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Ānāpāna,sati Sutta

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

Theme: The breath meditation in detail

Translated and annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 The Sutta

1.1 BACKGROUND. In the **Ichhā,naṅgala Sutta** (S 54.11), breath meditation is declared to be “the noble abode, the perfect abode, the Tathagata’s abode,”¹ because during the rains-retreat, the Buddha “most-ly dwells 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 16 steps of breath meditation in four tetrads [§§15-22] and the relationship of tetrads to the 4 focuses of mindfulness [§§23-28], the 7 awakening-factors [§§29-40] and spiritual liberation [§§41-43]. The 16 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 focuses 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 “progressively higher distinction” (*uḷāraṃ pubbenā-param viśesaṃ*), that is, the 4 stages of sainthood [§2+n]. The Buddha begins by declaring that breath meditation brings to perfection the 4 focuses 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?)

The two Ānanda Suttas differ only in Ānanda requesting the Buddha to teach him, “Bhante, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, has the Blessed One as refuge. It would be

¹ *Ariya,vihāra, brahma,vihāra, tathāgata,vihāra*. Cf *ariya,vāsa* in **Ariya,vāsa S 2** (A 10.20), SD 10.15.

² S 54.11/5:325 f.

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

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.

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 7 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 comprehension. **The Visuddhi-magga** says: “Herein there are three kinds of *final* breaths on account of cessation, that is to say, final in *becoming*, final in *absorption*, final in *death*. For, among the various kinds of existence, in-breaths and out-breaths occur only in the sense-sphere existence, not in the form-existence nor the formless-existence.” (Vism 8.241/291 f)⁸

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 Ñāṇamoli’s *Mindfulness of Breathing* (3rd ed 1973). Thich Nhat Hanh gives a contemporary popular free interpretation of breath meditation in *Breathe! You Are Alive* (1988, 1990, 1996).

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

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

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

In **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), the Buddha exhorts of these 7 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

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

⁶ *Bhagavam,mūlakā no bhante dhammā, bhagavaṃ nettikā, bhagavaṃ paṭisaraṇā. Sādhū vata bhante bhagava-taṅṅā-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 36.6.6/4:207; A 1:199, 4:158, 351, 5:355).

⁷ *Ān’āpāna,sati 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.

that is, the exhaled air, to refer to *respiration*. Zysk gives this helpful point regarding the ancient Indian conception of the breath:

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

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

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

2.1.1.3 The first term, *prāṇa* [2.1.1.1], is the most common of the “5 winds,” and is a general term for the breath and for life (that which breathes) itself.¹² Although the Vedic system generally defines *prāṇa* as the in-breath, the Pali term here is usually *āna* (with the verb *assasati*, “he breathes in”).¹³ The term *apāna* came to mean “down-going winds” (*adho, gamā vātā*), the breath that moves down from the navel, controlling evacuation and flatus (the breaking of wind).¹⁴

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

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

¹² The Ṛg,veda and Sāma,veda define *prāṇa* as being threefold: (1) it indicates and motivates life (RV 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 (RV 10.189.1 f; SV 2.726 f). The Buddha however defines *pāṇa* 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 Comys and the Upaniṣads follow the same defs: see 2.1.2.

¹⁴ For further tym, see SD 49.4 (5.2.2.1).

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

¹⁶ See eg 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.

¹⁷ See also Bodewitz 1986:334-336. For a summary, see Olivelle 1996:1-li.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.1.2 Buddhist definitions

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

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

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

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

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

²¹ “Winds that course through the limbs,” *aṅgam-aṅgānusārino vātā*. In ref to this, **Peter Harvey** says, “Note that the ‘motion/air’ element might be related to the modern concept of electrical discharges of the nerves... In that case, the mind would move the body by effecting the electrical modulation of nerve discharges.” (1993:7 digital ed). In contemporary terms, these “winds” clearly refer to the oxyhaemoglobin, ie, the oxygen in the blood, coursing through the body. Clearly, this is the *samāna* as def in Maitrī 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).

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

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

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

palate and is extinguished (with the baby’s sneezing) (Vism 7.164/271 f).

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

2.1.2.3 T W Rhys Davids (PED: 92 under *ā + pa*)²⁶ says that “both terms [*assasati* and *passasati*] are semantically alike; but in exegesis however they have been differentiated in a way which looks like a distortion of the original meaning, viz *assasati* is taken as ‘breathing out,’ *passasati* 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)²⁷—too, take *assasati* (Skt *āśvasati*, *āśvasiti*) as “he breathes out,” and *passasati* (Skt *praśvasiti*) as “he breathes in.”

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

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)

2.1.3 Pragmatic accuracy. In the *Ānāpāna,sati Sutta* (M 118), I have, out of necessity and for convenience, translated *assasissāmi* as “I breathe in,” and *passasissāmi* as “I breathe out.” In fact, the phrase, *ānāpāna*, can mean either “in-and-out breath” or “out-and-in breath,” or we can simply render it as “the breath.”²⁹ [2.1.1.3]

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

2.2 BREATH MEDITATION AND SATIPATTHANA. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas*,³⁰ 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.³¹

However, in *Ānāpāna Saṃyutta*,³² breath meditation is generally presented as in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, which gives emphasis on all 4satipatthanas and the 7 awakening-factors (*bojjhaṅga*).³³ 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)

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

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

²⁷ Online edition: http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/indologie/tamil/mwd_search.html.

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

²⁹ See SD 7.13 (2.1): *Ānāpāna*.

³⁰ *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.

³¹ See *An Introduction to the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas*, SD 12.1 (3.8).

³² S 54/5:311-341.

³³ *Bojjhaṅga*, see §§30-40.

