵³ “Sitting cross-legged” (*pallaṅkam ābhujitvā*) here helps one to spread one’s body weight over the greatest area, thereby reducing tiredness so that one can focus better on the meditation. This is the prescribed posture for breath meditation which is best done in the sitting posture.

⁵⁴ “Keeping his body upright” (*ujum kāyam pañidhāya*). This is mainly for the sake of warding off discomfort and pain after a long sitting. Imagine a pendulum or plumb-line hanging from just below one’s skull with the pendulum ball hanging inside the belly. When one bends too far forward, or one sits leaning too far back, the pendulum hangs outside the body—the centre of gravity is outside the body. When one’s centre of gravity is outside the body, it tires more quickly.

⁵⁵ **Parimukham**, 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 Ñānamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001:527). The Vibhaṅga explains it as “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip” (Vbh §537/ 252): see important n to §18(1). **Where to watch the breath?** Ajahn Brahmavamso, however, says that *parimukha* does not mean “just on the tip of the nose, or on the lip, or somewhere in front of your eyes...[but] just means [to] make it important.” (2002:58). “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). Soṇa Bhikkhu, however, teaches the “traditional” approach of taking *parimukham* as air contact as “either at the nose or lip” (2000:6). See SD 7.13 Intro (2). (All three teachers here are students of Ajahn Chah.)

⁵⁶ Brahmavamso: “As one relaxes and settles down, the breath becomes short by itself. When the body is relaxing, you don’t need as much oxygen to give the body energy. So it’s quite natural that these two steps usually follow one after the other. The whole point of these two steps [long breaths, short breaths] is just to experience the breath instead of attending to many things. What you’re doing is to focus on one thing.” (“The Beautiful Breath,” 1999; also

- Or, breathing out long [deep], he knows: ‘I breathe out long [Long out-breath]’;
 (2) Or, breathing in short, he knows: ‘I breathe in short [Short in-breath]’;
 Or, breathing out short, he knows: ‘I breathe out short [Short out-breath]’;⁵⁸
 (3) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in experiencing the whole body (of breath)’;⁵⁹
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out experiencing the whole body (of breath)’;
 (4) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in calming the bodily function (of breathing)’;⁶⁰
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out calming the bodily function (of breathing)’;⁶¹
 Bhikshus, this is how a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].⁶²

2002:59 f). On these 4 tetrads and 16 aspects, see Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:133-136. On the breath, see SD 7.13 Intro (1cd).

⁵⁷ 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 knows or understands); 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*). On “mental noting,” see SD 7.13 Intro (3).

⁵⁸ In practical terms, focussing on the first 2 factors of this tetrad, that is maintaining one’s undivided focus on the breath or one’s conception of it can lead to *jhāna*. However, in (**Pabbateyyā**) **Gāvī S**, the Buddha warns Moggallāna not to go into the 2nd *jhāna* until he has thoroughly mastered the 1st *jhāna* (A 9.35/4:418 f qu at Vism 153 f).

⁵⁹ “Experiencing the whole body (of breath),” *sabba,kāya,paṭisaṃvedī*. MA glosses *sabba,kāya* as “the whole body of breath” that is, its three phases of each in-breath and out-breath through its three phases of beginning, middle and end (Brahmavamso, 2002:60). Brahmavamso keeps to this tradition, teaching that “you have just the target in your mind—just the breath and nothing else...the full attention on the breath” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999). “You see it from the very start when it originates out of the silence, and you see it grow to its peak and then fade away again, until the in-breath has completely subsided. You have such a degree of clarity that you even see that space between the breaths. The in-breath has stopped, the out-breath has yet to arise. There’s a pause there. Then the out-breath begins to grow to its peak and then fade away into nothingness again. That’s what we call **the whole of the breath**” (2002:60). However, Thich Nhat Hanh (1990:6, 46-49) & esp Bodhi (2001 n141) 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 transpersonal psychology (especially bodywork and breathwork), the whole *body* “breathes.” For the simile of the teacher and his three archer students illustrating the experience of the total breath, see Brahmavamso 2002:62 f. For a discussion, see Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:131 f.

⁶⁰ “The bodily function,” *kāya,sāṅkhāra*. The bodily formation is the in-and-out-breathing itself (M 44.13). This calming process may lead to the development of *jhāna*, but this is not the primary object here (Walshe 1995 n641). See **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44) for explanation of *kāya,sāṅkhāra* (M 44.14/1:301) = SD 40a.9. **Brahmavamso**: “Once you have full attention on the breath, the next stage is where the beauty and the bliss have a chance to arise... This is where you calm down that object of mind, the breath, by giving the suggestion, ‘calm, calm, calm.’ Instead of just an ordinary breath that you’re aware of, you deliberately, by an act of will, calm that breath down...it gets softer and softer... more and more beautiful. But you have to be careful here...If you calm the breath in the fourth stage before you complete the third stage, that’s when you go to sleep... When the attention is fully there, then calm that object inside your mind.” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999). “If you calm the breath in this fourth stage before you complete the third stage, that’s when you go to sleep. You haven’t got a complete image of the breath in your mind yet, and you are already calming the little you do have. Get the full attention of the breath first of all. When the attention is fully there, then calm that object inside your mind.” (Brahmavamso 2002:65).

⁶¹ At this point even after the breath has been calmed down but one still does not experience joy (*pīti*) or the “beautiful breath,” the one should proceed to the next two steps to willfully arouse feelings of joy. (Brahmavamso 2002:66).

