

Giri-m-ānanda Sutta

The Giri-m-ānanda Discourse

[The 10 meditations for the sick]
(Aṅguttara Nikāya 10.60/5:108-112)
Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

Introduction

1 Giri-m-ānanda

We only know of Giri-m-ānanda (“Ānanda of the hills”) from **the Apadāna**, its Commentary, **the Thera,gāthā Commentary**,¹ and from this Sutta. It is said that in Sumedha Buddha’s time, Giri-m-ānanda was a householder, who, when his wife and children died, retired to the forest in grief. There, he met the Buddha consoled him, and in return he offered flowers to the Buddha and sang his praises. (ApA 483; ThaA 2:138)

According to the Thera,gāthā Commentary, he was the son of king Bimbisāra’s chaplain. Seeing the greatness of the Buddha’s Teaching when the Buddha visited Rājagaha, he joined the order. He lived in a village studying, but one day, when he was at Rājagaha to visit the Buddha, the king asked him to remain there, promising to look after him.

The king, however, forgot his promise, and Giri-m-ānanda had to live in the open. The devas, fearing that he would be wet from rain, stopped it from falling. The king, observing the drought, and learning its reason, built a hermitage for him where he continued his practise until he became an arhat (ThaA 2:138). This event is reflected in **the Giri-m-ānanda Thera,gāthā**:

- 325** The rains fall like a sweet song;
My little hut is roofed, pleasant, draught-free;
Calm (*vūpasanta*), I dwell within—
So rain, therefore, rain if you wish.²
- 326** The rains fall like a sweet song;
My little hut is roofed, pleasant, draught-free;
With peaceful mind (*santa,citta*), I dwell within—
So rain, therefore, rain if you wish.
- 327** The rains fall like a sweet song;
My little hut is roofed, pleasant, draught-free;
Rid of desire (*vīta,lobha*), I dwell within—
So rain, therefore, rain if you wish.
- 328** The rains fall like a sweet song;
My little hut is roofed, pleasant, draught-free;
Rid of hate (*vīta,dosa*), I dwell within—
So rain, therefore, rain if you wish.
- 329** The rains fall like a sweet song;
My little hut is roofed, pleasant, draught-free;
Rid of delusion (*vīta,moha*), I dwell within—
So rain, therefore, rain if you wish. (Tha 325-329)

¹ Ap 1:331 f; ApA 483; ThaA 2:138 f. Cf AA 5:42 f; Nm 2:268.

² This refrain is also found in **Dhaniya S** (Sn 1.2/18-34/3-6).

2 Ancient Indian medicine

This sutta, in its section on **the perception of danger** (*ādīnava, saññā*) [§7], makes one of the earliest historical references to ancient Indian medicine. According to Kenneth Zysk, early Buddhism was a key factor in the rise of Indian medicine, and a close study of Indian sources from the 9th century BCE to the beginning of the Common Era, shows that

medical practitioners were denigrated by the brāhmaṇic hierarchy and excluded from orthodox ritual cults because of their pollution from contact with impure peoples. Finding acceptance among the communities of heterodox ascetic renunciants and mendicants who did not censure their philosophies, practices, and associations, these healers, like the knowledge-seeking ascetics wandered the countryside performing cures and acquiring new medicines, treatments, and medical information, and eventually became indistinguishable from the ascetics with whom they were in close contact...

Fitting into the Buddha's key teaching of the Middle Way between the extremes of world indulgence and self-denial, healing became a part of Buddhism by providing the means to maintain a healthy bodily state characterized by an equilibrium both within the organism and its environment. Portions of the repository of medical lore were codified in the early monastic rules, thereby giving rise to a Buddhist monastic medical tradition.³ The symbiotic relationship between Buddhism and medicine facilitated the spread of Buddhism in India, led to the teaching of medicine in the large Indian conglomerate monasteries and assisted the acceptance of Buddhism in other parts of Asia...

Medicine in the Buddhist monastery receives special attention because, like the Christian monasteries and nunneries of the European Middle Ages, communities of Buddhist monks and nuns played a significant role in the institutionalization of medicine. Indeed, an understanding of the social history of Buddhism is incomplete without a full elucidation of Buddhism's involvement in the healing arts. The codification of medical practices within the monastic rules accomplished perhaps the first systematization of Indian medical knowledge and probably provided the model for later handbooks of medical practice; the monk-healers' extension of medical care to the populace and the appearance of specialized monastic structures serving as hospices and infirmaries increased the popularity of Buddhism and ensured ongoing support of the monasteries by the laity; and the integration of medicine into the curricula of major monastic universities made it a scholastic discipline. (Zysk 1998:5 f)

The causes of how one feels (such as pain and sickness) are also briefly mentioned in **the Sīvaka Sutta** (S 36.21), which states that karma is only one of the causes.⁴

3 Cognitive training

3.1 TRAINING THE MIND. A very important part of early Buddhist spiritual cultivation consists in cognitive training, that is, understanding and skillfully guiding one's conscious behaviour. This training is clearly evident from the wealth of terms relating to observation and minding (mind-training). **Analayo's** makes this observation:

The method through which cognition is trained can be conveniently exemplified with a set of terms occurring in the Girimānanda Sutta, where reflection (*paṭisañcikkhatī*) and contemplation (*anupassanā*) are mentioned alongside cognition (*saññā*) [Table 3.3]. Although this is not spelled out in the discourse, this passage lists those two activities that are related to training cognition: a

³ Zysk's fn: In a recent article, Richard Gombrich persuasively argues that the Buddhist monastery had the required organizational structure from its inception to carry out the function of systematizing and preserving Buddhist scripture. This structure then facilitated the codification and transmission of the Indian medical knowledge as part of Buddhist religious literature ("How the Mahāyāna Began," *Journal of Pāli and Buddhist Studies* 1, 1988:29-46).

⁴ S 36.21/4:230 f = SD 5.6, see esp Intro (1).

preliminary degree of wise reflection as a basis for the sustained practice of contemplation (*anupassanā*). Skillfully combined, these two can gradually transform the way the world is cognized.

To give a practical example: if, on the basis of an intellectual appreciation of impermanence, one regularly contemplates the arising and passing away of phenomena, the result will be the arising of *aniccasaññā*, of cognitions apprehending phenomena from the viewpoint of impermanence. With continued practice, awareness of impermanence will become increasingly spontaneous and have an increasing influence on one's daily experiences, outside of actual contemplation. In this way, sustained contemplation can lead to a gradual change in the operational mechanics of cognition, and in one's outlook on the world. (Analyo 2003:228)

The Giri-m-ānanda Sutta contains more verbs related to cognitive training than those mentioned by Analyo. We shall here list all in the order of usage and prominence:

3.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS. We will now examine the key words (especially verbs) used in connection with the mind-training described in the Giri-m-ānanda Sutta. The four of them, here arranged according to prominence by way of occurrence:

3.2.1 *saññā*, “perception” [§§3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12]. The term *saññā* occurs throughout nine of the ten mindfulness exercises, that is, except in the case of the mindfulness of the breath. *Saññā*, usually translated as “perception” (as one of the five aggregates), is used in a different sense here, that is, meaning a “theme,”⁵ “idea,”⁶ or “perceptual object.” The Visuddhi,magga Commentary, Paramattha Mañjūsā (by Dhammapāla), says that perception exercises may be used as preliminary work for calmness (*samatha*) or for access concentration.⁷ **The (Satta) Saññā Sutta** (A 7.46), however, states that

These seven perceptions, bhikshus, when cultivated and continuously developed, are of great fruit, of great benefit, grounded in the deathless, ending up in the deathless. (A 7.46.1/4:46)⁸

