SD 62.15 (Satipaṭṭhāna) Sālā Sutta

The (Satipatthana) Discourse at Sālā

S 47.4

Theme: Even the saints practise satipatthana

Translated with notes by Piya Tan ©2010; 2025

1 Sutta summary and highlight

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The (Satipaṭṭhāna) Sālā Sutta (S 47.4) records the Buddha as declaring the primary position of the 4 satipatthanas [2.1.5.1] in Buddhist practice, that is, they have been mastered by the arhats, they are being mastered by the path saints (the streamwinners, once-returners and nonreturners),[1] and should be properly cultivated by novice monks (*bhikkhu nava*), those new to the sangha.

1.2 SUTTA HIGHLIGHT

1.2.1 The Sutta's commentary notes that in the above Sutta context, both the novice monks and the arhats have cultivated the same preliminary parts of the 4 satipatthanas [2.1.0], while the 7 path saints (the streamwinner-to-be and the streamwinner-become, the once-returner-to-be and once-returner-become, the nonreturner-to-be and the nonreturner-become, and the arhat-to-be) have cultivated the rest of satipatthana.[2]

The meaning of this explanation is that beginners *start with* satipatthana just as where the arhats themselves have done. The other practitioners—the 7 kinds of path-saints (the stages in between)—practise the rest of satipatthana training to attain their meditative goal.

1.2.2 The Kandaraka Sutta (M 51,3) records the Buddha as mentioning that the arhats and the learners "dwell with their minds well established in the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)." Then, Pessa, the elephant-trainer's son, exults, declaring to the Buddha that there are also lay followers like himself who, from time to time, practise the 4 satipatthanas.[3] [2.2.1]

2 The 4 satipatthanas

2.1 DYNAMICS OF SATIPATTHANA

2.1.0 The 4 satipatthanas

Briefly, the 4 satipatthanas or "focuses of mindfulness" are as follows: [§4]

(1) contemplation of the body	*kāyânupassanā*;	body-based meditation;
(2) contemplation of feelings	*vedanā'nupassanā*;	feeling-based meditation;
(3) contemplation of mind	*cittânupassanā*;	mind-based meditation;
(4) contemplation of dharmas	*dhammânupassanā*;	reality-based meditation.

[1] On these first 2, see **Kandaraka S** (M 51,3), SD 32.9.

[2] *Imasmiṁ sutte navaka,bhikkhūhi c'eva khīṇ'āsavehi ca bhāvita,satipaṭṭhānā pubba,bhāgā, sattahi sekhehi bhāvitā missakā* (SA 3:200,6-8).

[3] M 51,4 (SD 32.9).

2.1.1 Body-based meditation

2.1.1.1 Satipatthana (***sati'paṭṭḥāna***) is the best known of early Buddhist meditation methods, since it is rooted in the breath meditation (*ānâpāna,sati*) used by the Buddha himself to gain awakening. Based on this key body-based practice, the Buddha developed a 4-stage system for "setting up mindfulness" (*sati-upaṭṭḥāna,* euphonically combined into *sati'paṭṭhāna*). It is popularly known as "focuses of mindfulness" since it is the best way for meditators, especially beginners and the unawakened, to effectively direct their mindfulness to the meditation object to develop samadhi or concentration.

Traditionally, every satipatthana practice begins with **breath meditation** because it is easy to do. Breath meditation quickly brings one some level of calm, even concentration or "unified mind" (*ekodi,-bhūta*), explained by the Commentaries as "momentary concentration" (*khaṇika samādhi*) [§4(1) n]. This mental concentration can be said to be the first and basic goal of satipatthana that all meditators need to master. This is also called **mental unification**, or simply "concentration."

2.1.1.2 Meditation beginners will often be **distracted**, that is, their meditation will be intruded or disrupted by sense-experiences: *sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or touches* (including the weather). In practical terms, Buddhist meditation, as a rule, develops with our understanding and management of these distractions. We only need to choose one such distraction (the most dominant one) to "note," that is, strategically acknowledge it with lovingkindness (with an inner smile), and then let go of that distraction and return to the breath.

Thus, we are only "distracted" when we try to "fight" off a distraction. Neither the senses nor the sense-objects distract us on their own. It is only when the mind is unhappily or deludedly lost with the sense-object that we are *distracted*, meaning that we are following the capricious sense-consciousness instead of settling into the stillness of the breath.

When we learn to "let come, let go" of a **sense-consciousness** as it arises, we have, as it were, "befriended" it and it will not distract us; we then at once bring the mind (attention) back to the breath. As a beginner, we need to master this skill in "letting come, letting go" or freeing the mind of any sense-consciousness so that our attention is better focused on the breath as a mental image (*nimitta*). Every time we bring the distracted mind back to the breath with lovingkindness (with a smile), we get better at freeing the mind from distractions.

2.1.1.3 As we become more naturally comfortable with managing and letting go of distractions, our mind will more easily concentrate and will do so in a sustained way. When the mind is fully unified in a sustained manner, it is called **concentration** (*samādhi*). This gives the mind a profound sense of calm and clarity. As we have mentioned, this is the basic goal of satipatthana practice. Even at this simple level of mental management, we will be able to function well with our daily activities and focus on our work and creativity. Bodily health, too, should be nurtured alongside proper diet, exercise, social interaction and rest.

2.1.2 Feeling-based meditation

2.1.2.1 Proper meditation as mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*), as a rule, begins with letting go of the 5 sense-faculties so that their respective sense-consciousnesses neither intrude nor interrupt the directing of the mind to the mind-object. "Letting go" of the senses does not mean stopping or ending them, since, so long as we live, our senses will function in our mental background. Thus, **letting go** properly means giving these senses enough peaceful space so that none of them fight for our attention, and we are not distracted from directing our mind to the meditation-object, the breath.

Sense-consciousness is the most common distraction for the untrained beginner in meditation. We are *distracted*—dissipating our mental energy and focus—because we are trying to attend to whatever sense-consciousness that arises when a sense-faculty meets a sense-object. This meeting between consciousness, faculty and object is called "**sense-contact**"—this is the perceptual triad from which sense-consciousness (of *sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch*) takes over the mind, preventing it from focusing on the breath, or disrupting that breath-based attention, preventing oneness of mind and breath.

2.1.2.2 Early in our meditation, we are likely to be confronted with **feelings** on two levels: the sensual (sense-based) and the mental (mind-based). In both cases, distraction arises in the form of **feelings** (*vedanā*) that captivate us as familiar or enticing memories (reconstructions of the past). We will first examine sense-based feelings, which usually arise first and are more manageable than *thought-based feelings* [2.1.3.2 (2)].

Sense-based feelings are "grosser" than mind-based ones, which are "subtle" (*sukhuma*). Sense-based feelings are gross (*oḷārika*) in the sense that they are each a sense-faculty (or sense-element, in Abhidhamma terms), all rooted in the mind (how we think). These feelings are the result of how the mind reacts through each of the senses.

For example, when we happen to *see* someone or something while meditating, experienced teachers will remind us to simply "**note**" it for what it really is, neither as a "thing" (a being, etc) nor as "something" (that seizes us in wonder or doubt). It is merely "seeing … seeing." This "noting" skill is vital (and easy) for a beginner to master; and the without which one will be easily distracted. Hence, it is imperative that we have a clear idea of the following noting skills and practise them whenever we can, thus:[4]

sight	*seeing* something externally;	there is only seeing:	"Seeing, seeing …"	(smile and let go);
sound	*hearing* something externally;	there is only hearing:	"Hearing hearing …"	(smile and let go);
smell	*smelling* something externally;	there is only smelling:	"Smelling, smelling …"	(smile and let go);
taste	*tasting* something externally;	there is only tasting:	"Tasting, tasting …"	(smile and let go);
touch	*feeling* something externally;	there is only feeling:[5]	"Feeling, feeling …"	(smile and let go).

2.1.2.3 By "**externally**" [2.1.2.2] is meant that these sense-experiences arise *through* the senses, stimulated by an *external* sense-object. When we "note" an experience just as it is, we keep it "objective"—as an external object—and leave it where it has arisen. Thus the sense-object arises and ceases all on its own: something simple and beautiful in itself. This is how we keep our meditation and mindfulness *simple and beautiful*.

On the other hand, when we are caught in the gravity of any sense-experience, we are "made to feel or know" (*vedeti*)[6] it as being more than it really is. We then "subjectify" that mere sense-experience by "internalizing" it. Based on our recall, or rather reconstruction, of the past,[7] we reshape that mere experience into something complicated, coloured and magnified by what we *like* or what we *dislike* in those memories. For example, when we see someone who resembles (in our mind) someone we hated in the past, we then feel *fear or hatred* in this projected vision. [3.2.2.2]

When we are unskillful towards such an *external* sense-experience, we then internalize it by projecting all kinds of ideas to that bare sense-object. We do this, often instinctively, by heaping negative or

[4] See eg **(Arahatta) Māluṅkya,putta S** (S 35.95), SD 5.9.

[5] We can also note it as: "Touching … " if this works better.

[6] *Vedeti,* "to cause (ourself) to know or feel," a causative verb form of *paṭisaṁvedeti,* "to feel, experience, undergo."

[7] Such projections can also be to the future, by way of some hope, wish or desire for something (material, non-material or mental).

unhappy remarks and notions onto this perception. Hence, our mind explodes into a "mindfull"[8] of unwholesome thoughts. This dangerous development is called "**thought proliferation**" (*papañca*). This reaction is best avoided immediately and totally before it develops into symptoms of mental ill-health.

2.1.3 Mind-based meditation

2.1.3.1 Even though we speak of "sense-based experiences" or simply, "sense-experiences," all such experiences are actually *conscious moments*. They are occasions of **sense-consciousness** (*viññāṇa*)[9] since they arise in the mind. The suttas remind us that they arise from the outside (*bahiddhā*),[10] and should not be internalized, especially during meditation. We need to understand this nature of the senses and the mind intuitively (in an experiential sense, more than just theoretically); we need to be very mindful when **sensing and thinking** arise during meditation.

Once we are able to sustain a good level of clear mindfulness, we should spend some peaceful time observing these 2 aspects of how the mind proliferates itself; that is, know and manage *the sense-based* and *feeling-based* aspects of the active mind. The benefit of such an exercise is that we get to clearly know what we need to manage during meditation so that we will gain full concentration. This exercise may be done directly with the mind-object here and now, or retrospectively as meditative review. In short, this is an exercise in **wise attention** (*yoniso manasikāra*).

2.1.3.2 These two exercises are interconnected, one exercise being the basis for the other. Let us, for example, look at a flower (such a natural object is easier to work with as a start):

(1) **On a sense-based level**, notice the flower's shape, colour/s and a few other characteristics as noticeable, ignoring other things around it. This flower arises as an image in our mind; it is a purely cognitive process, arising according to natural causes and conditions. We call it "flower," but we cannot isolate any part or feature of it that is in itself *the* flower. As we watch the flower, it moves somewhat or some features of it change, such as an insect may land on it, and so on. This is a series of images (say, of which we had taken a video or photos). Yet none of these images alone is *the* flower. All we can know is that it is *a* flower. Even more simply, we can just see it simply as "flower" (with neither "the" nor "a").

We should go on with this exercise until we notice a clear pattern of noticeable reality (some of which may be ineffable; we just know it but have difficulty describing it). Once we feel ready, try this exercise with something else, such as **a person**, simply as a cognitive experience without any emotional colour to it. In other words, delay the "feeling" aspect of our experience until the next level of observation (the feeling-based level).

We have perceived it as a flower or a person. It's just *perception*; it is just *seeing*.

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[8] Ironically, this negative n is the opposite of the positive adj "mindful." This is a rare occasion when a word is its own (close) opposite!

[9] Such sense-consciousnesses are part of the consciousness aggregate (*viññāṇa-k,khandha*) and are of 11 kinds: "past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near," by way of the totality formula. See **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,27/1:138 n), SD 3.13.

[10] Although *sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches* exist as external realities, independent of our sensing of them, in early Buddhist psychology, "**external**" qualifies the sense-object, while "**internal**" refers to the mind's own minding of the sense-objects. Also, the sense-faculties themselves are regarded as "internal" bases (*ajjhatt'āyatana*) and their objects are "external" bases (*bahiddhâyatana*).

(2) **On a feeling-based level**, look at the flower (the same one or a similar one) again.

"Do I like this flower? How do I feel when I like this flower?" "What aspect of the flower do I like?" "Where is this pleasant feeling located?" Nowhere; it's just a feeling.

"Will I like this flower when it has been blown down by the wind, or when it is old, faded and decayed?" "Where is this unpleasant feeling located?" Nowhere; it's just a feeling.

"Whether it is pleasant to me or unpleasant to me, it's just a feeling."

It can get difficult when we direct this feeling-based exercise to someone we know [2.1.3.2]. So delay this until we are well ready for it. Use some other simpler or less complicated object like a piece of music or a cat.

We have conceived it as a feeling. It's just *feeling*.

With mindful practice, we will see and understand how the feeling-based aspect leads to the cyclic round, pulling us back into the floods of *lust, existence and ignorance*. By perceiving the feelings as "pleasant" or "unpleasant," we create a **duality** of "self" and "other," caught in a push-pull cycle of liking and disliking. We are thus caught up in a *consuming* frenzy, a serpent devouring its own tail.