⁶² *Tassa evaṃ appamattassa ātāpino pahitassa viharato ye te gehasitā sara,sāṅkappā te pahīyanti, tesaṃ pahānā ajjhataṃ eva cittaṃ santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodī,hoti samādhiyati.*

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

(2) The four postures

5 Furthermore, bhikshus,

- (1) while walking, a monk knows, ‘I walk’ [‘Walking’];⁶³
- (2) or, while standing, he knows, ‘I stand’ [‘Standing’];
- (3) or, while sitting, he knows, ‘I sit’ [‘Sitting’];
- (4) or, while lying down, he knows, ‘I lie down’ [‘Lying down’].

In whatever way his body is disposed, that is how he knows it.

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].⁶⁴

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body. [90]

(3) Full awareness

6 Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk,

- (1) while going forward or back, he is fully aware of what he is doing;
- (2) while looking forward or back, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
- (3) while bending or stretching, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
- (4) while carrying his upper robe, outer robe and bowl, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
- (5) while eating, drinking, chewing and tasting, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
- (6) while voiding or peeing, he is fully aware of what he is doing.
- (7) while walking, standing, sitting, asleep, awake,⁶⁵ talking, or remaining silent, he is fully aware of what he is doing.

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

(4) Perception of foulness (the 31 parts of the body)⁶⁶

7 Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk reviews⁶⁷ this very body, wrapped in skin and full of various impurities, from the soles of the feet upwards and from the crown of the head downwards:

‘In this body there are⁶⁸

⁶³ On the tr here, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) = SD 13.3 §1(A) n on “Contemplating the body in the body.”

⁶⁴ *Tassa evaṃ appamattassa ātāpino pahitatassa viharato ye te gehasitā sara,sāṅkappā te pahīyanti, tesam pahānā ajjhataṃ eva cittaṃ santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodi,hoti samādhīyati.*

⁶⁵ “When asleep, when awake” *sutte jāgarite*. Comy glosses *sutte* as *sayane*, “lying down, sleeping.” See **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) = SD 13.1(3.6c).

⁶⁶ On how to practice this meditation, see Intro (5).

⁶⁷ “Reviews,” *paccavekkhati*, see SD 13.1(3.9b).

⁶⁸ In this meditation of parts of the body, groups (1)-(4) constitute the **earth** element (**Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S**, M 62.8/1:421 f); groups (5)-(6) constitute the **water** element (ib M 62.9/1:422). The same sutta describes the **fire** element as *that by which one is warmed, ages, and burns, and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed and tasted gets completely digested*, or whatever else that is liquid, liquefied and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself] (M 62.10/1:422); and the **air** element as *up-going winds [burping], down-going winds, winds in the belly [flatulence], winds that course through the limbs, in-breath and out-breath*, or whatever else that is air, airy and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself] (M 62.11/1:422 f). See prec n.

- (1) head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin;⁶⁹
- (2) flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;⁷⁰
- (3) heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs),⁷¹ spleen, lungs;⁷²
- (4) large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents,⁷³ faeces[, brain];⁷⁴
- (5) bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat;⁷⁵
- (6) tears, grease, saliva, snot, oil of the joints,⁷⁶ urine.⁷⁷

Just as if there were a bag, open at both ends, full of various kinds of grain, such as hill-rice, paddy, green gram,⁷⁸ kidney-beans, sesame, husked rice,⁷⁹

and a man with good sight were to open the bag and examine them, saying: ‘This is hill-rice; this is paddy; this is green gram; this is kidney-bean; this is sesame; this is husked rice,’

—so, too, a monk reviews this very body, wrapped in skin and full of various impurities, from the soles of the feet upwards and from the crown of the head downwards:

‘In this body there are

head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin;
flesh, [D 2:294] sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;
heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs), spleen, lungs;
large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents, faeces[, brain];
bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat;
tears, grease, saliva, snot, oil of the joints, urine.’

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body. [91]

(5) The four elements⁸⁰

⁶⁹ *Kesā lomā nakhā dantā taco*. The meditation on these five parts “with skin as the fifth” or “skin pentad” (*taca, pancake kamma-ṭ, ṭhāna*) (Vism 8.50/242) forms the basic spiritual practice first taught to monks at the end of ordination.

⁷⁰ *Maṃsaṃ nahāru aṭṭhi aṭṭhi, miñjā vakkam*.

⁷¹ “Membranes,” alt tr “pleura,” *kilomaka*, ie a pair of membranous sacs surrounding the lungs.

⁷² *Hadayaṃ yakanam kilomakam pihakam papphasam*.

⁷³ *Udariyam*, lit “that which is in the *udara* (stomach),” sometimes tr as “gorge” (Vism:Ñ 8.120/-122/258 f); technically, this includes chyme (food half-digested by gastric juices, expelled into the duodenum).

⁷⁴ *Antam anta, guṇam udariyam karisam*. See M 3:90; KhpA 38. Later traditions add the 32nd part—*matthake mattha, luṅgam* (lit “the brain in the head”) (Kh 3, Pm 1:6 f; Vism 8.42-144/239-266): “brain” is not listed at S 4:111). Although “brain” is usually listed last, Comys list it as no 20, after “faeces” (KhA 60; Vism 8.126/260) in the set headed by “large intestines” since they have similar or related appearances. For a fascinating discussion on how ancient ascetics obtain such knowledge of the human anatomy, see Zysk 1998:34-37.