3.2.2 *paṭisañcikkhati*, “he reflects” [§§4, 5, 7, 9, 10]. “He reflects,” *paṭisañcikkhati*, “he thinks over, discriminates, considers, reflects”⁹ is derived from *paṭi*, “back (to)” + *sañ*, “together, nearby” + *cikkhati*, “he tells” (fr √KHYĀ, “to see”: Whitney 33). The BHS¹⁰ *pratisamśikṣati*, literally means “he studies exactly,” “becomes well aware that (followed by the subject’s thought)” (Mvst 2:314.15),¹¹ and is apparently synonymous with *prativipaśyati*, “he perceives distinctly.”¹² The verb *cikkhati* (frequentative of √khyā, Dhpt 19), however, means “he tells, announces,” and is found in the forms *ācikkhati* (he tells, relates, designates, describes) and *paṭisañcikkhati*. As noted above [3.3], the verb, *paṭisañcikkhati*, “he reflects,” shows that this reflection is done *after* one has emerged from the dhyana or mental concentration (during which time the joyful mental focus is otherwise devoid of thoughts). To “reflect” means—to use the mirror analogy—that one simply notes the phenomena without comment and without projecting any other ideas onto it: one examines the object just as it is.

3.2.3 *anupassī*, “who contemplates” [§§4, 5, 7]. This term occurs in three of the perception exercises: those of (1) impermanence, (2) of not-self, and (4) of danger. *Anupassī* has the sense of “a continued effort in watching”: *anu* (a prefix meaning “after,” in the sense of sustained effort, as in “again and again”) and *passī* (from *passati*, “he sees”), “seeing.”¹³ **Sujato** explains *anupassanā* (the noun form of *anupassati*) thus:

⁵ Nyanaponika & Bodhi 1999:303 VII n1.

⁶ BDict: *saññā* (3).

⁷ VismT 334 f.

⁸ See SD 15.4.

⁹ V 1:5; D 1:63; M 1:267, 499, 3:33; S 1:137; A 1:205; Pug 25; Vism 283.

¹⁰ Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.

¹¹ PED has BHS wr *pratisamśikṣati*.

¹² See BHSD sv.

¹³ For a detailed discussion on *anupassanā*, see **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** = SD 13.1(3.5).

The prefix *anu-* suggests “following, conforming, after,” and lacks the analytical implication of *vi-*. It could be interpreted here as implying a mode of contemplation that “conforms” to the relevant context; thus *anupassanā* is normally the second member of a compound where the first member defines the specific subject of meditation: “contemplation of...”

In psychological contexts[,] *anu-* commonly carries the nuance of “continuing.” Thus *vitakketi* means “to think”; *anuvitakketi* means “to keep on thinking.”

The same usage occurs in the definition of *sati* as “memory” that we have encountered above. There two terms are used: *sara* and *anussara*, which we should understand as “remembers, keeps in memory.”

A similar nuance is evident in two of the terms used in the Abhidhamma gloss for the jhana factor *vicāra*—*anusandhanatā* and *anupekkhanatā*—which should be translated “sustained application, sustained observation.”

Anupassanā is semantically cognate with *anupekkhanatā*, and so also suggests “sustained observation.” This sustained, continuous aspect of *anupassanā* is clearly emphasized in the verses we examined above. The commentary on the Visuddhimagga comments on this word in just this way: “he keeps re-seeing (*anu anu passati*) with jhana knowledge and insight knowledge.”¹⁴

(Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, 2004:119 f)

3.2.4 *paccavekkhati*, “he reviews” [§6]. The verb *paccavekkhati* (“he reviews”) is derived from *paṭi* (a directional prefix, here meaning “back to”) and *avekkhati* [from *ava*, “down” + √IKṢ, to see], “looks down on (from above), considers, regards.” Hence, the word *paccavekkhati* has the sense of continually looking back upon, reflection upon, the object, that is, recalling its true purpose.¹⁵

The verb *paccavekkhati* (“he reviews”) is found used only once, that is, in the perception of foulness (*asubha, saññā*), which is “reviewed,” that is, one internally examines that one is made of “the 32 parts,” a meditation often combined with the analysis of the four elements.¹⁶ The verb, *paccavekkhati*, reflects the physical presence of these 32 body parts that are reviewed.

In **the Amba,laṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 61), for example, the young Rāhula is admonished by the Buddha with the well known analogy of a mirror (“for the purpose of reflection”), thus:

In the same way, Rāhula,
action with the body should be done only after repeated reflection,
action with speech should be done only after repeated reflection,
action with the mind should be done only after repeated reflection.¹⁷

*Evam eva kho Rāhula paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā kāyena kammaṃ kattabbaṃ,
paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā vācāya kammaṃ kattabbaṃ,
paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā manasā kammaṃ kattabbaṃ.* (M 61.8/1:415) = SD 3.7

¹⁴ Vism:Ñ 68 n47.

¹⁵ M 1:415; S 3:103, 151 f, 4:111, 236 f; J 5:302; Vbh 193, 194 (cf A 3:323). The abstract *n paccavekkhaṇa* is also used in the late sense of “retrospective,” as in *paccavekkhaṇa, ñāṇa*, “retrospective knowledge,” ie the recollected mental image obtained in mental concentration, or to any inner experience just passed, such as any dhyana, or supramundane path or path fruition. In this connection, the term *paccavekkhaṇa nimitta*, “reviewing sign,” is mentioned as the fifth of “the five things to be developed,” ie the fivefold perfect concentration, in **Das’uttara S** (D 34.1.6(2)). See BDict: sv

¹⁶ See **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28.5b-23/1; 185-189) = SD 6.16.

¹⁷ “Repeated reflection,” *paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā* is an example of a reduplicative (a verb repeating itself to show repeated or continuous action). Although the verb *paccavekkhati* usually means “he reviews” in the sense of an examination of conscience after the fact, here it is used as a synonym for *yoniso manasikāroti*, “he considers mindfully”, that is, before the deed, during the deed and after the deed as clearly evident from the three phases of each of the three doors of action: “when you want to do an action” [9, 12, 15], “while you are doing an action” [10, 13, 16] and “after you have done an action” [11,14,16].

Monastics have to review their using of the four requisites (*paccaya*) (food, robes, lodging, and medicines). This constant reflection of proper use of the requisites is called “the purity of reflection” (*paccavekkhaṇa, suddhi*), and forms the fourth aspect of basic monastic training, that is, the fourfold “moral virtue of purification” (*pārisuddhi, sīla*), which, briefly stated, are:

- (1) restraint in accordance to the monastic code (*pāṭimokkha, saṃvara, sīla*);
- (2) restraint of the senses (*indriya, saṃvara, sīla*);
- (3) purification of livelihood (*ājīva, pārisuddhi, sīla*); and
- (4) moral virtue as regards to the four requisites (*paccaya, sannissita, sīla*).¹⁸

3.3 USAGE OF TERMS. Here we shall present a table showing the usages of the key terms related to cognitive training, an early aspect of mental cultivation:

| Table 3.3 Cognitive training terms | <i>saññā</i> (perception) | <i>paṭisañcikkhati</i> (he reflects) | <i>anupassī</i> (contemplating) | <i>paccavekkhati</i> (he reviews) |
|--|------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (1) The perception of impermanence [§4] | √ | √ | √ | — |
| (2) The perception of not-self [§5] | √ | √ | √ | — |
| (3) The perception of foulness [§6] | √ | — | — | √ |
| (4) The perception of danger [§7] | √ | √ | √ | — |
| (5) The perception of abandoning [§8] | √ | — | — | — |
| (6) The perception of fading away [§9] | √ | √ | — | — |
| (7) The perception of cessation [§10] | √ | √ | — | — |
| (8) The perception of not delighting in all the world [§11] | √ | — | — | — |
| (9) The perception of the impermanence of all formations [§12] | √ | — | — | — |
| (10) The mindfulness of the breath <i>pajānāti & sikkhati.</i> ¹⁹ [§13] | | | | [This exercise has its own verbs: |