Now, since feeling is the key factor leading to the cyclic round due to mental proliferation, we can and must break the cycle here by not reacting to the feelings. We simply know feelings as they are: a natural process of conditioned causes and effects, without any being, self or person. We have thus initiated a **turning away** (*vivaṭṭa*) from the duality of the consumer and the consumed. We simply let it all *arise and fall away* in a natural cycle. We are at peace at least for the moment.[11]

2.1.3.3 With our understanding of the sensing and the feeling aspects of experience [2.1.3.2], we should be ready to embark on the main exercise of **mind-based satipatthana**, that is, the contemplation of the mind (*cittânupassanā*). **The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) coaches us with the following 8 mindful observations, thus:

(1) I understand a **lustful mind** as	"Lustful mind;"
or, I understand a lust-free mind as	"Lust-free mind."
(2) Or, I understand **a hating mind** as	"Hating mind;"
or, I understand a hate-free mind as	"Hate-free mind."
(3) Or, I understand **a deluded mind** as	"Deluded mind;"
or, I understand an undeluded mind as	"Undeluded mind."
(4) Or, I understand **a narrowed mind** as	"Narrowed mind" [with sloth and torpor];
or, I understand a distracted mind as	"Distracted mind" [with restlessness and worry].
(5) Or, I understand **a great [exalted] mind** as	"Great mind [in dhyana];"[12]
or, I understand a small mind as	"Small mind [out of dhyana]."
(6) Or, I understand **a surpassable mind** as	"Surpassable mind;"
or, I understand an unsurpassable mind as	"Unsurpassable mind."[13]

[11] On sensing and feeling, see SD 60.1e (7.5.2).

[12] "Great mind" or "the mind grown great," *maha-g,gataṁ cittaṁ*, ie made great or "exalted" because all the mental hindrances have been overcome, thus attaining a form dhyana or a formless attainment. See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4) @ SD 24.14 (4). Properly speaking, only the first 4 form dhyanas are called *jhāna*, while the higher 4 formless bases are called *samāpatti* (attainment); and that the 4 formless attainments actually belong to the 4th form dhyana since they all possess the same two factors (ie equanimity and samadhi).

[13] Unsurpassable (*anuttaraṁ*) mind, may be syn with "great" mind or perhaps well calmed for the moment. See D:W 592 n667 & Anālayo 2005 ad M 1:59.

(7) Or, I understand **a concentrated mind** as	"Concentrated mind;"	
or, I understand an unconcentrated mind as	"Unconcentrated mind."	
(8) Or, I understand **a freed mind** as	"Freed mind,"	
or, I understand an unfreed mind as	"Unfreed mind."	(M 10,34/1:59), SD 13.3

In simple terms, we mindfully note whether the mind is distracted by any of the 5 hindrances [2.1.4.1 (1)], or by any of the 3 roots (greed, hatred and delusion), or whether the mind is in dhyana or out of it, or whether the mind is well-focused or not, whether it is freed from the defilements or not.[14]

2.1.4 Dharma-based meditation

2.1.4.1 Dharma-based satipatthana is unique in the sense that we should have proper grounding in the Dharma both as teaching and as experience of true reality in order to cultivate it effectively to free the mind from the dharmas themselves. **The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) clearly defines 5 sets of dharma-teachings that we should directly experience and understand as they really are, thus:

(1) the 5 hindrances;	*pañca nīvaraṇā*	***Nīvaraṇa,*** SD 32.1;
(2) the 5 aggregates;	*pañca-k,khandha*	SD 17;
(3) the 6 sense-bases;	*saḷ-āyatana*	**Sal,āyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137), SD 29.5;
(4) the 7 awakening factors;	*satta bojjhaṅga*	**(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3), SD 10.15;
(5) the 4 noble truths.	*catu ariya sacca*	**Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), SD 1.1.

(1) The 5 hindrances

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 5 hindrances, those factors that prevent us from gaining mental calm, clarity and focus, that is to say:

(1) sensual desire,	*kāma-c,chanda;*
(2) ill will,	*vyāpāda;*
(3) sloth and torpor,	*thīna,middha;*
(4) restlessness and worry, and	*uddhacca,kukkucca;*
(5) doubt.	*vicikicchā.*

In each case, the meditator understands,	"There is [the hindrance'] in me."
	"There is *no* [hindrance] in me."
He understands the arising	of the unarisen hindrance.
He understands the letting go	of the arisen hindrance.
He understands the non-arising further	of the hindrance.

The satipatthana refrain[15]

So he dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas internally [in oneself];
or, contemplating dharma in the dharmas externally [in another];
or, contemplating dharma in the dharmas both *internally and externally* [either way, alternately];
Or, he dwells contemplating states that arise in dharmas,
or, he dwells contemplating states that cease in dharmas,
or, he dwells contemplating states that arise and cease in dharmas;
Or else, he maintains the mindfulness thus:

[14] Properly, we can only note the hindrance-free mind after we have abandoned all the hindrances. See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.4) @ SD 24.14 (4).

[15] See SD 13.1 (3.7).

"There are dharmas [these realities], merely for knowing and awareness.
And he dwells independent, not clinging to anything in this world.

(2) The 5 aggregates of clinging (*pañc'upādāna-k,khandha*)

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 5 aggregates, those factors that constitute our body and mind, thus:

(1) form,	*rūpa-k,khandha;*
(2) feeling,	*vedanā-k,khandha;*
(3) perception,	*saññā-k,khandha;*
(4) formations, and	*saṅkhāra-k,khandha;*
(5) consciousness.	*viññāṇa-k,khandha.*

In each case, the meditator understands, "Such is [the aggregate]" such is its arising; such is its ending."

[Apply the **Satipaṭṭhāna refrain** here.]

(3) The 6 sense-bases

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 6 internal sense-bases and the 6 external sense-bases, thus:

the internal sense-bases		**the external sense-bases**		
(1) the eye	(*cakkhu*),	forms	(*rūpe*);	shapes, colours, etc.
(2) the ear	(*sota*),	sounds	(*sadde*);	voices, vibrations, etc.
(3) the nose	(*ghāna*),	smells	(*gandhe*);	sweet, floral, minty, foul, etc.
(4) the tongue	(*jivhā*),	tastes	(*rase*);	salty, sweet, sour, bitter, umami, etc.[16]
(5) the body	(*kāya*),	touches	(*phoṭṭhabbe*);	warm, cold, hard, soft, etc.
(6) the mind	(*mana*),	dharmas	(*dhamme*).	thoughts, emotions, realities.

In each case,
he understands ***the internal sense-base*** and understands ***the external sense-base*.**
He understands any fetter[17] that arises dependent on both. [Sense-consciousnesses as fetters.]
He understands the arising of an unarisen fetter.
He understands the letting go of an arisen fetter.
He understands the non-arising further of the fetter that he has given up.

[Apply the **Satipaṭṭhāna refrain** here.]

(4) The 7 awakening factors

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 7 awakening factors, thus:

(1) the awakening factor of mindfulness;	*sati sambojjhaṅga;*
(2) the awakening factor of dharma-discernment;	*dhamma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga*
(3) the awakening factor of effort;	*viriya sambojjhaṅga;*
(4) the awakening factor of zest;	*pīti sambojjhaṅga;*

[16] See (3.3.2.5) n; also **Suda S** (S 47.8), SD 28.15.

[17] Whatever that holds us back in samsaric or worldly conduct and life, esp the influxes (*āsava*) of sensual desire, existence, views and ignorance: **Cūḷa Gopālaka S** (M 34,6) n SD 61.3.

(5) the awakening factor of tranquillity; *passaddhi sambojjhaṅga;*
(6) the awakening factor of samadhi; and *samādhi sambojjhaṅga;*
(7) the awakening factor of equanimity; *upekkhā sambojjhaṅga.*

When there is [*the awakening factor*] in him,
he understands, "There is [*this awakening factor*] in me."

Or, when there is *no* [*awakening factor*] in him, he understands,
"There is *no* [awakening factor] in me."
And he understands the arising of an unarisen [*awakening-factor*];
and he understands the perfecting of the arisen [awakening-factor].

[Apply the **Satipaṭṭhāna refrain** here.]

(5) The 4 noble truths

Here the meditator dwells contemplating dharma in the dharmas in respect to the 4 noble truths, thus:

He understands, as it really is,	'This is suffering';	*dukkha ariya,sacca*
he understands, as it really is,	'This is the arising of suffering';	*samudaya ariya,sacca*
he understands, as it really is,	'This is the ending of suffering';	*nirodha ariya,sacca*
he understands, as it really is,	'This is the way leading to the ending of suffering.'	*dukkha,nirodha,gāminī,paṭipadā ariya,sacca*[18]

[Apply the **Satipaṭṭhāna refrain** here.]

2.1.4.2 It is important to understand that the contemplation of dharmas is not to be done ritually. It is an **experiential cultivation** or **spiritual exercise**, that is, we begin by carefully understanding what each factor in each teaching-set is. Then we observe each of them, as instructed, in our own experience of it. Some insight into aspects of the individual factors will then arise as we contemplate thus.

We begin our practice with the teaching-set we understand best, and progress from there. As we understand the set, we see the connections of their individual factors with those of other sets. The pieces of the contemplation puzzle slowly fall into their rightful places, and the picture becomes more complete over time.

Insight into a teaching-set occurs at some level. As we see how the factors of the set fit together, and how they fit with those of other sets, our insight into the dharma (truth and reality) deepens accordingly. At some point, even when we seem not to be making any effort in such a contemplation, our mind will subconsciously process what we know and whisper to us some deeper insight with joy and clarity. These momentary flashes of insight will gradually build up in us greater insights that will bring us closer to the path of awakening.

2.1.5 Satipatthana as the basis for a calm and clear mind

2.1.5.1 The fact that **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Sālā Sutta** (S 47.4) unequivocally states that novice monks (*bhikkhu nava*) should "be made to take up, be settled, be established in the cultivation" of the 4 sati-patthanas [§3] means that satipatthana is to be cultivated to help the mind become concentrated, not

[18] Here, **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,18-21/2:305-313) gives a detailed analysis of the 4 noble truths, one which is more elaborate than its parallel in **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141/3:248-252). On the lateness of this whole section, see SD 13.1 (1.1).

necessarily for the attainment of dhyana (yet).[19] The attainment of dhyana, however, is clearly suggested in the 4-satipatthana formula given in **the Satipatthāna Sutta** (M 10) and **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22), thus:

> Here, bhikshus,
> a monk[20] dwells [21]exertive, clearly aware, mindful, **contemplating body in the body**,[22]
> …[23] **contemplating feeling in the feelings**,
> … **contemplating mind in the mind**,
> … **contemplating dharma in the dharmas**,
> removing[24] covetousness and displeasure [discontent][25] in regard to the world.[26]
> (M 10,3/1:56), SD 13.3 (= D 22,1.4/2:290) SD 13.2

2.1.5.2 Note that this M 10 abridged passage should be read in full for each of the 4 satipatthanas. In the line "**removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world**" (*vineyya loke abhijjhā,-domanassaṁ*), the phrase "covetousness and displeasure" refers to "sensual desire (*kāma-c,chanda*) and ill will (*vyāpāda*)"—the first two of the 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) [2.1.4.1 (1)]—and "in regard to the world" (*loke*) means "by way of the 6 sense-bases" [2.1.4.1 (3)]. The bigger picture here is that the phrase "covetousness and displeasure" is a shorthand for the 5 hindrances, and that:

> the main purpose of cultivating satipatthana is to let go of "**the world**"—the 6 sense-bases—
> and focus the mind so that it is lucid and still.

This is the training for the novice monks and, we may add, lay meditators [2.2]; but at this stage, they do not have to cultivate satipatthana to attain dhyana. For this reason, notice that the phrase "removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world" of **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** is *omitted* from **the Sālā Sutta** satipatthana formulas [§§3 f]. This is because satipatthana here (in S 47.4) is meant to be taught to novice monks, those newly ordained, and also to lay practitioners [§7].

However, even when the full satipatthana formula with "removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world" is present, it only suggests that dhyana may be cultivated by those who are able to

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[19] See "Satipatthana with dhyana," SD 13.1 (4.3.2).

[20] Here "a monk" (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (here, doing satipatthana) (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251): see SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5).

On meditation as renunciation, see **Hāliddakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; ***Bhāvanā***, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

[21] *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassaṁ.* Here we find 4 of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc'-indriya*) in action: see SD 13.1 (4.2).

[22] "Contemplating body in the body" (*kāye kāyânupassī*). See SD 13.1 (3.4).

[23] This is an **ellipsis**—an omission of a familiar repeated passage—which is to be supplied by the reciter or reader for a fuller understanding of the passage. Such an ellipsis is known as *peyyāla* in Pali, abbreviated as *pā* or *pe.* Such ellipses should only be used when the omitted repeated passage can be easily supplied and understood, and not for the sake of economy of space, as is common in commercial translations of the suttas.

[24] *Vineyya* can mean "would or should remove" (as pot or opt, like *vineyya*, Sn 590) or as "having removed" (as ger or absol, like *vineyya,* Sn 58, or *vinayitvā,* Pm 1:244), and both senses apply in Satipaṭṭhāna S. U Silananda similarly ends the sentence with "removing covetousness and grief in the world" (1990:177); also 1990:22-25. See Sn:N 170 n58 + 284 n590. See SD 13.1 (4.2c) above.

[25] "Covetousness and displeasure," *abhijjhā,domanassaṁ,* alt trs: "desire and discontent," "desiring and disliking," or "longing and loathing." Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders it as "hankering and fretting [in regard to the world]." See SD 13.1 (4.2).

[26] "World" (*loka*). See SD 13.1 (4.2.4).

do so. Naturally, even learners (streamwinners, once-returners and nonreturners) practise satipatthana, and some streamwinners and once-returners may not be able to attain dhyana. We will also see, in **the Kandaraka Sutta** (M 51) that some lay followers, too, from time to time practise satipatthana. [2.2.1].

2.2 SATIPATTHANA FOR THE LAITY

2.2.1 The Karandaka Sutta (M 51)

2.2.1.1 The Kandaraka Sutta (M 51) is an inspiring account of **laity** practising satipatthana *with its full formula*, that is, including the phrase "removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world" [2.1.5.2]. This phrase actually keeps the satipatthana practice "open," that is, it includes the more advanced meditators (such as the arhats and learners) who are able to attain dhyana, and also beginners or lay meditators who may not be able to attain dhyana. We are not told in the Kandaraka Sutta, for example, whether any lay practitioner attained dhyana.[27]

2.2.1.2 The relevant passage in **the Kandaraka Sutta** is where **Pessa**, the elephant-trainer's son, joyfully declares that lay followers, too, from time to time, practise satipatthana; but this is not easy since humans, unlike animals, are often more unamenably stubborn and devious than animals are.