⁷⁵ *Pittam semham pubbo lohitaṃ sedo medo*.

⁷⁶ *Lasikā*, ie synovial fluid.

⁷⁷ *Assu vasā kheḷo siṅghānikā lasikā muttam*. Here there are a total of 31 parts of the body. See here (4)n.

⁷⁸ Or, mung beans.

⁷⁹ The Pali substantives are in the plural.

⁸⁰ Vism 348 says that the four primary elements are only briefly explained here—as in **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22.6 /2:293; M 10.6/1:56 f)—but at length in **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28.6-27/1185-191), **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62.8-17/1:421-426) and **Dhātu, vibhaṅga S** (M 140.13-18/3:240-242). The four elements are explained in some detail in **Mūla, pariyāya S** (M 1). The six elements (4 primary elements + space + consciousness) are mentioned in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.2.1 (16)/3: 248), **Bahu, dhātuka S** (M 115.5/3:62), and **Titth’āyatana S** (A 3.61.6/1:175 f = SD 6.8 n); see also Dhs 638. For the first 5 elements in later Buddhism, see Lama Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, London, 1959:183 ff.

8 Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk reviews⁸¹ this body, in whatever way it may be placed or disposed, in terms of the elements:⁸²

‘There are in this body

- (1) the earth-element,
- (2) the water-element,
- (3) the fire-element,
- (4) the air-element.’⁸³

Just as a skilled butcher or his apprentice, having slaughtered a cow, were to sit at the cross-roads with the carcass divided into portions, so, too, a monk reviews this body, in whatever way it may be placed or disposed, in terms of the elements:

‘There are in this body

- (1) the earth-element,
- (2) the water-element,
- (3) the fire-element,
- (4) the air-element.’

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

(6-14) The nine charnel-ground meditations

9 (1) Furthermore, bhikshus, just as if⁸⁴ he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel-ground, one, two, three days dead, bloated, discoloured, festering,⁸⁵

—so, too, he compares⁸⁶ this very body with that, thinking:

‘Such is the nature of this body: it will become like that—this is unavoidable.’⁸⁷

⁸¹ “Reviews,” *paccavekkhati*, see SD 13.1(3.9b).

⁸² In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the 4 elements dissolve in the death-process thus: earth dissolves into water, water into fire, fire into air, air into space; the consciousness dissolves in 4 further stages (white flash, red flash, black flash, clear light). See Lati Rinbochay & Jeffrey Hopkins, *Death, Intermediate State and Rebirth in Tibetan Buddhism*, Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1979:13-57; Terry Clifford, *Tibetan Buddhist Medicine and Psychiatry: The Diamond Healing*, York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1984:108-114; Kalu Rimpoché, *Luminous Mind: The Way of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997:53-56; Margaret Coberly, *Sacred Passage: How to provide fearless, compassionate care for the dying*, Boston & London: Shambhala, 2002:79-98.

⁸³ “Earth” (*pathavī*) or extension, “water” (*āpo*) or cohesion, “fire” (*tejo*) or temperature, “air” (*vāyo*) or motion. These are the ancient Indian names for the four “great elements” (*mahā,bhūta*) or qualities present in varying proportions in all matter, that is, the various states of matter.

⁸⁴ “Just as if,” *seyyathā pi*, alt tr “as though.” [14, 17, 26] “The phrase ‘as though’ (*seyyathā pi*) suggests this meditation, and those to follow, need not be based upon an actual encounter with a corpse in the state of decay described, but can be performed as an imaginative exercise” (M:ÑB 1192 n150). **The Visuddhi,magga** details how a meditator can gain the first vision of a decaying corpse in a charnel ground and subsequently develop this vision while meditating in his dwelling Vism 6.12-69/180-190, esp §§6.62-64). **Ledi Sayadaw** says that this meditation could be done based on sick or wounded persons (incl oneself), or with dead animals as the object (TM nd:58). See also Analayo 2003:152-155.

⁸⁵ Cf (**Cattāro**) **Padhāna S** (D 33.1.11(10)/3:225 = A 4.14/2:16 f) which says, “Here, monks, a monk guards the auspicious sign of samadhi when it has arisen, that is to say, the perception [image] of a skeleton (*aṭṭhikāṃ,saññāṃ*), the perception of the worm-infested (corpse) (*puḷavaka,saññāṃ*), the perception of the discoloured (corpse) (*vinīlaka,saññāṃ*), the perception of the festering (corpse) (*vipubbaka,saññāṃ*), the perception of the fissured (corpse) (*vicchidaka,saññāṃ*), the perception of the bloated (corpse). (*uddhumataka,saññāṃ*). This simpler Aṅguttara listing is probably older than the more systematized set of **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** = SD 13.2.

⁸⁶ “He compares,” *upasaṃharati*, see SD 13.1(3.9b).