Note that **the first nine exercises** are called “perception” (*saññā*) [Table 3.3], and from the chart on “the 40 meditation methods,”²⁰ the six recollections are for those who are faith-inclined, that is, those with a strong faith faculty (*saddh’indriya*),²¹ but these exercise only lead to access concentration, that is, the mind is temporarily focussed and joyful, but not fully concentrated.²²

The 10th exercise—**the mindfulness of the breath** (*ānāpāna, sati*)—is a class of its own, and its key verbs: *pajānāti* (“he knows”) and *sikkhati* (“he trains himself”).²³ The breath meditation is especially beneficial for those whose mental disposition is delusive or discursive (or the “intellectual type”), who are often inclined to thinking and argumentation. This key meditation can lead to any of the four form dhyanas.

The three exercises involving “contemplating” (*anupassī*), also involve “reflection” (*paṭisañcikkhati*),²⁴ and they are all perception (*saññā*) exercises. These are exercises to note personal experiences of impermanence, the lack of abiding self, and the dangers of neglecting one’s spiritual practice. The perception of foulness (*asubha, saññā*) is in this category of exercises, too, but its key verb is “he reviews”

¹⁸ M 1:10, 2:75; Vbh 244-247; Vism 1.41-130/15-46; Abhs:SR 212; Abhs:BRS 347 f; Abhs:WG 348

¹⁹ See here below.

²⁰ SD 15.1 Diagram 2: meditations 23-28.

²¹ On the spiritual faculties (*indriya*), see SD 10.3-4.

²² See SD 15.1(9.2).

²³ See §§12-13 below & **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118.17-21/3:82 f) = SD 9.7.

²⁴ *Paṭisañcikkhati*, is of course a verb, but maintained so here after “reflection” for the sake of easy reference.

(*paccavekkhati*), that is, he internally examines that he is made of “32 parts,” a meditation often combined with the analysis of the four elements.²⁵ The verb, *paccavekkhati*, reflects the physical presence of these 32 body parts that are reviewed. In the other cases here, the objects of meditation are *abstract*, and so are “reflected” on as a perception.

The 6th exercise, the perception of fading away (*virāga,saññā*), and the 7th, the perception of cessation (*nirodha,saññā*), both refer to the results of effective mindfulness practice, so that, in the case of (6), *the fading away of lust* (that is, the experience of dispassion), so that one rejoices thus:

“This is peaceful! This is sublime! That is, the stilling of all formations, the letting go of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, the fading away, nirvana.” [§9]

In (7), one notes *the cessation of suffering*, and rejoices thus:

“This is peaceful! This is sublime! That is, the stilling of all formations, the letting go of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, the cessation, nirvana.” [§10]

In both cases, the key verb is *paṭisañcikkhati*, “he reflects,” because this reflection is done *after* he has emerged from the dhyana or mental concentration (during which time the joyful mental focus is otherwise devoid of thoughts).²⁶

3.4 TEN PERCEPTIONS. The best known set of ten perceptions, which follows a practical sequence is found in **the Bojjaṅga Saṃyutta** (S 46), as follows:²⁷

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) the perceptions of foulness | (<i>asubha,saññā</i>), |
| (2) the perceptions of death | (<i>maraṇa,sati</i>), |
| (3) the perceptions of repulsiveness of food | (<i>āhāre paṭikkūla,sañña</i>), |
| (4) the perceptions of non-delight | (<i>sabba,loke anabhirata,saññā</i>), |
| (5) the perceptions of impermanence | (<i>anicca,saññā</i>), |
| (6) the perceptions of suffering | (<i>dukkha,saññā</i>), |
| (7) the perceptions of not-self | (<i>anatta,saññā</i>), |
| (8) the perceptions of abandonment | (<i>pahāna,saññā</i>), |
| (9) the perceptions of dispassion | (<i>virāga,saññā</i>), and |
| (10) the perceptions of cessation | (<i>nirodha,saññā</i>). |

The last six perceptions form the constituents of true knowledge (*vijjā,bhāgiya dhamma*), which is mentioned in **the Dīgh’āvu Sutta** (S 55.3).²⁸

These ten perceptions seem to be listed rather randomly, even haphazardly, in **the Giri-m-ānanda Sutta** [§§4-13; Table 3.3], and it also includes the mindfulness of the breath (*ānāpāna,sati*) [§13]. In fact, the Giri-m-ānanda listing of the ten perceptions is unique, and understandably so, as they form the teaching for the sick Giri-m-ānanda, who is probably already an arhat. He only needed to listen to the teachings as a basis for mental focus to heal himself of his illness. Or, he could simply go into deep meditation and heal himself.

4 Note on noting

4.1 LABELLING. A modern innovation, inspired by such statements such as the Satipatṭhāna refrain regarding “maintaining the mindfulness of a ‘body’ merely for knowing and awareness,” is that of “**labelling**,” that is, a sub-verbal mental noting of distractions and any phenomenon arising during one’s medita-

²⁵ See **Mahā Hatthi,paḍōpama S** (M 28.5b-23/1;185-189) = SD 6.16.

²⁶ Except of course in the 1st dhyana, where initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*) are used to refine the focus.

²⁷ S 46.71-76/5:132 f.

²⁸ See **Dīgh’āvu S** (S 55.3/5:344-347) = SD 23.16 Intro (1).

tion.²⁹ However, such a practice comes naturally and does not go against the grain of the Suttas or the mindfulness tradition (meditation practice).

Mindful “knowing” or direct watching underlies all satipatthana exercises: the other verbs [3] used in connected with satipatthana only add on to the basic “knowing” due to the more complicated nature of the object. This “knowing” and connected actions all relate directly to the attaining of focus and insight. In the popular “Vipassanā” method started in Burma, this is known as “labelling,” the meditator merely makes a mental note of what is going on at the six sense-doors. The main problem with “labelling” is that it is done with *mental verbalization* (“head talk”). The proper way is simply to watch *without comment*, a “knowing without words.” Commenting on certain innovative teachings in the name of Abhidhamma, **Sujato** graphically instructs:

So while the Buddha spoke of the mind “changing while it stands,” the Abhidhamma just speaks of “standing.” It is much easier to define a static entity than a process evolving over time. This is why a butterfly collector wants to have his butterflies dead, with a pin stuck through their heart and a little label underneath, not madly meandering about in the woods. The dead mind. But the Buddha was not a butterfly collector, he was an observer of nature. He wanted us to watch the flight and flutter of the butterfly, to understand how it behaves in its natural environment, and to follow it gently, delicately, quietly until it settles down to rest and be still according to its nature—which he called “samadhi.”
(Sujato, TMA:7, digital ed)³⁰

This strong but insightful criticism is understandable as Sujato belongs to the Thai forest tradition that emphasizes a direct experience of reality in one’s mindfulness practice. However, most beginners to meditation will be assailed by a barrage of sense-experiences, and the initial tool is to pick the most dominant of these, and note it just as it is. Some sort of labelling, whether sub-verbal (head talk) or silent noting (mental seeing), usually helps to minimize distraction, so that one could return to the meditation object. In fact, the main difference (perhaps the *only* practical difference) between the forest tradition and the modern “insight” (vipassana) method is this: while the forest method emphasizes silent noting, the insight method encourages the use of sub-verbal labelling. The purpose of both methods is the same: the overcoming of mental hindrances.

