

Ānāpāna,sati Sutta

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

(Majjhima Nikāya 118/3:77-88)
Translated and annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 The sutta

1.1 BACKGROUND. In the **icchā,naṅgala Sutta** (S 54.11), breath meditation is declared to be “a noble dwelling, a divine dwelling, the Tathagata’s dwelling,”¹ because during the rains retreat, the Buddha “generally dwell in the concentration by mindfulness of breathing.”² The chief text of “the mindfulness of in-and-out breathing” (*ānāpāna,sati*) is of course **the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta** (the discourse on the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing) found in the Majjhima Nikāya (M 118/3:77-88). There are also four brief versions of the breath meditation (S 54.13-16) [1.2]. The Madhyama Āgama of the Sarvāstivāda does not have any such sutta, but there is an isolated text in the Chinese Madhyama Āgama.³

The Pāli Ānāpāna,sati Sutta is an exposition of the sixteen steps of breath meditation in four tetrads [§§15-22] and the relationship of tetrads to the four focusses of mindfulness [§§23-28], the seven awakening-factors [§§29-40] and spiritual liberation [§§41-43]. The sixteen steps are found as a separate set in the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama and Saṃyukta.⁴

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

On hearing of the Buddha’s presence, the monks from the surrounding countryside flock to meet him [§§5-7]. The Buddha declares that the spiritual community is filled with accomplished disciples [§§8-12]. Even those who are not yet awakened are engaged in various spiritual exercises beginning with the focusses of mindfulness [§§13-14]. This bulk of the sutta records the teaching given on the final night of the four-month retreat.

The main theme of this sutta is the attainment of “successive stages of excellence” (*uḷāraṃ pubbenāparaṃ viśesam*), that is, the four stages of Sainthood. The Buddha begins by declaring that breath meditation brings to perfection the four focusses of mindfulness, and finally singling it out for special mention. [§15]

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

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

¹ *Ariya,vihāra, brahma,vihāra, Tathāgata,vihāra.*

² S 54.11/5:325 f.

³ Thich Minh Chau says that this is the “Chih-ching” (1991:347). “These miscellaneous discourses, found added to the major collections, consist of alternative translations and sometimes texts not found in the major Āgamas. Their doctrinal affiliations are usually unknown and they have been even less studied than the major collections.” (Sujato 2004:237 n359). See also Sujato 2004:145-147.

⁴ Rod Bucknell, in his “Pāli-Chinese Sutras Correspondences” (2004) lists T97.1:919 and SĀ 810 = T2.208 as “partial or doubtful cognates of the Pāli version.

⁵ See Bodhi’s intro: S:B 1516 f.

The two Ānanda Suttas differ only in Ānanda requesting the Buddha to teach him, “Venerable sir, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, has the Blessed One as refuge. It would be good indeed if the Blessed One were to explain its meaning. Having heard the Blessed One, the monks would remember it.”⁶ These suttas also share a pericope on the seven awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*).⁷ The two Bhikkhū Suttas, too, share a similar pattern, mutatis mutandis.

The Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta (M 62) closes with the section on *ānāpāna,sati*, and ends with the remark that “when mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing is cultivated and often developed in this manner, even the last breath leaves with your knowledge, not without it.” (M 62.30/1:426). That is to say, when a dying person is mindful of his breath, he dies calmly with mindfulness and clear awareness. **The Visuddhi,magga** says: “Herein there are three kinds of *final* breaths on account of cessation, that is to say, final in *becoming*, final in *absorption*, final in *death*. For, among the various kinds of existence, in-breaths and out-breaths occur only in the sense-sphere existence, not in the form-existence nor the formless existence.” (Vism 8.241/291 f)⁸

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

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

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

(D 29.16-18/3:127 f)

In **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), the Buddha exhorts of these seven sets: “You are to learn them well, associate with them, cultivate them, develop them” (D 16.3.50/ 2:120).

Various methods of meditation are then listed [§14], but only the breath meditation is explained in full. The Commentary explains the reason for this is that a large number of the monks take it as their meditation practice (MA 4:139). It should also be added that the breath meditation is the key meditation in the Buddha’s own spiritual life. The first record we have of his meditation experience is breath meditation when he is a child of 7, and on the night of his awakening, too, he uses the breath meditation (MA 2:291).¹¹

2 The breath

2.1 ĀNĀPĀNA.

2.1.1 Vedic antecedents. The key word ancient Indian word for breath is *prāṇa*, which means both breath and life (that is, to live is to breathe). The word *prāṇa* is a derivative noun, originally meaning “the

⁶ *Bhagavam,mūlakā no bhante dhammā, bhagavaṃ nettikā, bhagavaṃ paṭisaraṇā. Sādhu vata bhante bhagavatañ-ñ’eva paṭibhātu etassa bhāsitaṃ attho.Bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressantī ti.* This is stock (M 1:309 f, 317, 465, 3:115; S 2:80 f; S 36.6/4:207; A 1:199, 4:158, 351, 5:355).

⁷ **Ānāpānasati S**, M 3:85-87 = **Sīla S**, S 5:67-70 = **Ānanda S 1**, S 331-333 = **Ānanda S 2**, S 334 f.

⁸ See **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62.30/1:426) = SD 3.11 n.

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

¹⁰ M 77.15-21/11 f = SD 6.18.

¹¹ See eg **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36.17.31-44/1:242-249) = SD 1.12.

breath in front,” that is, the inhaled air, and is combined with its opposite, *apāna*, “the breath down or away,” that is, the exhaled air, to refer to *respiration*. Zysk gives this helpful point regarding the ancient Indian conception of the breath:

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

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

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

The first term, *prāṇa* (P *pāṇa*), is the most common of the “five winds,” and is a general term for the breath and for life (that which breathes) itself.¹² Although the Vedic system generally defines *prāṇa* as the in-breath, the Pali term here is usually *āna* (with the verb *assasati*, “he breathes in”).¹³ The term *apāna* came to mean “down-going winds” (*adho,gamā vātā*), the breath that moves down from the navel, controlling evacuation and flatus (the breaking of wind). *Vyāna* refers to the interval between inhalation and exhalation, that is, when we are very relaxed, or on a deeper meditation level.¹⁴ The Upanishadic tradition generally defines *samāna* as the breath in the abdomen (abdominal breathing) and associates it with the digestion of food and nourishment of the body.¹⁵ However, as we shall see from **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 62) below, the early Buddhists are aware of both abdominal breathing (*kucchisayā vātā*) and thoracic breathing (*koṭṭhasayā vātā*).¹⁶

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

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

¹³ Although this distinction is not prominent in the Suttas, their Commentaries and the Upaniṣads follow the same defs: see 2.1.2.

¹⁴ Cf Chāndogya Upaniṣad: *yad vai prāṇīti sa prāṇaḥ | yad apāṇīti so ‘pānaḥ | atha yaḥ prāṇāpānayoḥ saṁdhiḥ sa vyānaḥ | yo vyānaḥ sāvāk | tasmād aprāṇann anapānan vācam abhivyāharati ||* “the *prāṇa* is the out-breath, the *apāna* is the in-breath. The *vyāna* is where the *prāṇa* and the *apāna* meet. This *vyāna* is speech. Therefore, when one speaks, one stops the *prāṇa* and the *apāna*” (ChU 1.3.3). In ancient Indian medicine, *vyāna* is said to be responsible for blood circulation.

¹⁵ See eg Maitrī Upaniṣad 2.6 & Zysk 1993:205 f. This aspect of the five winds is close to *aṅgam-aṅgānusārino vātā* (M 62.11 below). Its prominence in our times is found as the “Vipassana” meditation method of watching the rise and fall of the belly (two-fingers’ breath above the navel), as taught by Mahasi Sayadaw.

¹⁶ See also Bodewitz 1986:334-336. For a summary, see Olivelle 1996:1-ii.

Rāhula, what is **the wind element** [motion]?¹⁷

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

Rāhula, whatever that is wind [airy], wind-like and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself], namely,¹⁸

<i>uddhaṅgamā vātā</i>	up-going winds,
<i>adhogamā vātā</i>	down-going winds,
<i>kucchisayā vātā</i>	winds in the belly [abdominal breathing],
<i>koṭṭhasayā vātā</i>	winds in the chest [thoracic breathing],¹⁹
<i>aṅgam-aṅgānusārino vātā</i>	winds that course through the limbs,²⁰
<i>assāso passāso</i>	in-breath and out-breath,

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

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

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

When one sees it thus as it really is with right wisdom, one is revulsed by the wind element and the mind becomes dispassionate towards the wind element. (M 62.11/1:422 f) = SD 3.11

2.1.2 Buddhist definitions. The term *ānāpāna* (with variant readings: *ānāpāṇa*, *āṅāpāṇa*, *āṅāpāṇa*) means “inhaled and exhaled breath, inhalation and exhalation, inspiration and expiration, respiration, breathing” (CPD). The dvandva is resolved as *āna* + *apāna*.²¹ The verbs are *assasati* and *passasati*, respectively, and the Sutta instructs the meditator to first direct himself to *assasati* (“he breathes in”), and then to *passasati* (“he breathes out”). However, there are divergent opinions here.²²

The Visuddhi,magga says that the Vinaya Commentary takes *assāsa* (ie *āna*, Skt *prāṇa*) as the out-breath, and *passāsa* (or *apāna*), the in-breath.²³ The Suttanta Commentaries (like the Upaniṣad tradition) [2.1.1], however, take them as the reverse. Buddhaghosa (the Vism author) himself notes that when a baby leaves its mother’s womb, the air is first expelled from within and then air enters with a fine dust, strikes the palate and is extinguished (with the baby’s sneezing) (Vism 7.164/271 f).

This divergence is also found in **the Mahāyāna**. The Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit and Tibetan texts generally seem to take *āśvāsa* or *ucchvāsa* (Tib *dbugs briubs*) as “in-breath,” and *praśvāsa* (Tib *dbugs*

¹⁷ “Wind,” *vāyo*, or “air” element, ie, motion, in Abhidhamma, said to be “strengthening” or “supporting” (*vit-thambhana, lakkhaṇa*). On how winds cause pains, see **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97.28-29/2:193) = SD 4.9.

¹⁸ According to **Visuddhi,magga**, “winds” are responsible for the various internal motions of the body, namely, “up-going winds” (*uddhaṅgamā vātā*) for vomiting and belching, “down-going winds” (*adho, gamā vātā*) for the expelling of faeces and urine (Vism 350). “Wind” here clearly refers to elemental “motion,” not to the object moved.

¹⁹ *Koṭṭha* means “the stomach or abdomen” (PED); and, *kucchi* is “stomach.” As such, here I take *koṭṭhasayā* to be cognate with or related to Skt *koṣṭhya* (mfn), meaning “proceeding from the chest, emitted (as a sound) from the centre of the lungs” (SED), which makes clear sense here.

²⁰ “Winds that course through the limbs,” *aṅgam-aṅgānusārino vātā*. In ref to this, **Peter Harvey** says, “Note that the ‘motion/air’ element might be related to the modern concept of electrical discharges of the nerves... In that case, the mind would move the body by effecting the electrical modulation of nerve discharges.” (1993:7 digital ed). In contemporary terms, these “winds” clearly refer to the oxyhaemoglobin, ie, the oxygen in the blood, coursing through the body. Clearly, this is the *samāna* as def in Mairī Upaniṣad, where it is said to be the wind that conducts into *apāna* (the downward passing wind) the coarse element of food and distributes in each limb the most subtle element of food (MU 2.6).

²¹ Cf Skt *prāṇāpāna*, ie *prāṇa* + *apāna*.

²² For a detailed study, see Analayo 2005 at M 1:425n.

²³ *Assāso* ‘ti bahi nikkhamana, vāto. ‘*Passāso* ti anto pavisana, vāto. Suttant’atṭhakathāsu pana uppaṭipāṭiyā āgatam, “*assāsam* means out-going wind; *passāsa* means in-coming wind. But in the Sutta Commentaries, it is the reverse” (VA 2:408).

phyuñ) as “out-breath.”²⁴ The Ekōttar’āgama, however, refers first to the out-breath (出息) and then the in-breath (入息) (EĀ17.1 = T2.582a15).

TW Rhys Davids (PED: 92 under *ā + pa*)²⁵ says that “both terms [*assasati* and *passasati*] are semantically alike; but in exegesis however they have been differentiated in a way which looks like a distortion of the original meaning, viz *assasati* is taken as ‘breathing out,’ *passati* as ‘breathing in.’” Among the modern dictionaries, Childers (1875, DPL 61), Trenckner et al (1924, CPD 523), and Cone (2001, DP 268) take *assasati* as “he breathes in.” The Sanskrit dictionaries—Böthlingk (*Sanskrit Wörterbuch*, 1855-75, 4:173), Mylius (*Wörterbuch Sanskrit-Deutsch*, 1992:250) and Monier-Williams (1899: 696)²⁶—too, take *assasati* (Skt *āśvasati*, *āśvasiti*) as “he breathes out,” and *passasati* (Skt *praśvasiti*) as “he breathes in.”