10 (2) Or, again, bhikshus, just as if he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel-ground,
 being eaten by crows,
 or being eaten by hawks,
 or being eaten by vultures,
 or being eaten by dogs,
 or being eaten by jackals,
 or being eaten by various worms and bugs;

—so, too, he compares this very body with that, thinking:

‘Such is the nature of this body: it will become like that—this is unavoidable.’ [92]

11-14⁸⁸ Or, again, bhikshus, just as if he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel-ground,

(3) a skeleton with flesh and blood, connected by sinews,

(4) a skeleton, fleshless, smeared with blood, connected by sinews,

(5) a skeleton, flesh and blood all gone, connected by sinews,

(6)⁸⁹ random disconnected bones, scattered in all directions, a hand-bone here, a foot-bone there, a shin-bone here, a rib there, a thigh-bone here, a pelvic bone there, a back-bone here, a shoulder-bone there, a neck-bone here, a jaw-bone there, a tooth here, a skull there;

—so, too, he compares this very body with that:

‘Such is the nature of this body: it will become like that—this is unavoidable.’

Or, again, bhikshus, just as if he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel-ground,

15 (7) the bones bleached, looking like conch-shells,

16 (8) the bones piled up, over a year old,

17 (9) the bones reduced to dust;

—so, too, he compares this very body with that:

‘Such is the nature of this body: it will become like that—this is unavoidable.’

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

THE FOUR DHYANAS

The 1st dhyana

18 (1) Furthermore, bhikshus, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome mental states, he reaches and dwells in the **first dhyana**, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness, born of seclusion.⁹⁰ He permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills this very body⁹¹ with the zest and happiness born of seclusion.⁹²

Bhikshus, just as if a **skilled bathman or bathman’s apprentice** would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again and again with water, so that his ball of bath powder

⁸⁷ Notice the impersonal tone of the statement, reflecting the lack of ownership and not self, ie, the body is actually beyond one’s control [14, 16, 24, 30]. This is an application of the “specific conditionality” (*idap-paccayatā*). See SD 13.1(3.7c) & SD 5.16(2).

⁸⁸ I have kept to M:ÑB paragraph numbering here for consistency although the numbers here seem to be in excess of the actual paragraphs, even if we insert the “extended *satipaṭṭhāna* formula” after each of these sub-sections.

⁸⁹ For variant readings, see PTS ed, D 2:296 f.

⁹⁰ On the omission of “one-pointedness of mind” (*cittassa ek’aggatā*) and “concentration” (*samādhi*) here, see **The laity and dhyana** = SD 8.

⁹¹ Here “body” (*kāya*) refers to the “mental body” (*nāma,kāya*), ie feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), formations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (Vism 4.175/169).

⁹² These are the dhyana factors: *vitakka vicāra pīti sukha* *ek’aggatā*, respectively.

—saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within and without—would not drip; even so, the monk permeates—this very body with the zest and happiness born of seclusion. [93] There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by zest and happiness born of seclusion.

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

The 2nd dhyana

19 And, furthermore, bhikshus, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he reaches and dwells in **the second dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.⁹³ He permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills this very body with the zest and happiness born of concentration.

Bhikshus, just as **a lake with spring-water welling up from within**, having *no* inflow from the east, *no* inflow from the west, *no* inflow from the north, or *no* inflow from the south, and with the skies *not* bringing heavy rain over and again.⁹⁴ Yet the cool spring welling up from within the lake would permeate and pervade, flood and fill it with cool waters—there being no part of the lake unpervaded by the cool waters.

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

The 3rd dhyana

20 (3) And furthermore, bhikshus, with the fading away of zest, he remains equanimous, mindful and fully aware, and experiences happiness with the body. He reaches and dwells in **the third dhyana**, of which the Noble Ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.’ He permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills this very body with the happiness free from zest.

Bhikshus, just as in **a pond of the blue lotuses, red and white lotuses, or red lotuses**,⁹⁵ born and growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, [94] so that they are permeated, pervaded, suffused and filled with cool water from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those lotuses would be unpervaded with cool water; even so, the monk permeates this very body with the happiness free from zest, so that there is no part of his entire body that is not pervaded with this happiness free from zest.

⁹³ The 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya,tuṅhī,bhāva*) because within it applied thought and sustained thought (thinking and discursion, *vitakka,vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur. (S 2:273); cf. S 4:293 where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī,sāṅkhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech. In Ariya,pariyesanā S (M 1:161), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to “either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence” (i.e. either talk Dharma or meditate).

⁹⁴ Be Ce *devo ca na kālena kālaṃ sammā dhāraṃ anupaveccheyya*. Ee Se omits *na: devo ca kālena kālaṃ sammā dhāraṃ anupaveccheyya*. See D 1:74 n6. For preferring the *na* reading, see **Dhyana** = SD 8.4 (8.2).

⁹⁵ *uppala* (Skt *utpala*), *paduma* (*padma*) and *puṇḍarīka* respectively. See **Āyācana S** (S 6.12/1:138) where the simile of lotuses in a pond is applied to beings of different spiritual dispositions.

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

The 4th dhyana

21 (4) And furthermore, bhikshus, with the letting go of pleasure and pain—and with the earlier letting go of happiness and grief—he reaches and dwells in **the fourth dhyana**, that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity. He sits, pervading the body with a pure, bright mind,⁹⁶ so that there is no part of his entire body that is not pervaded by a pure, bright mind.

Bhikshus, just as if **a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth**, so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; even so, the monk sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright mind. There is no part of his entire body that is not pervaded by pure, bright mind.

The samadhi refrain

As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself internally, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated].

In this way, bhikshus, a monk cultivates mindfulness regarding the body.