4.2 KNOWING. **Sujato**, in *A History of Mindfulness*, comments on the contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), showing how it deals basically with the abandoning of the mental hindrances, also applies to a proper understanding of “labelling” or “mental noting”:

The overall context, the progressive structure of the [Satipaṭṭhāna] discourse, and the inclusion of the mind “compressed” [contracted] (by sloth) and “scattered” [distracted] (by restlessness) all suggest that here we are basically dealing with **the abandoning of the hindrances** on the plane of samadhi, an interpretation confirmed by the commentary. Here again, as in the contemplation of feelings, a distinctive facet of all the satipatthana material is the direct experience of the “exalted” mind, the “unexcelled” [unsurpassable] mind, the mind “in samadhi,” the “released” [liberated] mind—all synonyms for jhana.

These two sections share a common syntactical structure. For example: “When feeling a pleasant feeling, one understands ‘I feel a pleasant feeling.’” Or in the contemplation of mind: “One understands mind with lust as ‘mind with lust.’”

This reflexive structure is shared also with *ānāpānasati*: “When breathing in a long breath, one understands ‘I am breathing in a long breath.’” The phrasing in “quotation marks” (representing the Pali particle *iti*) was perhaps what prompted some schools to equate satipatthana meditation with mental noting. But this would be a naively literal interpretation.

²⁹ See **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** = SD 13.1(3.9c)+(8).

³⁰ D 22.2B/2:291; M 10.4B/1:56. For a differing opinion, see Analayo [3.9] above.

Similar usages are found, for example, in the standard passage on the formless attainments. Due to the idiomaticness of the Pali, this is difficult to translate; literally it would be: “‘Space is infinite,’ one enters & abides in the field of infinite space.” Usually translators would say something like: “‘Aware that ‘Space is infinite,’ one enters & abides in the field of infinite space.” Obviously here the meditator has passed well beyond thinking or noting anything. The use of *iti* with repetitions in such contexts seems rather to intimate the reflexive, “seeking within” nature of meditative contemplation. One is not merely knowing the feeling, but one is conscious that one is knowing the feeling. (Sujato 2004b:149 f; emphases added)

Here, **Analayo** makes a similar note as Sujato has done, saying,

The way this instruction [the satipaṭṭhāna refrain] is phrased suggests the use of mental labeling. Mindfulness is established that ‘there is a body’ (feelings, mind, *dhammas*). The Pāli particle *iti* used here indicates direct speech, which in the present context suggests a form of mental noting. This is in fact not the only instance of this kind of recommendation in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Most of the instructions in the discourse use direct speech to formulate what is to be known.³¹

This way of presentation shows that concepts, especially when used as labeling tools for the purpose of mental noting, can be skillfully employed with the context of *satipaṭṭhāna*.³² Thus the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* does not require a complete relinquishment of all forms of verbal knowledge.³³ In fact, concepts are intrinsically related to cognition (*saññā*), since the ability to recognize and understand relies on a subtle level of mental verbalization and thereby on the use of concepts. The skillful use of labeling during *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation can help strengthen clear recognition and understanding. At the same time, labelling introduces a healthy degree of inner detachment, since the act of apostrophizing one’s moods and emotions diminishes one’s identification with them. (Analayo 2003:113 f)

4.3 DIRECT EXPERIENCE. A *conceptual* approach to meditation often helps initially, but in due course, when the mind is calm enough, it should be dispensed with, so that one looks *directly* into the mind. **Analayo’s** comments here are instructive:

Clearly, for the Buddha the mere absence of concepts does not constitute the final goal of meditation practice.³⁴ Concepts are not the problem, the problem is how concepts are used. An *arahant* still employs concepts, yet without being bound by them.³⁵

On the other hand, *satipaṭṭhāna* has to be clearly distinguished from mere intellectual reflection. What this part of the “refrain” indicates is the extent to which concepts and labels are appropriate within the context of insight meditation. This should be kept to an absolute minimum, only

³¹ Eg M 1:56: “he knows, ‘I breathe in long’”; M 1:56: “he knows a lustful mind to be ‘lustful’”; M 1:59: “he knows, ‘I feel a pleasant feeling’”; M 1:59: “he knows, ‘there is the mindfulness awakening factor in me’”; M 1:162: “he knows as it really is, ‘this is *dukkha*’.” [Analayo’s fn]

³² On labelling, cf Fryba 1970:130-132; Mangalo 1988:34; Nyanaponika 1968:13; Sujiva 2000:181-183. For a differing opinion, see Sujato [4.2] below.

³³ See Analayo 2003:113 n89 for refs regarding the need for ego skills for successful meditation and the danger of cultivating intellectual vacuity. **Ñāṇananda** speaks of “rallying the concepts for the higher purpose of developing wisdom whereby concepts themselves are transcended” (1971:60).

³⁴ Analayo: In fact, even the fourth immaterial attainment (*n’eva,saññā,nāsaññ’āyatana*), a deep meditative experience as far removed from concepts as possible within the realm of mundane experience, still falls short of realization (fn). Cf Hamilton 1996:60.

³⁵ Analayo: According to **It 53**, *arahants*, because of their penetrative understanding of concepts and verbal expressions, are able to use them freely, without in any way falling prey to them. Cf also **Ñāṇananda**: “to believe that by merely demolishing concepts or theories one can rise above them is to stop at the fringe of the problem.” (1986:103)

“to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness.” Labelling is not an end in itself, only a means to an end. Once knowledge and awareness are well established, labelling can be dispensed with. (Analyo 2003:114)

Moreover, the Dharma as the liberating truth has to be directly experienced, just as food and medicine has to be taken by oneself and in a proper manner. One who merely studies a menu or argue over it without taking any food will surely go hungry. In **the Āyācana Sutta** (S 6.1), the newly awakened Buddha reflects on his realization, thus:

This Dharma that I have discovered is deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, sublime, unattainable through discursive thought,³⁶ subtle, to be experienced by the wise. (S 6.1/1:136-138 = SD 12.2)

— — —

³⁶ *Atakkāvacaro* = *na* + *takka* + *avacara*, lit “not in the sphere of discursive thought (or logic)” (V 1:4 = D 2:36 = 37 = M 1:167 = S 1:136 ≠ M 1:487 ≠ 2:172; A 2:289; D 1:12; It 37).

The Giri-m-ānanda Discourse

(A 10.60/5:108-112)

[108]

1 At one time the Blessed One was dwelling in Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park, in Jeta’s Grove, near Sāvathī. At the time, the venerable Giri-m-ānanda was ill, in pain, gravely ill.

Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, the venerable Ānanda said this to the Blessed One:

2a “Venerable sir, the venerable Giri-m-ānanda is ill, in pain, gravely ill. It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One would go to him out of compassion.”

THE 10 PERCEPTIONS

2b “Ānanda, if you approach the monk Giri-m-ānanda and speak to him regarding **the ten perceptions**, it is possible that the monk Giri-m-ānanda, having heard the ten perceptions, his illness will subside immediately. What are the ten? [109]

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | (1) The perception of impermanence | (<i>anicca,saññā</i>); |
| | (2) The perception of not-self | (<i>anatta,saññā</i>); |
| | (3) The perception of foulness | (<i>asubha,saññā</i>); |
| | (4) The perception of danger | (<i>ādīnava,saññā</i>); |
| | (5) The perception of abandoning | (<i>pahāna,saññā</i>); |
| | (6) The perception of fading away (of lust) [of dispassion] | (<i>virāga.saññā</i>); |
| | (7) The perception of cessation | (<i>nirodha,saññā</i>); |
| | (8) The perception of not delighting in all the world | (<i>sabba,loke anabhirata,saññā</i>); |
| | (9) The perception of the impermanence of all formations | (<i>sabba,sankhāresu anicca,saññā</i>); |
| | (10) The mindfulness of the breath | (<i>ānāpāna,sati</i>). |

1 The perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*)

And what, Ānanda, is the perception of impermanence?