The passage explains the amenability of animals despite their stubbornness and deviousness:

> **4** When this was said [2.2.1.1], Pessa, the elephant driver's son, said this to the Blessed One:
>
> "It is wonderful, bhante! It is marvellous, bhante! How well laid down are **the 4 focuses of mindfulness** for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of physical and mental pain, for gaining the right way, for realizing nirvana.[28]
>
> For, we, bhante, as **white-dressed householders**, from time to time dwell with our minds well-established in the 4 focuses of mindfulness.[29]
>
> (1) We dwell, bhante, exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing [watching] *body in the body*, **removing covetousness and displeasure in the world**.[30]
>
> (2) We dwell, bhante, exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing *feeling in the feelings*, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world;
>
> (3) We dwell, bhante, exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing *mind in the mind*, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world;
>
> (4) We dwell, bhante, exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing *dharma [phenomena] in the dharmas*, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.
>
> 4.2 It is wonderful, bhante! It is marvellous, bhante!
>
> For, bhante, how the Blessed One knows what is good or not for beings amidst such human tangles, such human vices, such human wiles.
>
> 4.3 **Humans, bhante, are this tangle; and animals, bhante, are this open clearing**!

[27] However, elsewhere it is stated that there are lay disciples who are able to attain dhyana. The best known of such laymen is Citta the householder, who has not only mastered the 4 dhyanas but is also a non-returner: S 41.9/-:300-302 (SD 45.3). Cf **Acela Kassapa S 1** (S 12.17/2:18-22), SD 18.5. Also SD 40a.7 (1).

[28] This para as at **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,2/1:55), SD 13.3.

[29] Comy: We are engaged in various duties to the monks, but from time to time, we find the occasion for practice. We do not completely neglect meditation. (MA 3:6).

[30] The phrase in bold is omitted from these 4 satipatthanas in this key formula in **(Satipaṭṭhāna) Sālā S** [§4]; see (2.1.5.2).

4.4 Bhante, I can still make a training elephant remember the journey to and from Campā even though during that journey to and fro, it will try to show every kind of deception, treachery, deviousness, and dishonesty.

4.5 But, bhante, as for those who are called our slaves, messengers, and workers—*they act in one way, speak in another way, and think in yet another way*.[31]

It is wonderful, master Gotama! It is marvellous, master Gotama!

4.6 For, bhante, how the Blessed One knows what is good or not for beings amidst such human tangles, such human vices, such human wiles.

For, bhante, humans are this tangle; but animals, bhante, are this **open clearing**."[32]

(M 51,4), SD 32.9

2.2.2 The 4 kinds of persons

2.2.2.1 The Buddha affirms Pessa's statement that "Humans are this tangle; but animals are this open clearing" [2.2.1.2]. Then the Buddha goes on to describe **4 kinds of persons** in terms of their tormenting practices, whether religious or secular, that is:

(1) one who torments himself, intent on self-torment;[33]
(2) one who torments others, intent on tormenting others;[34]
(3) one who torments himself, intent on self-torment, and who torments others, intent on tormenting others;[35]
(4) one who *neither* torments himself, not intent on tormenting himself, *nor* torments others, not intent on tormenting others.[36]

"Neither tormenting himself nor tormenting others, he dwells here and now hunger-free, quenched, cooled, abides enjoying bliss, by becoming divine himself [becoming Brahmā himself]?"[37]

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[31] Comy: An animal's guile and trickery are very limited, while those of a human are unlimited. (MA 3:7)

[32] Dh Comy quotes this as a scholium in the moving episode of the pratyeka-buddha and the faithful dog in **Sāmā,vatī Vatthu** (DhA 2.1): "Animals, they say, are straightforward, not given to deceit; but for humans, the heart thinks one way, the mouth speaks another. Hence, it is said, 'For, humans, bhante, are this tangle; and animals, bhante, are this open clearing'" (*Tiracchānā kira nām'ete uju,jātikā honti akuṭilā. Manussā pana aññaṁ hadayena cintenti, aññaṁ mukhena kathenti. Ten'ev'āha, "gahanañ h'etaṁ, bhante, yad idaṁ manussā, uttānakañ h'etaṁ, bhante, yad idaṁ pasavô ti*) (DhA 2.1/1:173).

[33] M 51,8 (SD 32.9). Such austerities were practised by the Buddha's contemporaries, such as the naked ascetics, and the bodhisattva himself experimented with these painful austerities: see **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,45/1:77 f), SD 49.1.

[34] M 51,9 (SD 32.9). Such as those engaging in hunting, killing, stealing, cheating others and other wrong livelihood. As listed at **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,37/1:412), SD 35.5; **Ghoṭa,mukha S** (M 94,10/2:162), SD 77.2; **(Catukka) Attan,tapa S** (A 4.198,3/2:206), SD 56.7.

[35] This is where both the perpetrator suffers from loss of lives and wealth, and impending bad karma, and those serving him also suffer in the process. For such a sacrifice, involving 500 animals each, see **(Pasenadi) Yañña S** (S 3.9/1:75 f) + SD 22.11. This passage on the self-tormentor and the other-tormentor [M 51,10] recurs in **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,38/1:412), SD 35.5; **Ghoṭa,mukha S** (M 94,11/2:161), SD 77.2; **(Catukka) Attan,tapa S** (A 4.198,4/2:207), SD 56.7.

[36] This passage on the non-tormentor of self or of others [M 51,11-28] recurs in **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,39-56/1:412 f), SD 35.5; **Ghoṭa,mukha S** (M 94,12/2:16), SD 77.2; **(Catukka) Attan,tapa S** (A 4.198,5-16/2:208-211), SD 56.7.

[37] Here, the arhat is meant. To stress that the Buddha neither torments himself nor anyone else, he next describes the path of practice by which he himself gained at awakening.

2.2.2.2 The first 3 kinds of tormentors clearly refer to those who are **devoted to self-mortification** (*atta,kilamathânuyoga*)[38]—declared by the Buddha to be "painful, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]."[39] This is an unequivocal warning to Buddhist practitioners to avoid self-torment in any form, especially as personal "devotion to ritual and vow" (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), which is a hindrance to the attaining of even the first stage of the path (streamwinning).

The Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta (S 56.11) records the Buddha as also warning against the opposite extreme of "enjoying" the physical body, that is, "**devotion to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures**[40]—it is low, vulgar, worldly, *ignoble, not connected with the goal* [*unprofitable*]."[41] Both "devotion to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures" and "devotion to self-mortification" are extremes to be avoided by the Dharma practitioner, who should keep to the "**middle way**," that is, the noble eightfold path, that is, the 3 trainings in moral virtue, mental cultivation and wisdom.[42]

2.2.2.3 Mental cultivation, the 2nd training of the middle way, comprises "right mindfulness" (*sammā sati*) and "right concentration" (*sammā samādhi*). While **right mindfulness** is defined as the practice of the 4 satipatthānas,[43] **right concentration** comprises the attainment of dhyana.[44] Both these limbs of the eightfold path prepare us with a calm and clear mind to see directly into true reality so that we are freed from suffering.

3 Satipatthana as renunciation

3.1 SATIPATTHANA AS RENOUNCING THE BODY

3.1.1 Freeing the breath

3.1.1.1 There is a very important aspect of Buddhist training which should be highlighted here; in fact, it is the most vital aspect of Dharma-based life. In terms of Dharma spirit and practice, this is where **true renunciation** (*nekkhamma*) of the world begins. While monastic renunciation may be said to be conventional renunciation, both monastics and laity have to practise at least some level of **spiritual renunciation**, that is, letting go of unwholesome states, anything that hinders progress to mental concentration and to the path of awakening.

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[38] *Atta,kilamathânuyoga* (D 3:113,21 (DA 3:109,12); M 3:230,10 (MA 2:384,9); S 4:330,30, 5:421,5 = V 1:10,13).

[39] On these **2 extremes**, see SD 1.1 (3.1). Note that while "the devotion to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures" (*kāma,sukh'allikânuyoga*) is described as being "low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]" (*hīno gammo puthujjaniko anariyo anattha,saṁhito*), "the devotion to self-mortification" (*atta,kilamathânuyoga*) is *not* said to be "low, vulgar," but only "painful, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]" (*dukkho anariyo anattha,saṁhito*). Despite being "painful," self-mortification, with some moral virtue, can still bring about a divine afterlife; but such a goal is still "ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]," because we are still caught up in samsara, unliberated from suffering. See **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (4.1). On *sukh'allikânuyoga,* see **Pāsādika S** (D 29,23/3:130), SD 40a.6.

[40] *Kāma,sukh'allikânuyoga* (V 1:10,12 = S 4,330,29 = 5:421,4; D 3:113,20; S 5:421; MA 1:104,15; UA 351,23). Comy on **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28,18/3:113,19) glosses *kāma* here as "the objects of sense-pleasure" (*vatthu,kāmesu*, DA 896,27). On *vatthu,kāma* and *kilesa,kāma,* see SD 38.4 (3.1.2); SD 41.4 (2.3.1).

[41] "Low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]," *hīno gammo puthujjaniko anariyo anattha,saṁhito.* On *gamma = gāma,dhamma,* see **Gavesī S** (A 5.180,17) n, SD 47.16.

[42] On the noble eightfold path (*ariy'aṭṭh'aṅgika magga*), see SD 10.16. On the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t,taya*), see **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88), SD 24.10c; ***Sīla samādhi paññā***, SD 21.6.

[43] See SD 10.16 (7).

[44] See SD 10.16 (8).

3.1.1.2 A very useful tip for proper satipatthana meditation is that there is neither a goal to attain nor any ritual to complete: satipatthana is **the letting go** of all sense-consciousness and then to free the mind from mind-consciousness. The fruit of this mental renunciation is concentration (*sāmadhi*), which when properly developed attains dhyana. This is the broad principle of satipatthana as mental renunciation.

3.1.2 Becoming the breath

3.1.2.1 In the contemplation of the body, we can take **the breath meditation** as a practice in mental renunciation. First, we must clearly know the breath:[45]

"This is the in-breath; is it long, or is it short?" (Note it as it is: "In long," or "In short".)

"This is the out-breath; is it long, or is it short?" (Note it as it is: "Out long," or "Out short.")

This is a simple yet effective way to begin the breath meditation. Do note here that we should *not* lead the breath, but follow it as it slows down and becomes subtler. The "long and short" of the "in and out" breaths are simply means of letting go of any thoughts, so that the mind is fully seeing the breath as it is, and in due course *becomes* the breath.

The mental verbalization (the words) must be dispensed with once we can *silently* feel the "long and short" of the "in and out" breaths. You will know this without thinking about it. If you have to ask or think about it you are not there yet. When we let go of the medium of words or thought, there is the direct experience of the breath. We *are* then the breath, but concentration needs to be sustained long enough.

3.1.2.2 As we *simply* focus on the in-breath and out-breath, we begin to notice that they are actually connected by peaceful space, a thought-free gap of mental stillness, following each phase of the breath: "In … *space*, out … *space*." They are, as a rule, uneven; we just *feel* the joyful stillness, and *smile* at it if we like.

You may sometimes feel this beautiful process of the calming breath as "rising and falling." Just keep watching this process of rising and falling so that you are familiar with it. When you do this properly (without a thought) you will notice this rise-and-fall getting subtler with growing silent spaces which may also appear radiant. All this is mind-made; silently see them without a thought or you will lose them.

3.1.3 Calmness and insight

What has been described [3.1.2.2] is **calmness** (*samatha*) of meditation as experience. Once we emerge from this calmness, the mind is profoundly clear. We are then ready for the practice of **insight** (*vipassanā*); we review (*paccavekkhati*) the beautiful moments of the breath that we have just experienced. If we do not review these precious moments, we will either forget them or recall them intellectually, which is merely talking about them, like talking about a piece of beautiful music (music is to be heard). When we have done Dharma-spirited meditation we will know what this means.

The calm and clarity of the mind having just emerged from deep meditation is the best time to review the beauty and truth of breath meditation. For example, in reviewing your breath meditation, you may realize:

"What rises must fall away. It is all impermanent."

"We take in air that is the wind element; we must give back the wind element. We do not own it."

"We breathe in, we live. To continue living, we must let go of the breath, renounce it."

To live, we must free the breath.

[45] For a study, see **Ānâpāna,sati S** (M 118), SD 7.13.

3.2 SATIPATTHANA AS RENOUNCING FEELINGS

3.2.1 We feel, then we perceive

3.2.1.1 According to the sequence of the 5 aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness—and sutta explanations of the cognitive process, **feelings** precede perception. When we experience a sense-object or a mind-object, we first react to it *affectively* (with feelings), and then we *perceive* this reaction. Either we end the process there and that's that; or we go on to evaluate it willfully (conatively), that is, it forms karma. In other words, we are now karmically caught with the fruits of such actions.

3.2.1.2 An important benefit of satipatthana training is that we learn to notice and manage **feelings** before they become karmic. In terms of **the 5 aggregates**—*form (body), feelings, perception, formations and consciousness*—we can see that the 1st satipatthana, the contemplation of the body (*kayânupassanā*), is *mindfulness of the body*. In this 2nd satipatthana, we go on to observe the contemplation of feelings (*vedanā'nupassanā*).

In this 2nd satipatthana, we observe feelings as what feeds the body, that is, something *pleasant*, or something unpalatable or *unpleasant* to the body (the senses). The unmindful person is likely to be drawn to feed on the pleasant, and so fuel the fire of **lust**. But lust is a two-sided coin; its other side is **ill will**, dislike for what is unpalatable to the body (to seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching) and to the mind. When we are unmindful, we are likely to be drawn to what we *see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or think of* as being pleasant.