PROGRESS THROUGH THE MINDFULNESS REGARDING THE BODY

Mindfulness keeps Māra out

22 “Bhikshus, one who has cultivated, often developed, the mindfulness regarding the body embraces whatever wholesome states there are that partake of true knowledge.⁹⁷

Bhikshus, just as one who has pervaded the great ocean with his mind has also embraced whatever streams there are that flow into the ocean; so, too, one who has cultivated, often developed, the mindfulness regarding the body has embraced whatever wholesome states there are that partake of true knowledge.

Parable of the heavy stone ball⁹⁸

23a Bhikshus, Māra gains entry, Māra finds a foothold, in one who has not cultivated, not often developed, the mindfulness regarding the body.⁹⁹

Suppose, bhikshus, a man were to throw a heavy stone ball into a mound of wet clay. What do you think, bhikshus? Would that heavy stone ball go into the mound of wet clay?¹⁰⁰

“Yes, bhante.” [95]

⁹⁶ See **Accharā Vagga** (A 1.6.1-2: “Monks, this mind is radiant (*pabhassara*), but it is defiled by defilements from outside. The uninstructed ordinary person does not understand this as it really is. As such, for him there is no personal development.” (A 1:10). On reaching the 4th dhyana, the practitioner becomes directly aware of the truly and naturally pure nature of the mind. See also A:ÑB 1999 §4.

⁹⁷ *Yassa kassaci bhikkhave kāya, gatā sati bhāvitā bahulī, katā anto, gadhā tassa kusalā dhammā ye keci vijjā, bhāgiyā.* On the “states that partake of true knowledge” (*vijjā, bhāgiyā dhammā*), see Intro (4).

⁹⁸ The following 3 sections [23a, 24, 25] are the negative similes showing Māra’s power over one who does not cultivate the mindfulness regarding the body. The next 3 sections [26, 27, 28] are the positive similes showing how one’s practice of the mindfulness regarding the body keeps Māra away.

⁹⁹ *Yassa kassaci bhikkhave bhikkhuno kāya, gatā sati abhāvitā abahulikatā labhati tassa Māro ārammaṇaṃ.*

¹⁰⁰ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave puriso garukaṃ silā, guḷaṃ alla, mattikā, puñje pakkhipeyya. Tam kiṃ māññatha bhikkhave? Api nu tam garukaṃ silā, guḷaṃ alla, mattikā, puñje labhetha otāran ti?*

The Māra refrain

23b “Even so, bhikshus, Māra gains entry, Māra finds a foothold, in one whose mindfulness regarding the body is not cultivated, not often developed.”¹⁰¹

Parable of the dry sapless fire-wood

24 “Suppose, bhikshus, there were a dry sapless piece of wood, and a man were to come along with an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I’ll light a fire. I’ll produce some heat.’ What do you think, bhikshus? Would the man be able to light a fire and produce heat by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the dry sapless piece of wood?”¹⁰²

“Yes, bhante.”

The Māra refrain

“Even so, bhikshus, Māra gains entry, Māra finds a foothold, in one whose mindfulness regarding the body is not cultivated, not often developed.

The empty water jar

25 Suppose, bhikshus, there were an empty, hollow water jar that is standing, and a man were to come along bearing a load of water. What do you think, bhikshus, would the man be able to pour the water into the water jar?”¹⁰³

“Yes, bhante.”

The Māra refrain

“Even so, bhikshus, Māra gains entry, Māra finds a foothold, in one whose mindfulness regarding the body is not cultivated, not often developed.

The ball of string¹⁰⁴

26 Suppose, bhikshus, that a man were to throw a light ball of string against a door panel made entirely of heartwood. What do you think, bhikshus? Would that light ball of string gain entry into that door panel made entirely of heartwood?”¹⁰⁵

“No, bhante.”

The Māra refrain

¹⁰¹ *Evam eva kho bhikkhave yassa kassaci bhikkhave bhikkhuno kāya,gatā sati abhāvitā abahulikatā labhati tassa Māro ārammaṇaṃ.*

¹⁰² *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave sukkhaṃ kaṭṭhaṃ koḷāpaṃ atha puriso āgaccheyya uttarāraṇiṃ ādāya: aggim abhinibbattessāmi tejo pātukarissāmi ti. Taṃ kiṃ māññatha bhikkhave? Api nu so puriso amuṃ sukkhaṃ katthaṃ koḷāpaṃ uttarāraṇiṃ ādāya abhimatthento aggim abhinibbatteyya tejo pātukareyyā ti.* Cf the parable of the three sticks at **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36), which applies to a different (positive) context: “Suppose a man were to use a dry sapless stick lying on dry ground far away from water and rub it with an upper fire-stick, he would be able to make a fire. Even so, those who live bodily away from sensual pleasures, and whose desire for sense-pleasures are totally abandoned, even if they were to feel or not to feel the pains of self-mortification, would be capable of knowledge and vision and supreme awakening” (M 36.17-19/ 1:242) = SD 1.12.

¹⁰³ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave udaka,maṇiko ritto tuccho ādhāre ṭhito, atha puriso āgaccheyya udaka,bhāraṃ ādāya. Taṃ kiṃ māññatha bhikkhave? Api nu so puriso labhetha udakassa nikkhepanan ti?*

¹⁰⁴ The previous 3 sections [23a, 24, 25] are the negative similes showing Māra’s power over one who does not cultivate the mindfulness regarding the body. The following 3 sections [26, 27, 28] are the positive similes showing how one’s practice of the mindfulness regarding the body keeps Māra away.