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)

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.³⁴ 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 PARIMUKHA

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 focused at the nostril or the upper lip, wherever the contact of the breath is felt most distinctly. This tradition is mainly based on **the Paṭisambhidā, magga** and **Vibhaṅga** interpretation of *pari-*

³⁴ This does not, however, imply that concepts are not classified as conditioned and impermanent, as some suggest. See S 15.2/2:179.

mukham as being “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip.”³⁵ *Parimukha* literally means “around (*pari*) the entrance (*mukha*),” here always used idiomatically and as an adverb, meaning “in front.” This is the interpretation followed by U Thittila,³⁶ Maurice Walshe,³⁷ Soma Thera,³⁸ and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi.³⁹

In this connection, the Tiantai⁴⁰ master, **Zhiyi** 智顓 (538-597), in his *Tóngméng zhǐguān* 童蒙止觀 (*Śamatha and Vipassanā for Beginners*), gives this advice for dealing with two kinds of distractions:

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

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

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

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

2.4.2 Modern interpretations

2.4.2.1 The most modern innovation here is that of “watching the rise and fall of the abdomen” introduced by Mingun Jetavana Sayadaw of Myanmar, but made famous by his pupil, **Mahasi Sayadaw** in the mid-20th century.⁴³ To avoid contradicting the Sutta and Commentaries, the Mahasi tradition has always taken care to present their main meditation practice as a contemplation of the wind element (*vāyo*)—that is, one of 4 primary elements used in meditation—not as a form of breath meditation.⁴⁴ 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.

2.4.2.2 Around the same time as Mahasi Sayadaw, too, although less well known, we have **Lee Dhammadharo’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).”⁴⁵

³⁵ 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).

³⁶ Vbh:T 319, 328.

³⁷ D:W 1995:335.

³⁸ 1941:42 f digital ed.

³⁹ M:ÑB 2001:527.

⁴⁰ Tiāntái 天台.

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

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

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

⁴⁴ Despite this, the Mahasi tradition has been severely criticized for contemplating the movement of the breath at the abdomen (Kassapa, “Meditation—right and wrong,” *Maha Bodhi*, Calcutta, 74,11-2 1966:2420245, 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 we have tried it or not*, that is, whether it promotes mindfulness (“meditates”) in us or not.

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

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

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

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

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

2.4.3 The Satipaṭṭhana Sutta

2.4.3.1 **Anālayo**,⁴⁹ in his comprehensive and conciliatory survey of *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization* (2003),⁵⁰ gives insightful comments on the term *parimukha*, which should be carefully studied.⁵¹ A few salient points should be noted here. In breath meditation, *parimukha*, usually translated as “in front” or “before” (oneself), may be taken literally as “around the mouth,” referring to the nostril or upper area. 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 worthwhile to point out that the qualification “in front” appears to be more than simply part of a stereotype formula, since in several passages in the *Udāna* it is missing from otherwise identical description of meditators sitting down cross-legged. (U 21, 42, 43, 46, 60, 71, 77) (Anālayo 2003:128 n47; references normalized)

2.4.3.2 As such, only in the context of breath meditation, *parimukha* may be interpreted literally as in the nostril area or upper lip.⁵² 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

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

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

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

⁴⁹ Dharma scholar and German *sāmaṇera* ordained in Sri Lanka.

⁵⁰ Anālayo also quotes sources outside the Pāli tradition in a useful comparative manner, and this 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. So is this author.

⁵¹ Anālayo 2003:128 f; 2011:350 f.

⁵² As at Pm 3.170/2:171; Vimmi:ESK 160; Vism 8.161/271.

the term, cannot be categorically excluded. In fact, several modern teachers have developed successful approaches to mindfulness of breathing independent of the nostril area. Some, for example, advise their pupils to experience the breath in the chest area, others suggest contemplating the air element at the abdomen, while still others recommend directing awareness to the act of breathing itself, without focusing on any specific location. (Anālayo 2003:129)

2.4.3.3 **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 *parimukham 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*.⁵³ 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 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**⁵⁴ 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”⁵⁵ (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.⁵⁶ 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 *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, though not in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*[, but] the phrase means the same: “I say, bhikshus, 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

⁵³ Eg Skt *Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra* 27.16; Skt *Catuṣpariṣat Sūtra* 6.1; Skt *Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra* 63. BHSD, however, has neither *pratimukha* nor *parimukha*.

⁵⁴ Thai forest monastic tradition: Birkenhead Forest Monastery, British Columbia, Canada.

⁵⁵ Pm 3.170/2:171; Vim:ESK 160; Vism 8.161/271.

⁵⁶ 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.

breathing a short breath, knows that he breathes in a short breath...and so trains himself, thinking: ‘I will breathe out, calming the whole body formation.’” [D 22,2.4/2:291]

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

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

3 “Mental noting”

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

Sujato, in his comments on the contemplating of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), how it deals basically 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 satipatthana material is the direct experience of the “exalted” mind, the “unexcelled” [unsurpassable] mind, the mind “in samadhi,” the “released” [liberated] mind—all synonyms for jhana.

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

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

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

- | | |
|---|---------|
| I. The basic breath meditation | §§15-23 |
| II. The breath meditation as satipatthana | §§24-28 |

- III. Applying satipatthana to the awakening factors §§29-41
 IV. The attainment of true knowledge and liberation §§42-44

Part I opens with the practical instructions for the beginner, where the Buddha mentions the ideal places for meditation, the best posture and the essence of the breath meditation [§17]. Then follow the 16 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 us with the energy to further fine-tune our keeping of the moral precepts, and in due course lead us to the satipatthana level of practice.

It should be noted here that even if we do *not* attain dhyana at this point, our practice is still beneficial by way of the perception of impermanence.⁵⁷ If we constantly practise in this way, we are assured of stream-winning in this life itself.

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

At this stage, “the in-and-out-breathing is a certain body amongst the bodies,” meaning that the body (manifested as the breath)⁵⁸ is seen as it really is in terms of the 4 elements, as “conscious matter”⁵⁹ [§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 dhyana⁶⁰ [§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 7 awakening-factors [§§29-41]. Each of the 4 satipatthanas is now applied in terms of the 7 awakening-factors. Then, in **Part IV**, the awakening-factors, cultivated by way of the viveka, nissita formula, bring about the spiritual liberation [§§41-43].

4.2 BRAHMAVAMSO’S COMMENTARY. The *Dhamma Journal* (3,2, Jan 2002) of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia has Brahmavamso’s useful and readable commentary on the Ānāpānasati Sutta from a 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 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 7 awakening-factors [Table 4.2].

⁵⁷ See any of the 10 suttas of **Okkanta Samyutta** (S 25): eg (**Anicca Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7.

⁵⁸ See eg **Dhātu, vibhaṅga S** (M 140.17/3:241), SD 4.17 & **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (2.1.6)..

⁵⁹ See **Rūpa**, SD 17.2a (9).

⁶⁰ See eg **Daṭṭhabba S** (S 36.5/4:207), SD 17.3(5).