This is Nature's way of guaranteeing her own survival and proliferation. When we feel what seems palatable to the body, we desire to appropriate it. The ultimate act of appropriation is the **sex act**, which takes our time, multiplies our bodies and fills samsara. This is not to say "sex is evil," but rather we should understand that when we bring beings into the world, they will have to go through suffering as all beings do. Even the awakened have to face the fruits of some past karma, although they do not create new karma. When we bring new beings into the world, we should wisely and ably train them to understand and learn from suffering so that they will themselves be free and awakened in due course.

This is called parenting and humanizing. Good **parenting** is not only raising children in a healthy way, but in a loving way. This entails teaching them to respect *life, happiness, freedom, truth and the mind* (the 5 values underpinning the 5 precepts); these values shape bodily acts and speech in a wholesome way.[46]

Humanizing means teaching our offspring the skills to *become* wholesomely human. This means that
- we should fully accept ourselves and love others proactively,
- we should show compassion when necessary,
- we should rejoice in the good in oneself and in others, and
- we should be at peace with the ways of reality (especially karma) after all the good that we have done.

This is known as cultivating positive emotions or the divine abodes (love, ruth,[47] joy and peace) to ennoble our being and interbeing (society).

3.2.1.3 In terms of satipatthana, to know **feelings** is to see them for what they really are, that is:

They are reactions of liking (lust) or disliking (ill will) towards external stimuli (sights, sounds, etc).

These reactions are conditioned by **memories** (reconstruction of the past) projected onto the present sense-objects and mind-objects. We are thus reliving our past but dead to the present. [2.1.2.3]

[46] On the 5 values, see SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

[47] "Ruth" is a good old early Middle English word for "compassion" which should be resurrected. See SD 60.2 (5.4.2.2).

When we unmindfully follow the pull of the pleasurable and the push of the displeasurable, we are then likely to feel **dull** or **bored** in the absence of pleasure and displeasure. For example, when we have never before experienced samadhi (or even dhyana)—the settling of the mind when we rise above pleasure and displeasure with a neutral mind (*tatra,majjhatā*) (otherwise called "equanimity," *upekkhā*) —we do not recognize this wholesome state. We may instead react with fear or apprehension, mistaking it for some experience of preconceived "divine state." Deluded by the notion of divinity, we are likely to swing to some extreme view and see ourselves as "divinely inspired," and others as being "evil," "sinful," and so on.

3.2.1.4 Thus, when we encounter feelings, we must know a feeling for what it really is, thus:
we see a pleasurable object as simply being "impermanent," and let it pass;
we see an unpleasant object with lovingkindness and let it go;
we see a neutral object as *rising and falling away,* and smile at it.

When we notice lust arising, we see it as:	"Lust, lust … "	and let it go.
When we notice ill will arising, we see it as:	"Ill will, ill will … "	and let it go.
When we notice boredom arising, we see it as:	"Boredom, boredom … "	and let it go.

We see all three as being *impermanent* and not mine (they are not worth having); let them go.

In **the Pacalā Sutta** (A 7.58), the Buddha instructs Moggallāna that "**nothing is worth clinging to**" (*sabbe dhammā nâlaṁ abhinivesāyā,* literally, "All dharmas are not worth clinging to").[48]

The Buddha then adds:

> Having fully understood all things,
> he fully understands whatever **feelings** there are,
> whether pleasant, painful or neither painful nor pleasant.
> As regards those feelings,

he dwells contemplating	impermanence	in them.
He dwells contemplating	dispassion	[fading away of lust] in them.
He dwells contemplating	ending	[of suffering] in them.
He dwells contemplating	letting go	[of defilements].

Thus, the meditator abandons mental hindrances by the contemplations

of impermanence,	*anicânupassanā*,
of fading away (of lust),	*viragânupassanā,*
of cessation (of suffering) and	*nirodhânupassanā,*
of letting go (of defilements),	*paṭinissaggânupassanā,*

and thus looks upon **feelings** (all experiences) with equanimity (accepting them as they are).[49]
Overcoming the hindrances, one attains dhyana.

3.2.2 We tend to feel what isn't

3.2.2.1 So long as we are unawakened and ruled by our biases (greed, hatred, delusion and fear),[50] we are likely to feel only what we have been conditioned by our past (family and schooling), by others (social and religious background) and by personal needs. We are thus likely to find only **the familiar** to be interesting and delightful, while the unfamiliar is likely to be seen as boring and alien.

[48] A 7.58,11.2 (SD 4.11).
[49] **Gelañña S 1** (S 36.7/4:212), SD 76.8 (forthcoming).
[50] On the 4 biases (*agati*), see **Sigal'ovāda S** (D 31,5), SD 4.1; **Āgati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7; **Saṅgaha Bala S** (A 9.5,-6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1.3); SD 53.5 (2.2.1.1).

"What's wrong with being delighted with the familiar?" we might ask.

The familiar things that captivate us often are what our sense-faculties habitually, even instinctively, delight in. Notice how the crowd is drawn instinctively to the loud, the lustful and the violent. Such reactivity is almost unthinking, which means that we are likely to have little, if any, control of our own selves. The crowd does not think. We tend to be driven by external[51] stimuli (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts) without any mind of our own, without any vision of the causes and effects they have on ourselves and on others.

3.2.2.2 To be distracted is to lose sight of present reality. While we are watching the breath in our meditation (or in any kind of Dharma-based meditation), our distraction may be time-based or root-based. In either case, our attention is removed from the present mind-object and led astray in terms of *time* or dissipated by an *unwholesome root* or *a bias.*

In terms of **time**, we may be distracted by the past or by the future. As already noted [2.1.2.3], when we are drawn to something "pleasant" in a thought—whether an intrusion or a projection displacing the meditation-object—it is because we see some pleasant memory in it. And when we are repelled by something "unpleasant" in a distracting thought, it is because we see some unpleasant memory in it. In either case, we have been sucked back into **the past**. Thus, we lose track of present reality. We are blocked by the hindrance of **restlessness** (*uddhacca*).

Or, we may be dragged into some future imagining, something as simple as "What shall I eat after the meditation?" or as complex as "What will I be?" Caught in thinking in this way, we open ourselves to the hindrance of "**worry**" (*kukkucca*).

In terms of **root**, we may be distracted by *greed, hatred or delusion,* or by an extended version of the roots, that is, by any of the 4 biases: *greed, hatred, delusion or fear*. We are captivated by a lust-drenched image and lose ourselves in it. Or we are driven by uneasy hatred over some troubling thought (arising, for example, from a painful posture). Or we could just be darkly deluded or muddle-headed with sleepiness. If we have not been keeping the precepts, we may be wondering what bad karma is, what its fruit will be, and so on. Fear may also arise as a result.

We are thus lost in the past or the future, or hijacked by the biases of *greed, hatred, delusion or fear*. None of these are in the present moment. It's much ado about nothing since we have lost our focus on the presence of the meditation-object. Our boat has lost its rudder in a stormy sea.

3.2.3 Free feelings

3.2.3.1 To be distracted is to be mentally caught in false feelings that block any direct or clear vision of the meditation-object. Such feelings arise from sense-contact in *a meeting of sense-faculty, sense-object and sense-consciousness*. When feeling arises, we go on to perceive it as pleasant or as unpleasant, when we are familiar with the object; or we may feel bored towards a neutral feeling. usually arising from an unfamiliar mind-object. [3.2.1.3]

It is crucial that we do not direct any lust (by desiring a pleasant feeling), any hatred (by disliking an unpleasant object), or even ignoring an unfamiliar object that is neutral, thus allowing delusion to arise. When any of these unwholesome roots have arisen, we form karma; hence, it is called **karma-formation** (*saṅkhāra*). Such karmic fruits will continue to pursue us life after life, and may continue to fruit even after we are awakened![52]

[51] On sense-objects and mind-objects being "external," see (2.1.2.3).

[52] Of course, an arhat (like the Buddha) does not fear any karmic fruition and will let it arise naturally and pass away as such. See, eg, the case of the arhat Aṅguli,māla: **Aṅguli.māla S** (M 86,17/2:104), SD 5.11.

To prevent any **karma** from arising through feelings, we must simply allow the feelings to fall away just as they have arisen. It helps that we see such feelings as being "impermanent … impermanent … ," which expedites our letting go of them. Just as after breathing in, we naturally breathe out, we simply let go of the arisen feeling; free the feeling.

3.2.3.2 In our routine lives as non-renunciants (that is, as lay followers), we are likely to enjoy "distractions," especially as individuals. What we call "leisure" is often filled with what we enjoy doing, often in the positive sense of the word. So long as we feel wholesome **joy** in such leisure neither harming self nor others, it is harmless, even beneficial, for a wholesomely healthy body and mind.

So long as such leisurely "distractions," such as doing physical exercises, enjoying sports and playing games, reading, travelling and so on, do not entail breaking any of the 5 precepts, we may pursue them in a timely manner, keeping ourselves joyful and contented. Notice that we best enjoy such leisure when we feel joy arising on account of winning a game (or even losing it), have a feeling of fellowship, mental stimulation and so on.

In mundane terms, we use such words as "sportsmanship" or "game" (adj) to show that we are a joyful part and partners in such happy and healing leisure. There is a good sense of "give-and-take" without being arrogant with victory or dismayed by defeat, but simply enjoying friendship and having a good time.

In a simple way, then, to be truly happy, we must let go of feelings. The whole idea of leisure is in the feeling of **joy** (*pīti*), which is impermanent, yet fun enough for us to seek it again in doing what we enjoy and are good at, and doing so in a wholesome manner. Understanding impermanence can bring joy as well as wisdom. This is learning while at play.

3.3 SATIPATTHANA AS RENOUNCING MIND

3.3.1 Mind is a learning process

3.3.1.1 All earthly sentient beings, especially humans, are made up of **body and mind**.[53] The body functionally consists of the 5 physical senses[54] and the mind of feelings, perception, formations and consciousness.[55] As conscious beings, our **embodied mind** (*nāma,rūpa*) serves as the interface between our self (*nāma*) and the world (*rūpa*); properly, "world" here refers to "formations" (*saṅkhārā*), that is, what we construct of the world through our senses and thoughts. Technically, *nāma* is our mind (the internal senses) and *rūpa* is the world (the external sense-bases or sense-consciousnesses).[56]

3.3.1.2 Our experiences arise from the contact (*phassa*) between the sense-faculties (*ajjhatt'āyatana*), their sense-objects (*bahiddhâyatana*) and their **sense-consciousnesses** (*viññāṇa*), respectively. 'This is the most we can know (and only so long as we are unawakened). Generically then there are only 6 kinds of knowledges: *the sight-based, the sound-based, the smell-based, the taste-based, the touch-based and the thought-based*. These are the 6 kinds of sense-data we call **knowledge**, the information by

[53] On the senses of the celestial beings, see SD 62.14 (3.2.2.2).

[54] Structurally, the "body" is made up of the 4 elements [foll].

[55] **Sammā Diṭṭhi S** (M 9) defines the embodied mind, "name-and-form" (*nāma,rūpa*), as comprising ***nāma*,** ie, feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention, and ***rūpa*** comprises the 4 elements (earth, water, fire and wind) (*vedanā saññā cetanā phasso manasikāro, idaṁ vuccat'āvuso nāmāni. Cattāri ca mahā,bhūtāni catunnañ ca mahā,-bhūtānaṁ upādāya rūpaṁ idaṁ vuccat'āvuso rūpaṁ,* M 9/1:53,11-13).

[56] See Analayo, "Mind (Buddhism)," *Buddhism and Jainism* (Ency of Ind Rels), 2017:779-781; P D Premasiri, "Mind," *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Colombo, 2003 7:1-12.

which we live, and which initiate and define all our actions, and the tools with which we construct our reality, personal and social.

According to **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23) all (*sabba*) that there *are*, or the "all" are *the 6 sense-bases and their respective sense-objects*, thus:

	sense-faculties		**sense-objects**		
(1)	**The eye**	and	forms,	*cakkhuñ c'eva*	*rūpā ca*
(2)	**the ear**	and	sounds,	*sotañ ca*	*saddā ca*
(3)	**the nose**	and	smells,	*ghānañ ca*	*gandhā ca*
(4)	**the tongue**	and	tastes,	*jivhā ca*	*rasā ca*
(5)	**the body**	and	touches,	*kāyo ca*	*phoṭṭhabbā ca*
(6)	**the mind**[57]	and	mind-objects.[58]	*mano ca*	*dhammā ca*

(S 35,23/4:15) SD 7.1

This is the process by which we create our samsara (cyclic world of habitual tendencies); understanding this very same process frees us from it, bringing us closer to the path and to nirvana. In this sense, only in this sense, we may say that samsara is nirvana, nirvana is samsara. This is a description of our experience of what nirvana is like, but not a definition of nirvana.

3.3.2 Growing is letting go

3.3.2.1 Reflecting on how **knowledge** arises in this manner [3.3.1.2], we can say that there are 2 kinds of knowledge:

(1) **experiential** or sense-based (including mind-based) knowledge: pragmatic or practical; and
(2) **spiritual** or direct knowledge: liberating and awakening (by seeing the 4 noble truths).

All knowledge arise either *at any of the physical senses* (as sensing[59]) *or within the mind* (by way of perception, reasoning, insight, and so on), but *all* are created and processed in the mind; the mind precedes all such states of knowing, they are thus mind-made (*mano,maya,* Dh 1 f).

3.3.2.2 There are 3 ways by which we **learn**, that is, gain knowledge or wisdom, as laid out in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) and **the Vibhaṅga,** as follows:

			described as
(1)	wisdom through **thinking**,	*cintā,maya paññā*	philosophical knowledge;
(2)	wisdom through **listening**, and	*suta,maya paññā*	academic knowledge;
(3)	wisdom through **cultivation.**	*bhāvanā,maya paññā*	insight knowledge.

(D 33,1.10(43)/3:219; Vbh 324)[60]

The most common way we know things and learn—rightly or wrongly—is by forming views or by **thinking**, including reasoning, that is, seeing and relating to causes and effects. We continue to form views, and we revise and refine them (or fall into wrong conclusions) through **listening**, including academic, religious

[57] Note that while all the above 5 faculties are based on physical sense-organs, the mind is by itself: see SD 60.1e (12.7).