¹⁰⁵ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave puriso lahukam sutta,guḷam sabba,sāra,maye aggaḷa,phalake pakkhipeyya. Taṃ kiṃ māññatha bhikkhave? Api nu taṃ lahukam sutta,guḷam sabba,sāra,maye aggaḷa,phalake labhetha otāran ti?*

“Even so, bhikshus, Māra gains no entry, Māra finds no foothold, in one whose mindfulness regarding the body is cultivated, often developed.

The wet sappy fire-wood

27 “Suppose, bhikshus, there were a wet sappy piece of wood, and a man were to come along with an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I’ll light a fire. I’ll produce some heat.’ [96] What do you think, bhikshus? Would the man be able to light a fire and produce heat by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the dry sapless piece of wood?”¹⁰⁶

“No, bhante.”

The Māra refrain

“Even so, bhikshus, Māra gains no entry, Māra finds no foothold, in one whose mindfulness regarding the body is cultivated, often developed.

The full water jar

28 Suppose, bhikshus, there were a water jar full of water so that a crow could drink from it, and a man were to come along bearing a load of water. What do you think, bhikshus? Would the man be able to pour the water into the water jar.”¹⁰⁷

“No, bhante.”

The Māra refrain

“Even so, bhikshus, Māra gains no entry, Māra finds no foothold, in one whose mindfulness regarding the body is cultivated, often developed.

REALIZATION

Direct knowledge

29a Bhikshus, when one has cultivated, often developed, the mindfulness regarding the body, then when he directs his mind towards the attaining of any mental state attainable through **direct knowledge**, he gains the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave allam kaṭṭham sasneham, atha puriso āgaccheyya uttarāraṇim ādāya: aggim abhinibbattessāmi tejo pātukarissāmi ti. Tam kim māññatha bhikkhave? Api nu so puriso amum allam kaṭṭham sa, sneham uttarāraṇim ādāya abhimatthento aggim abhinibbatteyya tejo pātukareyyā ti?* Cf the parable of the three sticks at **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36), which applies to a different (positive) context: “Suppose a man were to use a dry sapless stick lying on dry ground far away from water and rub it with an upper fire-stick, he would be able to make a fire. Even so, those who live bodily away from sensual pleasures, and whose desire for sense-pleasures are totally abandoned, even if they were to feel or not to feel the pains of self-mortification, would be capable of knowledge and vision and supreme awakening” (M 36.17-19/ 1:242) = SD 1.12.

¹⁰⁷ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave udaka,maṇiko pūro udakassa samatittiko kākapeyyo ādhāre ṭhapito, atha puriso āgaccheyya udaka,bhāram ādāya. Tam kim māññatha bhikkhave? Api nu so puriso labhetha udakassa nikkhepanan ti?* Cf similar parable at (**Samādhy-aṅga**) **Pañc’āṅgika S** (A 5.28.12/3:27) = SD 33.13.

¹⁰⁸ *Yassa kassaci bhikkhave kāya,gata sati bhāvitā bahulī,katā, so yassa yassa abhiññā,sacchikaraṇīyassa dhammassa cittam abhininnāmeti abhiññā,sacchikiriya, tatra tatr’eva sakkhi,bhavyatam pāpuṇāti sati sati āyatane.* The latter phrase—*tatra tatra...sati sati āyatane*—is a common stock phrase that introduces the attainment of the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*): **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73.19/1:494 = SD 27.4); **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119.29 f/3:96 f = SD 12.21); **Paṃsu,dhovaka S** (A 3.100a.4/1:255 = SD 19.11a); **Upakkilesa S** (A 5.23/3:16-19); **Dutiya Iddhi,pāda S** (A 5.68/3:82 f); **Sakkhi,bhabba S** (A 6.71/3:426 f); **Gāvi Upamā S** (A 9.35/4:421 f). It refers to the preliminary conditions (*āyatana*) for the 6 direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) which follow later. The preliminary condition for the first 5 knowledges (the mundane ones) is the 4th dhyana; for the 5th (the only supramundane one), it is insight. See SD 12.21 Intro (6).

The water jar

29b Suppose, bhikshus, there were a water jar that is standing, brimful with water so that a crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to tip it, would the water spill out?¹⁰⁹

“Yes, bhante.”

The realization refrain

“Even so, bhikshus, when one has cultivated, often developed, the mindfulness regarding the body, then when he directs his mind towards the attaining of any mental state attainable through direct knowledge, he gains the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right.

The rectangular water tank

30 Suppose, bhikshus, there were a rectangular water tank, built on level ground, bounded by dykes, and it is brimful of water so that a crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to open up any of the dykes, would water spill out?¹¹⁰ [97]

“Yes, bhante.”

The realization refrain

“Even so, bhikshus, when one has cultivated, often developed, the mindfulness regarding the body, then when he directs his mind towards the attaining of any mental state attainable through direct knowledge, he gains the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right.

The chariot

31 Suppose, bhikshus, there were a chariot on good level ground at a crossroads, harnessed to thoroughbreds, with a whip on a slant (in the holder) at the ready, so that a skilled driver, a trainer of tamable horses, might mount and, taking the reins in his left hand and the whip in his right, drive out and back, to whatever place and by whichever road he likes.¹¹¹

The realization refrain

Even so, bhikshus, when one has cultivated, often developed, the mindfulness regarding the body, then when he directs his mind towards the attaining of any mental state attainable through direct knowledge, he gains the ability to witness [to personally experience] any aspect therein, whenever the conditions are right.