Edgerton, in his entries on *āśvāsa-praśvāsa*, remarks that “whatever may have been the meaning of the two terms, it seems clear that the [compound] (like *ānāpāna*) was commonly used in the sense of breath, collectively and as a whole,”²⁷ which **Analayo** notes, is

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

2.2 BREATH MEDITATION AND SATIPATTHANA. In the **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**,²⁸ breath meditation (*ānāpāna,sati*) is presented as an aspect of the first satipatthana (*kāye kāyānupassī*). The breath meditation is abruptly broken off, as it were, at the end of the first tetrad. In fact, here, the breath meditation is used as a launching pad in meditation of the body, and for the rest of the satipatthanas. The key practice of satipatthana (as has been discussed elsewhere), is the reflection of impermanence.²⁹

However, in **Ānāpāna Saṃyutta**,³⁰ breath meditation is generally presented as in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, which gives emphasis on all four satipatthanas and the awakening-factors (*bojjhaṅga*).³¹ In fact, the *Ānāpāna,sati Sutta* begins as a vehicle for the first satipatthana and ends up as a vehicle for all four:

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

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

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

(Gethin 2001:59; emphases added)

²⁴ For refs, see Edgerton, BHSD:110 under *āśvāsa-praśvāsa*.

²⁵ Online ed: <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/pali/>

²⁶ Online edition: http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/indologie/tamil/mwd_search.html.

²⁷ BHSD 1953:110 under *āśvāsa-praśvāsa*.

²⁸ **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22/2:290-325) = SD 13.2; **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10/1:55-63) = SD 13.3. See Gethin 2001: 56 f, 282 f.

²⁹ See **An Introduction to the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** = SD 12.1(3.8).

³⁰ S 54/5:311-341.

³¹ *Bojjhaṅga*, see §§30-40.

2.3 WHAT IS THE BREATH IN MEDITATION? Writing from an experiential viewpoint of a practising meditator of the forest tradition, **Sujato** gives us an instructive explanation of the nature of the breath:

What exactly is the “breath”? There is a certain experience at the beginning of each breath, a different experience in the middle, and yet another at the end. These experiences are simply awareness of the air element; but it is perception that marks them off as the “breath.” Only the physical impact of the air on the nerve endings is registered by body consciousness. That body consciousness “reports” to mind consciousness, which performs the more sophisticated cognitive tasks such as recognition, interpretation, and so on.

The function of *vitakka* to initiate thoughts and *vicāra* to sustain chains of thoughts is transformed by applying them not to perceptions of verbal constructs but to perceptions of the breath, actively directing the mind away from the diversity of sense experience onto the breath. Doing so over and over, the common features of the breaths become apparent. By combining the shared features of the breaths recognized by perception and by ignoring irrelevant data, the mind forms a stable and coherent concept or mental image of the breath.

As contemplation deepens, the physical breath becomes very fine, so that its impact, originally overpowering, fades and the settling mind gains more appreciation of the subtle mind consciousness. Here, the meditator is going beyond the first four steps of mindfulness of breathing which fall within body contemplation. A numinous rapture arises; the mind floats up like a balloon relieved of its ballast as the heavy burden of the body is disappearing. The subtle reflection of the mind in the breath is now almost the sole object in awareness.

This refined concept, because of ignoring fluctuations in detail, has an enduring quality which outlives the changing physical phenomena it is derived from, in just the same way than the concept of ‘self’ has an enduring quality which outlives the body.³² It normally appears to the meditator as a brilliant light of awesome power, yet exquisite refinement. As the fluctuations in consciousness even out, change fades away.

One need no longer rely on memories of past experiences to interpret the present moment. The contrast on which time depends is not evident, and past and future disappear in the seamless flow of the present: one-pointedness in time. The contents of experience become so rarified that signs and summaries are rendered superfluous. A deeper mode of knowing emerges.

(Sujato, *A Swift Pair of Messengers*, 2001:77)

2.4 PARIMUKHAMĀ.

2.4.1 ABHIDHAMMA INTERPRETATION. Unlike in Hatha Yoga, in breath meditation the breath is not deliberately regulated, but a sustained effort is made to fix one’s awareness on the breath as it moves in and out in its natural rhythm. Those who follow the Abhidhamma and Commentarial traditions, teach that mindfulness should be focussed at the nostril or the upper lip, wherever the contact of the breath is felt most distinctly. This tradition is mainly based on **the Paṭisambhidā, magga** and **Vibhaṅga** interpretation of *parimukhamā* as being “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip.”³³ *Parimukha* literally means “around the entrance,” here always used idiomatically and as an adverb, meaning “in front.” This is the interpretation followed by U Thittila,³⁴ Maurice Walshe,³⁵ Soma Thera,³⁶ and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi.³⁷

In this connection, the Tiantai master, **Zhiyi** (538-597), in his *Tongmen Zhiguan (Śamatha and Vipāśyanā for Beginners)*, gives the following advice for dealing with two kinds of distractions:

³² This does not, however, imply that concepts are not classified as conditioned and impermanent, as some suggest. See S 15.2/2:179.

³³ Pm 1:171,19; Vbh 537/252,13. For further discussion, see above Intro (2), & **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10) = SD 13 Intro (3.9d).

³⁴ Vbh:T 319, 328.

³⁵ D:W 1995:335.

³⁶ 1998:42 f digital ed.

³⁷ M:ÑB 2001:527.

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

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

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

(Zhiyi, *Tongmen Zhiguan*, in Lu K'uan Yü, 1964:126; emphases added)

2.4.2 MODERN INTERPRETATIONS. The most modern innovation here is that of “watching the rise and fall of the abdomen” introduced by Mingun Jetavana Sayadaw of Myanmar, but made famous by his pupil, **Mahasi Sayadaw** in the mid-20th century.³⁸ To avoid contradicting the Sutta and Commentaries, the Mahasi tradition has always taken care to present their main meditation practice as a contemplation of the wind element (vāyo)—that is, one of four primary elements used in meditation—not as a form of breath meditation.³⁹ But as we have already noted [2.4.1], this method, at least its location around the navel, has been taught some 1500 years ago by Zhiyi in China.

Around the same time as Mahasi Sayadaw, too, although less well known, we have **Lee Dhamm-dharo's** method where “the resting spots of the breath” on which one could centre one's attention are given as “the tip of the nose, the middle of the head, the palate, the base of the throat, the breastbone (the tip of the sternum) and the navel (or a point just above it).”⁴⁰ **Mahā Boowa**,⁴¹ too, teaches a very similar method.⁴² However, **Nyanadhammo** (of the Cittaviveka Forest Order) notes that:

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

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

at the time when there is breath, he is aware it is there; at a time when there is no breath, he is aware it is not there.

有時有息亦復知有，又時無息亦復知無

(EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a19)⁴³

³⁸ “[T]he mind should be attentively riveted on the abdomen. It will then be noticed that the abdomen is rising and falling and that these movements take place in continual succession.” Mahāsi Sayādaw, *The Purpose of Practising Kammaṅghāna Meditation*, Rangoon: Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organization, 1980:27 f. For criticisms of the Mahasi method, see GD Bond 1988: & LS Cousins 1996:42.

³⁹ Despite this, the Mahasi tradition has been severely criticized for observing the movement of the breath at the abdomen (Kassapa, “Meditation—right and wrong,” *Maha Bodhi*, Calcutta, 74,11-2 1966:2420245, see p242). However, it is important to distinguish here between academic criticism and practical efficacy since it is well known that meditation masters and methods never rely on merely one practice but are as a rule applied with a host of other helping practices and techniques. The question is not which method is right or wrong, but *whether one has tried it or not*, that is, whether it promotes mindfulness (“meditates”) or not.

⁴⁰ Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo, *Keeping the Breath in Mind & Lessons in Samādhi*, tr Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, 1983: 26; *Frames of Reference*, tr Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, 1987:16.

⁴¹ Wat Pah Bahn Taad, Udon Thani province, Thailand.

⁴² Ajahn Mahā Boowa, *Wisdom Develops Samādhi*, Bangkok: Pow Bhavana Foundation, 1983:14-16.

⁴³ See **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 26) = SD 3.11 Intro (2).

2.4.3 THE SATIPAṬṬHĀNA SUTTA. **Anālayo**,⁴⁴ in his comprehensive and conciliatory survey of *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization* (2003),⁴⁵ gives insightful comments on the term *parimukha*, which should be carefully studied.⁴⁶ A few salient points should be noted here. In breath meditation, *parimukha*, usually translated as “in front” or “before” (oneself), may be taken literally as “around the mouth,” referring to the nostril or upper area. However, such an interpretation is not applicable when the term is used, for example, in relation to overcoming the mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*) (M 3:49; M 1:274; A 4:437) or in cultivating the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) (A 1:183).

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

As such, only in the context of breath meditation, *parimukha* may be interpreted literally as in the nostril area or upper lip.⁴⁷ However, such a literal interpretation would not make sense elsewhere (in overcoming the mental hindrances or cultivation of the divine abodes) where no watching of the breath is involved.

Therefore, although to understand “in front” to indicate the nostril area makes sense in relation to mindfulness of breathing, alternative ways of practice, based on a more figurative understanding of the term, cannot be categorically excluded. In fact, several modern teachers have developed successful approaches to mindfulness of breathing independent of the nostril area. Some, for example, advise their pupils to experience the breath in the chest area, others suggest observing the air element at the abdomen, while still others recommend directing awareness to the act of breathing itself, without focusing on any specific location. (Anālayo 2003:129)

Ajahn Sujato, in *A History of Mindfulness*, gives a helpful comparative study of the term *parimukha*:

In the gradual training, *sati* and *upaṭṭhāna* occur together in the common idiom *parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhāpeti*. Here the term *parimukha* is one of those simple words that is so hard to interpret. It literally means “around the mouth.” It is interpreted by the Vibhaṅga as “at the nose tip,” while modern renderings usually use something vague like “in front.” However, the phrase frequently occurs in contexts outside of *ānāpānasati*, making the interpretation “at the nose-tip,” or any literal spatial interpretation, unlikely.

The Sanskrit has a different reading, *pratimukha*.⁴⁸ This has many meanings, among which are “reflection” and “presence.” Both of these would be appropriate in meditative context. But the word usually, as here, occurs in close conjunction with *upaṭṭhāna*, which also means “presence.” I think it is likely that here we have another example of that common feature of Pali or Sanskrit, a

⁴⁴ Dharma scholar and German *sāmaṇera* ordained in Sri Lanka.

⁴⁵ Anālayo also quotes sources outside the Pāli tradition in a useful comparative manner, and this probably marks the beginning of an auspicious development within contemporary Buddhist studies by practicing Buddhists. Sujāto of the Santi Forest Monastery at Bundanoon, New South Wales, Australia, is enthusiastic about such an approach, too. As is this author.

⁴⁶ Anālayo 2003:128 f.

⁴⁷ As at Pm 3.170/2:171; Vim:ESK 160; Vism 8.161/271.

⁴⁸ Eg Skt **Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra** 27.16; Skt **Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra** 6.1; Skt **Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra** 63. BHSD, however, has neither *pratimukha* nor *parimukha*.

conjunction of synonyms for emphasis: literally, “one makes present a presence of mind,” or more happily, “one establishes presence of mindfulness.” (2004:109)

2.5 THE BREATH SIGN. In his instructive article, “The mystery of the breath nimitta” (2000), **Soṇa Bhikkhu**⁴⁹ refers to three important texts: the *Paṭisambhidā,magga*, the *Vimutti,magga* and the *Visuddhi,-magga*. **The Paṭisambhidā,magga** is a book in the Khuddaka Nikāya; **the Vimutti,magga** is an ancient treatise by Upatissa (the original Pali is lost; only the Chinese translation is extant); and **the Visuddhi,-magga** is by Buddhaghosa. All three texts, Soṇa Bhikkhu points out, agree in regarding the breath in meditation should be watched “either at the nose or lip”⁵⁰ (2000:7).

The reason for this interpretation is the fact that *mukha* literally means “entrance, mouth.” As such, if one breathes through the nose, one should watch the breath contact at the nose. If one breathes through the mouth, one should watch it at the lip, which is especially helpful when one has a cold: one could then breathe through the mouth and watch the breath contact at the lip.⁵¹ Soṇa Bhikkhu concludes his instructions with this important remark on breath meditation:

Some modern teachers have suggested that it doesn’t matter where the breath contact is located, probably in response to the phrase which occurs later on in the sutta: “Experiencing the whole body, he breathes in...,” etc. And since the whole body of the breath is not explicitly stated, they feel there is room for interpretation. But the breath as a “whole body” is explicitly mentioned in the Ānāpāna-sati Sutta, though not in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta[, but] the phrase means the same: “I say, bhikkhus, that of bodies this is one, that is to say breathing-in and breathing-out” ([M 3:83 = M:H 3:125]; the footnote states that “...breathing is a body because it is included in the field of touch”).

As well there is an explicit location of “the entrance” in the sutta, which the three commentaries agree on, whatever the later confusion may have been. It also overlooks the simile which immediately follows the explicit location, ie, “**As a turner or his apprentice, while making a long turn, knows that he is making a long turn, or in making a short turn, knows that he is making a short turn**, so too a monk, in breathing in a long breath, knows that he breathes in a long breath, in breathing a short breath, knows that he breathes in a short breath...and so trains himself, thinking: ‘I will breathe out, calming the whole body formation.’” [D 22.2d/2:291]

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

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

3 “Mental noting”

Of the 16 steps of the breath meditation, only the steps 1-4 are noted by *pajānāti* (he is aware of, or knows); the rest (5-16) have the verb *sikkhati* (he trains), “I will breathe in...out,” (*assasissāmi...passasissāmi*) in the future tense. This clearly shows that steps 1-4 are a passive non-judgemental noting, while the rest are deliberate efforts. However, this interpretation applies only for the beginners or in the incipient stages of one’s practice.