The 16 Steps of the Ānāpāna, sati as <i>satipaṭṭhāna</i>
<u>The 12 steps for getting into dhyana (mental absorption)</u>
[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 zest [joy]
Step 6—Arousing happiness
Step 7—Experiencing mental formation
Step 8—Calming both zest and happiness
[Contemplation of the mind] [§26]
Step 9—Experiencing the mind
Step 10—Shining the <i>nimitta</i> [meditation sign]
Step 11—Sustaining the <i>nimitta</i>
Step 12—Freeing the mind
[Contemplation of dharmas] [§27]
<u>The 4 steps to take after emerging from dhyana</u>
Step 13—Contemplating on impermanence (<i>anicca</i>)
Step 14—Contemplating on fading away (of lust) (<i>virāga</i>)
Step 15—Contemplating on cessation (of suffering) (<i>nirodha</i>)
Step 16—Contemplating on letting go (of defilements) (<i>paṭinissagga</i>)

Table 4.2. The 16 steps of breath meditation

5 *Pīti* and *sukha*

We experience zest [joy]⁶¹ (*pīti*) in any of two ways: by attaining either the 1st or 2nd dhyana in which zest is present, we experience it in the mode of calm (*samatha*); by emerging from that dhyana and reflecting that zest is subject to destruction, we experience zest in the mode of insight (*vipassanā*). Psychologically, *pīti* is a kind of “joyful interest,” and as such may be associated with wholesome, unwholesome or neutral states (BDict: *pīti*). Zest belongs to the formation group (*saṅkhāra-k, khandha*) while happiness (*sukha*) belongs to the feeling group (*vedanā-k, khandha*). Buddhaghosa compares zest to when a thirsty man lost in the desert finds water; happiness is what he feels when he is drinking the water. (Vism 4.94 ff).

6 Meditation sign (*nimitta*)

6.1 THE BREATH SIGN

6.1.1 In “The Mystery of the Breath Nimitta” (2000), **Bhikkhu Soṇa** explains that the simile of a clear full moon to which the dhyanic mind is compared in the Paṭisambhidā “degenerates to a mistaken literalization as internally produced visual data” in the Visuddhi, magga’s description of the counterpart sign (*paṭi-bhāga, -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).⁶² For example, when one feels weakness, headache and nausea, nausea here is a sign of the flu.

⁶¹ Brahmavamso, as a rule, tr *pīti* as “joy.”

⁶² On definitions of *nimitta*, see SD 13.1(3.1d).

6.1.2 According to *the Buddhist Dictionary*, there are 3 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. [6.4]

6.2 THE VIMUTTI,MAGGA EXPLANATION

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

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

...as such, the monk sits, having established mindfulness at the nose-tip or at the sign of the mouth [lip], without paying attention to the coming and going [rising and falling] of the in-breath and the out-breath as they come and go; as he disregards the coming and going of the in-breath and the out-breath, he put forth effort, and carries out his task. Through his effort he gains excellence.⁶³

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶³ Pm 3.170/2:171. *Evam evaṃ bhikkhu nāsik’agge vā mukha,nimitte vā satim upaṭṭhapetvā nisinno hoti, na āgate vā gate vā assāsa,passāse manasi karoti, na āgatā vā gatā vā assāsa,passāsā aviditā honti, padhānañ ca paññāyati, payogañ ca sādheti. Visesam adhigacchati padhānañ ca.* (Pm 3.170/2:171)

Bhikkhu Soṇa reminds us that 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 clearly comprehending” (M 118,26(12)/3:84).

6.3 THE VISUDDHI.MAGGA EXPLANATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This distinction is critical. It shows that breath meditation is different from other concentration objects in that it is exclusively tactile.⁶⁴

6.4 HOW DHYANA ARISES THROUGH THE BREATH MEDITATION

6.4.1 The 2 signs

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

⁶⁴ For a better understanding, see Bhikkhu Soṇa’s “The Mystery of the Breath Nimitta” (2000): <http://www.birken.ca/library>. For a more detailed study of *nimitta*, see *Nimitta*, SD 19.7.

the breath meditation, this happens when the mind is said to have attained “full concentration.” This blissfully freed mind is preceded by what is known as “access concentration.”

6.4.1.2 The whole process leading up to dhyana is easy to understand in term of “access concentration” and “full concentration.” When we are focused on watching the breath, having let go of all distractions, we come closer to directly seeing the breath as it really is, that is, we do not even need to think about it. This stage is known as “**access**” (*upacāra*), because we are in the proximity or “neighbourhood” of full concentration or dhyana—hence, this is called “neighbourhood concentration” or “access concentration” (*upacāra, samādhi*). When the mind is totally free from the 6 senses and fully absorbed in itself, it is said to have attained dhyana, that is, “**full concentration**” (*appanā, samādhi*).⁶⁵

6.4.1.3 The mind becomes concentrated on the level of access by the abandonment of **the mental hindrances**,⁶⁶ that is, when the mind is completely free (at least temporarily) from the body. The mental hindrances are the demanding and distracting activities of the 6 senses (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind). When the mind is fully free of the body, the physical senses also cease their activities, so that the mind, too, stops conceiving, that is, generating ideas with the senses-faculties. The mind, then, basically only perceives, without *conceiving*.⁶⁷ In aesthetic terms, we can say that, in dhyana, the mind *feels* without thinking.⁶⁸

6.4.1.4 Dhyana is said to have arisen when all **the dhyana-factors**—initial application, sustained application, zest, joy, and one-pointedness⁶⁹—are attained, the mind is said to have attained full concentration or attainment (*appanā*), that is, the first dhyana.⁷⁰ In practice, it is difficult to distinguish between the two, as they are really the two side of the same coin of the concentrated mind in deep meditation.

7 Breath meditation in practice

7.1 SEQUENCE OF PRACTICE. The first exercise of the 16-steps of the Ānāpānasati 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.

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)

⁶⁵ For further details on *upacāra samādhi* and *appanā samādhi*, see **Samadhi**, SD 33.1a (3.1).

⁶⁶ The 5 mental hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*) are (1) sensual lust (*kāma-c, chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*), (4) restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*): see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

⁶⁷ On perceiving (*sañjānana*), or better, perception (*saññā*), see **Saññā**, SD 17.4. On conception (*maññanā*), see **Mūla, pariyāya S** (M 1,3) n, SD 11.9; **Ejā S I** (S 35.90), SD 29.10 (3). See also SD 31.10 (2.6); SD 43.3 (4.2.3.5).