4 Here, Ānanda, a monk who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house,³⁷ reflects³⁸ thus:

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| Form | is impermanent; |
| Feeling | is impermanent; |
| Perception | is impermanent; |

³⁷ “Empty place,” (*suññ’āgāra*), sometimes rendered as “empty place.” 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 and this aggregate of noble sense-restraint and this aggregate of noble mindfulness and clear knowledge and this aggregate of noble contentment, he seeks out a secluded dwelling: 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” (*so iminā ca ariyena sīla-k,khandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya,sañvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati,sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhitāya samannāgato vivittam senāsanaṃ bhajati, araññaṃ rukkha,mūlaṃ pabbataṃ kandaraṃ giri,-guhaṃ susānaṃ vana,pattham abbhokāsam palāla,puñjaṃ*, D 2.67/ 1:71): this stock passage also at **Sāmañña-phala S** (D 2) = SD 8.10.67 (2005). The oldest reference 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).

³⁸ “(He) reflects,” *paṭisañcikkhati*, “he thinks over, discriminates, considers, reflects”; see Intro (3.2.2).

Formations are impermanent;
Consciousness is impermanent.

Thus he dwells contemplating³⁹ impermanence in these five aggregates of clinging.
This, Ānanda, is called the perception of impermanence.

2 The perception of not-self (*anatta,saññā*)

And what, Ānanda, is the perception of not-self?

5 Here, Ānanda, a monk who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house, reflects thus:

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| The eye is not-self; | form is not-self; |
| The ear is not-self; | sounds are not-self; |
| The nose is not-self; | smells are not-self; |
| The tongue is not-self; | tastes are not-self; |
| The body is not-self; | touches are not-self; |
| The mind is not-self; | mind-objects are not-self. |

Thus he dwells contemplating not-self in these six internal-and-external sense-bases.
This, Ānanda, is called the perception of not-self.

3 The perception of foulness (*asubha,saññā*)

And what, Ānanda, is the perception of foulness?

6 Here, Ānanda, a monk reviews⁴⁰ 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 are⁴¹

- (1) head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin;⁴²
- (2) flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;⁴³
- (3) heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs),⁴⁴ spleen, lungs;⁴⁵
- (4) large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents,⁴⁶ faeces[, brain];⁴⁷
- (5) bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat;⁴⁸

³⁹ *Anupassī*, see Intro (3.2.3).

⁴⁰ “Reviews,” *paccavekkhati*, see Intro (3.2.4) & also **Satīpaṭṭhāna Ss** = SD 13.1(3.9b).

⁴¹ 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 (or wind) 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.

⁴² *Kesā lomā nakhā dantā taco*. The meditation on these five parts “with skin as the fifth” or “skin pentad” (*taca,pancake kamma-t,thāna*) (Vism 242=8.50) forms the basic spiritual practice first taught to monks at the end of ordination.

⁴³ *Mamsaṃ nahāru aṭṭhi aṭṭhi,miñjā vakkam*.

⁴⁴ “Membranes,” alt tr “pleura,” *kilomaka*, ie a pair of membranous sacs surrounding the lungs.

⁴⁵ *Hadayaṃ yakanam kilomakam pihakam papphasam*.

⁴⁶ *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).

⁴⁷ *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.

⁴⁸ *Pittam semham pubbo lohitaṃ sedo medo*.

(6) tears, grease, saliva, snot, oil of the joints,⁴⁹ urine.⁵⁰

Thus he dwells contemplating foulness in this body.
This, Ānanda, is called the perception of foulness.⁵¹

4 The perception of danger (*ādīnava,saññā*)

And what, Ānanda, is the perception of danger?

7 Here, Ānanda, a monk who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house, reflects thus:

“Of much suffering [110] is this body, with many dangers! Various kinds of illnesses arise in the body, such as⁵²

eye ailment, hearing ailment, nose ailment, tongue ailment, body ailment,

(*cakkhu, rogo sota, rogo ghāna, rogo jivhā, rogo kāya, rogo*);

head ailment, ear ailment, mouth ailment, teeth problem, cough,

(*sīsa, rogo kaṇṇa, rogo mukha, rogo danta, rogo kāso*);

cold, heat [burning], fever, stomach ailment, faintness [swooning], diarrhoea, colic, cholera,

(*sāso pināso ḍaho jaro kucchi, rogo mucchā pakkhandikā sūlā visūcika*);

leprosy, abscess [boils], eczema, tuberculosis, epilepsy;⁵³

(*kuṭṭham gaṇḍo kilāso soso apamāro*);

ringworm,⁵⁴ itch, scabs, pustules,⁵⁵ scabies, jaundice,⁵⁶ diabetes, piles, boil, fistula,

(*daddu kaṇḍu kacchu rakhasā vitacchikā lohita, pittam madhu, meho amsā piḷakā bhagandalā*);

⁵⁷bile disorder,⁵⁸ phlegm disorder,⁵⁹ wind disorder,⁶⁰ a combination of them, a change in the temperature, improper self-care,⁶¹ ailments due to assault [trauma upon oneself caused by outside agencies],⁶² ailment due to the results of one’s karma,

⁴⁹ *Lasikā*, ie synovial fluid.

⁵⁰ *Assu vasā kheḷo siṅghāṇikā lasikā muttam*.

⁵¹ **Satta,saññā S** (A 7.46.3-4/4:46 f) = SD 15.4 shows how the perception of foulness removes sexual desire.

⁵² This section contains one of the oldest references of medicine in Indian social history. See Intro (2).

⁵³ Those with these 5 diseases are barred from joining the order (V 1:70-73, 93, 2:271, 4:8; VA 995 f; see also Nm 1:17, 47, 2:304; Nc 166).

⁵⁴ *Daddu*, Skt *dadru, dardru, dadrula, dardura (dardara), dardula, dradula*, a skin disease, probably a kind of leprosy or ringworm.

⁵⁵ *Rakhasā, rakhasā, nakhasā*. Comy say that this is “an ailment at the place scratched by the nails (*nakha*)” (AA 5:43; NmA 1:61).

⁵⁶ *Lohita, pitta*, lit “bile in the blood.” “Jaundice” is conjectured by FL Woodward, A:W 5:75.

⁵⁷ While the first 4 ailments are internal, the rest are external, except for karmic results, which are both. The first 4 of these ailments—the 3 peccant (illness-bringing) humours and their combination—are central to Āyurveda medical aetiology. The first 3 humours (Skt *doṣa*) are the *tri,doṣa* of Āyurvedic medicine. They also form a prominent aspect of the Mahāyāna medicinal philosophy and healing (Zysk 1998 ch 4). These 8 ailments are mentioned in **Sīvaka S** (S 36.21 = SD 5.6), **Samaṇa-m-acala S 1** (A 4.87.5/2:87), and (**Samaṇa**) **Sukhumāla S** (A 5.104/3:131). In the last sutta, one who is disease-free is said to be one free from these 8 causes (cf Nm 370). In **Milinda,pañha** (Miln 134 f), Nāgasena discusses the 8 causes of suffering in the context of the Buddha’s lack of moral vice. All this attests to the early history of this aetiology.