¹⁰⁹ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave udaka,maṇiko pūro udakassa samatittiko kākapeyyo ādhāre ṭhapito, tam enaṃ balavā puriso yato yato āvajjeyya: āgaccheyya udakan ti?* “Were to push it,” *āvajjeyya*, pot 3 sg of *avajjati* = caus *āvajjeti*, (1) tilts, tips up (to pour out); tips over; (2) adverts to, turns (one’s mind) to, give one’s attention to; ponders over, thinks about. There is a wordplay here. As at (**Samādhy-aṅga**) **Pañc’aṅgika S** (A 5.28.12/3:27) = SD 33.13. Cf V 1:230; D 1:244; S 2:134; U 90.

¹¹⁰ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave same bhūmi,bhāge caturassā pokkharaṇī aḷibaddhā pūrā udakassa samatittikā kākapeyyo, tam enaṃ balavā puriso yato yato ālīṃ muñceyya: āgaccheyya udakan ti?*

¹¹¹ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave subhūmiyaṃ cātum,mahā,pathe ājañña,ratho yutto assa ṭhito odhastā,patodo, tam enaṃ dakkho yog’ācariyo assa,damma,sārathi abhiruhitvā vāmena haṭṭhena rasmiyo gahetvā dakkhiṇena haṭṭhena patodaṃ gahetvā yen’icchakaṃ sāreyyaṃ, yad icchakaṃ sāreyya pi paccāsāreyya pi. Paccāsāreyya is opt of *paccāsāreti* (*paṭi + ā + sāreti*, caus of √SR, to flow), to make go (or turn) backward (M 1:124 = A 3:28 = Comy: *paṭinivatteti*): see PED, svv *paccāsāreti* & *paṭinivattati*. Parable recurs in **Kakacūpama S** (M 21.7.5/1:124) = SD 38.1; **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119.31/3:97) = SD 12.21; **Rathōpama S** (S 35.239/4:176) = SD 55.14; (**Samādhi**) **Pañc’aṅgika S** (A 5.28.14/3:28) = SD 33.13. Cf a similar parable, that of the earth-mound at the crossroads: **Kimbila S** (S 54.10.-22/5:325) = SD 12.22.*

BENEFITS OF THE MINDFULNESS REGARDING THE BODY

The ten benefits

32 Bhikshus, when the mindfulness regarding the body has been cultivated, often developed, used as a vehicle, used as a basis, established, consolidated, well undertaken, these ten benefits may be expected. What are the ten?¹¹²

33 (1) He conquers discontent and delight, and discontent overcomes him not. He dwells victorious over discontent even as it arises.¹¹³

34 (2) He conquers fear and dread, and fear and dread overcome him not. He dwells victorious over any fear and dread even as they arise.

35 (3) He bears cold and heat, hunger and thirst, the touch of gadflies, of mosquitoes, of the wind, of the sun, and of creeping things. He endures ill-spoken, unwelcome words. He endures bodily feelings that are painful, racking, sharp, stabbing, disagreeable, life-threatening.¹¹⁴

36 (4) He can attain at will, without difficulty, without trouble, the four dhyanas [98] that comprise the higher mind and provide pleasant dwelling here and now.¹¹⁵

The 6 superknowledges¹¹⁶

37 (5) Psychic powers. He wields **the manifold supernormal powers**.¹¹⁷ Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears; he vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through space. He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and the moon, so mighty and powerful. He has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā worlds.

¹¹² *Kāya, gatāya bhikkhave satiyā āsevitāya bhāvitāya bahulī, katāya yāṇi, katāya vatthu, katāya anuṭṭhitāya paricittāya susamāraddhāya ime das'ānisaṃsā pāṭikānkhā*. This is stock, sometimes called: **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.2.2(17)/-3:248 f, as 6 *nissaraṇīya dhātuyo*, “the 6 elements leading to liberation”) = **Das'uttara S** (D 34.1.7(7)/3:280); **Kāya, gata, sati S** (M 19/3:97, 99) = SD 12.21; **Nissāraṇīya S** (A 6.13/3:291 f); (**Aṭṭhānisaṃsā**) **Mettā S** (A 8.1/-4:150); **Mettānisaṃsā S** (A 11.16/5:342) = SD 2.15; cf **Cha, pāṇā S** (S 35.247) = SD 18.14; Pm 2:130.

¹¹³ *Arati, rati, saho hoti na ca tam arati sahati, uppannam aratiṃ abhībhuyya abhībhuyya viharati*.

¹¹⁴ This whole para: *khamo hoti sītassa uṇhassa jīghacchāya pipāsāya ḍaṃsa, makasa, vātātapa, sirimsapa, samphassānam duruttānam durāgatānam vacana, pathānam uppannam sārīrikānam vedanānam dukkhānam tippānam kharānam kaṭukānam asātānam amanāpānam pāṇa, harānam adhvāsaka, jātiko hoti*.