Ajahn Sujato, in his comments on the observing of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), how it deals basically

⁴⁹ Thai forest monastic tradition: Birkenhead Forest Monastery, British Columbia, Canada.

⁵⁰ Pm 3.170/2:171; Vimm:ESK 160; Vism 8.161/271.

⁵¹ Or, in the “Burmese” method, one could watch the rise and fall of the belly at a point two fingers-breadth above the navel. On Zhiyi’s method, see (2a) above.

with the abandoning of the mental hindrances, and its significance:

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

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

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

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

4 Stages of practice according to the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta

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

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

Part I opens with the practical instructions for the beginner, where the Buddha mentions the ideal places for meditation, the best posture and the essence of the breath meditation [§17]. Then follow the sixteen stages of the breath meditation for the beginner [§§18-22], that is, the mundane practice of the worldly practitioner. In the footnotes, the various dhyanas mentioned are the mundane dhyanas (*lokiya jhāna*), that is, they are not very strong but nevertheless help one with the energy to further fine-tune one’s keeping of the moral precepts, and in due course lead one to the satipaṭṭhāna level of practice.

It should be noted here that even if one does *not* attain dhyana at this point, one’s practice is still beneficial by way of the perception of impermanence.⁵² One who constantly practises in this way is assured on stream-winning in this life itself.

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

At this stage, “the in-and-out-breathing is a certain body amongst the bodies,” meaning that the body

⁵² See any of the 10 suttas of **Okkanti Saṃyutta** (S 25): eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225) = SD 16.7.

(manifested as the breath)⁵³ is seen as it really is in terms of the four elements, as “conscious matter”⁵⁴ [§24]. Similarly, the Buddha declares that “full attention to the in-and-out-breathing is a certain feeling amongst the feelings,” meaning that one’s undivided attention to the true nature of feeling, too, can bring one to dhyana⁵⁵ [§25]. In due course, too, he truly knows the nature of the mind [§26], and then he “closely looks on with equanimity,” alluding to the fourth dhyana [§27]. That is, emerging from the fourth dhyana, he truly experiences the mind directly as it really is.

Having mastered the dhyanas, the meditator is ready to go on to **Part III** of the breath meditation, to perfect the seven awakening-factors [§§29-41]. Each of the four satipatthanas is now applied in terms of the seven awakening-factors. Then, in **Part IV**, the awakening-factors, cultivated by way of the viveka,nissita formula, bring about the spiritual liberation [§§41-43].

4.2 BRAHMAVAMSO’S COMMENTARY. The January 2002 (vol 3 no 1) edition of the *Dhamma Journal* of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia has Brahmavamso’s very important, useful and readable commentary on the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta from the practitioner’s viewpoint. This Sutta translation should be studied alongside his commentary, together with the practice of breath meditation. In his article, Brahmavamso gives a very helpful table (2002:56) summarizing the 16 steps of breath meditation as presented in this sutta (to which the paragraph references and headings have been added). Here we see the operation of Part III, that is, how the breath meditation forms the basis of satipatthana for the perfection of the seven awakening-factors:

The 16 Steps of the Ānāpāna,sati as *satipaṭṭhāna*

The 12 steps for getting into dhyana [mental absorption]

[Contemplation of the body] [§24]

Step 1—Experiencing a long breath

Step 2—Experiencing a short breath

Step 3—Experiencing the whole breath (or whole body)

Step 4—Calming the breath

[Contemplation of feelings: Entry into dhyana] [§25]

Step 5—Arousing joy

Step 6—Arousing happiness

Step 7—Understanding mental functions

Step 8—Calming the joy and happiness

[Contemplation of the mind]

Step 9—Experiencing the mind [§26]

Step 10—Shining the *nimitta* [meditation sign]

Step 11—Sustaining the *nimitta*

Step 12—Freeing the mind

[Contemplation of dharmas]

The 4 steps to take after emerging from dhyana [§27]

Step 13—Reflecting on impermanence (*anicca*)

Step 14—Reflecting on fading away [of lust] (*virāga*)

Step 15—Reflecting on cessation [of suffering] (*nirodha*)

Step 16—Reflecting on letting go [of defilements] (*paṭinissagga*)

⁵³ See eg **Dhātu,vibhaṅga S** (M 140.17/3:241) = SD 4.17.

⁵⁴ See **Rūpa** = SD 17.2a(9).

⁵⁵ See eg **Daṭṭhabba S** (S 36.5/4:207) = SD 17.3(5).

5 *Pīti* and *sukha*

In this sutta translation, for the sake of consistency with Brahmavamsa's commentaries in the footnotes, I have followed his terminology and rendered *pīti* as "joy" (though I prefer "zest" which I use elsewhere) and *sukha* as "happiness." One experiences joy (*pīti*) in two ways: by attaining either the 1st or 2nd *jhāna* in which joy is present, one experiences it in the mode of calm (*samatha*); by emerging from that *jhāna* and reflecting that joy is subject to destruction, one experiences joy in the mode of insight (*vipassanā*). Psychologically, *pīti* is a kind of "joyful interest," as such may be associated with wholesome, unwholesome or neutral states (BDict: *pīti*). Joy belongs to the formation group (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*) while happiness (*sukha*) belongs to the feeling group (*vedanā-k,khandha*). Joy is compared to when a thirsty man lost in the desert finds water; happiness is what he feels when he is drinking the water. (Vism 4.94 ff).

6 Meditation sign (*nimitta*)

In "The Mystery of the Breath Nimitta" (2000), Bhikkhu Soṇa explains that the simile of a clear full moon to which the dhyanic mind is compared in the Paṭisambhidā "degenerates to a mistaken literalization as internally produced visual data" in the Visuddhi,magga's description of the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga,nimitta*). However, let us get the terms right first. By *nimitta* is meant "a characteristic mark or phenomenon, which accompanies and helps identify an experience" (2000:1).⁵⁶ For example, when one feels weakness, headache and nausea, nausea here is a sign of the 'flu.

According to *the Buddhist Dictionary*, there are three types of *nimitta*. The first type, the "preparatory image or sign" (*parikamma,nimitta*), refers to the perception of the meditation object. When the mind reaches a weak degree of concentration, a still unsteady and unclear image or "acquired sign" (*uggaha,-nimitta*), also called "learning sign," arises. This percept precedes the arising of an entirely clear and steady image, the "counter-sign" (*paṭibhāga,nimitta*). The appearance of the third type of *nimitta* signals the arising of the "neighbourhood (or access) concentration" (*upacāra,samādhi*), the state preceding full dhyana. Both these states share the same sign and are different only in the intensity of their component factors. The countersign is more refined and clarified, resulting from greater concentration.

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

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

...as such, the monk sits, having established mindfulness at the nose tip or at the sign of the mouth [lip], without paying attention to the coming and going [rising and falling] of the in-breath and the out-breath as they come and go; as he disregards the coming and going of the in-breath and the out-breath, he put forth effort, and carries out his task. Through his effort he gains excellence.⁵⁷

(Pm 3.170/2:171)

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

To the yogin who attends to the incoming breath with mind that is cleansed of the nine lesser defilements the image arises with a pleasant feeling similar to that which is produced in the action of spinning cotton or silk cotton. Also, it is likened to the pleasant feeling produced by a breeze.

⁵⁶ On definitions of *nimitta*, see SD 13.1(3.1d).

⁵⁷ *Evam evaṃ bhikkhu nāsik'agge vā mukha,nimutte vā satim upaṭṭhapetvā nisinno hoti, na āgate vā gate vā assāsa,passāse manasi karoti, na āgatā vā gatā vā assāsa,passāsā aviditā honti, padhānaṃ ca paññāyati, payogaṃ ca sādheti. Visesaṃ adhigacchati padhānaṃ ca.* (Pm 3.170/2:171)

Thus in breathing in and out, air touches the nose or the lip and causes the setting-up of air perception mindfulness. This does not depend on colour or form. This is called the image.

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

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

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

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

If his mind becomes clear, the yogin does not experience confusion. He attends to respiration and he does not cause the arising of other perceptions [underlining mine]. Meditating thus he is able to end confusion and acquire the subtle image [sign]. And he attends to respiration with mind that is free. That image [sign] is free. Because that image [sign] is free, desire arises. Desire being free, that yogin attends respiration with equipoise. Equipoise, desire and joy being free, he attends to respiration, and his mind is not disturbed.

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

Bhikkhu Soṇa reminds us: these warnings not to be distracted may be directly derived from the Ānāpāna,-sati Sutta (M 118), where the Buddha declares: "I do not say there is development of breathing for one who is forgetful, who is not fully aware" (M 118.26(12)/3:84).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The *Vimuttimaggā*, in referring to the “discerning of qualities” for the diverse meditation subjects, states that

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

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

For a better understanding, please read fully Bhikkhu Soṇa’s “The Mystery of the Breath Nimitta” (2000), freely available from Birken Forest Monastery website: <http://www.birken.ca/library> or its mirrors. His email is meditate@birken.ca.

A more detailed study on *nimitta* has been done elsewhere.⁵⁸

7 Practice of breath meditation

7.1 PRACTICAL SUMMARY. The following is a summary of instructions for meditators practicing breath meditation as given by Soṇa Bhikkhu:

1. Attend to the sensation of breath/air wherever it enters and exits the body.
2. If visual perceptions arise, ignore them.
3. If the mind wanders, do not allow it. Return to only the point of contact of breath.
4. Hold attention on the breathing process throughout the entire duration of in-breaths and out-breaths.
5. The sensation or perception of sensation of moving air will change to a static feeling—this is the sign of the mind stilling.
6. Dwell on this airy, buoyant quality, which should pervade the head. One should experience a cool and airy emptiness of the head. This may extend throughout the body. This is a further “sign” of increasing stillness.
7. Keep focusing on this experience of airy lightness.
8. All mental hindrances will in due course fall away and the five dhyana factors⁵⁹ will be present to a weak, medium or strong degree.
9. Refer to the *Ānāpāna,sati Sutta* for further instructions.

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

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

⁵⁸ See *Nimitta* = SD 19.7.

⁵⁹ “Dhyana factors,” *jhāna’anga*: **The Vibhaṅga** gives a list of five dhyana-factors as follows: applied thought (*vi-takka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), zest [joyful interest, or simply “joy”] (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek’aggatā*) (Vbh 257). See **Dhyana** = SD 8.4(5-6).

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

In the observing of the body of **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta**,⁶⁰ the Pāli sequence is “**the breath meditation**,” “the four postures,” and “clear awareness.” The sequence in the Madhyama Āgama versions, however, is just the reverse: clear awareness, the four postures, and breath meditation.⁶¹ On this issue of practice sequence of the breath meditation, **Anālayo** notes:

A point in favour of the Madhyama Āgama presentation is that **mindfulness of the four postures and clear comprehension [full awareness] of the activities of the body** are relatively rudimentary forms of contemplation. Due to their more elementary character, it seems reasonable to place them at the beginning of an exposition of satipaṭṭhāna practice. From a practical perspective, these two types of mindfulness practices would constitute convenient ways for building up a foundation in mindfulness, thereby enabling the meditator to better undertake the more sophisticated exercises listed later on.

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

The same requirement may well apply to the remaining exercises for mindfulness of breathing to the third position, after mindfulness of postures and activities, the description of the sitting postures would also move to the most convenient position within the Pāli list of exercises for mindfulness of the body. Such a shift of position can moreover claim for support the Pañca, vimśati, sāhasrikā Prajñā.pāramitā and the Śāriputrābhidharma, both of which similarly have mindfulness of postures and activities precede mindfulness of breathing.⁶² (2005:6 f)

8 Living transmissions

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

Many good teachings and commentaries have been given on this sutta. The most comprehensive and authoritative theoretical study of the breath meditation is perhaps:

Anālayo Bhikkhu’s well-written *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct way to realization* (2003:125-136) and fully annotated, is actually an exposition on **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10/1:55-63), but the common passages are valuable for a good understanding of the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta.

Nyanaponika Thera’s *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (1962) is still a classic, containing an anthology of relevant texts translated from the Pali and Sanskrit. Chapter 6 deals with the mindfulness of breathing (pp 108-113). Part 2 contains the basic text of Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (translated with notes) (pp 115-135); Part 3.39 is the Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing (excerpts: M 118.15-43) (pp 165-169).

Ñāṇamoli Mahāthera’s translation, *Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpānasati): Buddhist texts from the Pali Canon and Extracts from the Pali Commentaries*⁶³ is invaluable for the serious student and teacher for a more extensive study.

⁶⁰ D 22; M 10.

⁶¹ MĀ 98 = T1.582b21.

⁶² **Pañca, vimśati, sāhasrikā**, Dutt 1934:204, tr Conze 1990:153; **Śāriputrābhidharma**, T1548 = T28.613b3.

⁶³ 1952; 2nd ed 1964 (1973).

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's well-known *Ānāpānasati: Mindfulness with Breathing: unveiling the secrets of life; a manual for beginners* (1989)⁶⁴ is written from a spiritual reformer's viewpoint and is especially readable for those who wish to make a contemporary application of the meditation.

Ajahn Brahmavaṃso's article "The beautiful breath: The *Ānāpānasati Sutta*," found in the *Dhamma Journal*,⁶⁵ is written in clear simple language from a practitioner's point of view. This is helpful reading for the practitioner.

Thich Nhat Hanh's *Breathe! You Are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* was first published as *Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* (1988), with commentary (1996).⁶⁶ This book is popular for the western and westernized mind for its contemporary style. It is a good introductory reading to breath meditation.