⁶⁸ On the usage of “feeling” in meditation, see Reflection R418, “Feeling meditation,” 2015.

⁶⁹ These dhyana-factors (*jhān’āṅga*) are also fivefold, respectively: (1) *vitakka*, (2) *vicāra*, (3) *pīti*, (4) *sukha*, and (5) *ek’aggata*: see SD 8.4 (6).

⁷⁰ On the dhyanas, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

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

- (1) Attend to the sensation of breath/air wherever it enters and exits the body.
- (2) If visual perceptions arise, ignore them.
- (3) If the mind wanders, do not allow it. Return to only the point of contact of breath.
- (4) Hold attention on the breathing process throughout the entire duration of in-breaths and out-breaths.
- (5) The sensation or perception of moving air turns into a static feeling—this is a sign of the mind stilling.
- (6) Dwell on this airy, buoyant quality, which should pervade the head, as a sense of cool and airy emptiness. This may pervade the whole body. This is a further “sign” of growing stillness.
- (7) Keep focusing on this experience of airy lightness.
- (8) All mental hindrances will fall away and the 5 dhyana-factors⁷¹ will arise (weak, medium or strong).
- (9) Refer to the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta for further instructions.

7.2 THE ĀGAMA VERSION. In the contemplating of the body of **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta**,⁷² the Pāli sequence is “**the breath meditation**,” “the 4 postures,” and “clear comprehension.” The sequence in the Madhyama Āgama versions, however, is just the reverse: clear comprehension, the 4 postures, and breath meditation.⁷³ 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,vimśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā and the Śāriputrābhidharma, both of which similarly have mindfulness of postures and activities precede mindfulness of breathing.⁷⁴ (2005:6 f)

8 Living transmissions

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

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

⁷¹ “Dhyana factors,” *jhān’āṅga*: **Vibhaṅga** gives a list of 5 dhyana-factors as follows: initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), zest [joyful interest, or simply “joy”] (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek’aggatā*) (Vbh 257). See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4(5-6).

⁷² D 22; M 10.

⁷³ MĀ 98 = T1.582b21.

⁷⁴ **Pañca,vimśati,sāhasrikā**, Dutt 1934:204, tr Conze 1990:153; **Śāriputrābhidharma**, T1548 = T28.613b3.

Anālayo'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 Ānāpānasati Sutta. Such writings highlight the historical importance of the breath meditation as an early Buddhist teachings, which are still available to us, so that we are fortunate enough to experience the benefits of the authentic practice, that is, breath meditation as taught by the Buddha and practised by the early saints.

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

Ñānamoli's translation, *Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpānasati): Buddhist texts from the Pali Canon and Extracts from the Pali Commentaries*⁷⁵ is invaluable for the serious student and teacher for a more extensive study of the text. This is helpful sutta-based background reading, which gives us a good idea of the true purpose of breath meditation.

Buddhadāsa's well-known *Ānāpānasati: Mindfulness with Breathing: unveiling the secrets of life; a manual for beginners* (1989)⁷⁶ is written from a spiritual reformer's viewpoint and is especially readable for those who wish to make a contemporary application of the meditation. Such writings make us aware of a wide variety of methods and explanations available to us, and we should try them out to see which methods helps us feel more calm and clear—an joyful—in mind.

Brahmavamso's article "The beautiful breath: The Ānāpānasati Sutta," found in the *Dhamma Journal*,⁷⁷ is written in clear simple language from a practitioner's point of view. This is helpful reading for the practitioner. This will help put us on the right track towards improving our breath meditation, which means that we need to learn from the mistakes and progress of our own practice.

Thich Nhat Hanh's *Breathe! You Are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* was first published as *Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* (1988), with commentary (1996).⁷⁸ This book is popular for the western and westernized mind for its contemporary style. It is a good non-technical introductory reading to breath meditation. From there, for a deeper understanding of breath meditation, we should study the full translation below (SD 7.13), along with its notes

Bhikkhu Sona,⁷⁹ 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 (2).

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NOTE OF APPRECIATION

My joyful thanks to friends of the Pali Yahoo Group, especially John Kelly for his invaluable help in proof-reading the text and suggestions, and to Ong Yong Peng for his contagious enthusiasm and energy. My maiden attempt at translating this sutta was done using the trilinear method (Pali/verbatim English/ idiomatic English) used during the "Pali Without Grammar" course (Pali Centre, Singapore, Feb-Mar 2003). The trilinear method was then introduced to

⁷⁵ 1952; 2nd ed 1964 (1973).

⁷⁶ Tr from the Siamese by Santikaro Bhikkhu; Bangkok, 1987; 2nd ed, 1989.

⁷⁷ *Dhamma Journal* 3,1 Jan 2002:61-108 (ch 9).

⁷⁸ Tr fr the Vietnamese by Annabel Laity. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990; rev 1996. Although this is a very free tr, it is a good start to further examine meditation so as to inspire us into the actual practice of breath meditation.

⁷⁹ Birken Forest Monastery, British Columbia, Canada, belonging Ajahn Chah's lineage.

the Pali Yahoo Group where it is well received. The trilinear edition is being used by such centres as the Bhavana Society, Washington, and the Insight Meditation Society, Barre, Massachusetts, USA. Beginning March 2005, I am deeply grateful to **Anālayo** for sharing the drafts of his forthcoming *Comparative Study of the Majjhima* in the light of Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan texts which also provide very insightful commentaries into the Suttas and early Buddhist practice. I have also been deeply moved by **Sujato's** *A History of Mindfulness* (2004), which uncannily speaks almost every word in my mind on the issues of “vipassana,” sutta study, worldly monastics and other issues. Above all, 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)

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

M 118

[78] 1 Thus have I heard.

The Buddha and the great saints teaching

1.2 At one time, the Blessed One was staying in the Mansion of Migāra's Mother in the Eastern Park near Sāvathī, together with a great many very well known elder disciples:⁸⁰

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

2.2 And the new monks, having been exhorted and instructed by the elder monks, had attained progressively higher distinction.⁸¹

⁸⁰ “Together...elder disciples,” *sambahulehi abhiññātehi abhiññātehi therehi sāvakehi saddhim*. This phrase is stock: **Mahā Go,siṅga S** (M 32,1/1:212), SD 44.12; **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,1/3:78 f), SD 7.13; **Kaṇṭhaka S** (A 10.72,1/-5:133), SD 80.17. Cf the opening of **Naḷaka,pāna S** (M 68,2/1:462), SD 37.4.