¹¹⁵ *Catunnam jhānānam abhicetasikānam diṭṭha, dhamma, sukha, viharānam nikāma, lābhī hoti akicchā, lābhī akasira, lābhī*. Comy glosses *nikāma, lābhī* as “attaining it whenever he desires it” (*yathā, kāma, lābhī*); *akicchā, lābhī* as “attaining it without difficulty” (*adukkhā, lābhī*); and *akasira, lābhī* as “attaining it abundantly” (*vipula, lābhī*) (DA 3:897). This is stock: **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28.19/3:113), **Sekha S** (M 53.6+18+19+23/1:354, 356, 357, 358), **Go-paka Moggallāna S** (M 108.17/3:11), **Kāya, gatā, sati S** (M 119.36/3:98), **Nava S** (S 21.4/2:278), **Mahā Kappina S** (S 54.7/5:316), **Venāga, pura S** (A 1:181-184 ×9), **Uruvela S 2** (A 4.22.3/2:23), **Vassa, kāra S** (A 4.35.3/2:36 f), **Putta S** (A 4.87.5/2:87), **Nāgita S** (A 5.30.2/3:31 ×3), **Samaṇa, sukhumāla S** (A 5.31.7/3:33), **Phasu, vihāra S** (A 5:104/3:132), **Asekha S** (A 5.106/3:134), **Catuddisa S** (A 5.109/3:135), **Arañña S** (A 5.110/3:135), **Nāgita S** (A 6.42.2/3:342 ×2), **Yasa S** (A 8.86.2+3+4+5/4:341-343 ×6), **Kosala S 2** (A 10.30.9+10/5:67 f ×4), **Subhūti S** (A 11.15.13/5:341).

¹¹⁶ The first 5 superknowledges (*abhiññā*) are almost identical as those mentioned, without the similes, at **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.87-96/1:77-83) = SD 8.10. All these six are known as *abhiññā*; but while the first 5 are called “superknowledges” or “superpower,” the 6th and last is best called “direct knowledge,” as it is the only supramundane one (it is a liberating power). For details on each of the 6 superknowledges, see **Miracles** = SD 27.5a (5).

¹¹⁷ Cf **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11.5) where the Buddha disapproves of the exhibiting of such powers.

38 (6) Clairaudience. He hears, by means of the **divine-ear element**,¹¹⁸ purified and surpassing the human, both kinds of sounds, divine and human, whether near or far.

39 (7) Telepathy. He directs and inclines the mind to **the knowledge of mind-reading**. He knows the minds of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed them with his own mind.¹¹⁹

He knows a mind with lust as a mind with lust,
and a mind without lust as a mind without lust.

He knows a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion,
and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion.

He knows a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion,
and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion.

He knows a contracted mind [due to sloth and torpor] as a contracted mind,
and a distracted mind [due to restlessness and worry] as a distracted mind.

He knows an exalted mind [through the lower or higher dhyana] as an exalted mind,
and an unexalted mind [not developed by dhyana] as an unexalted mind.

He knows a surpassable mind as a surpassable mind,
and an unsurpassable mind as an unsurpassable mind.¹²⁰

He knows a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind,
and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind.

He knows a released mind as a released mind,
and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind.

40 (8) Retrocognition. He directs and inclines the mind to **the knowledge of the recollection of past lives**.¹²¹ He recollects his manifold past lives, that is, [99] one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion, many aeons of cosmic contraction and expansion, (recollecting),

‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-span. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’

Thus he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes and details.¹²²

41 (9) Clairvoyance. He sees—by means of **the divine eye** [clairvoyance],¹²³ purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and he knows how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, faring in accordance with their karma:

‘These beings—who were endowed with evil conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—after death, when the body has broken up, have re-appeared in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—after death, when the body has broken up, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

¹¹⁸ “Divine-ear element,” *dibba,sota,dhātu*, clairaudience: the ability to hear beyond the normal distance or range of the human ear, a sort of “inner ear” that is able to hear and understand sounds and voices of even non-humans (such as animals), and even those beyond this world.

¹¹⁹ The rest of this section is a list of mental states also appears in the **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22.12/2:299 = M 10.34/1:59).

¹²⁰ Unsurpassable (*anuttaram*) mind, probably synonymous with “developed” mind. See D:W 592 n667.

¹²¹ *Pubbe,nivāsanānussati*, lit “recollection of past abodes.”

¹²² This knowledge is detailed at Vism 13.13-71/411-423.

¹²³ *dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (see n in §102).

Thus, by means of the divine eye, he sees beings passing away and re-appearing, and *how they fare according to* their karma.

42 (10) **Gnosis.** Having right here and now realized for himself through direct knowledge,¹²⁴ after attaining, dwells in the liberation of mind and the liberation by wisdom¹²⁵ that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes.¹²⁶

43 Bhikshus, when the mindfulness regarding the body has been cultivated, often developed, used as a vehicle, used as a basis, established, consolidated, well undertaken, these ten benefits may be expected.”

The Blessed One said this. The monks joyfully approved¹²⁷ of the Blessed One’s word.

— evaṃ —

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¹²⁴ All the above 6 are known as *abhiññā*; but while the first 5 are called “superknowledges” or “superpowers,” the 6th and last is best called “direct knowledge,” as it is the only supramundane one (it is a liberating power).

¹²⁵ “Liberation of mind and liberation through wisdom”: see Intro (6) n.

¹²⁶ “Mental influxes,” *āsava*: see Intro (6) n.

¹²⁷ “Joyfully approved,” *attamanā...abhinandunī*.