Bhikkhu Sona,⁶⁷ has written an important article, "The mystery of the breath nimitta, or the case of the missing simile: an essay on aspects of the practice of breath meditation" (2000). This must-read article is found at <http://www.birken.ca/library> or its mirrors.

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

— — —

NOTE OF APPRECIATION

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

⁶⁴ Tr from the Siamese by Santikaro Bhikkhu; Bangkok, 1987; 2nd edition, 1989.

⁶⁵ *Dhamma Journal* 3,1 January 2002:61-108 (ch 9).

⁶⁶ Tr fr the Vietnamese by Annabel Laity. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990; rev 1996.

⁶⁷ Birken Forest Monastery, British Columbia, Canada, belonging Ajahn Chah's lineage.

The Discourse on The Mindfulness of the In-and-out-breathing (M 118/3:78-88)

[78] 1 Thus have I heard.

The Buddha and the great saints teaching

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

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

and other very well known elder disciples.

- 2 Now at that time, elder monks were exhorting and instructing new monks:
some elder monks were exhorting and instructing ten monks;
some elder monks were exhorting and instructing twenty monks;
some elder monks were exhorting and instructing thirty monks;
some elder monks were exhorting and instructing forty monks.

And the new monks, having been exhorted and instructed by the elder monks, had attained successive stages of excellence.⁶⁸

The Buddha extends his stay in Sāvattihī

3 At that time—it was⁶⁹ the Uposatha day⁷⁰ of the fifteenth, on the full-moon night of the invitation

⁶⁸ “Excellence,” *visesa*, alt tr “distinction.” It refers to any of the dhyana (*jhāna*) or any of the 4 stages of sainthood: stream-winner (*sot’āpanna*), once-returner (*sākad’āgāmī*), non-returner (*anāgāmī*) and arhat (*arahanta*) (D 1:156). For definitions, see eg Ānāpānasati S (M 112.9-12/3:80). Cf the story of Sāriputta’s meeting with Assaji: when Sāriputta realizes that he does not any “higher [further] excellence” (*upari,visesa*), ie any higher attainment than stream-winning, he decided to meet the Buddha himself (DhA 1:94).

⁶⁹ *ahu* has 2 meanings: (1) aor 3 sg, 2 sg of *bhavati*; (2) loc of *aha*, “a day” = “on that (very) day.”

⁷⁰ Uposatha. **The Indian year**, according to the ancient Indian system, is divided into three seasons (*utu*)—the hot season (*gimha*), the cold season (*hemanta*), and the rains (*vassa*) (A 4:138, SnA 317)—each lasting for four lunar months or “moons” (*cātu,māsa*). Each of these seasons are subdivided into eight fortnights (*pakkha*), the 3rd and the 7th containing 14 days and the others 15. Each month has two fortnights. Within each fortnight, the nights of the full moon (of the “bright half” or waxing moon, *sukka,pakkha*) and the new moon (either the 14th or the 15th) (of the “dark half” or waning moon, *kaṇha,pakkha*) and night of the half-moon (the 8th) are regarded as especially auspicious, called *uposatha*, Sabbath or observance day. On king Bimbisāra’s proposal, the Buddha adopted these observance days (V: 101 f), on which occasion the monks would assemble to recite the Monastic Code (*pāṭimokkha*) (V 1:101-104) and the laity would visit the monasteries to observe the Uposatha precepts (the 8 Precepts). For the Indian seasons, see **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16) = SD 9(9d). On the monsoons, see **Vāsi,jaṭa S** (S 22.101.20/3:155) n on “the cold season” = SD 15.2a.

ceremony⁷¹—the Blessed One was seated in the open surrounded by the community of monks.

Then surveying the very silent community of monks, the Blessed One addressed them (thus):

4 “Bhikshus, I am content⁷² with this progress. My mind is content, bhikshus, with this progress. So, bhikshus, assert all the more effort to attain the unattained, to achieve the unachieved, to realize the un-realized. I will wait right here at Sāvattḥī for the Komudī full moon of the fourth month.”⁷³

5 The monks of the country-side heard:

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

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

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

- some elder monks were exhorting and instructing ten monks;
- some elder monks were exhorting and instructing twenty monks;
- some elder monks were exhorting and instructing thirty monks;
- some elder monks were exhorting and instructing forty monks.

And the new monks, having been exhorted and instructed by the elder monks, attained successive stages of excellence.

Teaching on the heartwood

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

[80] Then surveying the silent community of monks, the Blessed One addressed them:⁷⁴

8 “Bhikshus, this assembly is without idle chatter, free from idle chatter. Bhikshus, this assembly is pure, established in the heartwood.⁷⁵

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

Such a community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly of monks as this, bhikshus, is
worthy of offerings,
worthy of hospitality,
worthy of gifts,
worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,⁷⁶
a supreme field of merit for the world.

Such a community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly of monks as this, bhikshus: even a small gift becomes great, and a great one becomes greater.⁷⁷

Such community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly as this, bhikshus: it is worth going many yojanas [leagues] with only a travel-bag⁷⁸ just to see it.⁷⁹

⁷¹ *Pavāraṇā*. This ceremony concludes the annual three-month monastic rains retreat, during which monks invite one another to be admonished regarding any misconduct that had been “seen, heard or suspected” of them. **The Pavāraṇā S** (S 8.7/1:190-192) describes such a proceeding.

⁷² *Āraddha*, “accomplished, achieved; pleased, satisfied” (CPD, DP), pp of *ārajjhati*; not pp of *ārabhati*, “undertakes, initiates.”

⁷³ *Komudī* is the full-moon day of the month of Kattikā, the fourth month of the rainy season. It is so called because the white water-lily (*kumuda*) bloomed at that time.

⁷⁴ The foll whole section as at D 1:117, 133; M 3:80; A 2:183.

⁷⁵ “Established in the essence” (*sāre patiṭṭhitā*), ie established in moral virtue, etc (AA 3:168). *Suddhā sāre*, alt tr “of the pure essence”: *sāra*, “heartwood,” that is, the core or essence of anything; the pith or the best of wood—a simile for spiritual strength and attainment. See, for example, **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18.12/ 1:111) and **Udumbarikā Sīhanāda S** (D 25.15-19). The Buddha’s humour is evident in such a simile given in *Udumbarika Sīhanāda S* (D 25.15-19/3:47-53).

⁷⁶ *Añjalī*, or more fully, *kamal’añjalī*, “lotus gesture,” that is, with cupped hands held between the chest level and the crown depending on one’s devotion. In the Thai tradition, however, the palms are pressed close together.

⁷⁷ For a discussion on gifts, see, eg, **Dakkhiṇā, vibhaṅga S** (M 142) and **Dakkhiṇā S** (A 4.78/2:80 f).

⁷⁸ *Puṭṭosena*, vl *puṭṭamsena* (mostly Comys), a bag for carrying food when travelling, a knapsack. See foll n.

The four types of saints

9 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who are **arhats with mental influxes**⁸⁰ **destroyed**, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal,⁸¹ destroyed the fetters of being, completely liberated through direct knowledge.

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

10 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who, with **the destruction of the five lower fetters**⁸² [connected with the lower realms of existence], are **spontaneously reborn** [as a non-returner, reborn in the Pure Abodes]⁸³ and there attain final nirvana, without ever returning from that world.

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

11 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who, with **the destruction of the three fetters**⁸⁴ **and with the diminishing of lust, hate and delusion**, are **once-returners**, returning only once⁸⁵ to this world [81] to make an end of suffering.

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

12 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who, with **the total destruction of the three fetters**, are **stream-winners**, not bound for the lower world,⁸⁶ sure of liberation, destined for awakening.

—Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks.⁸⁷

The seven sets of spiritual strategies⁸⁸

13 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of **the**

⁷⁹ *Puṭosenāpi tathā,rūpo ayaṃ bhikkhave bhikkhu,saṅgho, tathā,rūpā ayaṃ parisā* (Sī Pī Ka). As at D 1:117, 133 (= *pātheyyaṃ gahetvā, puṭo aṃse assā ti*, “with provision in hand, a bag over the shoulder,” DA 1:288, 4:139; AA 3:168); M 3:80; A 2:183. See prec n.

⁸⁰ **“Mental influxes,”** *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “in-flow, out-flow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as influxes, taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 kinds of *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These four are also known as “floods” (*oghā*) and “yokes” (*yogā*). The list of three influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

⁸¹ *Sadatthā*, may be resolved as: (1) *sa-d-atthā*, “one own goal,” (2) *sant + atthā*, “the sublime goal,” “the ideal.”

⁸² **The 10 fetters** (*dasa,samyojanā*) are: (1) Personality view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rules and rites (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377). In some places, no. 5 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*).

⁸³ That is, reborn in **the Pure Abodes** (*suddh’āvāsa*), the five highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa,loka*) inhabited only by non-returners who assume their last birth to become arhats and attain nirvana. These worlds are *Āviha* (“Non-declining”), *Ātappa* (“Unworried”), *Sudassā* (“Clearly Visible”), *Sudassī* (“Clear-visioned”) and *Akaṇiṭṭhā* (“Highest”) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46). It should be noted that one could become a non-returner in this world itself, but upon dying, one is reborn in the Pure Abodes.

⁸⁴ The (first) 3 fetters: see §10n.

⁸⁵ *Ke sakim deva*.

⁸⁶ ***Avinīpāta***, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 woeful courses (*pañca,-gati*) (D 33.21/3:234, A 11.68) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal kingdom (*tirachāna,yoni*), the ghost realm (*pitti,visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura,kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*). For a discussion, see Nyanaponika & Bodhi (tr), *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 1999:14-19.

⁸⁷ On the noble individuals, see **Kīṭā,giri S** (M 70) = SD 12.2 Intro (5).

⁸⁸ The 7 sets: see Intro (1b) above & SD 9 Intro (10bc).

four focusses of mindfulness⁸⁹

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

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the four right exertions.⁹⁰

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the four bases for spiritual power.⁹¹

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the five spiritual faculties.⁹²

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the five spiritual powers.⁹³

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the seven awakening-factors.⁹⁴

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the noble eightfold path.

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

Meditation methods

14 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of lovingkindness.

Bhikshus, there are in **[82]** this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of compassion.

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of altruistic joy.

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of equanimity.

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of foulness.⁹⁵

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of the perception of impermanence.

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

Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who dwell devoted to **the cultivation of the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing**.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ *Sati'paṭṭhāna*. I have analyzed it as *sati* + *upaṭṭhāna* (setting up) rather than *sati* + *paṭṭhāna* (foundation). Cf Nāṇamoli & Bodhi 2001 n136).

⁹⁰ *Samma-p, padhāna*, right exertion or striving, same as right effort, the 6th limb of the Noble Eightfold Path.

⁹¹ *Iddhi, pāda*, the 4 bases for spiritual power: focus of will (*chanda*), of effort (*vīriya*), of mind (*citta*), of investigation (*vimaṃsā*) (D 3:213=M 1:103=2:11; D 3:221; Vbh 216).

⁹² *Indriya*, the 5 spiritual faculties: faith (*saddhā*), effort (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*) (D 2:239, S 5:193; Tha 352).

⁹³ *Bala*, the 5 spiritual powers: same as *pañc'indriya*, but are unshakable (untouched by their opposites) in the stream-winner (A 5.15) (D 3:239, S 48.43, S 50, A 3:10, Vbh 342).

⁹⁴ See §§30-36.

⁹⁵ “The cultivation of foulness,” *asubha, bhāvanā*, or “meditation on the foulness,” ie the contemplation on the 31 (Comy, 32) parts of the body. In the Suttas, this practice is called *asubha, saññā* (perception of foulness), as in **Mahā Rāhuḷ'ovāda S** (M 10.10/1:57). In the Comys, *asubha, nimitta* (the sign of foulness) refers to one or other of the 10 foul objects, ie a corpse in one of the 10 stages of bodily decomposition (Vism 6.1-11/178 f). Sometimes (eg Vism 8.2) “mindfulness regarding the body” (*kāya, gatā, sati*) is used here. Sometimes the term “perception of foulness” (*paṭik-kula, saññā*) is used here, but it specifically refers to the foulness of food (D 3:289, 291; S 5:132; A 4:49). In fact, *kāya, gata, sati* is a general term denoting a range of practices based on the perception of the impermanence of the physical body. See BDict: kāya-gatā-sati.

⁹⁶ Comy explains the reason why of all the meditation methods listed, only the breath meditation is expounded in full: this is because a large number of the monks take it as their meditation practice (MA 4:139). It should also be

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

Preamble: The preliminary stages of the practice

15 (I) Bhikshus, when the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing⁹⁷ is cultivated and often developed, it is of great fruit and great benefit.⁹⁸ [§§15-23]

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

(III) When the four focusses of mindfulness are cultivated and often developed, they bring the seven awakening-factors to perfection. [§§29-41]

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

16 And how, bhikshus, is the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing developed, and how is it often cultivated so that it is of great fruit and great benefit?⁹⁹

Physical preparation

17 Here, bhikshus, a monk¹⁰⁰ who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house,¹⁰¹ sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness

added that the breath meditation had been the key meditation in the Buddha's own spiritual life. The first record we have of his meditation experience was breath meditation when he was a child of 7, and on the night of his awakening, too, he used the breath meditation (MA 2:291). See **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36.17.31-44/1:242-249) = SD 1.12.