[58] "Mind-objects," *dhammā,* alt tr "mental phenomena." In satipatthana practice, *dhamma* is tr as "realities," ie, they are no ordinary mind-objects but those capable of freeing the mind, or at least bring calm and clarity.

[59] Here "sensing" is a simple term for "being conscious of; sense-consciousness."

[60] Further see SD 40a.4 (6.1).

learning and hearsay. Most of our learning and knowing at this stage is based on second-hand knowledge, that is, through *hearing from others* or through *reading* or being informed by *the mass media* or *hearsay* (which may in turn be based on other "sources," which makes it "third-hand" information). These are neither direct nor personal knowledge or understanding but mere rumours.

Even when we have a "direct" experience of things, especially by way of **religious experiences** (such as a vision of God or of Buddhas), it is likely to arise from past conditioning from parents and others during childhood and religious upbringing, indoctrination or inclination (including past karma). Such pre-conditioning can be difficult to notice and even harder to give up. Hence, we need **the contemplation of mind** (*cittânupassanā*) to see and understand how our mind is conditioned, and how to free it.

3.3.2.3 Another triad of types of learning helps us in understanding how we can know and understand things *as they really are*, and so free ourselves from blinkered knowledge and past conditioning. This is dharma-spirited or reality-based learning by way of **the 3 right ways** (or "good dharmas," *ti sad-dhamma*), as follows:[61]

			described as
(1)	**theoretically,**	*pariyatti*	through listening or thinking and reasoning;
(2)	**practically,** and	*paṭipatti*	through personal observation, especially direct experience;
(3)	**penetratively**.	*paṭivedha*	through personal experience, especially cultivation.

From the time we take our first breath, we begin to instinctively learn by simply reacting to stimuli. Our earliest habits were natural and primary in the sense of being *life-supporting*: we instinctively breathe, take food and get rid of waste. These are natural processes without involving much of our conscious awareness of them; they are samsara's way of perpetuating itself.

3.3.2.4 Our **conscious learning** begins with feeling hunger, cold and discomfort—body-based states—that we instinctively want to be rid of by mother's milk, human warmth and bodily posture or contact. We then spend most of our time sleeping and growing. When we wake, we cry out, to instinctively make known our needs. This is an instinctive and powerful exhalation of our breath by which we communicate with others, those who mother us or are close to us. Thus we grow physically.

Infants show signs of rudimentary consciousness and awareness of their surroundings from birth, including reflexes, emotional expressions, and processing of sensory input, as the extent and clarity of their awareness continues to develop, helped by colourful noise-making toys that are safely manipulable and chewable, and also with human contact and interaction.

Simply then, our earliest learning consists of seeing, touching, and being aware of our body (especially limb movements), reacting to our primary feelings (such as hunger and comfort), reacting to external stimulation (human touch and smell) and to sensory stimulation (toys, human interaction). In due course, we learn to express ourselves by certain sounds and simple words.[62]

Early Buddhist teachings, however, say that human consciousness arises at **conception**,[63] which defines a living being. The sutta term for "**conception**" is "descent of the birth-being" (*gabbhâvakkanti*).[64] This seems to be a very rudimentary form of consciousness that comes with bodily growth and mental

[61] VA 225; AA 5.33. See **The levels of training**, SD 40a.4 (6.2.1); **Notion of *diṭṭhi***, SD 40a.1 (3.4.2). On *sacca,ñāṇa kicca,ñāṇa kata,ñāṇa,* see SD 46.18 (1.2).

[62] See, eg, T Bayne et al, "Consciousness in the cradle: On the emergence of infant experience," *Trends in Cognitive Science* 27,12 Dec 2023:1135-1149 [TrendsCS]. 16 Mar 2025.

[63] Early Buddhism however does not say exactly when this rebirth-consciousness descends into the womb. Modern medicine says that touch is the first sense to develop, starting around 7 weeks of pregnancy.

[64] M 38,26/1:265 f (SD 7.10).

development. In due course, actual learning—the ability to initiate or repeat actions expressing needs or emotions—begins, when babies learn to express themselves verbally.[65]

3.3.2.5 Like babies, we often learn by practical experience, but as adults we also learn by observation, imitation, experimentation and reasoning. Such practical knowledge is experiential, like tasting salt at "the tongue-tip" (*jivh'agge thāpetvā*),[66] meaning that one knows directly or empirically through one's own experience. When such learning combines with insight into seeing how causes and effects work, we are likely to grow in wisdom. Thus, learning comes from knowing what we *are*, with which we work to better ourselves.

The best, indeed, the *only,* right way of learning is by understanding **conditionality** (interdependence of causes and effects),[67] how it works in the situations before us, and what's wrong and what's right with them. We must carefully set wrong ideas aside (remembering that false views can arise in many disguised forms), and diligently work with the good ideas so that we better understand ourselves (the mind) and the world to free ourselves from greed, hatred, delusion, fear, superstition and ignorance.

3.3.3 Freeing the mind

3.3.3.1 **Spiritual freedom** is true beauty and true goodness. **Beauty** is in seeing and understanding true reality; **goodness** is enjoying this beauty with others so that they, too, know and enjoy spiritual freedom. A good education is both a means of sustenance of bodily health and the joy of mental health. This is spiritual freedom: being free to love oneself, in the same way to love others, to be joyful in each others' presence, and to be at peace with the world. This is the ideal freedom.

By **spiritual learning**, I mean the personal freedom to understand ourselves and free ourselves from *superstition, delusion and ignorance*; this, of course, is easier said than done. Religion (like the mass media) thrives on superstition, delusion and ignorance.

Religion is **superstition** when it demands or persuades others to accept an *external* agency to solve or succour our lacks and pains that originate from *within* us, from our own minds.

Religion is **delusion** when it believes that words and stories are divine and are liberating without understanding the origin and nature of such languages; or to twist or hide these truths for power over the masses.

Religion is **ignorance** when it has to keep revising and updating its dogmas and beliefs when challenged with better learning, clearer science and greater human freedom.

3.3.3.2 True religion, on the other hand, is **spirituality**; is when we seek to see directly into true reality, and to learn for ourselves the goodness of these truths so that we are free from ignorance,

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[65] Modern medicine thinks that it is possible that the capacity for sense-consciousness may emerge towards the end of gestation, possibly as early as 35 weeks (after the development of thalamocortical networks around 26 weeks). See, eg, C Koch, "When does consciousness arise in human babies?" *Scientific American* Sep 1 2009 [SciAm]. 16 Mar 2025.

[66] DhA 2:33. The truth is the whole tongue is able to taste any of the 5 kinds of taste (salty, sweet, sour, bitter and umami), with some areas being more sensitive to certain tastes: V B Collings, "Human Taste Response as a Function of Locus of Stimulation on the Tongue and Soft Palate," *Perception & Psychophysics* 16 1974:169-174. On the tongue-map myth: [Wiki] 15 Mar 2025.

[67] **Conditionality** or dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppāda*) is not causation or causality (where the causes bring effects in a temporal sequence). In early Buddhism, causality (*hetu,paccaya*) is only one of the 24 conditions (*paccaya*) that define conditionality, where conditions work in different ways (besides temporally) to produce effects which in turn become causes and so on. On the 24 conditions (*paccaya*), see SD 60.1e (13.12 f).

craving and suffering. Spirituality is the true quest of **the open mind**; the mind that is allowed to seek truth and to see true reality, and so be free from untruth and unreality.

Our first line of learning is through the physical senses: we learn from what we *see, hear, smell, taste, or touch*. However, we often know that we have been wrong before with sense-based data; what we see, hear, smell, taste or touch is not always what we think it is. We are merely working with beliefs or views. Broadly, this is what is meant by "**theoretical knowledge**" (*pariyatti*), especially when applied to our daily sense-based experiences: it is what we choose to believe even though we are certain of its truth and reality. It is provisional knowledge, steps in learning and understanding.

The term ***pariyatti*** is commentarial, often applied as *pariyatti,dhamma* in the sense of "mastering the Dharma," that is, having memorized it well, being able to teach Dharma from memory, and to properly rectify wrong views (that is, as views or teachings neither found in the suttas nor in their spirit). Yet the Buddha warns us that even an elder who is "of long standing … well known … recipient of robes, etc, …. deeply learned … , but he could be one of wrong view and perverted vision" (*micchā,diṭṭhiko hoti viparīta,dassano*).[68]

3.3.3.3 We may think that we have "received" Dharma transmission from an elder who is a Dharma-spirited, Vinaya-abiding, experienced monk or nun, or from a titled priest of high status—but this is just a ritual status. Or we may think that we have well understood the Dharma that has been taught to us. Even though we may not be wrong, we may not have properly understood its context or finer points.

Hence, the Buddha reminds us of **the 12 steps of Dharma-learning**, such as recorded in **the Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95) and **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70), thus:

(1)	One who has **faith** (in a teacher)	approaches the teacher.
(2)	Having approached him,	one draws near [attends] to him.
(3)	Having drawn near to him,	one lends his ear to him.[69]
(4)	One who lends his ear,	listens to the Dharma.
(5)	Having listened to the Dharma,	one remembers [memorizes] it.[70]
(6)	Having remembered the teachings,	one examines their meaning.
(7)	Having examined their meaning,	one reflectively accepts[71] the teachings.[72]
(8)	Having reflectively accepted the teachings,	(wholesome) desire for mindfulness arises in one.
(9)	Having (wholesome) desire for mindfulness,[73]	one exerts himself.
(10)	Having exerted oneself,	one weighs [harmonizes] it.[74]

[68] **(Pañcaka) Thera S** (A 5.88,2 (5)), SD 40a.16.

[69] Alt tr: "Respectfully sitting close, he listens attentively."

[70] This and next line: *Sutvā dhammaṁ dhāreti | dhātānaṁ dhammānaṁ atthaṁ upaparikkhati:* here *dhammaṁ* (sg) in the 1st line becomes *dhammānaṁ* (pl) in the 2nd line. In the 1st line, *dhammaṁ* refers to the teaching as a whole; in the 2nd line, individual aspects or topics are meant.

[71] ***Nijjhānaṁ khamanti,*** lit, "insights are endured," ie, "capable of bearing insights"; idiomatic meaning "he is pleased with, approves of, finds pleasure in" (M 1:133 f; 479 f, 2:173, 175; S 3:225, 228, 5:377, 379; Vv 84.17). ***Khanti*** usually means "patience" but here it means "choice, receptivity, preference, acceptance." The BHSD defines *kṣānti* as "intellectual receptivity; the being ready in advance to accept knowledge." *Khanti* is often used in the Canon in this latter sense (see SD 12.13(2a) for refs). The phrase can also be freely rendered as "a receptivity in harmony with true reality." On ***dhamma,nijjhāna,khanti*****,** see **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65), SD 35.4 Comy 3a(8). On *khanti* as "mental receptivity," see **Aniccā S** (A 6.98), SD 12.13(3).

[72] This and the next line: *Atthaṁ upaparikkhatto dhammā nijjhānaṁ khamanti; dhamma,nijjhāna,khantiyā sati chando jāyato.* M:ÑB: "when he examines their meaning, he gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings."

[73] From here to end of para: *Chanda,jāto ussahati; ussahitvā tuleti; tulayitvā padahati; pahit'atto samāno kāyena c'eva paramaṁ saccaṁ sacchikaroti paññāya ca naṁ ativijjha passati.* Alt tr: "With his desire, he applies his will." On *ussahati,* see CPD: I have conflated both the normal ("he is able") and the conative ("he strives") senses in the tr.

(11) Having weighed it, one strives.[75]
(12) With a resolute [striving] mind, one **realizes** the ultimate truth.
(M 70,24), SD 11.1; (M 94,20-33), SD 21.15

In this 12-step Dharma-learning, notice that the stages or aspects of learning are gradual, and often overlap (the phases of learning are interrelated), except for the last, that is, the fruit: "one realizes the ultimate truth."

3.3.3.4 In terms of **the 3 good dharmas** [3.3.2.3], we can sort out the 12 steps and their fruition in connection with the 12-step Dharma-learning, as follows:

(1)	theoretical knowledge	*pariyatti*	1-5;	study: reading, recitation etc;
(2)	practical knowledge	*paṭipatti*	6-11;	practice: mindfulness and meditation;
(3)	penetration	*paṭivedha*	12.	realization: wisdom, awakening.

On a deeper level, these 12 steps are training to know the mind (1-5), to tame the mind (6-11) and to free the mind (12). They are said to be a gradual progress in the sense that when each step or set of steps is mastered, one lets it go for the next step and so on. Spiritual learning, then, is like peeling the layers of an onion: *the peeling away of layers of views goes on and on, so that in the end **the "I"** is not there anymore*: "on-i-on."

To truly know the mind, we must let it go.

3.3.4 From natural learning to spiritual insight

3.3.4.1 Early Buddhism is sometimes described as being **empirical**, that is, understanding that what we know comes *naturally* from experience, and that everything that exists in the mind comes from our senses. The contents of our *mind,* then, are rooted in the senses. As stated by the Buddha in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), all that we can know is rooted in the senses and the mind [3.3.1.2].

Early Buddhist psychology tells us that although the mind shapes the contents of the senses, **the mind** is also capable of creating its own sense-objects *without* the sense-faculties. Thus, the mind can, and often does, project itself as our experiences. We thus experience what the mind wants us to see, hear, smell, taste, touch (feel) and think. These habits of the mind are so common that there is an early Buddhist term for them: **latent tendencies** (*anusaya*).[76]

The Pali term ***anu-saya*** literally means "that which lies habitually." In English, we can see a wordplay in "lie"—which the Pali term takes literally to mean "always present, usually in a dormant state"—while in English it also means "something untrue," which also applies here, unfortuitously. Thus, experientially, we tend to be creatures of habit, and such habits also tend to bring us suffering since they are rooted in greed, hatred and delusion.