⁵⁸ Symptoms of bile disorders (*bhagandalā*) include nervousness and excitement suggesting that one has emotional and neurotic problems.

⁵⁹ Symptoms of phlegm disorders (*pitta,samuṭṭhānā ābādhā*) include sluggishness and apathy suggesting that one has depression.

⁶⁰ Symptoms of wind disorders (*vāta,samuṭṭhānā ābādhā*) include hiccup, stitch (brief sharp pain running through the body) and stomach-ache. Also at **Sīvaka S** (S 36.31.6/4:230) = SD 5.6.

⁶¹ Causes of *visama,parihārajā ābādhā* include sitting or standing too long, and being bitten by a snake.

⁶² *Opammikā ābādhā*. It is also translated as “assault” or “external agency,” but the Pali forms *upakkama, opak-kama, opakkamika*, and the Sanskrit *upakrama* (from *upa-* and √KRAM, to stride) have the primary meaning of

(*pitta,samuṭṭhānā ābādhā semha,samuṭṭhānā ābādhā vāta,samuṭṭhānā ābādhā sannipātikā ābādhā utu,pariṇāmajā ābādhā visama,parihārajā ābādhā opakkamikā ābādhā kamma,-vipākajā ābādhā*);

cold, heat, hunger, thirst, voiding, urinating (*sītaṃ uṇhaṃ jighacchā pipāsā uccāro passāvo*).

Thus he dwells contemplating the dangers in this body.

This, Ānanda, is called the perception of danger.

5 The perception of abandoning (*pahāna,saññā*)

And what, Ānanda, is the perception of abandoning?

8 Here, Ānanda, a monk does not give in to a sensual thought that has arisen, but he abandons it, pushes it away, makes an end of it, brings it to extinction.

He does not give in to a thought of ill will that has arisen, but he abandons it, pushes it away, makes an end of it, brings it to extinction.

He does not give in to a violent thought that has arisen, but he abandons it, pushes it away, makes an end of it, brings it to extinction.

He does not give in to evil unwholesome states that have arisen, but he abandons them, pushes them away, makes an end of them, brings them to extinction.

This, Ānanda, is called the perception of abandoning.

6 The perception of fading away (*virāga,saññā*)

And what, Ānanda, is the perception of fading away (of lust) [the perception of dispassion]?

9 Here, Ānanda, a monk who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house, reflects thus:

‘This is peaceful! This is sublime! That is, the stilling of all formations, the letting go of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, *the fading away*, nirvana.’

This, Ānanda, is called the perception of fading away.⁶³

7 The perception of cessation (*nirodha,saññā*)

And what, Ānanda, is the perception of cessation (of suffering)?⁶⁴

10 Here, Ānanda, a monk who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house, reflects thus:

‘This is peaceful! **[111]** This is sublime! That is, the stilling of all formations, the letting go of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, *the cessation*, nirvana.’

This, Ānanda, is called the perception of cessation.

8 The perception of not delighting in all the world (*sabba,loke anabhirata,saññā*)

And what, Ānanda, is the perception of not delighting in⁶⁵ all the world?

11 Here, Ānanda, abandoning any engagement and clinging to the world due to mental standpoints, adherences [mindsets] and latent tendencies, he refrains from them, being one with no clinging.

This, Ānanda, is called the perception of not delighting in all the world.⁶⁶

“attacking suddenly.” As such, Zysk thinks “it therefore could be equivalent to the *āgantū*, or external, category of disease causation in Indian medicine. According to the āyurvedic medical tradition, *āgantū* causes are generally violent and traumatic and involve injury to the body” [Caraka Saṃhita Sūtrasthāna 20.3; Suśruta Saṃhita Sūtrasthāna 1.24 f] (Zysk 1998:30). This suffering may arise from being arrested for crime, being attacked by robbers, accidents, etc; the Buddha’s foot being hurt by a piece of rock due to Devadatta’s attempted assassination.

⁶³ Both this perception and the next are reflections on nirvana, and are subsumed under the recollection of peace (*upāsamānussati*), explained at Vism 8.245-251/293 f.

⁶⁴ On this perception, see prec n.

⁶⁵ “Not delighting in,” *anābhirata*, which is syn with *nibbidā*, “disenchantment, disillusionment, revulsion.”

9 The perception of wishlessness towards all formations (*sabba,saṅkhāresu aniccha,saññā*)⁶⁷

And what, Ānanda, is the perception of wishlessness towards all formations?

12 Here, Ānanda, a monk is pained by all formations, ashamed of them, revulsed by them. This, Ānanda, is called the perception of wishlessness towards all formations.

10 The mindfulness of the breath (*ānāpāna,sati*)

And what, Ānanda, is the mindfulness of the breath?⁶⁸

13a Here, Ānanda, a monk who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house,⁶⁹ sits down, and having crossed his legs⁷⁰ and keeping his body upright,⁷¹ establishes mindfulness before him.⁷²

⁶⁶ This is the 4th perception of the seven found in **Satta,saññā S** (A 7.46.3-4/4:46 f) = SD 15.4, where it is explained in more detail: its practice is said to lead to nirvana; the immediate benefit is that the mind shrinks away from worldly thoughts. Cf *Atammayatā* = SD 19.13.

⁶⁷ The spelling *aniccha* (sic) = *na + icchā*. Sometimes wrongly read as *sabba,saṅkhāresu anicca,saññā*. As noted by Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, “It is hard to see exactly how the explanation ties in with the theme of impermanence. Some MSS read the name of this perception as *sabba,saṅkhāresu anicchā,saññā*, “perception of wishlessness (or non-desire) in regard to all formations,” which may be more original.” (1999:313 n51).

⁶⁸ For detailed study, see **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118.17-21/3:82 f) = SD 9.7. See also Vism 8.145-244 for explanation. Bodhi says: “While the first three tetrads can be developed in the mode either of tranquillity or insight, the fourth tetrad is exclusively a subject of insight meditation.” (*Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 1999:313 n52).

⁶⁹ “Empty place,” (*suññ’āgāra*), sometimes rendered as “empty place.” 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 and this aggregate of noble sense-restraint and this aggregate of noble mindfulness and clear knowledge and this aggregate of noble contentment, he seeks out a secluded dwelling: 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” (*so iminā ca ariyena sīla-k,khandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya,samvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati,sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuḥhitāya samannāgato vivittam senāsanaṃ bhajati, araññaṃ rukkha,mūlaṃ pabbataṃ kandaraṃ giri,guhaṃ susānaṃ vana,paṭṭhaṃ abbhokāsaṃ palāla,puñjaṃ*, D 2.67/ 1:71): this stock passage also at **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2) = SD 8.10.67 (2005). The oldest reference 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).

⁷⁰ “Sitting cross-legged” (*pallaṅkaṃ 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.

⁷¹ “Keeping his body upright” (*ujum kāyaṃ pañidhāya*). This is mainly for the sake of warding off discomfort and pain after a long sitting. Imagine a pendulum or plumbline 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.

⁷² **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 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?** Brahmagosa, 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

—Mindfully⁷³ he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out.

THE 16 PHASES OF BREATH MEDITATION

A. The first tetrad: Contemplation of the body

13b

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) Breathing in long [deep], ⁷⁴ | he knows: ‘I breathe in long [Long in-breath]’; ⁷⁵ |
| 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]’; ⁷⁶ |
| (3) He trains himself thus: | ‘I will breathe in, experiencing the whole body (of breath)’; ⁷⁷ |
| 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 formation (of breathing)’; ⁷⁸ |

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 *pari-mukhaṃ* as air contact as “either at the nose or lip” (2000:6). See Intro (2d) above. (All three teachers here are pupils of Ajahn Chah.)