⁹⁷ "In-and-out-breathing" *ānāpāna*. The Skt word for "breath" is *prāna* (Pali *pāna*), which also refers to "life-force" (Chin *qi*). Its Greek cognate is *pneuma*, from which we get "pneumatic," "pneumonia," etc. Another Indian word for breath is *āna*, as found in the dvandva *ānāpāna*, usually rendered as "in and out breath," sometimes used interchangeably as "out and in breath." The word *ānā* has the Latin cognate of *anima* (breath, soul) as in found such English words as "animal," "animated," etc. The Paṭisambhidā,magga Comy say: "*Ānam* is air going inwards; *apānam* is air going outwards. Some, however, say it is the other way around" (PmA:Ce 320).

⁹⁸ §§15-23. See **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62.5/1:420).

⁹⁹ See *The Middle Length Discourses* 2nd ed 2001:1190 f nn140-142. This section is identical to that of **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.4) except for the similes in the latter. The whole section on the Mindfulness of the Breath (M 118.16-22) here is identical to that of **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62.25-29/1:425-427). The Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S ends by stating that breath meditation benefits one in that "even the final in-breaths and out-breaths are known as they cease, not unknown" (M 62.30), that is, the practitioner dies with a calm and clear mind.

¹⁰⁰ DA on **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** with the identical context here says that "monk" (*bhikkhu*) indicates "whoever undertakes that practice... is here comprised under the term *bhikkhu*." See Dh 142; also Dh 362, 260-270. Cf the **Bhikkhu Vagga** (ch 25) and the **Brāhmaṇa Vagga** (ch 26) of Dh.

¹⁰¹ This stock of 3 places (forest, *arañña*; the foot of a tree, *rukkha,mūla*; empty house, *suññ'āgāra*) conducive to meditation are at **D** 2:291; **M** 1:56, 297, 398, 425, 2:263, 3:82, 89, 4:297; **S** 5:311, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 323, 329, 336; **A** 1:147, 148, 149, 3:92, 100, 4:437, 5:109, 110, 111; **Pm** 1:175, 2:36. **The Pavavika Sutta** (A 3.92) mentions 7 places: a forest, the foot of a tree, a cemetery, a forest path [a remote forest], the open air, a heap of straw, a thatched shelter (*araññaṃ rukkha,mūlaṃ susānaṃ vana,pantham* [v1 *vana,pattham*] *abbhokāsaṃ palāla,puñjam bhusāgāraṃ*, A 3.92/1:241 = SD 44.2). **The Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2), probably a very ancient account, gives 9 places suitable for meditation, and the spiritual preparation for living in such places, thus: "Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue, this aggregate of noble sense-restraint, this aggregate of noble mindfulness and full awareness, and this aggregate of noble contentment, he resorts to a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a gorge, a hillside cave, a cemetery, a remote forest [jungle grove], the open air, a heap of straw" (*so iminā ca ariyena sīla-k,-khandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya,samivarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati,sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhitāya samannāgato vivittam senāsanam bhajati, araññaṃ rukkha,mūlaṃ pabbatam kandaram giri,guhāṃ susānaṃ vana,pattham abbhokāsaṃ palāla,puñjam*, D 2.67/1:71 = SD 8.10; V 2:146; M 3:3; A 2:210. These are def at DA 209-210, VbhA 366 f. The oldest reference to an ideal meditation spot is in **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26) and **Saṅgārava S** (M 100): "still in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I walked by stages through Magadha until eventually I arrived at Senānigama near Uruvelā. There I

before him.¹⁰²

—Mindfully¹⁰³ he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out.

SYNOPSIS: THE SIXTEEN PHASES

A. The first tetrad: Observing the body

- 18 (1) Breathing in long [deep],¹⁰⁴ he knows, 'I breathe in long [Long in-breath]';¹⁰⁵
 Or, breathing out long [deep], he knows, 'I breathe out long [Long out-breath]';
 (2) Or, breathing in short, he knows, 'I breathe in short [Short in-breath]';
 Or, breathing out short, he knows, 'I breathe out short [Short out-breath]';¹⁰⁶
 (3) He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe in, experiencing the whole body (of breath)';¹⁰⁷
 He trains himself thus: 'I will breathe out, experiencing the whole body (of breath)';

saw an agreeable spot, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. I sat down there thinking: "This is conducive for spiritual striving." (M 26.17/1:167 = 100.13/2:212).

¹⁰² *Parimukham*, lit "around the mouth," here always used idiomatically and as an adverb, meaning "in front": so U Thittila (Vbh:T 319, 328), Walshe (D:W 1995:335), Soma Thera (1998:42 f digital ed), and Ñānamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001:527). The *Vibhaṅga* explains it as "at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip" (Vbh §537/252): see important n to §18(1). **Where to watch the breath?** Brahmavamso, however, says that *parimukha* does not mean "just on the tip of the nose, or on the lip, or somewhere in front of your eyes...[but] just means [to] make it important." (2002:58). "Often people are told when meditating to watch the breath at the tip of the nose, but actually many people find this is a distraction. If you look at the suttas, the Buddha never tells us to watch the breath in a physical place. He says to know that you are breathing in and to know that you are breathing out. The important thing is to note it in time. So: 'Am I breathing in at this time, or am I breathing out at this time?'" (Nyanadhammo, "The Spiritual Faculties," 1999:3). Soṇa Bhikkhu, however, teaches the "traditional" approach of taking *parimukham* as air contact as "either at the nose or lip" (2000:6). See Intro (2d) above. (All three teachers here are pupils of Ajahn Chah.)

¹⁰³ Ce Se Ke PTS *sato*.

¹⁰⁴ **Brahmavamso**: "As one relaxes and settles down, the breath becomes short by itself. When the body is relaxing, you don't need as much oxygen to give the body energy. So it's quite natural that these two steps usually follow one after the other. The whole point of these two steps [long breaths, short breaths] is just to experience the breath instead of attending to many things. What you're doing is to focus on one thing." ("The Beautiful Breath," 1999; also 2002:59 f). On these 4 tetrads and 16 aspects, see Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:133-136. On the breath, see Intro (1cd) above.

¹⁰⁵ I have rendered these important sentences and those of the first 2 ("noting") tetrads using very short sentences (not grammatically complete sentences) to reflect a "bare noting" (denoted by *pajānāti*) that should occur in meditation whose purpose is mental focus. Only the steps 1-4 are noted by *pajānāti* (he is aware of, or knows); the rest (5-16) are *sikkhati* (he trains) or "training" aspects (ie one has to put in more regulated effort), "I will breathe in...out," (*assāsisāmi...passāsisāmi*). On "mental noting," see important n on "Mental noting": Intro (3).

¹⁰⁶ In practical terms, focussing on the first 2 factors of this tetrad, that is maintaining one's undivided focus on the breath or one's conception of it can lead to *jhāna*. However, in (**Pabbateyyā**) **Gāvi S**, the Buddha warns Moggallāna not to go into the 2nd *jhāna* until he has thoroughly mastered the 1st *jhāna* (A 9.35/4:418 f qu at Vism 153 f).

¹⁰⁷ "Experiencing the whole body (of breath)," *sabba,kāya,paṭisaṁvedī*. MA glosses *sabba,kāya* as "the whole body of breath" that is, its three phases of each in-breath and out-breath through its three phases of beginning, middle and end (Brahmavamso, 2002:60). Brahmavamso keeps to this tradition, teaching that "you have just the target in your mind—just the breath and nothing else...the full attention on the breath" ("Beautiful Breath," 1999). "You see it from the very start when it originates out of the silence, and you see it grow to its peak and then fade away again, until the in-breath has completely subsided. You have such a degree of clarity that you even see that space between the breaths. The in-breath has stopped, the out-breath has yet to arise. There's a pause there. Then the out-breath begins to grow to it peak and then fade away into nothingness again. That's what we call **the whole of the breath**" (2002:60). However, Thich Nhat Hanh (1990:6, 46-49) & esp Bodhi (2001 n141) take *sabba,kāya* to mean "the whole physical body." Cf the remark that the in-and-out-breathing is "a body among the bodies" (§24). According to transpersonal psychology (especially bodywork and breathwork), the whole *body* "breathes." For the simile of the teacher and his three archer students illustrating the experience of the total breath, see Brahmavamso 2002:62 f. For a discussion, see Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:131 f.

- (4) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, calming the bodily formation (of breathing)’;¹⁰⁸
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, calming the bodily formation (of breathing)’;¹⁰⁹

B. The second tetrad: Observing feelings

- 19 (5) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing joy [zest]’;¹¹⁰
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing joy [zest]’;
 (6) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing happiness’;¹¹¹ [83]
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing happiness’;
 (7) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, knowing the mental formations [mental functions]’;¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ “The bodily formation,” *kāya,saṅkhāra*. The bodily formation is the in-and-out-breathing itself (M 44.13/1:301; S 41.6/4:293,15: *assāsa,passāsa kāya,saṅkhāro*). See **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.14) for explanation of *kāya,saṅkhāra*. This calming process may lead to the development of dhyana, but this is not the primary object here (Walshe 1995 n641). **Brahmavamso**: “Once you have full attention on the breath, the next stage is where the beauty and the bliss have a chance to arise... This is where you calm down that object of mind, the breath, by giving the suggestion, ‘calm, calm, calm.’ Instead of just an ordinary breath that you’re aware of, you deliberately, by an act of will, calm that breath down...it gets softer and softer...more and more beautiful. But you have to be careful here...If you calm the breath in the fourth stage before you complete the third stage, that’s when you go to sleep... When the attention is fully there, then calm that object inside your mind.” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999). “If you calm the breath in this fourth stage before you complete the third stage, that’s when you go to sleep. You haven’t got a complete image of the breath in your mind yet, and you are already calming the little you do have. Get the full attention of the breath first of all. When the attention is fully there, then calm that object inside your mind.” (Brahmavamso 2002: 65).

¹⁰⁹ At this point even after the breath has been calmed down but one still does not experience joy (*pīti*) or the “beautiful breath,” the one should proceed to the next two steps to willfully arouse feelings of joy. (Brahmavamso 2002:66).

¹¹⁰ “Joy,” *pīti*. Sometimes tr as “rapture,” but “zest” is closer to evoking a more subtle yet enthusing nature of *pīti*. However, in this sutta tr I have rendered *pīti* as “joy” and *sukha* as “happiness,” foll Brahavamso to be consistent with his commentaries used here. One experiences joy (*pīti*) in two ways: by attaining either the 1st or 2nd *jhāna* in which joy is present, one experiences it in the mode of calm (*samatha*); or, by emerging from that *jhāna* and reflecting that joy is subject to destruction, one experiences joy by way of insight (*vipassanā*). Psychologically, *pīti* is a kind of “joyful interest,” as such may be associated with wholesome, unwholesome or neutral states (BDict: *pīti*). Joy belongs the formation group (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*) while happiness (*sukha*) belongs to the feeling group (*vedanā-k,khandha*). Joy (*pīti*) is compared to when a thirsty man lost in the desert finds water; happiness (*sukha*) is what he feels when he is drinking the water. See Vism 4.94 ff.

¹¹¹ **Brahmavamso**: “As you calm the breath down, you get to the stage where the breath becomes very, very refined, very peaceful, and very smooth. It is the nature of such a mind state that it should be very happy... This is another type of happiness, and it takes wisdom to be able to recognize it... the Buddha taught the fifth and sixth steps to arouse that [un arisen] beauty.” The 5th step is the deliberate arousal of joy (*pīti*) with the beautiful breath; the 6th step is the deliberate arousal of happiness (*sukha*). “This is one important training in meditation, to be able to extract the perceptions of happiness and joy from whatever you’re doing... When the breath is very peaceful, search for that bliss and you will find it.” This is what Brahavamso calls “**the beautiful breath.**” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:68). When the mind is very peaceful, one only need to look for the joy in it to find it.

¹¹² “Knowing the mental formations [mental functions],” *citta,saṅkhāra,paṭisaṃvedī*. The mental formation (*citta,saṅkhāra*) is feeling and perception, experienced in all four dhyanas. Here, it refers to the experience of **the breath as a dharma [mind-object]**. “When the beautiful breath is established, it may appear that your breath has disappeared, that you have just this beautiful, stable peace inside but no breath. What has happened is that you are still breathing, but the breath is no longer being experienced as a touch on the body, instead it is experienced as an object in the mind. You are switching from feeling to knowing. The sense base of physical touch turns off and the mind turns on... You are still breathing but the knowing is so focussed that the experience is like a smooth flow in one direction only.” (Brahmavamso 2002:68 f). He then gives **the simile of the carpenter sawing**: “When a carpenter begins to saw a piece of wood he can see the whole saw from the handle to the tip of the saw blade. As he concentrates on the cut, his attention focusses closer and closer onto the point where the saw touches the wood. The handle and tip of the saw soon disappear from his vision. After a while, all he can see is the one saw tooth, that tooth which is in contact with the wood now, whereas all the other saw teeth to the left and to the right are now beyond his range of perception. He does not know nor needs to know, whether that tooth is at the beginning or middle or end of the blade. Such concepts have

- He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, knowing the mental formations [mental functions]’;
 (8) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, calming the mental formations [mental functions]’;¹¹³
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, calming the mental formations [mental functions]’;

C. The third tetrad: Observing the mind

- 20 (9) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing the mind’;¹¹⁴
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing the mind’;
 (10) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, gladdening the mind’;¹¹⁵
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, gladdening the mind’;
 (11) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, concentrating the mind’;
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, concentrating the mind’;¹¹⁶

been transcended.” (2002:69). The same method given in the previous note applies to the second and third clauses. According to some teachers, in the second, the three lower *jhāna* are present and in the third, all four are present. Mental formations here refer to feelings, perceptions and other mental concomitants, and which are calmed by the development of successively higher levels of calm and insight. See **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.14) for explanation of *citta,saṅkhāra*.