3.3.4.2 Early Buddhism can also be described as being **naturalistic** in the sense that the Buddha teaches us to see and understand life as it really is (*yathā,bhūta,ñāṇa,dassana*). In terms of the 5 aggregates [2.1.4.1 (2)], **human knowledge** is rooted in body-based experiences that are interpreted by various mental processes, that is, feelings and perceptions. Human knowledge is not only *informative* but also discursive (rational), intuitive (experiential) and, above all, psychological (mind-made).

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[74] Alt tr: "Having applied effort, he harmonizes his practice."
[75] Alt tr: "Harmonizing his practice, he strives on."
[76] See **Anusaya** (SD 31.3).

Psychologically, human knowing has moral significance. Knowledge rooted in *greed, hatred or delusion* is unwholesome (*akusala*) and has negative karmic consequences; knowledge rooted in *non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion*[77] is wholesome (*kusala*); it helps us better understand ourselves. By "**wholesome**" here is meant that such knowledge, functioning as intention (*cetanā*), creates good karma in the sense that it gives us a happy and meaningful life whose natural purpose is developing the mind and disseminating happiness. In fact, the mind defines the value of all our actions (bodily, verbal and mental).

Although we imagine much of our actions as *conscious* events (we are conscious of what we do, say or think), the reality is that we are actually **unconscious** of most of our karmic actions. Most of what we do, speak or think are driven by the dark forces of habit, conditioned by the past, including past lives, and also by social conditioning. In this sense, we have no control of ourselves; we have no free will. For the will to be truly free, we must free our mind! In this sense, arhats have free will.

3.3.4.3 A moral life (especially one regulated by the 5 precepts, or the Vinaya in the case of renunciants) prevents us from moral breaches and their karmic consequences. We are often driven by our feelings that colour and distort our experiences; we tend to be biased by some past *greed, hatred, delusion or fear*, and enticed by some future *belief or hope*. But these are, as a rule, conditioned reactions. This is where mindfulness and clear awareness are helpful in reminding us to take feelings just as they are, to let them come and let them go, and to form neither liking nor disliking for them, but to note them as being *mind-made and impermanent.* This is how we deal with distractions on **a sense-based level**. [2.1.2]

Next, we must remember that the drive to commit moral lapses lurk deeper in the dark unconscious or latent tendencies (*anusaya*) (lust, aversion and ignorance).[78] This inner darkness is best lightened up and cleansed by a regular dose of **mind contemplation** (*cittânupassanā*), that is, mind-based satipatthana.[79] This is when we expose the skulking negative mind for what it is, and welcome the positive radiant mind by cultivating it. [2.1.3]

3.4 SATIPATTHANA AS RENOUNCING DHARMAS

3.4.1 Seeing realities

3.4.1.1 We have explained how satipatthana practice begins with body-mindfulness, especially with the breath [3.1]. We then explained how body-mindfulness is cultivated as the avenue for focus on mindfulness of feelings [3.2]. Then, we described mind-based satipatthana to see how the mind masters feelings.

Then we have briefly surveyed "**dharma-based meditation**" or contemplation of dharmas (*dhammanupassanā*) [2.1.4] of each of *the 5 sets of dharma-teachings*.

Now we will go on to the 4th satipatthana to see how we can observe the mind and mind-contents, and free the mind of even such contents, so that the mind is free to gain full concentration, that is, samadhi, even dhyana.

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[77] In positive terms, these include *charity, love and wisdom*.

[78] These are, respectively, *kāma,rāga, paṭigha* and *avijjā*: **Sammā Diṭṭhi S** (M 9,65-67), SD 11.14; ***Anusaya,*** SD 31.3 (8.2).

[79] Much of what is explained in (3.3.4) is remarkably close to the ideas of the Scosman **David Hume** (1711-1776), one of the greatest philosophers who has ever written in English, esp as expressed in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748, 1757). [Wiki] [IEP] all 17 Mar 2025.

Here we will first briefly examine the significance of each of these 5 sets of teachings:

(1) the 5 hindrances;	*pañca nīvaraṇā*	factors that prevent concentration and dhyana;
(2) the 5 aggregates;	*pañca-k,khandha*	basic components of our body-mind being;
(3) the 6 sense-bases;	*saḷ-āyatana*	the 5 physical senses and the mind;
(4) the 7 awakening factors;	*satta bojjhaṅga*	the factors of focusing the mind for freedom;
(5) the 4 noble truths.	*catu ariya sacca*	the aspects of true reality leading to freedom.

spiritual faculty (*indriya*)		**mental hindrance** (*nīvaraṇa*)		**dhyana-factor**[80] (*jhān'aṅga*)
(2) effort	suppresses	(4) sloth and torpor	countered by	(1) initial application
(5) wisdom		(5) doubt		(2) sustained application
(1) (joyful) faith		(2) ill will		(3) zest
(4) concentration		(3) restlessness and worry		(4) happiness
(3) mindfulness		(1) sensual desire		(5) one-pointedness of mind

Table 3.4.1 Spiritual faculties, mental hindrances, and dhyana-factors[81] [SD 32.1 (5.3)]

3.4.1.2 The 5 hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*) are the factors that prevent mental concentration and attaining of dhyana [2.1.4.1 (1)]. In satipatthana practice, our first and foundation meditation is **the mindfulness of the breath** (*ānâpāna,sati*) or breath meditation [3.1.2], and once we have begun our practice, we will notice that:

(1) we are distracted by sense-experiences (sights, sounds, etc);
(2) we may even feel annoyed by pain from our posture;
(3) we become restless and have concerns;
(4) as a result of all this, we are likely to feel slothful and tired; or
(5) we may even doubt whether we are doing it right, and so on.

3.4.2 What the hindrances can teach us

3.4.2.1 These [3.4.1.2] are, of course, manifestations of the 5 mental hindrances (simply, hindrances). We should not be discouraged by them; their initial presence means that we have started meditating. Otherwise, we would probably not have noticed any of the hindrances so that they operate without our knowledge! At this early stage of satipatthana training we should *primarily* acknowledge the sensual distraction for what it is [2.1.2.2]. This is the application of the spiritual faculty (*indriya*) of **mindfulness**, which dispels sensual desire (any distractions from sense-experiences). [Table 3.4.1]

[80] On the dhyana-factors (*jhān'aṅga*), see SD 8.4 (6).
[81] See also the explanations given at SD 62.16 (3.1.1.2).

3.4.2.2 Even if we have difficulty or only limited success with such experiences (they tend to recur when we least expect it), it is all part of our training (otherwise, why meditate at all?). When we notice there is ill will in our mind, we direct our mind to **joyful faith** in the Dharma. This is an inspiring reflection by way of the spiritual faculty (faith) that counters ill will. [Table 3.4.1]

3.4.2.3 Even when we have difficulties with sense-based distractions, or we are upset with them, and we become restless or worry about something we have done or not done, we simply bring the mind (attention) back to the breath with a smile; get back to the **concentration**. The inner smile actually helps in warding off distractions. [Table 3.4.1]

3.4.2.4 Some days we may have distraction after distraction, until we are crushed, as it were, with sloth and torpor; we just feel physically and mentally tired. This is just a *feeling*. After exerting ourself for some time, we may become impatient. We should then imagine ourself to be a marathon runner or an athlete who does not give up, especially when we only need a tiny push, "the last wind" (as the athletes call it). Just make that **effort** by smiling at tiredness, and bring the mind back to the breath. [Table 3.4.1]

3.4.2.5 At some point in our meditation, we find our mind chatting with us asking whether we are meditating correctly, or we may even have some doubt about some teaching, or about some strange thoughts. This is where we can apply the most basic of Buddhist teachings: the **wisdom** of impermanence. We will get over all this doubt *after* we have meditated. Now is the time to be *meditating*. The point remains that Dharma study and understanding correctly what we know of Dharma are vital for effective meditation.[82]

3.4.2.6 From **Table 3.4.1**, we can see how **dhyana-factors** (*jhān'aṅga*) suppress the hindrances, and with the arising of the 1st dhyana, the hindrances are countered or neutralized by dhyana-factors. While a spiritual faculty has to be *actively* applied to suppress the respective hindrances, the 5 dhyana-factors work as a set to counter the hindrances. Technically, once the hindrances are all suppressed by the spiritual faculties, the 1st dhyana arises, and its dhyana-factors suppress the hindrances.

One way to understand how the spiritual faculties suppress the hindrances is as follows:[83]

(1) **Effort**, having suppressed sloth and torpor, is successfully directed as **initial application** to the breath.
(2) **Wisdom**, having overcome doubt, applies *clear awareness* for **sustained application** of the mind to focus on the breath.
(3) **Faith**, having joyfully removed ill will, strengthens itself as **zest**, feeding the dhyana.
(4) **Concentration**, having overcome restlessness and worry, brings about **happiness**.
(5) **Mindfulness**, having suppressed sensual desire, induces **one-pointedness of mind**, that is, dhyana.

This is only an analytical explanation of how the faculties suppress the hindrances, allowing dhyana with its factors to arise. The dynamic of dhyana is such that all this happens almost all at once. The dhyana-factors also disappear with the cessation of dhyana, but the faculties need to be cultivated continuously.

[82] On an interesting riddle on the spiritual faculties and the hindrances, see **Jāgara S** (S 1.6): read just the Sutta, verse S 10, and look up the nn.

[83] On how the hindrances are overcome and the form dhyanas arise, see SD 62.16 *3.1.1).

3.4.3 The 5 aggregates and our being

3.4.3.1 The 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*) are the 2nd dharma listed in the contemplation of dharmas [2.1.4.1]. Our sentient being consists of *body and mind*. Our **body** (*kāya*)[84] may be seen as made up of either the 5 physical sense-faculties—*the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body*—or the 4 primary elements—*earth, water, fire and wind*.

The 5 sense-faculties, mediated by the mind, experience 5 material or physical realities by way of *sight* (light, colours, shapes), *sounds* (vibrations, words), *smells, tastes and touches* (bodily contact, temperature, softness, hardness, smoothness, roughness, etc). The 5 sense-faculties and the mind form the 6 sense-bases (*saḷ-āyatana*) [3.4.4].

Although the 5 sense-faculties are, as a rule, common to all humans, vision and hearing are the only faculties common to all sentient beings, including devas and brahmas. These divine beings, because of their highly developed minds and subtle forms, do not need the faculties of "molecular contact," that is, those of *smell, taste and touch*, sometimes bundled together as ***muta***, "sensed," as in the expressions, *diṭṭha,suta,muta* or *diṭṭha,suta,muta,viññāta*.

In the phrase ***diṭṭha,suta,muta,*** *muta* has the broad sense of "known or sensed," that is, all the senses other than seeing (*diṭṭha*) and hearing (*suta*).[85] In other words, *muta* here refers to smell, taste and touch, faculties that are sensed by way of molecules coming into contact with sensitive body surfaces, that is, those of *the nose, the tongue and the skin*. It seems that early Buddhist psychophysiology regarded the faculties of *smell, taste and touch* as being "tactile," that is, they are stimulated by chemical molecules in the case of smell and taste, and by "physical" touch (especially pressure and temperature) in the case of the skin.

3.4.3.2 The teaching that our body consists of **the 4 primary elements** (*cattaro mahā,bhūta*)—earth, water, fire and wind—is a reflection of *impermanence, conditionality and nonself*. The tetrad of elements is a "pre-scientific" (a non-scientific)[86] term used by the Buddha simply as a reflection on our body as composed of the 4 elements thus:[87]

			examples
earth element	*paṭhavī dhātu*	solidity	head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, etc;
water element	*āpo dhatu*	liquid	bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, etc;
fire element	*tejo dhatu*	heat	what warms, ages, burns us, and digests our food;
wind element	*vāyo dhatu*	air	our bodily movements, the breath.

All the elements are conditioned and impermanent; they arise and fall away every moment;

- our body is **solid** with bones and flesh which grow, change, age and die;
- our body is mostly **liquid**, that is, blood, urine and other fluids;
- from day one, our body is the **fire** that burns up the food we take, and the body burns itself up, too; and

[84] "Body" (*kāya*) here is a broader collective term for our sentient human frame; the "body" (also *kāya*) is a narrower term for the tactile body, esp its skin.

[85] See SD 53.5 (3.1); SD 60.1e (1.1.6).

[86] Early Buddhism should not be described as "scientific," which may relegate it to being merely a category in science. Early Buddhism is a pre-scientific spiritual system that has some scientific parallels, remarkable for its time, which modern science may help to explain in contemporary terms.

[87] See **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 11,8-11, with §12 on "space"), SD 3.11; **Mahā Hatthi,pādôpama S** (M 28,6), SD 6.16.

- our body moves like air or **wind** with every breath we take in, and with the breath that we give back each time.

In the end we give it all back to the elements. We are conditioned beings; the conditions work our body and our mind; the conditions are all around us. Whatever that lives, that exists, is conditioned.

All that we are—*form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*—"whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near"[88] should be seen, as they really are, with right wisdom, thus: "**This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self."**[89]

3.4.4 The 6 sense-bases are the tools of our being

3.4.4.1 As already noted [3.4.3.1], **the 6 sense-bases** (*saḷ-āyatana*) consist of the 5 physical senses (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) and the mind. In other words, this is the way we experience the 4 primary elements (plus space as the 5th), through the mind, that is, consciousness, which is the 6th element.[90] Although there is the physical world "out there," what we experience of it is, as a rule, our own construction or projection of the world in our own minds by way of the 6 elements: *earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness*.

In modern terms, we may see **earth** as *solidity* or matter (which includes light and sound); **water** as *cohesiveness* or "contact" as in smell, taste and touch (their molecules impact sensory surfaces); **fire** is heat, that is, combustion, oxidation, digestion and decay (including the aging process); **wind** is basically *motion.* However*,* it is not only perpetual motion of each of the 4 primary elements (earth, water, fire and wind) themselves, but it is their mutual transformation or interchanges.