⁸¹ “Progressively higher distinction,” *ulāram pubbenāparam visesam*, here refers to any of the 4 stages of sainthood: streamwinner (*sot'āpanna*), once-returned (*sākad'āgāmī*), non-returned (*anāgāmī*) and arhat (*arahanta*); also, as *ulāram visesam*, only in **Lohicca S** (D 12/1:229-233 passim), SD 34.8. In the sense the *dhyānas* (*jhāna*), see eg **Dhamma,cetiya S** (M 89,12+18/2:121, 124), SD 64.10; **Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka S** (S 47.3+10/5:154 f×5), SD 24.2. For defs of the 4 types of saints, see eg **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 112.9-12/3:80) & **Mahāli S** (D 6.13/1:156). Cf the story of Sāriputta's meeting with Assajī: when Sāriputta realizes that he does not attain any “higher [further] excellence” (*upari,visesa*), ie any higher attainment than streamwinning, he decides to meet the Buddha himself (DhA 1:94).

The Buddha extends his stay in Sāvattḥī

3 At that time—it was⁸² the Uposatha day⁸³ of the fifteenth, on the full-moon night of the invitation ceremony⁸⁴—the Blessed One was seated in the open surrounded by the community of monks.

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

4 “Bhikshus, I am content⁸⁵ with this progress. My mind is content, bhikshus, with this progress.

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

4.3 I will wait right here at Sāvattḥī for the Komudī full moon of the fourth month.”⁸⁶

5 The monks of the country-side heard:

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

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

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

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

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

Teaching on the heartwood

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

[80] 7.2 Then surveying the silent community of monks, the Blessed One addressed them:⁸⁷

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

8.2 Bhikshus, this assembly is pure, established in the heartwood.”⁸⁸

⁸² *Tad ahu* (cf Skt *tad ahan, tad ahar*), “that day, that very day.” See *aha(n), aha(r)* in CPD 1:527 & DPL 1:271.

⁸³ **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 4 lunar months or “moons” (*cātu,māsa*). Each of these seasons is subdivided into eight fortnights (*pakkha*), the 3rd and the 7th containing 14 days and the others 15. Each month has 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 (9.4). On the monsoons, see **Vāsi,jaṭa S** (S 22.101,20/3:155) n on “the cold season,” SD 15.2a.

⁸⁴ *Pavāraṇā*. This ceremony concludes the annual three-month monastic rains retreat, during which monks invite one another to be admonished regarding any misconduct that had been “seen, heard or suspected” of them. **Pavāraṇā S** (S 8.7/1:190-192) describes such a proceeding.

⁸⁵ *Āraddha*, “accomplished, achieved; pleased, satisfied” (CPD, DP), pp of *ārajjhati*; not pp of *ārabhati*, “undertakes, initiates.”

⁸⁶ *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.

⁸⁷ The foll whole section as at D 1:117, 133; M 3:80; A 2:183.

⁸⁸ “Established in the heartwood” (*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 Sīha,-nāda S** (D 25,15-19). The Buddha’s humour is evident in such a simile given in *Udumbarika Sīhanāda S* (D 25,15-19/-3:47-53).

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

8.4 Such a community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly of monks as this, bhikshus, is worthy of offerings,
worthy of hospitality,
worthy of gifts,
worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,⁸⁹
a supreme field of merit for the world.

8.5 For such a community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly of monks as this, bhikshus, even a small gift becomes great, and a great one becomes greater.⁹⁰

8.6 Such community of monks as this, bhikshus, such an assembly as this, bhikshus, is worthy of going many yojanas [leagues] with only a travel-bag⁹¹ just to see it.⁹²

The 4 types of saints

9 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who are **arhats** with mental influxes⁹³ destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what is to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal,⁹⁴ destroyed the fetters of being, completely freed 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 5 lower fetters⁹⁵, are **spontaneously reborn⁹⁶** and there attain final nirvana, without ever returning from that world.
—Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks.

11 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks those who, with the destruction of the 3 fetters⁹⁷ and with the diminishing of lust, hate and delusion, are **once-returners**,

⁸⁹ *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.

⁹⁰ For a discussion on gifts, see, eg, **Dakkhiṇā, vibhaṅga S** (M 142) and **Dakkhiṇā S** (A 4.78/2:80 f).

⁹¹ *Puṭosena*, vl *puṭaṁsena* (mostly Comys), a bag for carrying food when travelling, a knapsack. See foll n.

⁹² *Puṭosenāpi tathā, rūpo ayaṁ bhikkhave bhikkhu, saṅgho, tathā, rūpā ayaṁ parisa* (Sī Pi Ka). As at D 1:117, 133 (= *pātheyyaṁ gahetvā, puṭo aṁse 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.

⁹³ “**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 (*kāma’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*oghā*) and “yokes” (*yogā*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is prob older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

⁹⁴ *Sadatthā*, may be resolved as: (1) *sa-d-atthā*, “one’s own goal,” (2) *sant + atthā*, “the sublime goal,” “the ideal.”

⁹⁵ They keep us within the lower realms (the sense-worlds). **The 10 fetters** (*dasa, samyojanā*) are: (1) Personality view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rules and rites (*śīla-b, bata, parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa, rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa, rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377). In some places, no 5 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*).

⁹⁶ As a non-returner, reborn in the Pure Abodes (*suddh’āvāsa*), the 5 highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa, loka*) inhabited only by non-returners who assume their last birth to become arhats and attain nirvana. These worlds are 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.

⁹⁷ The (first) 3 fetters: see §10n.

returning only once⁹⁸ to this world [81] to make an end of suffering.

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

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

no longer bound for the lower world,⁹⁹ sure of going over to self-awakening.

—Such is the nature of the monks in this community of monks.¹⁰⁰

The 7 sets of spiritual strategies¹⁰¹

13 (1) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of

the 4 focuses of mindfulness¹⁰²

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

(2) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of

the 4 right exertions.¹⁰³

(3) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of

the 4 bases for spiritual power.¹⁰⁴

(4) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of

the 5 spiritual faculties.¹⁰⁵

(5) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of

the 5 spiritual powers.¹⁰⁶

(6) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of

the 7 awakening-factors.¹⁰⁷

(7) Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to the cultivation of

the noble eightfold path.