⁷³ Ce Se Ke PTS *sato*.

⁷⁴ Brahmavaṃso: “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 2002:59 f). On these 4 tetrads and 16 aspects, see Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:133-136. On the breath, see Intro (1cd) above.

⁷⁵ 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 important n on “Mental noting”: Intro (3).

⁷⁶ 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).

⁷⁷ “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 (Brahmavaṃso, 2002:60). Brahmavaṃso 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 Brahmavaṃso 2002:62 f. For a discussion, see Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:131 f.

⁷⁸ “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*). See Cūḷa Vedalla S (M 44.14) for explanation of *kāya,saṅkhāra*. This calming process may lead to the development of dhyana, but this is not the primary object here (Walshe 1995 n641). Brahmavaṃso: “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

He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, calming the bodily formation (of breathing)’;⁷⁹

B. The second tetrad: Contemplation of feelings

- 13c (5) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing zest [joy]’;⁸⁰
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing zest [joy]’;
 (6) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing happiness’;⁸¹ [M 3:83]
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing happiness’;
 (7) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, knowing the mental formations [mental functions]’;⁸²
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, knowing the mental formations [mental functions]’;
 (8) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, calming the mental formations [mental functions]’;⁸³

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).

⁷⁹ At this point even after the breath has been calmed down but one still does not experience joy [zest] (*pīti*) or the “beautiful breath,” the one should proceed to the next two steps to willfully arouse feelings of joy [zest]. (Brahmavamso 2002:66).

⁸⁰ “Zest,” *pīti*. Sometimes translated as “joy” or “rapture,” but “**zest**” is closer to evoking the more subtle yet enthusing nature of *pīti*. However, in this sutta tr I have rendered *pīti* as “zest” and *sukha* as “happiness,” following Brahmavamso to be consistent with his commentaries used here. One experiences *zest* (*pīti*) in two ways: by attaining either the 1st or 2nd *jhāna* in which zest is present, one experiences it in the mode of calm (*samatha*); by emerging from that *jhāna* and reflecting that zest is subject to destruction, one experiences zest in the mode 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 [joy] belongs the formation group (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*) while happiness (*sukha*) belongs to the Feeling Group (*vedanā-k,khandha*). Zest [joy] is compared to when a thirsty man lost in the desert finds water; happiness is what he feels when he is drinking the water. See Vism 4.94 ff.

⁸¹ Brahmavamso: “As you calm the breath down, you get to the stage where the breath becomes very, very refined, very peaceful, and very smooth. It is the nature of such a mind state that it should be very happy... This is another type of happiness, and it takes wisdom to be able to recognize it...the Buddha taught the fifth and sixth steps to arouse that [un arisen] beauty.” The 5th step is the deliberate arousal of *zest* [joy] (*pīti*) with the beautiful breath; the 6th step is the deliberate arousal of happiness (*sukha*). “This is one important training in meditation, to be able to extract the perceptions of happiness and zest [joy] from whatever you’re doing...When the breath is very peaceful, search for that bliss and you will find it.” This is what Brahmavamso calls “**the beautiful breath.**” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:68). When the mind is very peaceful, one only need to look for the zest [joy] in it to find it.

⁸² “Knowing the mental formations [mental functions],” *citta,saṅkhāra,paṭisaṁvedī*. This refers to the experience of the breath as a dharma [mind-object]. “When the beautiful breath is established, it may appear that your breath has disappeared, that you have just this beautiful, stable peace inside but no breath. What has happened is that you are still breathing, but the breath is no longer being experienced as a touch on the body, instead it is experienced as an object in the mind. You are switching from feeling to knowing. The sense base of physical touch turns off and the mind turns on... You are still breathing but the knowing is so focussed that the experience is like a smooth flow in one direction only.” (Brahmavamso 2002:68 f). He then gives **the simile of the carpenter sawing**: “When a carpenter begins to saw a piece of wood he can see the whole saw from the handle to the tip of the saw blade. As he concentrates on the cut, his attention focusses closer and closer onto the point where the saw touches the wood. The handle and tip of the saw soon disappear from his vision. After a while, all he can see is the one saw tooth, that tooth which is in contact with the wood now, whereas all the other saw teeth to the left and to the right are now beyond his range of perception. He does not know nor needs to know, whether that tooth is at the beginning or middle or end of the blade. Such concepts have been transcended.” (2002:69). The same method given in the previous note applies to the second and third clauses. According to some teachers, in the second, the three lower *jhāna* are present and in the third, all four are present. Mental formations here refer to feelings, perceptions and other mental concomitants, and which are calmed by the development of successively higher levels of calm and insight. See **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.14) for explanation of *citta,saṅkhāra*.

He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, calming the mental formations [mental functions]’;

C. The third tetrad: Contemplation of the mind

13d (9) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing the mind’;⁸⁴

He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing the mind’; [112]

(10) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, gladdening the mind’;⁸⁵

He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, gladdening the mind’;

(11) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, concentrating the mind’;

He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, concentrating the mind’;⁸⁶

⁸³ “Calming the mental formations [mental functions],” *passambhayaṃ citta, saṅkhāraṃ*. “It can happen at this and subsequent stages of the meditation process that the zest [joy] and happiness become a little bit too exciting and therefore disturb the tranquillity. Because of this the Buddha taught the eighth step... Alternatively, fear can arise alongside the bliss: ‘This is a bit too much for me.’... And, again, the bliss leaves. The fear destroys the tranquillity.” (Brahmavaṃso 2002:70). He then relates Ajahn Chah’s famous **simile of the forest pool** in detail (2002:71 f).

⁸⁴ “Experiencing the mind.” According to Brahmavaṃso, “It’s only at this stage that you can know the mind... the only place where you can actually experience the mind... by what we call a *nimitta*, a reflection of the mind. Remember the mind is that which is ‘knowing.’ How can the ‘knower’ know itself? Only like a person who looks at himself in a mirror. Only that way can you see your face, can you see your reflection. The reflection you see here, the *nimitta*, is a true reflection of the mind. It’s as if the mirror has finally been cleaned of all this dust and grime on its surface, and now at last you can see yourself. You can experience the mind (*citta, paṭisaṃvedī*) through the *nimitta*. (2002:73; see 73 f for **simile problems**). The *nimitta* is just a reflection of the “knower,” the meditator’s mind: one’s image in the mirror only reflects one’s looks and does what one does! If the watcher is still, the image, too, is still. It does not help to hold the mirror still: one has oneself to remain still. “Instead, focus on the knower, that which is experiencing this, and calm that into stillness.” (2002:78). According to Bodhi “experiencing the mind” is to be understood by way of the fourth *jhāna* (2001 n1118). *Citta*, “mind,” is synonymous with *mano* and *viññāṇa* (*Yaṃ... idaṃ vuccati cittaṃ ti vā mano ti vā viññāṇaṃ ti vā*, D 1:21; *Yaṃ ca kho etaṃ... vuccati cittaṃ iti pi mano iti pi viññāṇaṃ iti pi*, S 2:94 f), so too in most traditions following the Abhidharma period, but they were clearly differentiated within the Yogācāra. SA says that all the three are names for the mind-base (*man’āyatana*). See Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, 2000:769 n154.