For example, technically, we can see the contact of the molecules of smell, taste and touch as a manifestation of *the earth element.* The speed of light and of sound is technically a measure of *the wind element* in these 2 elements. The rapid motion of these elements generates *the heat element,* which we understand today as the decaying process of those states. In short, *the wind element* as motion embodies one of the most basic early Buddhist key teachings: **impermanence**.

Space is usually understood as vacuum or emptiness. We know today that there is no perfect vacuum because it contains extremely low pressure and density of matter; it contains the earth element. Outer space vacuum, in fact, has no perfect vacuum as it still contains diffuse particles, such as atoms, dust, protons, and electrons (all of which are forms of the earth element), forming the interstellar medium (ISM; the space between stars), filled with radiation (the fire element) and magnetic fields (forms of the water element).

The multi-phase medium is crucial for star formation, with dense regions known as molecular clouds acting as stellar nurseries. The ISM's varying densities, temperatures, and compositions allow for the

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[88] The totality formula: *atītânagata,paccupannaṁ ajjhattaṁ vā bahiddhā vā oḷarikaṁ vā sukhumaṁ vā hīnaṁ vā panītaṁ vā yaṁ dūre santike vā.* See **(Dve) Khandha S** (S 22.48) + SD 17.1a (3); **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,17-21), SD 1.2.

[89] This sentence refers to negating the 3 graspings (*ti,vidha gāha*), which are: (1) "This is mine" (*etam mama*), which arises from craving (*taṇhā*); (2) "This I am" (*eso ham'asmi*), which arises from conceit (*māna*); (3) "This is my self" (*eso me attā*), which arises from self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*): see SD 19.1 (1.2). **Mahā Hatthi,padopama S** (M 28,7) more concisely says: "There can be no considering that (element) as 'I' or 'mine' or 'I am'" (M 28,7/-1:185), SD 6.16, which represents respectively the 3 kinds of mental proliferation (*papañca*) of self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), craving (*taṇhā*) and conceit (*māna*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f), or as "graspings" (*gāha)*, namely, view (*diṭṭhi*), craving, conceit (MA 2:111, 225). On their opp: *n'etaṁ mama, n'eso 'ham asmi, na mêso attā ti,* applied to the 5 aggregates, see **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,12-16), SD 1.2. On the nature of the 3 graspings, see respectively: **I: The nature of identity,** SD 19.1; **Me: The nature of conceit,** SD 19.2a & **Mine: The nature of craving,** SD 19.3.

[90] On the 6 elements, see **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 11,8-12), SD 3.11.

formation of complex molecules and play a vital role in the lifecycle of matter within a galaxy. A similar microcosmos of elements works to produce change and growth in our own bodies. The only difference is that we have **consciousness**. We know of these processes; we notice the changes that we undergo; we wonder and fret over the termination of such processes.

We notice how pain arises in the wake of such changes; we suffer in our desire for these processes to remain unchanged. This can never be: *to exist is to change*. Looking deeper, we will notice that there is no fixed state in any of these processes. Even a "steady state" phase of the universe is undergoing subtle but sure changes; the steady state is itself part of the whole process of this changing universe.

Hence, by reflecting on impermanence, we see how at even the most fundamental level of all existence and our lives, all the elements change, they end and re-arise, without any fixed or final state. When we apply this understanding to our own being, we begin to see more of the true reality of ourselves. When we fully understand this, we reach awakening: the mind is free of the elements. There is neither mind, nor elements, nor nothingness. This is as far as we can put "it" into words.

3.4.4.2 Through **language**, we create *words, symbols and names* to represent what we have fabricated or imagined. Using language, we formulate and evolve theories and ideas about good, evil, right and wrong, God, heaven and hell; we create societies and destroy them, and we tell stories about them for our glorification or to control the masses. We live in a world of concepts and make-believe where *names are not the things named*.

In other words, we live in a virtual reality constructed by our mirror-like mind, and we, as a rule, take this inner virtual reality as more real than the actual reality out there. In this way, we fail to see what is really out there and live in our own private reality forming private views. Since we are habitually not in sync with true reality, we are likely to have a deluded view of things, such as the notion of an abiding self, some external agency we depend on for succour, and so on.

We thus have 2 kinds of beliefs or religions: one thinks that these names are real and wants us to believe them to be so; the other reminds us that these are merely names and forms, and to learn to see things as they really are. The Buddha teaches that we should learn to see true reality and thus be free.

3.4.4.3 In the context of **the 5 aggregates**, *form* refers to our body and any physical reality; our mind is made up of the other 4 aggregates, that is, *feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*. This listing is only a theoretical taxonomy for teaching purposes. In practical reality, we create "**name-and-form**" (*nāma,rūpa*); we mentally project (*rūpa*) what we experience (*nāma*). For example, when there is an old tree-trunk on the beach, stripped bare and washed smooth by the sea, a Town Council worker may see it as mere junk and have it removed; a poor wood-cutter sees it as fuel for his fire; children have fun climbing and playing on and around it; an artist sees an exquisite piece of natural art.

3.4.4.4 In early Buddhist psychology, ***nāma*** is made up of *contact, feeling, perception, volition, and attention.* In our daily experience, even during meditation, we tend to direct our mind to a sense-object or a mind-object (say, the breath) with the mind. With some proper attention, there arises **contact**: we mentally "see" the breath. Then, we **feel** calm for this breath-sign, and **perceive** joy for it due to the absence of greed, hatred and delusion. A deep sense of acceptance and satisfaction follows: this is **volition** (a karmic or intentional act). With joyful faith, we pay **attention** to this breath-experience.[91]

What is described above is a case of the arising of *nāma,rūpa* with a mind-object. ***Rūpa*** is the form (or "feel") of the breath. It is the earth element that we feel when the breath contacts our nose-tip (for

[91] The mind (*citta*) arises as interaction between *rūpa* (form) and *nāma* (name), comprising contact, feeling, perception, volition, and attention. In modern terms, this is "cognitive consciousness": see **Nagara S** (S 12.65), SD 14.2 (2); & ***Viññāṇa***, SD 17.8a (6).

example); when the breath fogs up a cool glass surface, the breath is the water element; the warmth of the breath that we feel is the fire element; and the movement of inhalation and exhalation is the wind element. All this is ***rūpa***. The deep joyful peace we feel in the breath is ***nāma***; it is a mental state.

Briefly then, ***nāma*** comprises the *contact, feeling, perception, volition and attention* arising on account of our mindfulness of the breath. Even a thought or reflection of the breath brings us joyful peace and inspiration. In this case, *nāma,rūpa* is a wholesome part of our cognitive consciousness.[92]

3.4.5 The 7 awakening factors

3.4.5.1 The 7 awakening factors (*satta,bojjhaṅga*), the stages to deep and liberating meditation, are namely:[93]

(1) mindfulness,	*sati sambojjhaṅga*;
(2) investigation of states,	*dhamma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga*;
(3) effort,	*viriya sambojjhaṅga*;
(4) zest,	*pīti sambojjhaṅga*;
(5) tranquillity,	*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*;
(6) concentration, and	*samādhi sambojjhaṅga*;
(7) equanimity.	*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*.

These 7 awakening-factors work in 2 ways: as a sequence or as sets. For the adept meditator or when the meditation is successful, the 7 awakening-factors work sequentially to bring about dhyana, as illustrated in **the Bojjhaṅga Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3).[94]

For the unawakened meditator, especially when the mind is "stuck," factors 2-4 as a set should be applied; and when the mind is "restless," factors 5-7 as a set should be cultivated. Factor 1 (mindfulness) applies to both cases. This is laid out in **the (Bojjhaṅga) Aggi Sutta** (S 45.53) [4.3].

3.4.5.2 In satipatthana practice, the 7 awakening factors are properly applied in the following ways:

(1) **Mindfulness** (*sati*) refers to when all the 5 hindrances [3.4.1.2] have been temporarily removed. The calm and clear mind is then directed to the 1st satipatthana, **contemplation of body** [2.1.1], such as the breath meditation [2.1.1.1].

(2) **Dharma-investigation** (*dhamma,vicaya*) here refers especially to observing the rise and fall of the breath, and the spaces that arise between the breaths as one's concentration builds up.[95]

(3) **Effort** [energy] (*viriya*) comes as a result of dharma-investigation. It is making effort to bring back the wandering mind each and every time, and to keep the mind anchored on the breath (the right efforts).[96]

(4) **Zest** [joy] (*pīti*) is transomatic joy (mild form of dhyana) that arises from dharma-investigation and builds up with effort in minding the breath, especially when the breath is finally stilled.[97]

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[92] On *nāma,rūpa* as ordinary cognitive consciousness: **Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna S** (S 22.57,26-29), SD 29.2; ***Viññāṇa*** SD 17.8a (6.1.1).

[93] See **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.15, see "doctrinal summary" (1.0.3); **Mahā Sakul'udāyī S** (M 77,20) + SD 6.18 (7); **Aggañña S** (D 27,30), SD 2.19.

[94] S 46.3, SD 10.15 (4.1 f).

[95] On the breath's rise, fall and pause, see SD 17.2b (1.1).

[96] SD 10.16 (6).

[97] **Vimuttâyatana Sutta** (A 5.26,2.3), SD 21.5 (2) on *pāmojja.*

(5) **Tranquillity** (*passaddhi*) follows from zest, and settles the body (that is, feeling, perception and formations are temporarily suspended).[98]

(6) **Concentration** (*samādhi*) becomes deeper and stills the mind, too, bringing about dhyana (*jhāna*).[99]

(7) **Equanimity** (*upekkhā*) refers to joyful composure and peace resulting from samadhi or dhyana, which is a preparatory stage to the formless dhyanas.[100]

3.4.5.3 The above explanation of the awakening-factors is a simplified one based on the breath meditation. The awakening-factors can be similarly applied to other aspects of satipatthana practice. Such a practice helps bring concentration to an ordinary practitioner, and brings dhyana to an experienced meditator.

On an even simpler level, a new or inexperienced meditator should apply **the 5 grounds for freedom** (*pañca vimutt'āyatana*) that leads to concentration, even dhyana, as taught in **the Vimutt'āyatana Sutta** (A 5.26), thus:

> **Inspired by the meaning [goal] and by the Dharma** [knowing the Dharma in the spirit and in the letter],[101]
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | **gladness**[102] arises in him; | ***pāmujjaṁ*** *[pāmojjaṁ] jāyati* |
> | because of gladness, **zest** arises; | *pamuditassa **pīti** jāyati* |
> | because of zest, the body[103] becomes **tranquil**; | *pīti,manassa kāyo **passambhati*** |
> | when the body is tranquil, he feels **happiness**; | *passadha,kāyo **sukha**ṁ vedeti* |
> | a happy mind becomes **concentrated**. | *sukhino cittaṁ **samādhiyati*** |
>
> (A 5.26,2.3), SD 21.5

This teaching is a kind of simplified set of awakening-factors focusing on **being joyful** in our meditation. What we think during meditation, whether something negative or something positive, affects our meditation. To help suspend thinking during meditation, we should habitually **smile** (an inner smile) to help us focus. Hence, we should also *smile with lovingkindness* towards any distraction or hindrance, and then return to our meditation-object.

3.4.6 The 4 noble truths

3.4.6.1 The 4 noble truths (*catu ariya sacca*) are the defining teachings of early Buddhism, formulating the reality of *suffering, its arising, its ending and the path to the ending of suffering*. The truths are here listed in the well-known sequence of (1) truth, (2) arising, (3) ending, and (4) path, that is, the teaching sequence, such as that given in **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11).[104] This sequence is meant for neophytes to understand the truths sequentially, and then move to the path of awakening, that is, take up the 3 trainings of moral conduct, mental concentration and insight wisdom.

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[98] SD 10.15 (4.4).

[99] ***Dhyana***, SD 8.4.

[100] **Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 140,20-21), SD 4.17**.**

[101] On this phrase, see SD 101.7 (2.2.4).

[102] Comy explains *pāmujja* or *pāmojja* as "weak zest" (*taruṇa,pīti*) (AA 3:230).

[103] Comy glosses "body" (*kāya*) here as "the mental body" (*nāma,kāya*), ie, the mind or mental aggregates (feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness) (AA 2:230; ThīA 160): see ***Viññāṇa,*** SD 17.8a (5.2).

[104] S 56.111/5:420-424 (SD 1.1) = Mv 1.6.16-32 (V 1:10-12).

3.4.6.2 The original or oldest sequence of the 4 noble truths, as taught in the actual "first turning of the Dharma-wheel"[105] to the 5 monks, must have been sequenced as 1-2-4-3, that is, *first the truths of suffering, its arising, and the path are taught, and then its ending is explained*. Hence, this may be called **the practice sequence**, which is listed in at least one sutta, **the Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika Sutta** (M 149).[106]

3.4.6.3 In simple terms, the 4 noble truths are the transcendental problem-solving formula in both secular and spiritual senses, as shown in the following sequence, thus:

	definition	**description**
(*1*) suffering	lack, unsatisfactoriness, like/dislike	identifying the problem
(*2*) arising of suffering	craving, habitual dissatisfaction	knowing the conditions
(*4*) path to the ending of suffering	training in body, mind and the world	morality, mindfulness, wisdom
(*3*) ending of suffering	satisfaction, contentment, freedom	resolving the conditions, joy

At the root of the above **truth-training** is the wisdom of nonself. Our suffering—bodily, mental, social or spiritual—is not to be blamed on anyone or any one thing. *No one* is the cause of suffering. It arises from our notion of Self—"I, me, mine"—by way of self-identity view (identifying with any aspect of our body or being),[107] of conceit (measuring self and other),[108] or craving (desiring to have or to be).[109] Simply, it means that our suffering, failure or lack arise from conditions. Remove the conditions or remove ourselves from the conditions, and we will begin to solve the problem.