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

Meditation methods

14 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to

the cultivation of lovingkindness.

14.2 Bhikshus, there are in [82] this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to

the cultivation of compassion.

14.3 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks

those who dwell devoted to

the cultivation of gladness.

⁹⁸ Ke *sakim deva*.

⁹⁹ *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.

¹⁰⁰ On the noble individuals, see **Kiṭṭā, giri S** (M 70), SD 12.2 (5).

¹⁰¹ On the 7 sets: see (1.3) above + SD 9 (10bc).

¹⁰² *Sati’paṭṭhāna*. I have analyzed it as *sati* + *upaṭṭhāna* (setting up) rather than *sati* + *paṭṭhāna* (foundation). Cf Ñānamoli & Bodhi 2001 n136).

¹⁰³ *Samma-p, padhāna*, right exertion or striving, same as right effort, the 6th limb of the noble eightfold path.

¹⁰⁴ *Iddhi, pāda*, the 4 bases for spiritual power: focus of will (*chanda*), of effort (*vīriya*), of mind (*citta*), of investigation (*vimamsā*) (D 3:213 = M 1:103 = 2:11; D 3:221; Vbh 216).

¹⁰⁵ *Indriya*, the 5 spiritual faculties: faith (*saddhā*), effort (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*) (D 2:239, S 5:193; Tha 352).

¹⁰⁶ *Bala*, the 5 spiritual powers: same as *pañc’indriya*, but are unshakable (untouched by their opposites) in the streamwinner (A 5.15) (D 3:239, S 48.43, S 50, A 3:10, Vbh 342).

¹⁰⁷ See §§30-36.

14.4 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to

the cultivation of equanimity.

14.5 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to

the cultivation of foulness.¹⁰⁸

14.6 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.

14.7 Bhikshus, there are in this community of monks
those who dwell devoted to

**the cultivation of the mindfulness
of the in-and-out-breathing.**¹⁰⁹

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-breathing¹¹⁰ is cultivated and often developed, it is of great fruit and great benefit.¹¹¹ [§§15-23]

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

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

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

16 And how, bhikshus, is the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing developed, and how is it often cultivated so that it is of great fruit and great benefit?¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ “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 Rāhul’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.

¹⁰⁹ Comy explains the reason why of all the meditation methods listed, only the breath meditation is expounded in full: this is because a large number of the monks take it as their meditation practice (MA 4:139). It should also be added that the breath meditation had been the key meditation in the Buddha’s own spiritual life. The first record we have of his meditation experience was breath meditation when he was a child of 7, and on the night of his awakening, too, he used the breath meditation (MA 2:291). See **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,17.31-44/1:242-249), SD 1.12.

¹¹⁰ “In-and-out-breathing” *ānāpāna*. The Skt word for “breath” is *prāṇa* (Pali *pāṇa*), which also refers to “life-force” (Chin *qī*). 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: “*Āna* is air going inwards; *apāna* is air going outwards. Some, however, say it is the other way around” (PmA:Ce 320). See (2).

¹¹¹ §§15-23. See **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62,5/1:420).

¹¹² See M:ÑB, 2nd ed 2001:1190 f nn140-142. This section is identical to that of **Sati’paṭṭhāna S** (M 10,4) except for the similes in the latter. The whole section on the Mindfulness of the Breath (M 118.16-22) here is identical to that of **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62,25-29/1:425-427). The Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S ends by stating that breath meditation benefits one in that “even the final in-breaths and out-breaths are known as they cease, not unknown” (M 62.30), that is, the practitioner dies with a calm and clear mind.

Physical preparation

17 Here, bhikkhus, a monk¹¹³ who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty abode,¹¹⁴ sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.¹¹⁵

17.2 —Mindfully¹¹⁶ indeed he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out.¹¹⁷

SYNOPSIS: THE 16 ASPECTS

A. The first tetrad: Contemplating the body

18 (1) Breathing in long [deep],¹¹⁸ he understands, ‘I breathe in long [Long in-breath]’;¹¹⁹

¹¹³ DA on **Mahā Sati’paṭṭhāna S** with the identical context here says that “monk” (*bhikkhu*) indicates “whoever undertakes that practice...is here comprised under the term *bhikkhu*.” See Dh 142; also Dh 362, 260-270. Cf **Bhikkhu Vagga** (ch 25) and **Brāhmaṇa Vagga** (ch 26) of Dh.

¹¹⁴ This stock of 3 places (a forest, *arañña*; the foot of a tree, *rukkha,mūla*; an empty abode, *suññ’āgāra*) conducive to meditation are at **D** 2:291; **M** 1:56, 297, 398, 425, 2:263, 3:82, 89, 4:297; **S** 5:311, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 323, 329, 336; **A** 1:147, 148, 149, 3:92, 100, 4:437, 5:109, 110, 111; **Pm** 1:175, 2:36. **Pavevika Sutta** (A 3.92) mentions 7 places: a forest, the foot of a tree, a cemetery, a forest path [a remote forest], the open air, a heap of straw, a thatched shelter (*araññam rukkha,mūlam susānam vana,pantham* [v] *vana,pattham*) *abbhokāsam palāla,puñjam bhusāgāram*, A 3.92-1:241 = SD 44.2). **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2), probably a very ancient account, gives 9 places suitable for meditation, and the spiritual preparation for living in such places, thus: “Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue, this aggregate of noble sense-restraint, this aggregate of noble mindfulness and full awareness, and this aggregate of noble contentment, he resorts to a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a gorge, a hillside cave, a cemetery, a remote forest [jungle grove], the open air, a heap of straw” (*so iminā ca ariyena sila-k,khandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya,samvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati,sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhitāya samannāgato vivittam senāsanam bhajati, araññam rukkha,mūlam pabbatam kandaram giri,guhām susānam vana,pattham abbhokāsam 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 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).

¹¹⁵ **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). **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 from 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 (2.4) above. (All three teachers here are pupils of Ajahn Chah.)

¹¹⁶ Ce Se Ke PTS *sato*.