¹¹³ “Calming the mental formations [mental functions],” *passambhayaṃ citta,saṅkhāraṃ*. “It can happen at this and subsequent stages of the meditation process that the joy and happiness become a little bit too exciting and therefore disturb the tranquillity. Because of this the Buddha taught the eighth step... Alternatively, fear can arise alongside the bliss: ‘This is a bit too much for me.’... And, again, the bliss leaves. The fear destroys the tranquillity.” (Brahmavaṃso 2002:70). He then relates Ajahn Chah’s famous **simile of the forest pool** in detail (2002:71 f).

¹¹⁴ “Experiencing the mind,” *citta, paṭisaṃvedī*. Here, it refers to the four dhyanas. According to **Brahmavaṃso**, “It’s only at this stage that you can know the mind... the only place where you can actually experience the mind... by what we call a *nimitta*, a reflection of the mind. Remember the mind is that which is ‘knowing.’ How can the ‘knower’ know itself? Only like a person who looks at himself in a mirror. Only that way can you see your face, can you see your reflection. The reflection you see here, the *nimitta*, is a true reflection of the mind. It’s as if the mirror has finally been cleaned of all this dust and grime on its surface, and now at last you can see yourself. You can experience the mind (*citta,paṭisaṃvedī*) through the *nimitta*.” (2002:73; see 73 f for simile problems). The *nimitta* is just a reflection of the “knower,” the meditator’s mind: one’s image in the mirror only reflects one’s looks and does what one does! If the watcher is still, the image, too, is still. It does not help to hold the mirror still: one has oneself to remain still. “Instead, focus on the knower, that which is experiencing this, and calm that into stillness.” (2002:78). According to Bodhi “experiencing the mind” is to be understood by way of the fourth jhāna (2001 n1118). *Citta*, “mind,” is synonymous with *mano* and *viññāṇa* (*Yam... idaṃ vuccati cittaṃ ti vā mano ti vā viññāṇaṃ ti vā*, D 1:21; *Yam ca kho etaṃ... vuccati cittaṃ iti pi mano iti pi viññāṇaṃ iti pi*, S 2:94 f), so too in most traditions following the Abhidharma period, but they were clearly differentiated within the Yogācāra. SA says that all the three are names for the mind-base (*man’āyatana*). See Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, 2000:769 n154. See also **Viññāṇa** = SD 17.8(4.1).

¹¹⁵ “Gladdening the mind” (*abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ*), ie shining the meditation sign. The mind is “gladdened” by the attaining of the 2 dhyanas accompanied by zest or by the penetrative power of insight that these states are subject to destruction and disappearing. According to Brahmavaṃso, the mental reflex or meditation sign (*nimitta*) may appear to some as being “too dull” or “unstable,” which are addressed by the 10th and 11th steps, respectively; “shining the *nimitta* and sustaining the *nimitta*... The more joy there is in the mind, the more brilliant shines the *nimitta*. To enter *Jhāna*, the *nimitta* has to be the most brilliant thing that you have ever seen, and an unearthly beauty.” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:74 f). **Brahmavaṃso** teaches 4 ways of shining the *nimitta* (here summarized): (1) focus on centre of the *nimitta*; (2) sharpen the attention in the present moment; (3) smile at the *nimitta*; (4) go back to the beautiful breath. (2002:76 f). The reflex may be dull also due to poor moral conduct or to low mental effort. In the case of poor moral conduct, one should “spend some effort purifying your conduct beyond the meditation cushion. Keep your precepts faultlessly. Check your speech. The Buddha said that without first purifying *sīla* [moral conduct], it is impossible to purify *samādhi* [mental concentration].” (2002:75). In the case of low mental effort, one should remedy it by switching to “**the inspiring meditations**” like a reflection (*anussati*) on any of the Three Jewels, on giving (*cāgānussati*) or *mettā, bhāvanā*: see *anussati-ṭ, thāna* at SD 24.8 Intro (2.1). According to **Bodhi**, “gladdening the mind” is either the attainment of the first 2 *jhāna* (containing joy) or as the penetration of those *jhāna* by regarding them with insight as subject to destruction. (2001 n1118)

- (12) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, freeing the mind’;¹¹⁷
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, freeing the mind’;

D. The fourth tetrad: Observing dharmas¹¹⁸

- 21 (13) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, observing [contemplating] impermanence’;¹¹⁹
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, observing impermanence’;
 (14) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, observing the fading away (of lust)’;¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ “Concentrating the mind” (*samādahan cittaṃ*), ie sustaining the meditation sign (*nimitta*). This refers to either the concentration of the dhyana, or to the momentary concentration that arises along with insight. Sometimes, “even the brilliant *nimitta* can appear unstable...it is just a reflection of the knower... If the knower moved so did [his] reflection, the *nimitta*.” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999). “It is common that the first few times that a *nimitta* appears, it flashes up for a short time and then disappears. Or else it moves around in the mental field of vision. It is unstable. Usually, the bright powerful *nimittas* remain longer [than] the dull weak ones...” (2002:78). The solution, according to **Brahmavaṃso**, is to “focus on the knower, that which is experiencing this, and calm that into stillness.” (1999). “Once again, it is usually **fear or excitement** that creates the instability. You are reacting too much rather than passively observing. Experiencing the *nimitta* for the first time is like meeting a stranger for the first time. Often you are on the edge because you do not know who they are or how they behave.” (2002:78 f). He goes on to give the example of how one learns to cycle: “...you soon learn to stop gripping the *nimitta* like the child gripping the bicycle handlebars. You relax and discover that the more you ease off controlling the easier it is to sustain the *nimitta*.” Or, one deliberately surrenders the car keys to the *nimitta* to let it drive and one just sits back and relax. (2002 78 f). According to Bhikku Bodhi, “concentrating the mind” refers either to the concentration pertaining to the *jhāna* or to the momentary concentration that arises along with insight (2001 n1118)

¹¹⁷ “Freeing the mind” (*vimocayan cittaṃ*). This means “liberating it from the hindrances and grosser *jhāna* factors by attaining successively higher levels of concentration, and from the distortions of cognition by way of insight knowledge” (Bodhi S:B 1949 n292). Here, according to Brahmavaṃso, “the mind usually has two experiences that are exactly the same, but just depending on your perspective. You either find yourself ‘diving’ into the *nimitta*... The attention just sinks in there. Or else that *nimitta*, that ‘beautiful light’ or ‘feeling,’ just completely ‘envelops you.’ ‘You’ don’t do this...it just happens... You enter the *Jhāna* through freeing the mind. The Buddha called the *Jhānas* stages of freedom (*vimokkha*) [D 16.3.33, A 8.66].” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:79-81). This is probably the most truly powerful experience in one’s life, when one can really call oneself a “mystic.” It is a kind of momentary “joy of awakening” (*sambodhi sukha*, M 1:454). This is an experience “where the mind is free from the body. I’m not saying that it’s floating out somewhere like an out-of-body experience. You’re just not located in space and time any more. All space and time have something to do with the body. Here the mind is free from all of that. You’re just experiencing bliss. You’re not at all sensitive to what’s happening with the body.” (2002:80). In fact, there is a total hibernation of the physical senses.

¹¹⁸ These last following four stages relate to the meditator who has just emerged from the *jhāna*. The first thing one should do then is to review that state: “What was that?” “How did that arise?” “How do I feel?” “Why do I feel that way?” “What have I been doing all this time?” “What worked and what failed?” “What was the result of the meditation?” “Why is it happy?” All such reflections give rise to deep insight. Having reflected thus, “you either take up *Sati-paṭṭhāna* (the Four Focusses of Mindfulness) or just go directly to the last four stages of *Ānāpānasati*.” The meditator has any one of these four following things [13-16] to contemplate on after emerging from the *jhāna*. (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:81-85). See also SD 13.1 (5D)(iv).

¹¹⁹ “Observing impermanence,” *aniccānupassī*, ie contemplating the 5 aggregates as impermanent because they undergo rise, fall and change, or momentary dissolution. “This tetrad deals entirely with insight, unlike the other three, which can be interpreted by way of both serenity and insight” (S:B 1950 n293); but cf §21(16)b n below. What we call the “self,” something that appears to be so constant that we do not even notice it. In *jhāna*, it disappears. If you experience this deeply as “not-self,” “it’s very likely to give rise to the experience of Stream Winning.” (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:82).

¹²⁰ “Observing fading away,” *virāgānupassī*. “Fading away” (*virāga*) is also tr as “dispassion” (see §42). If reflections on impermanence does not work, then one should go on to reflect on the “fading away” (*virāga*). “This is when things just disappear...things which were so close to you, that you thought were an essential part of you...” (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999). Both “observing fading away” and the next, “observing cessation,” can be understood as the insight into the momentary destruction and cessation of phenomena, and as the supramundane path, which realizes nirvana as the fading away of lust (or dispassion, *virāga*) and the cessation of formations.

- He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, observing the fading away (of lust)’;
 (15) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, observing the cessation (of suffering)’;¹²¹
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, observing the cessation (of suffering)’;
 (16) He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, observing the relinquishment (of defilements)’;¹²²
 He trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, observing the relinquishment (of defilements)’.¹²³

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

II. THE PERFECTION OF THE FOUR FOCUSES OF MINDFULNESS

23 And how, bhikshus, is the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing developed, often cultivated, to bring the four focusses of mindfulness to perfection?¹²⁴

(A) Observing the body

24 Bhikshus,

- (1) a monk, when breathing in long, he knows, ‘I breathe in long [Long in-breath]’;¹²⁵
 or, when he is breathing out long, he knows, ‘I breathe out long [Long out-breath]’;
 (2) or, when he is breathing in short, he knows, ‘I breathe in short [Short in-breath]’;
 or, when he is breathing out short, he knows, ‘I breathe out short [Short out-breath]’;
 (3) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing the whole body’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing the whole body’;
 (4) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, calming the bodily formation (of breathing)’;¹²⁶
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, calming the bodily formation (of breathing)’;
 —then, bhikshus, exertive, fully aware, mindful,¹²⁷ the monk dwells **observing the body in the body**,¹²⁸

¹²¹ “Cessation,” *nirodha*. See prec n. Something that was once there had now disappeared. “So much of the universe that you knew has ceased, and you’re in a completely different space...what you thought was important has gone... Cessation is also the Third Noble Truth [the cessation of suffering]. The cause of that cessation is letting go...And what’s left?...the opposite of *dukkha*...it is *sukha* (happiness). The ending of suffering is happiness.” (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:82 f).

¹²² “Observing relinquishment [letting go],” *paṭinissagānupassī*, ie the giving up (*pariccāga*) or abandoning (*pahāna*) of defilements through insight and the entering into (*pakkhandana*) nirvana by attaining the path. “In this context *Paṭinissagga* is not giving away what’s ‘out there,’ but giving away what’s ‘in here’...the letting go of the ‘doer,’...even of the ‘knower’... especially letting go of... the ‘will,’ the ‘controller.’ This is the path to the end of suffering.” (Brahmavaṃso, “Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:82 f).

¹²³ While the previous three tetrads deal with both calm and insight, this tetrad deals only with insight. “Contemplating the fading away...” and “contemplating the cessation...” can be understood both as insight into the impermanence of formations and as the supramundane path leading to nirvana, that is, the fading of lust (*virāga*) and the cessation of suffering. “Contemplating the letting go...” is the giving up of defilements through insight and the gaining of nirvana through the path.

¹²⁴ “Bring...to perfection,” PTS *paripūreti*.

¹²⁵ See §18(1-2) n.

¹²⁶ *Kāya, saṅkhāra*, see §18(4)n.

¹²⁷ *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassaṃ* here is essentially synonymous with *vigatābhijjho vigata, vyāpādo asammūlho sampajāno patissato* mentioned in connection with the four Divine Abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) (**Kesaputtiya S**, A 65.15/1:192). Their application, however, differ: the former points to the *result* of meditation, while the latter is a *part* of the meditation process itself. On *sampajāno satimā*, see Vism 4.174/163 which explains that clear knowledge (*sampajañña*) has the characteristic of non-confusion; its function is to investigate and manifested as scrutiny. Mindfulness (*sati*) has the characteristic of remembering. Its function is not to forget and is manifested as guarding. *Sampajāno* is also tr as “clearly comprehending,” “fully understanding” (see M:NB 2001 n147).

¹²⁸ “Observing the body in the body,” *kāye kāyānupassī*, ie “one who contemplates the body as the body”; §25 “observing feeling in the feeling,” §26 “observing mind in the mind,” and §27 “observing dharma in the dharma.” In

removing¹²⁹ covetousness and displeasure¹³⁰ for the world.¹³¹

Bhikshus, this in-and-out-breathing is a certain body amongst the bodies,¹³² I say.

Therefore, bhikshus, on that occasion, the monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells observing the body in the body,¹³³ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.

(B) Observing feelings [Entry into dhyana]

25 Bhikshus, when a monk [84]

- (5) trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing joy [zest]’;¹³⁴
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing joy [zest]’;

each case, they are not to be seen as “This is mine” (*etam mama*) (which arises through craving, *taṇhā*), or as “This I am” (*eso ’ham asmi*) (due to conceit, *māna*), or as “This is my self” (*eso me attā*) (due to wrong view, *ditṭhi*) (**Anattā,lakkhaṇa S**, S 3:68). In short, such experiences are not “beliefs” but direct experiences of reality. See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f.