⁸⁵ “Gladdening the mind” (*abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ*), ie shining the meditation sign. According to Brahmavaṃso, the mental reflex or meditation sign (*nimitta*) may appear to some as being “too dull” or “unstable,” which are addressed by the 10th and 11th steps, respectively; “shining the *nimitta* and sustaining the *nimitta*... The more zest [joy] there is in the mind, the more brilliant shines the *nimitta*. To enter *Jhāna*, the *nimitta* has to be the most brilliant thing that you have ever seen, and an unearthly beauty.” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:74 f). Brahmavaṃso teaches 4 ways of shining the *nimitta* (here summarized): (1) focus on centre of the *nimitta*; (2) sharpen the attention in the present moment; (3) smile at the *nimitta*; (4) go back to the beautiful breath. (2002:76 f). The reflex may be dull also due to poor moral conduct or to low mental effort. In the case of poor moral conduct, one should “spend some effort purifying your conduct beyond the meditation cushion. Keep your precepts faultlessly. Check your speech. The Buddha said that without first purifying *sīla* [moral conduct], it is impossible to purify *samādhi* [mental concentration].” (2002:75). In the case of low mental effort, one should remedy it by switching to “**the inspirational meditations**” like a reflection (*anussati*) on any of the Three Jewels, on giving (*cāgānussati*) or *mettā, bhāvanā*. According to Bodhi, “gladdening the mind” is either the attainment of the first 2 *jhāna* (containing joy) or as the penetration of those *jhāna* by regarding them with insight as subject to destruction. (2001 n1118)

⁸⁶ “Concentrating the mind” (*samādahaṃ cittaṃ*), ie sustaining the meditation sign (*nimitta*). Sometimes, “even the brilliant *nimitta* can appear unstable... it is just a reflection of the knower... If the knower moved so did [his] reflection, the *nimitta*.” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999). “It is common that the first few times that a *nimitta* appears, it flashes up for a short time and then disappears. Or else it moves around in the mental field of vision. It is unstable. Usually, the bright powerful *nimittas* remain longer [than] the dull weak ones...” (2002:78). The solution, according to Brahmavaṃso, is to “focus on the knower, that which is experiencing this, and calm that into stillness.” (1999). “Once again, it is usually fear or excitement that creates the instability. You are reacting too much rather than passively observing. Experiencing the *nimitta* for the first time is like meeting a stranger for the first time. Often you are on the edge because you do not know who they are or how they behave.” (2002:78 f). He goes on to give the example of how one learns to cycle: “...you soon learn to stop gripping the *nimitta* like the child gripping the bicycle handlebars. You relax and discover that the more you ease off controlling the easier it is to sustain the *nimitta*.” Or, one

- (12) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, freeing the mind’;⁸⁷
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, freeing the mind’;

D. The fourth tetrad: Contemplation of dharmas⁸⁸

- 13e (13) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, contemplating impermanence’;⁸⁹
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, contemplating impermanence’;
 (14) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, contemplating the fading away (of lust)’;⁹⁰
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, contemplating the fading away (of lust)’;
 (15) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, contemplating the cessation (of suffering)’;⁹¹
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, contemplating the cessation (of suffering)’;
 (16) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, contemplating the letting go (of defilements)’;⁹²
⁹³He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, contemplating the letting go (of defilements).’

deliberately surrenders the car keys to the *nimitta* to let it drive and one just sits back and relax. (2002 78 f). According to Bodhi, “concentrating the mind” refers either to the concentration pertaining to the *jhāna* or to the momentary concentration that arises along with insight (2001 n1118)

⁸⁷ “Freeing the mind” (*vimocayan cittaṃ*). Here, according to Brahmavaṃso, “the mind usually has two experiences that are exactly the same, but just depending on your perspective. You either find yourself ‘diving’ into the *nimitta*... The attention just sinks in there. Or else that *nimitta*, that ‘beautiful light’ or ‘feeling,’ just completely ‘envelops you.’ ‘You’ don’t do this...it just happens... You enter the *Jhāna* through freeing the mind. The Buddha called the *Jhānas* stages of freedom (*vimokkha*) [D 16.3.33, A 8.66].” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:79-81). This is probably the most truly powerful experience in one’s life, when one can really call oneself a “mystic.” It is a kind of momentary “joy of awakening” (*sambodhi sukha*, M 1:454). This is an experience “where the mind is free from the body. I’m not saying that it’s floating out somewhere like an out-of-body experience. You’re just not located in space and time any more. All space and time have something to do with the body. Here the mind is free from all of that. You’re just experiencing bliss. You’re not at all sensitive to what’s happening with the body.” (2002:80). In fact, there is a total hibernation of the physical senses.

⁸⁸ These last following four stages relate to the meditator who has just emerged from the *jhāna*. The first thing one 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, “you either take up *Satipaṭṭhāna* (the Four Focusses of Mindfulness) or just go directly to the last four stages of *Ānāpānasati*.” The meditator has any one of these four following things [13-16] to contemplate on after emerging from the *jhāna*. (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:81-85). See also SD 13.1 (5D)(iv).

⁸⁹ “Impermanence,” *anicca*. What we call the “self,” something that appears to be so constant that we do not even notice it. In *jhāna*, it disappears. If you experience this deeply as “not-self,” “it’s very likely to give rise to the experience of Stream Winning.” (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:82).

⁹⁰ “Fading away,” *virāga*, also tr as “dispassion” (see §42). If reflections on impermanence does not work, then one should go on to reflect on the “fading away” (*virāga*). “This is when things just disappear...things which were so close to you, that you thought were an essential part of you...” (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999).

⁹¹ “Cessation,” *nirodha*. Something that was once there had now disappeared. “So much of the universe that you knew has ceased, and you’re in a completely different space...what you thought was important has gone... Cessation is also the Third Noble Truth [the cessation of suffering]. The cause of that cessation is letting go...And what’s left?...the opposite of *dukkha*...it is *sukha* (happiness). The ending of suffering is happiness.” (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:82 f).

⁹² “Letting go,” *paṭinissagga*, or “abandoning.” “In this context *Paṭinissagga* is not giving away what’s ‘out there,’ but giving away what’s ‘in here’...the letting go of the ‘doer,’...even of the ‘knower’...especially letting go of... the ‘will,’ the ‘controller.’ This is the path to the end of suffering. (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:82 f).

⁹³ While the previous three tetrads deal with both calm and insight, this tetrad deals only with insight. “Contemplating the fading away...” and “contemplating the cessation...” can be understood both as insight into the impermanence of formations and as the supramundane path leading to Nirvana, that is, the fading of lust (*virāga*) and the cessation of suffering. “Contemplating the letting go...” is the giving up of defilements through insight and the gaining of Nirvana through the path.

This, Ānanda, is called the mindfulness of the breath.

Giri-m-ānanda is healed

14 Ānanda, if you approach the monk Giri-m-ānanda and speak to him regarding the ten perceptions, it is possible that the monk Giri-m-ānanda, having heard the ten perceptions, will have his illness subside immediately.”

15 Then the venerable Ānanda, having learned the ten perceptions before the Blessed One himself, approached the venerable Giri-m-ānanda. Having approached the venerable Giri-m-ānanda, he spoke to him regarding the ten perceptions.

Then the venerable Giri-m-ānanda, upon hearing the ten perceptions, his illness subsided immediately. The venerable Giri-m-ānanda recovered from his illness, and that is how the venerable Giri-m-ānanda was rid of his illness.

—evam—

Bibliography

Analayo, Samanera

2003 *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003.
[The biblio is very comprehensive.]

Zysk, Kenneth G

1982 “Studies in Traditional Indian Medicine in the Pāli Canon: Jīvaka and Āyurveda.” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5,1 1982:70-86.

1998 *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery*. [1991]
Corrected ed Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998.

051028; 060706; 070726; 081228