¹¹⁷ *So sato’va assasati sato passasati*. Cf the sentence for the Buddha’s own breath meditation, where *va* or *eva* is omitted, in **Icchā,naṅgala S** (S 54.11.4), SD 44.9.

¹¹⁸ The tr here is idiomatic. **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 (2) above.

¹¹⁹ I have rendered these important sentences and those of the first 2 (“noting”) tetrads using very short sentences (not grammatically complete sentences) to reflect a “bare noting” (denoted by *pajānāti*) that should occur in meditation whose purpose is mental focus. Only the steps 1-4 are noted by *pajānāti* (he understands or knows); the rest (5-16) are

- Or, breathing out long [deep], he understands, ‘I breathe out long [Long out-breath]’;
 (2) Or, breathing in short, he understands, ‘I breathe in short [Short in-breath]’;
 Or, breathing out short, he understands, ‘I breathe out short [Short out-breath]’;¹²⁰
 (3) He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the whole body (of breath), I will breathe in’;¹²¹
 He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the whole body (of breath), I will breathe out’;
 (4) He trains himself thus: ‘Calming the bodily formation (of breath), I will breathe in’;¹²²
 He trains himself thus: ‘Calming the bodily formation (of breath), I will breathe out’;¹²³

B. The second tetrad: Contemplating feelings

- 19 (5) He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing zest [joy], I will breathe in’;¹²⁴
 He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing zest [joy], I will breathe out’;
 (6) He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing happiness, I will breathe in’;¹²⁵ [83]

sikkhati (he trains) or “training” aspects (ie one has to put in more regulated effort), “I will breathe in...out,” (*assāsisssāmi...passāsisssāmi*). In the breath, see (2.1). On “mental noting,” see important n on “Mental noting”: Intro (3).

¹²⁰ In practical terms, focusing 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 dhyana. However, in (**Pabbateyyā**) **Gāvī S**, the Buddha warns Moggallāna not to go into the 2nd dhyana until he has thoroughly mastered the 1st dhyana (A 9.35/4:418 f qu at Vism 153 f).

¹²¹ “Experiencing the whole body (of breath),” *sabba,kāya,paṭisaṃvedī*. MA glosses *sabba,kāya* as “the whole body of breath” that is, its 3 phases of each in-breath and out-breath through its three phases of beginning, middle and end (Brahmavamso, 2002:60). Brahmavamso keeps to this tradition, teaching that “you have just the target in your mind—just the breath and nothing else...the full attention on the breath” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999). “You see it from the very start when it originates out of the silence, and you see it grow to its peak and then fade away again, until the in-breath has completely subsided. You have such a degree of clarity that you even see that space between the breaths. The in-breath has stopped, the out-breath has yet to arise. There’s a pause there. Then the out-breath begins to grow to its peak and then fade away into nothingness again. That’s what we call **the whole of the breath**” (2002:60). However, Thich Nhat Hanh (1990:6, 46-49) & esp Bodhi (2001 n141) take *sabba,kāya* to mean “the whole physical body.” Cf the remark that the in-and-out-breathing is “a body among the bodies” [§24]. According to transpersonal psychology (esp Bodywork and Breathwork), the whole *body* “breathes.” For the simile of the teacher and his 3 archer students illustrating the experience of the total breath, see Brahmavamso 2002:62 f. For a discussion, see Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:131 f.

¹²² “The bodily formation,” *kāya,sāṅkhāra*. The bodily formation is the in-and-out-breathing itself (M 44.13/ 1:301; S 41.6/4:293,15: *assāsa,passāsa kāya,sāṅkhāro*). See **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.14) for explanation of *kāya,sāṅkhāra*. 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).

¹²³ At this point even after the breath has been calmed down but one still does not experience zest (*pīti*) or the “beautiful breath,” then one should proceed to the next two steps to willfully arouse feelings of zest. (Brahmavamso 2002: 66).

¹²⁴ “Zest,” *pīti*. Sometimes tr as “rapture,” but “**zest**” is closer to evoking a more subtle yet enthusing nature of *pīti*. We experience zest (*pīti*) in 2 ways: by attaining either the 1st or 2nd dhyana in which zest is present, we experience it in the mode of calm (*samatha*); or, by emerging from that dhyana and reflecting that zest is subject to destruction, we experience zest by way of insight (*vipassanā*). Psychologically, *pīti* is a kind of “joyful interest,” as such may be associated with wholesome, unwholesome or neutral states (BDict: *pīti*). Zest belongs to the formation group (*sāṅkhāra-k,-khandha*) while happiness (*sukha*) belongs to the feeling group (*vedanā-k,khandha*). Zest (*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.

- He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing happiness, I will breathe out’;
 (7) He trains himself thus: ‘Knowing the mental formations [mental functions], I will breathe in’;¹²⁶
 He trains himself thus: ‘Knowing the mental formations [mental functions], I will breathe out’;
 (8) He trains himself thus: ‘Calming the mental formations [mental functions], I will breathe in’;¹²⁷
 He trains himself thus: ‘Calming the mental formations [mental functions], I will breathe out’;

C. The third tetrad: Contemplating the mind

- 20 (9) He trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the mind, I will breathe in’;¹²⁸

¹²⁵ **Brahmavaṃso**: “As you calm the breath down, you get to the stage where the breath becomes very, very refined, very peaceful, and very smooth. It is the nature of such a mind state that it should be very happy ... This is another type of happiness, and it takes wisdom to be able to recognize it ... the Buddha taught the fifth and sixth steps to arouse that [un arisen] beauty.” The 5th step is the deliberate arousal of zest (*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 [zest] from whatever you’re doing ... When the breath is very peaceful, search for that bliss and you will find it.” This is what Brahmavaṃso calls “**the beautiful breath**.” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999; 2002:68). When the mind is very peaceful, we only need to look within it to see zest.

¹²⁶ “Knowing the mental formations [mental functions],” *citta, saṅkhāra, paṭisaṃvedī*. The mental formation (*citta, saṅkhāra*) is feeling and perception, experienced in all 4 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 focused that the experience is like a smooth flow in one direction only.” (Brahmavaṃso 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 focuses closer and closer onto the point where the saw touches the wood. The handle and tip of the saw soon disappear from his vision. After a while, all he can see is the one saw tooth, that tooth which is in contact with the wood now, whereas all the other saw teeth to the left and to the right are now beyond his range of perception. He does not know nor needs to know, whether that tooth is at the beginning or middle or end of the blade. Such concepts have been transcended.” (2002:69). The same method given in the previous note applies to the second and third clauses. According to some teachers, in the second, the three lower *jhāna* are present and in the third, all four are present. Mental formations here refer to feelings, perceptions and other mental concomitants, and which are calmed by the development of successively higher levels of calm and insight. See **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.14) for explanation of *citta, saṅkhāra*.