¹²⁹ *Vineyya*, this means that the five hindrances have to be abandoned *prior* to practising *satipaṭṭhāna*. This is because the hindrances, in the form of mental impurities (*cetaso upakkilesa*), weaken wisdom (*paññāya dubbhāṭṭhā*) (D 2:83, 3:49, 101, A 2:211, 3:93, 100, 386 f, Vbh 245, 256). In **Naḷakapāna S** (M 68), the Buddha tells Anuruddha, “While [a son of good family] still does not attain to joy and happiness that are secluded from sensual pleasures and secluded from unwholesome states, or to something more peaceful than that, covetousness [and the other four hindrances] will invade his mind and remain...” (M 68.6/1:463). (I thank Ajahn Brahmavaṃso for pointing this out.)

¹³⁰ “Covetousness and displeasure,” *abhijjhā,domanassaṃ*, which Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders as “hankering and fretting for the world”; alt tr “covetousness and displeasure” or “longing and loathing.” MA says that “covetousness and displeasure” here signify the first two hindrances—sensual desire and ill will—principal hindrances to be overcome for the practice to succeed. They thus represent the contemplation of dharmas, which begins with the five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*: sensual lust, desire, ill will, restless and worry, sloth and torpor, doubt): see **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55 = SD 3.12). Cf M 1:274/39.13; see also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.13) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36) on how to deal with the hindrances in one’s meditation. The monk effects the abandoning of the hindrances by the contemplations of impermanence, fading away (of lust), cessation (of suffering) and letting go (of defilements), and thus comes to look upon the object with equanimity. On *abhijjhā,domanassa*, there is an interesting related passage from **Pubba or Pubb’eva Sambodha S**: “Monks, before my awakening, when I was still a bodhisattva, this thought occurred to me... ‘Whatever physical and mental joy (*sukha,somanassa*) there is in the world, that is the gratification (*assāda*) in the world; that the world is impermanent, suffering and of the nature to change, that is the wretchedness (*ādīnava*) in the world—the removal and abandoning of desire and lust for the world, that is the escape from the world.’” (A 1:258/3.101, pointed out to me by Robert Eddison). My understanding here regarding the naming of the first two mental hindrances as *abhijjhā,domanassa* is to show that with their elimination the other hindrances are eliminated, too—a view confirmed by Brahmavaṃso (30 March 2003).

¹³¹ “World” (*loka*). **The Vibhaṅga** says: “This very body is the world, and the five aggregates of clinging (i.e. form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) are the world—this is called the world.” (Vbh 195). However, in his amplified tr at Vbh 105, U Thittila has “world (ie, in ideational objects)” (*dhammā*, mental objects) (Vbh:T 139).

¹³² “A certain body amongst the bodies,” *kāyesu kāy’aññatara*. Nyanaponika: “one of the bodily processes” (1962: 167). **SA** ad Kimbila S (S 54.10 = SD 16.11): “I call it the wind body (*vāyo,kāya*) among the bodies of the four elements. Or else, it is a ‘certain kind of body’ because it is included in the tactile base amongst the various components of the form body.” (SA 3:271). This sentence is missing from Thich Nhat Hanh 1990. The breath is “a body” because it is a part of the “body of air” (*vāyo,kāya*) or the wind element (*vāyo dhātu*), one of the four primary elements (*mahā,-bhūta*) making up the body (and everything else). It is included in the base of tangibles among bodily phenomena because the object of attention is the touch sensation of the breath entering and exiting the nostrils), that is, it is included in the sense of touch (or “tangible object base,” *phoṭṭabb’āyatana*). (M:ÑB 2002 n1122). See MA 4:140. Cf §18(3)n. See discussion in **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** = SD 13.1 Intro (3.4).

¹³³ DA (on Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S) explains why “body” is used twice here: “For determining the object and isolating it,” which Ñānamoli paraphrases as “This means not confusing, during meditation, body with feeling, mind, etc. The body is contemplated just as body, feeling just as feeling, etc.” (2001 n138 on Satipaṭṭhāna S).

¹³⁴ “Joy,” *pīti*, see §19(5)n.

- (6) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing happiness’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing happiness’;
 (7) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, knowing the mental formations’;¹³⁵
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, knowing the mental formations’;
 (8) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, calming the mental formations’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, calming the mental formations’;
 —then, the monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells **observing feeling in the feeling**,¹³⁶ removing
 covetousness and displeasure for the world.

Bhikshus, full attention¹³⁷ to the in-and-out-breathing¹³⁸ is a certain feeling amongst the feelings,¹³⁹ I say .

Therefore, bhikshus, on that occasion, the monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells observing feeling in the feeling, removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.

(C) Observing the mind

26 Bhikshus,

- (9) when a monk trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, experiencing the mind’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, experiencing the mind’;
 (10) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, gladdening the mind’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, gladdening the mind’;
 (11) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, concentrating the mind’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, concentrating the mind’;
 (12) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, freeing the mind’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, freeing the mind’;
 —then, the monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells **observing the mind in the mind**,¹⁴⁰ removing
 covetousness and displeasure for the world.

I do not say, bhikshus, that there is the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing for one who is confused, who lacks full knowing.

¹³⁵ Or, “Mental functions,” *citta,saṅkhāra*, see §19(7)n.

¹³⁶ “Observing feeling in the feeling,” *vedanāsu vedanā’nupassī*, ie “one who contemplates feeling as feeling.” See §24n.

¹³⁷ MA explains that full (or “bare”) attention (*sādhuka manasikāra*) is not itself actually feeling, but is spoken of as such only figuratively. In the second tetrad, the actual feeling is the happiness mentioned in the second clause and also the feeling connoted by the expression “mental formations” in the third and fourth clauses.

¹³⁸ “Full attention to the in-and-out-breathing” (*assāsa,passāsam sādhuḥkaṃ manasikāraṃ*). Comy: Attention is not really pleasant feeling, but this is a heading of the teaching. In this tetrad, in the first verse (*pada*) feeling is alluded to under the heading of ‘rapture’; in the second verse, it is directly found as ‘happiness.’ In the third and fourth verses, feeling is included in the mental formation [*saññā ca vedanā ca citta,saṅkhāro*, S 4:293].” (SA 3:271)

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

¹⁴⁰ “Observing the mind in the mind.” See §24n. MA says that although the meditator takes as his object the sign of the in-and-out-breathing, he is said to be “observing mind in the mind” because he maintains his mind on the object by arousing mindfulness and full understanding, two factors of mind.

Therefore, bhikshus, on that occasion, the monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells observing mind in the mind, removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.

(D) Observing dharmas [Emerging from dhyana]

27Bhikshus,

- (13) when a monk trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, observing impermanence’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, observing impermanence’;
 (14) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, observing the fading away¹⁴¹ [of lust]’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, observing the fading away [of lust]’;
 (15) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, observing the cessation [of suffering]’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, observing the cessation [of suffering]’;
 (16) when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe in, observing the letting go [of defilements]’;¹⁴²
 when he trains himself thus: ‘I will breathe out, observing the letting go [of defilements]’;

—then, bhikshus, the monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells **observing dharmas in the dharmas**,¹⁴³ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.

Having seen with wisdom the abandonment of covetousness and displeasure, [85] he closely looks on with equanimity.¹⁴⁴

Therefore, bhikshus, on that occasion, the monk dwells exertive, fully aware, mindful, observing dharmas in the dharmas, removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.

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

III. PERFECTION OF THE SEVEN AWAKENING-FACTORS

29 And how, bhikshus, are the four focusses of mindfulness cultivated and often developed to bring the seven awakening-factors to perfection?¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ “Fading away,” *virāga*, also translated as “dispassion” (see §42).

¹⁴² See §21(16)n.

¹⁴³ “Dharmas” (*dhammā*) here refers to “mind-objects” or “the nature of things” that arise in the mind. See **Sati-paṭṭhāna S** (M 10) = SD 10.1 Intro (5D).

¹⁴⁴ Saṃyutta Comy at **Kimbila S** (S 54.10 = SD 16.11): Here “**covetousness**” (*abhijjhā*) is only the hindrance of sensual lust; by “**displeasure**” (*domanassa*) is meant the hindrance of ill will.* This tetrad is stated by way of insight only. These two hindrances are the first of the five hindrances, the first section in the contemplation of dharmas. Thus he says this to show the beginning of the contemplation of dharmas. By “abandonment” (*pahānam*) is meant the knowledge that effects abandoning, eg, one abandons the perception of permanence by the contemplation of impermanence. By the words “having seen with wisdom” (*paññāya disvā*), he shows the sequence of insights, thus: “With one insight knowledge, he sees the knowledge of abandonment, that is, the knowledges of impermanence, dispassion, ending, and letting go; and that, too, he sees by yet another.” “He closely looks on with equanimity” (*sādhukam ajjhupekkhitā hoti*): one is said to look on with equanimity when one has fare along the path, and when one has established oneness (of mind). “Looking on with equanimity” (*ajjhupekkhanā*) can also refer the conascent mental states (in meditation) or to the object. Here, the looking on at the object is intended. (SA 3:272 f). [*Although “**covetousness and displeasure**” is taken by the Sutta’s Comy to refer to only the first two mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*), sensual lust and ill will, in the early Suttas, the dvandva is clearly a synecdoche (or short form) for all the five hindrances (*pañca-nīvaraṇā*) themselves, whose removal leads to mindfulness (*sati*), mental concentration (*samādhi*) and dhyana (*jhāna*). See SD 13.1(4.2e).]

¹⁴⁵ This section (M 118.29-40/3:85-87) is a pericope = **Sīla S**, S 5:67-70 = **Ānanda S 1**, S 331-333 = **Ānanda S 2**, S 334 f. The closing section (M 118.41-44/3:88) is also found in the 2 **Ānanda Ss** (S 54.13-14/S 333, 335).

(A) Observing the body

30 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells **observing the body in the body**,¹⁴⁶ then unconfused¹⁴⁷ mindfulness is established in him.

(i) Bhikshus, when unconfused mindfulness is established in a monk, then **the awakening-factor of mindfulness** is aroused in him. Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of mindfulness, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the mindfulness awakening-factor is perfected.

31 (ii) Living thus mindful, he investigates and examines¹⁴⁸ that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it.

Bhikshus, when, a monk, living thus mindful, investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, then **the awakening-factor of dharma-investigation**¹⁴⁹ is aroused in him.

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

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

Bhikshus, when tireless effort is aroused in a monk who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused, then **the awakening-factor of effort**¹⁵⁰ is aroused in him.

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

33 (iv) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual¹⁵¹ joy arises.

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

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

34 (v) In one whose mind is joyful, the body and the mind become calm.

Bhikshus, when the body and the mind become calm in a monk who is mentally joyful, then **the awakening-factor of tranquillity** is aroused in him.

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

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

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

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of concentration, and at the same time, by cultivating it,

¹⁴⁶ “Observing the body in the body.” See §24n.

¹⁴⁷ *appammaññhā* (Se Ke)

¹⁴⁸ Thus Ke Ce Se PTS. Be *pavicarati*.

¹⁴⁹ *Dhamma, vicaya*. Sometimes this is taken as “investigation of the Doctrine,” but the meaning here actually is “investigation of bodily and mental phenomena” (Walshe 1995 n690). This is the key awakening-factor, ie, “awakening” itself, while the others are the “factors” that help this awakening to be realized (Nm 456). **Milinda, pañha** compares *dhamma, vicaya sambojjhaṅga* to a sword, which in order to cut needs the use of the hands (representing the other 5 factors) (Miln 83): see Gethin 2001:185. On the two applications of *dhamma, vicaya*—in the teaching and in the meditation contexts—see **Bojjhaṅga Sila S** (S 46.3) = SD 10.1(1).

¹⁵⁰ *Vīriya sambojjhaṅga*. This is identical to the 4 right efforts of the noble eightfold path.

¹⁵¹ *Nirāmisā*, “not of the flesh,” here meaning ‘non-carnal’ or ‘spiritual’, which according to Comy refers to the six joyful feelings connected with the sense-doors, but not dependent on sense-desire (MA 1:279). Its opp is *s’āmisā* = *sa-āmisā*, “sensual,” lit “with flesh,” thus connoting some sense of the carnal, ie connected to the pleasures of the five senses (*kāma, guṇā*) (S 4:235, 236). In **Sal’āyatana, vibhaṅga S** (M 137), *s’āmisā* and *nirāmisā* refer to the household life and to the renounced life respectively. Elsewhere, as in **Suddhika Nirāmisā S** (S 36.29), *nirāmisā pīti*, *nirāmisā sukha* and *nirāmisā upekkhā* are experienced in the dhyanas (S 36.29.8-15/4:236 f). See D 2:298; M 1:59; S 4:235, 236 (x2); A 1:81, 3:4121 Pm 2:233. See also Sue Hamilton, *Identity and Experience*, 1996:43 f. On *āmisā* and *nirāmisā*, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.32/1:59) and **Dhamma, dāyāda S** (M 3). See also MA 1:89, 279.

the concentration awakening-factor is perfected in him.

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

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

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of equanimity, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the equanimity awakening-factor is perfected in him.¹⁵²

(B) Observing feelings

37 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells **observing feeling in the feeling**,¹⁵³ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world, then unconfused mindfulness is established in him.

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

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

(ii) ...**the awakening-factor of dharma-investigation**...

(iii) ...**the awakening-factor of effort**...

(iv) ...**the awakening-factor of joy [zest]**...