3.4.7 Renouncing dharmas, realizing Dharma

3.4.7.1 The 4th and last satipatthana is the contemplation of dharmas (*dhammânupassanā*), mindful observation of truths and realities arising in our mind. We will only know what that dharma (as teaching and training) is when we have learned and understood the Dharma (as reality); then, in practice, we will recognize it; and with mindfulness realize its truth, which will free us from ignorance at this stage [3.3.3.4].

Studying the Dharma as teaching and true reality begins with mindfully reciting or hearing it with joy. We take it at the word level at first; maybe that is all we understand for a start. We must take care not to simply interpret or re-interpret it with some views we hold, or piously repeat what we have been told. Then, we have only reinforced our old wrong views; we remain unmoved and unchanged.

3.4.7.2 Practising the Dharma as we understand it means that we reflect on it, and then apply that teaching to our daily life, observing how it actually operates in real life. This usually takes some time, like fruit taking time to ripen, but the awakening moment seems sudden, like ripe durian falling on its own. It may come as a "Eureka!" (I've found it!) moment of insight, and we begin to notice how it is connected to

[105] We do not have a "historical" record of the 1st sermon. **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11) is prob a reconstruction of the teaching as recalled by the Buddha much later for the benefit of posterity. The only difference between the historical teaching and the sutta reconstruction is in the sequence of the truths, which is a minor but useful technicality. We are given an example of "theory, practice and realization," ie, the 3 good truths (*saddhamma*) [3.2.2.3].

[106] M 149,11 etc, + SD 41.9 (2.4); SD 53.26 (2).

[107] **"I: The nature of identity,"** SD 19.1.

[108] "**Me: The nature of conceit**," SD 19.2a.

[109] "M**ine: The nature of craving**," SD 19.3.

other realities. It thus happens slowly at first, and then all at once. The most significant "all at once" Eureka moment is when we realize something wholesome about ourself:[110]

- that we have *neither* known nor accepted evil when it encountered *us*; or
- that we have done *evil* but we know now how to reject it; or
- that we have *not* done the truly good, and now we know how to do it; or
- that we have *done* good, and will now cultivate it.

3.4.7.3 Realizing the Dharma that is true reality means that we begin to notice and feel terrified at the idea that since we have been *born*, we will *age*, we will fall *sick* bodily or mentally, and we will eventually *die*. When we react with some profound fear or sadness, we have understood it; this is called **spiritual urgency** (*saṁvega*). First, there is a sense of seeming powerlessness to do anything about it.

Then, we notice that it is the fear that we must be rid of; for, those who let *fear* choke their lives are already dead. Yet, no one really dies since we are reborn, unless we are awakened. We must thus learn to live with true happiness. The happy life is best lived with Dharma-life, *knowing the mind, taking it, freeing it*. This urgent knowledge is what draws us closer to the path, to realization of nirvana.

3.4.8 The 2 parables on true renunciation

3.4.8.1 The Alagaddûpama Sutta (M 22) records the Buddha's warnings against the wrong grasp (misunderstanding, misusing and abusing) of the Dharma by way of 2 parables. The first, **the parable of the water-snake**, runs thus:

> 10.4 Suppose **a man who needs a water-snake**,
> looking for a water-snake, wandering in search of a water-snake,
> sees a large water-snake and grasps its coils or its tail.
> It would turn back and bite his hand or his arm or one of his limbs, **[134]**
> and because of that he would suffer death or deadly pain.
> Why is that? Because, bhikshus, of the wrong grasp of the water-snake.
>
> 10.5 So, too, here, some misguided person learns the Dharma … but having learnt the Dharma,
> they do not wisely examine the (true) purpose [meaning] of those teachings.
> 10.6 Without examining the purpose of those teachings with wisdom,
> they are not convinced of it [they fail to see its wisdom].
> Instead, they learn the Dharma *only for the sake of criticizing others and for winning debates*,
> and *they do not enjoy the good for the sake of which one learns the Dharma*.
> Those teachings, wrongly grasped by them,
> bring them *harm and suffering* for a long time to come.
> Why is that? Because, bhikshus, of the wrong grasp of the teachings.
>
> (M 22,10.4-10.6), SD 3.13

The parable of the watersnake warns us against misunderstanding and misusing the Dharma; that we must simply let go, renounce, all wrong views, especially about the Dharma.

We should instead have **the right grasp** of the Dharma, thus:

> Suppose a man who needs **a water-snake**,
> looking for a water-snake, wandering in search of a water-snake,
> sees a large water-snake and catches it rightly with a cleft stick,

[110] The foll are the 4 right efforts in practice: SD 10.16 (6).

and having done so, **grasps it rightly by its neck**.
Then, although the snake might coil around his hand or his arm or one of his limbs,
still he would *not* suffer death or deadly pain.[111]
Why is that? Because of the right grasp of the water-snake.
12 Therefore, bhikshus, when you *understand* the meaning of my word, *remember* it accordingly,
and when you do *not* understand the meaning of my word,
then you should question and counter-question either me or the learned monks about it.
(M 22,11.2-12), SD 3.13

The essence of the parable of the watersnake is that:
(1) we should not misunderstand the Buddha's teaching, especially by simply accepting what we hear (even from popular and respectable teachers), but courageously question the teachers, and carefully investigate and master the Dharma for ourselves.
(2) Conversely, we should fully renounce and totally avoid wrong views—based on greed, hatred, delusion or fear—especially religious teachings, whether in the name of Buddhism or from other systems, but carefully study and master the Dharma for ourselves.

3.4.8.2 The 2nd parable—**the parable of the raft**—is about *proper study, practice and realization of the Dharma*—that having *become* Dharma, we must *let go* of all dharmas, both Dharma and not-Dharma. This means that the Dharma as teaching and true reality should be used "for crossing over [the waters and landing on the far shore], not for the purpose of grasping; thus:

"Bhikshus, suppose a man in the course of his journey saw a great stretch of water,
whose **near shore** is dangerous and fearful, and whose **far shore** is safe and fear-free,
but there is neither ferry nor bridge for going across to the far shore. **[135]**
Then, he thinks:
There is **this great stretch of water**, *whose near shore is dangerous and fearful, and*
whose far shore is safe and danger-free,
but there is neither ferry nor bridge for going across to the far shore.

13.3 What now if I were to collect grass, wood, branches and leaves,
and bind them together into **a raft**, and supported by the raft,
and exerting effort with my hands and feet, I go safely across to the far shore?
Then, the man *collects grass, wood, branches and leaves, and*
binds them together into a raft, and supported by the raft.
He exerts himself using his hands and feet, goes safely across to the far shore.[112]

13.4 Then, when he has gone across and arrived on the far shore, he might think thus:
'This raft has been very helpful to me, since supported by it,
and exerting effort with my hands and feet, I went safely across to the far shore.
Suppose I were to *hoist it on my head or bear it on my shoulder, then go wherever I want?*'

13.5 Now, bhikshus, what do you think?
By doing so, would that man be doing what should be done with the raft?"
"No, bhante."

[111] Cf Buddhaghosa's parable of the fisherman and the watersnake: catching in his hand a watersnake and recognizing it so, he at once casts it as far away as possible and scrambles on to a high and dry place for safety (Vism 21.49/652), SD 20.1 (6.2.1.3).
[112] Cf a similar parable at **Asīvisôpama S** (S 35.238,8/4:174), SD 28.1. See also SD 52.11 (1.2.2.2).

13.6 "By doing what, would that man be doing what should be done with the raft?
Here, bhikshus, when that man has gone across and arrived on **the far shore**,
he might think thus:
'This raft has been very helpful to me, since, *supported by it and*
using my hands and feet, I went safely across to the far shore.
Suppose I were to haul it onto dry land or set it adrift in the water, and go wherever I wish?'
13.7 Now, bhikshus, by doing so, that man is *doing what should be done with that raft*.

13.8 Even so I have shown you that **Dharma**[113] is comparable to **a raft**, which is *for crossing over* (the waters to the far shore), not for the purpose of grasping.

14 Bhikshus, having understood the parable of the raft, **you should abandon even dharmas [the good], how much more so what are not-dharmas [the bad]!**[114]

(M 22,13 f), SD 3.13

These 2 parables highlight the truth that all teachings, especially religious teachings, are merely tools for individual understanding, social harmony and spiritual development. A religion is good with regards to such qualities. Even then, such teachings can be better effected by good education and wholesome socialization.

Yet all this goodness—personal, social and spiritual—are trends and training for becoming better individuals, for a better society and for spiritual freedom from *craving and ignorance*. When we are free from craving and ignorance—with just some wisdom of what they really are—as awakened beings or as compassionate persons, or just as we are, we can inspire happiness, goodness and peace in others, *free from religious dogma, beliefs, rituals and power*. We can then help awaken and free others from samsaric blindness and bondage.

3.4.8.3 Daily awakening. Life is but a karmic slumber from which we awake each karmic day. We wake and the sun brightens the day. Even when the sky is overcast, we know that the sun is up there behind the clouds, keeping the time and rhythm of life. When day is done, the sun sets and so must we rest in our own time.

We daily awake to the sun rising and setting, samsara's breath, just as we take in each breath and give it back. It's a really long karmic slumber with intermittent waking moments called "life." When we understand this, we then awake each day with joy ready to move on, searching the suttas and settling our minds so that we, with light-dust eyes, can see better. The real awakening begins here.

— — —

[113] Here *dhamma* (sg) has a broad uncountable sense encompassing "teaching/s; the good; the wholesome; mental states and objects; truth; reality and associated states and ideas." For comy, see SD 3.13 (3.3), esp (3.3.2).

[114] *Dhammā pi vo pahātabbā pag'eva adhammā*. See prec n.

(Satipaṭṭḥāna) Sālā Sutta

The (Satipatthana) Discourse at Sālā

S 47.4

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at the brahmin village of **Sālā** in Kosala.

2 There the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

The novice monks (newly ordained) (*bhikkhu nava*)

3 "Bhikshus, those monks who are **newly ordained**,
not long gone forth, recently come to this Dharma-Vinaya,
should by you be made to take up, be settled, be established
in the cultivation of the 4 focuses of mindfulness.[115]
What are the four?

"[They should be instructed thus:]

4 'Come, avusos,

(1) dwell contemplating **body in the body**, *kāye kāyânupassino viharatha*
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,[116]
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,[117]
for knowing the body as it really is.[118]

(2) Dwell contemplating **feeling in feelings**, *vedanāsu vedanā'nupassino viharatha*
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for knowing feelings as they really are.

(3) Dwell contemplating **mind in the mind**, *citte cittā'nupassino viharatha*
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for knowing the mind as it really is.

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[115] *Ye te bhikkhave **bhikkhū navā** | acira,pabbajitā adhun'āgatā imaṁ dhammavinayaṁ, | te vo bhikkhave bhikkhū catunnaṁ satipaṭṭhānānaṁ bhāvanāya samādapetabbā, nivesetabbā patipaṭṭhāpetabbā.*

[116] *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā*. This is an abridgement of the sentence in **Satipaṭṭhāna** (M 10), which reads: "exertive, clearly aware, mindful, … removing covetousness and displeasure [discontent] in regard to the world" (*ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassaṁ*) (M 10,3/1:56), SD 13.3 (where see nn). These lines apply only to the practice of the novice monks and the unawakened.

[117] *Ekodi,bhūtā vippasanna,cittā samāhitā ekagga,cittā*. Comy explains "unified (mind)" (*ekodi,bhūta*) as "momentary concentration" (*khaṇika samādhi*) and "one-pointed mind" (*ekagga,citta*) as "the mind that is rightly fixed by way of access concentration or full concentration (viz, dhyana)" (*upacār'appaṇā,vasena sammā ṭhapita,citta ca ekagga,cittā ca*) (SA 3:200,4-6).

[118] *Kāyassa yathā,bhūtaṁ ñāṇāya.*

(4) Dwell contemplating **dharma [reality] in the dharmas**, *dhammesu dhammā'nupassino viharatha*
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for knowing dharmas as they really are.' **[145]**

The learners (*sekha*)

5 Bhikshus, those monks who are **learners**,
who have not attained perfection,[119] who dwell aspiring for supreme safety from the yoke:[120]

(1) they too dwell contemplating **body in the body**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for fully understanding the body.[121]

(2) They too dwell contemplating **feeling in feelings,**
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for fully understanding feelings.

(3) They too dwell contemplating **mind in the mind**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for fully understanding the mind.

(4) They too dwell contemplating **dharma [reality] in the dharmas**
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
for fully understanding dharmas.

The arhats (*arahata*)

6 Bhikshus, those monks who are **arhats**,
whose influxes are destroyed,
who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden,
reached their own goal, utterly destroyed the fetters of existence, and
are fully freed through final knowledge:

(1) they too dwell contemplating **body in the body**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
detached [freed] from the body.[122]

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[119] "Who have not attained perfection" (*a-p,patta,mānassa*, lit "having not attained one's wishes"); qu at DhsA 140,16.* Comy on **Godhika S** (S 4.23,11.4/1:121,19*) glosses it as "not attained arhathood" (*appatta,arahatto*, SA 1:183.20). *Appatta,mānaso* occurs in **Mūla,pariyāya S** (M 1), SD 11.8.

[120] *Ye'pi te bhikkhave bhikkhū **sekhā** appatta,mānasā anuttaraṁ yoga-k,khemaṁ patthayamānā viharanti*. On *yoga-k,khema*, see SD 51.11 (2.2.2); SD 55.9 (1.3.2.3).

[121] *Kāyassa pariññāya*.

(2) They too dwell contemplating **feeling in feelings**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
detached from feelings.

(3) They too dwell contemplating **mind in mind**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
detached from the mind.

(4) They too dwell contemplating **dharmas in the dharmas**,
exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
mentally unified, with limpid mind, concentrated, with one-pointed mind,
detached from dharmas.

7 Bhikshus, those monks who are **newly ordained**, not long gone forth,
recently come to this Dharma-Vinaya,
should by you be made to take up, be settled, be established
in the cultivation of these 4 focuses of mindfulness."

—evaṁ—

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[122] *Kāyena visaṁyuttā*.