(v) ...**the awakening-factor of tranquillity**...

(vi) ...**the awakening-factor of concentration**...

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

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

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

(C) Observing the mind

38 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells **observing the mind in the mind**,¹⁵⁴ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world,...(repeat as at §§30-36)...the awakening-factor of equanimity is aroused in him.

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

(D) Observing dharmas

39 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, fully aware, mindful, dwells **observing dharma in the dharma**,¹⁵⁵ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world, then unconfused mindfulness would be established in him.

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

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

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

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

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of dharma-investigation, and at the same time, by cul-

¹⁵² On this *sambojjhaṅga* passage, cf the shorter *nīvaraṇa,pahīna* passage at **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.76/1:73) = SD 8.10n for other refs.

¹⁵³ “observing feeling in the feeling.” See §24n.

¹⁵⁴ “observing the mind in the mind.” See §24n & §25n.

¹⁵⁵ “observing dharma in the dharma.” See §24n.

tivating it, the dharma-investigation awakening-factor is perfected in him.

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

Bhikshus, when tireless effort is aroused in a monk who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, then **the awakening-factor of effort**¹⁵⁶ is aroused in him.

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

(iv) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual¹⁵⁷ joy arises.

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

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

(v) In one whose mind is joyful, the body and the mind become calm.

Bhikshus, when the body and the mind become calm in a monk who is mentally joyful, then **the awakening-factor of tranquillity** is aroused in him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

40 Bhikshus, when the four focusses of mindfulness are thus cultivated, thus often developed, they bring the seven awakening-factors to perfection.¹⁵⁸

IV. PERFECTION OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND LIBERATION

Conclusion

[88] **41** And how, bhikshus, are the seven awakening-factors cultivated and often developed to bring true knowledge and liberation to perfection?¹⁵⁹

42 Here, bhikshus,

(i) a monk cultivates the awakening-factor of mindfulness that is dependent on solitude,¹⁶⁰ dependent

¹⁵⁶ *Vīriya sambojjhaṅga*. See §32n.

¹⁵⁷ *nirāmisā*, See §33n.

¹⁵⁸ MA says that this passage shows that the awakening-factors exist together in each mind-moment in the practice of insight-meditation.

¹⁵⁹ This closing section (M 118.41-44/3:88) is a periscope = **Ānanda S 1** (S 54.13-14/5:333) = **Ānanda S 2** (S 54.14/5:335).

¹⁶⁰ Here “solitude” (*viveka*) (or seclusion) has a special reference to the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*). This whole phrase, beginning with “dependent on solitude”—*viveka, nissitam virāga, nissitam nirodha, nissitam vossagga, nissitam vossagga, pariṇāmiṃ dhamma, vicaya, sambojjhaṅgam*—is called **the viveka,-nissita formula**. See Gethin 2001:162-168. According to **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, there are 5 kinds of “solitude” (*viveka*), ie overcoming of the hindrances: (1) solitude through suppression (*vikkhambhana viveka*); (2) solitude through the substitution of opposite or displacement by opposites (*tad-aṅga viveka*); (3) solitude through cutting off (*samuccheda viveka*); (4) solitude through tranquillization (*paṭipassaddhi viveka*); and (5) solitude through escape (*nissaraṇa viveka*) (Pm 1:27, 2:219-224; Vism 13.12/410, 22.110/693). See also “Introduction to the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas” = SD 13.1 §4.2c.

on fading away (of lust) [dispassion],¹⁶¹ dependent on cessation (of suffering),¹⁶² ripening in letting go (of defilements).¹⁶³

(ii) He cultivates the awakening-factor of dharma-investigation...

(iii) He cultivates the awakening-factor of effort...

(iv) He cultivates the awakening-factor of joy...

(v) He cultivates the awakening-factor of tranquillity...

(vi) He cultivates the awakening-factor of concentration...

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

43 Bhikshus, when the seven awakening-factors are thus cultivated, thus often developed, they bring true knowledge and liberation to perfection.”¹⁶⁴

44 This is what the Blessed One said. The monks rejoiced and approved of the Blessed One’s word.

—evam—

¹⁶¹ *Virāga*, also tr as “dispassion.”

¹⁶² *Nirodha*, ie, “cessation of suffering.”

¹⁶³ MA says that there are 2 kinds of letting go or relinquishment (of suffering) (*vossagga*): “giving up” (*pariccāga*), ie the abandonment of defilements, and “entering into” (*pakkhandana*), ie culminating in nirvana. **Gethin** notes that this phrase is not unique to the 7 *bojjhaṅgā*, but is also found in connection with the factors of the noble eightfold path, the *indriyā* and *balā* (2001:162 f). This formula shows that that each *bojjhaṅga* is to be developed successively “as dependent on solitude, dispassion [fading away] and cessation” (Gethin 2001:166).

¹⁶⁴ MA says that the mindfulness that comprehends breathing is mundane. The mundane mindfulness of the breath perfects or fulfills the mundane focusses of mindfulness. The mundane focusses of mindfulness perfect the supramundane awakening-factors, and the supramundane awakening-factors perfect true knowledge and liberation, ie the fruit and nirvana.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha [Anuruddha] [Abhdhs]

- 1999 *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhammattha of Ācariya Anuruddha.* [1993] Pali text orig ed & tr by Mahāthera Narada. Rev tr Bhikkhu Bodhi. Introd & explanatory guide by U Rewata Dhamma & Bhikkhu Bodhi. Abh tables by U Sīlānanda. 2nd ed, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1997.

Āṅguttara Nikāya

- 1932-36 [A:WH] *The Book of Gradual Sayings.* Tr. F.L. Woodward & E.M. Hare, Oxford: OUP, 1932-36.

- 1999 [A:ÑB] *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anthology)* (A:ÑB), tr. Nyanaponika Thera & Bhikkhu Bodhi. Walnut Creek: Altamira & Kandy: BPS, 1999. (208 selected suttas.)

Dīgha Nikāya [D:W]

- 1995 *The Long Discourses of the Buddha.* Tr Maurice Walshe. Boston: Wisdom & Kandy: BPS, 1995.

Majjhima Nikāya [M:ÑB]

- 1959 *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings.* Tr. I.B. Horner. London: Pali Text Society, 1950, repr 1977.

- 2001 *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha.* Tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, Boston: Wisdom & Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, 1995; 2nd ed 2001.

Paṭisambhidā, magga [Sāriputta]

- 1997 *The Path of Discrimination.* [1982] Tr from the Pali by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. 2nd ed. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1997.

Sariyutta Nikāya [S:B]

- 2000 *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha.* Tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi, Boston: Wisdom, 2000. 2 vols.

Vimutti, magga [Arahant Upatissa] Vimm

- 1977 *The Path of Freedom.* [1961] Cié-to-tāo-lun, Chinese tr Tipiṭaka Saṅghapāla of Funan. Tr from the Chinese by NRM Ehara, Soma Thera & Kheminda Thera. Dr D Roland Weerasuria, 1961. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1977 (with corrigenda slip).

Visuddhi, magga [Buddhaghosa] Vism

- 1979 *The Path of Purification.* [1964] Tr Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. 4th ed Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1979. 5th ed 1991.

- 1991 → 1979.

Secondary sources

Anālayo Bhikkhu

- 2003 *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization.* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003.

- 2005 [Comparative study of M 62 in the light Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese texts. Forthcoming.]

Ariyadhamma, Mahathera Nauyane

- 1988 *Anapana Sati: Meditation on Breathing.* Bodhi Leaves BL 115. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1988. Downloadable free of charge from <http://www.accesstoinsight/lib/bps/leaves/bl111.html>

Bodewitz, HW

- 1986 “Prāṇa, apāna and other prāṇa-s in Vedic literature.” *The Adyar Library Bulletin* 50 1986: 326-348.

Bond, George D

- 1988 *The Buddha Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious tradition, reinterpretation and response.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988.

- Brahmavamso, Ajahn
 1999 *Present Moment Awareness and Silent Awareness of the Present Moment*. Perth: [publisher], 1999. Esp ch 9 “Beautiful Mind.”
 2000 *The Basic Method of Meditation* [1998]. ©The Buddhist Society of Western Australia. Singapore: Buddhist Fellowship, 2000.
 2002 “The beautiful breath: The *Ānāpānasati Sutta*.” In *Dhamma Journal* 3,1 Jan 2002:61-108 (ch 9).
- Bronkhorst, Johannes
 1993 *Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*. [Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1986. xii 145pp 24 cm] 2nd ed Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993. xviii 153pp hb incl pagination of 1st ed.
- Brown, GW
 1919 “*Prāṇa* and *apāna*.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 39 1919:104-112.
- Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu
 1989 *Ānāpānasati: Mindfulness with Breathing: unveiling the secrets of life; a manual for beginners*. (Tr fr Siamese by Santikaro Bhikkhu.) Bangkok: Dhamma Study and Practice Group. ©Evolution/Liberation, 1987. 2nd ed 1989. xx 174pp sb, Pali glossary, app incl The Mindfulness With Breathing Discourse.
- Cousins, Lance S
 1996 “The origins of insight meditation.” In *The Buddhist Forum* vol 4 Seminar Papers 1994-1996, ed Tadeusz Skorupski. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1996:35-58.
- Edgerton, Franklin
 1958a “*Prāṇa* and *apāna*.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 78,1 Jan-Mar 1958:51-54.
 1958b “*Prāṇa* and *Apāna*: Surrejoinder.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 78,1 Jan-Mar 1958:56-57.
- FUJII, Masato
 1999 “A common passage on the spureme *pṛāna* in the three earliest Upaniṣads (JUB 1.60-2.12; BĀU 1.3; ChU 1.2).” *Zinbun* 34,2 1992:51-86.
- Gethin, Rupert ML
 2001 *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*. [Leiden: E J Brill, 1992.] 2nd ed sb Oxford: Oneworld, 2001. A modern classic in the study of the *bodhi,pakkhiyā dhammā*.
- Johansson, Rune E.A.
 1981 *Pali Buddhist Texts: Explained to the beginner*. [1973] 3rd ed Richmond: Curzon, 1981. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Asian Studies Monograpg Series No. 14. 159pp pbk.
- Kearney, Patrick
 2001 *Evam Me Suttam* [sic] *This is how I heard it*. Week 4: *Ānāpānasati Sutta* (25 Oct 2001) [of a series of 6 talks]. Medlow Bath, NSW (Australia): Blue Mountain Insight Meditation Centre, 2001. (Sutta tr & personal commentary.)
- Lee Dhammadharo, Ajaan
 1983 *Keeping the Breath in Mind & Lessons in Samādhi (selected passages)* [1st ed, Bangkok, 1979]. Tr Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff), Bangkok, 2nd ed 1983. Free booklet.
- Lu, K’uan Yü
 1964 *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation*. London: Rider, 1964. Repr York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1969, 1994. See Zhiyi, *Tongmen Zhiguan*, 1964.
- Mahāsi Sayādaw
 1980 *Purpose of Practising Kammaṭṭhāna Meditation*. Tr U Min Swee (Min Kyaw Thu). Rangoon: Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization, Mahāsi Thātana Yeikthā, 1980. Free booklet. Various reprints.
- Ñāṇamoli (tr)

Living Word of the Buddha SD vol 7 no 13 M 118 Mindfulness of the In-and-out-breathing

- 1973 *Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpānasati): Buddhist texts from the Pali Canon and Extracts from the Pali Commentaries.* [1952; 2nd ed 1964] Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1973.
- Nyanadhammo, Ajahn
1999 “The spiritual faculties.” Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, UK: *Forest Sangha Newsletter* 48 1999.
- Nyanaponika Thera
1962 *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation.* [1962] With an anthology of relevant texts tr fr the Pali and Sanskrit. London: Rider, 1969. Ch 6: Mindfulness of Breathing (pp 108-113). Pt 2: The Basic Text (Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta tr with notes) (pp 115-135); Pt 3.39: The Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing (excerpts: M 118.15-43) (pp 165-169).
- Sona, Bhikkhu
2000 “The mystery of the breath nimitta, or the case of the missing simile: an essay on aspects of the practice of breath meditation.” British Columbia, Canada: Birken Forest Monastery. <http://www.birken.ca/library>
- Sujato, Ajahn
2004a *The GIST: The hidden structure of the Buddha’s Teachings.* 2004 Global Conference on Buddhism, 12-13 June 2004. Singapore: Buddhist Fellowship, 2004. [On the “general integrated sutta theory.”]
2004b *A History of Mindfulness* [Rev ed of “GIST: The hidden structure of the Buddha’s Teachings” & “A history of mindfulness.”] Unexpurgated draft. 2004. 242 pp.
- Thich Minh Chau
1991 *The Chinese Madhyama Āgama and the Pāli Majjhima Nikāya: A comparative study.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991.
- Thich Nhat Hanh
1990 *Breathe! You Are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing.* [First published as *Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing*, 1988.] With comy by author. Tr fr the Vietnamese by Annabel Laity. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990; rev 1996.
- Zürcher, Erik
1991 “A new look at the earliest Chinese Buddhist texts.” In *From Benares to Beijing, Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion.* Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1991:277-300.
- Zhiyi (538-597)
1964 *Tongmen Zhiguan*, in Lu K’uan Yü, *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation.* London: Rider, 1964. Repr York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1969, 1994.
- Zysk, Kenneth G.
1993 “The science of respiration and the doctrine of the bodily winds in ancient India.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113,2 Apr-Jun 1993:198-213.

030214; rev 061017; 071205; 081228; 090612; 091019a