¹²⁷ “Calming the mental formations [mental functions],” *passambhayaṃ citta, saṅkhāraṃ*. “It can happen at this and subsequent stages of the meditation process that the joy [zest] 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).

¹²⁸ “Experiencing the mind,” *citta, paṭisaṃvedī*. Here, it refers to the 4 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 n118). *Citta*, “mind,” is synonymous with *mano* and *viññāṇa* (*Yam... idam vuccati cittaṃ ti vā mano ti vā viññāṇaṃ ti vā*, D 1:21; *Yam ca kho etaṃ... vuccati cittaṃ iti pi mano iti pi viññāṇa 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).

- | | | | |
|------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing the mind, | I will breathe out’; |
| (10) | He trains himself thus: | ‘Gladdening the mind, | I will breathe in’; ¹²⁹ |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Gladdening the mind, | I will breathe out’; |
| (11) | He trains himself thus: | ‘Concentrating the mind, | I will breathe in’; |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Concentrating the mind, | I will breathe out’; ¹³⁰ |
| (12) | He trains himself thus: | ‘Freeing the mind, | I will breathe in’; ¹³¹ |
| | He trains himself thus: | ‘Freeing the mind, | I will breathe out’; |

¹²⁹ “Gladdening the mind” (*abhippamodayam cittam*), 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 [zest] 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 (2.1). According to **Bodhi**, “gladdening the mind” is either the attainment of the first 2 *jhāna* (containing zest) or as the penetration of those *jhāna* by regarding them with insight as subject to destruction (2001 n1118).

¹³⁰ “Concentrating the mind” (*samādaham cittam*), 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 contemplating. 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 handle-bars. 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).

¹³¹ “Freeing the mind” (*vimocayam cittam*). 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.

D. The fourth tetrad: Contemplating dharmas¹³²

- 21 (13) He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe in’;¹³³
 He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe out’;
 (14) He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating fading away (of lust), I will breathe in’;¹³⁴
 He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating fading away (of lust), I will breathe out’;
 (15) He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating cessation (of suffering), I will breathe in’;¹³⁵
 He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating cessation (of suffering), I will breathe out’;
 (16) He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating letting go¹³⁶ (of defilements), I will breathe in’;¹³⁷
 He trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating letting go (of defilements), I will breathe out.’¹³⁸
- 22 Bhikshus, this is how the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing, when developed, often cultivated, is of great fruit and great benefit.

¹³² These last following 4 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 Focuses 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).

¹³³ “Contemplating 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).

¹³⁴ “Contemplating 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 “contemplating fading away” and the next, “contemplating 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.

¹³⁵ “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).

¹³⁶ Alt tr: “relinquishment.”

¹³⁷ “Contemplating 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).

¹³⁸ 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.

II. THE PERFECTION OF THE 4 FOCUSES OF MINDFULNESS

23 And how, bhikshus, is the mindfulness of the in-and-out-breathing developed, often cultivated, **to bring the 4 focuses of mindfulness to perfection?**¹³⁹

(A) Contemplating the body

24 Bhikshus, a monk,

- (1) when breathing in long, he understands, ‘I breathe in long [Long in-breath]’;¹⁴⁰
or, when he is breathing out long, he understands, ‘I breathe out long [Long out-breath]’;
- (2) or, when he is breathing in short, he understands, ‘I breathe in short [Short in-breath]’;
or, when he is breathing out short, he understands, ‘I breathe out short [Short out-breath]’;
- (3) when he trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the whole body, I will breathe in’;
when he trains himself thus: ‘Experiencing the whole body, I will breathe out’;
- (4) when he trains himself thus: ‘Calming the bodily formation (of breath), I will breathe in’;¹⁴¹
when he trains himself thus: ‘Calming the bodily formation (of breath), I will breathe out’;

24.2 —then, bhikshus, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful,¹⁴² the monk dwells **contemplating the body in the body**,¹⁴³ removing¹⁴⁴ covetousness and displeasure¹⁴⁵ for the world.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ “Bring...to perfection,” PTS *paripūreti*.

¹⁴⁰ See §18(1-2) n.

¹⁴¹ *Kāya, saṅkhāra*, see §18(4) n.

¹⁴² *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassaṃ* here is essentially synonymous with *vigatābhijjho vigata, vyāpādo asammūḷho sampajāno patissato* mentioned in connection with the 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) (**Kesa, puttiyā S**, A 3.65, 15.1/1:192). Their application, however, differ: the former points to the *result* of meditation, while the latter is a *part* of the meditation process itself. On *sampajāno satimā*, see Vism 4.174/163 which explains that **full awareness** (*sampajānā*) 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).

¹⁴³ “Contemplating the body in the body,” *kāye kāyānupassī*, ie “one who contemplates the body as the body”; §25 “contemplating feeling in the feeling,” §26 “contemplating mind in the mind, and §27 “contemplating dharma in the dharma.” In each case, they are not to be seen as “This is mine” (*etam mama*) (which arises through craving, *taṇhā*), or as “This I am” (*eso ‘ham asmī*) (due to conceit, *māna*), or as “This is my self” (*eso me attā*) (due to wrong view, *diṭṭhi*) (**Anattā Lakkhaṇa S**, S 3:68 @ SD 1.2). In short, such experiences are not “beliefs” but direct experiences of reality. See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f. For detailed studies, see **I: The nature of identity**, SD 19.1; **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a; **Mine: The nature of craving**, SD 19.3.

¹⁴⁴ *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 dubbhālī, karaṇe*) (D 2:83, 3:49, 101, A 2:211, 3:93, 100, 386 f, Vbh 245, 256). In **Naḷakapāna S** (M 68 @ SD 37.4), the Buddha tells Anuruddha, “While [a son of good family] still does not attain joy [zest] and happiness on account of being secluded from sensual pleasures and secluded from unwholesome states, or some other state that is more peaceful than that, covetousness [and the other four hindrances] will invade his mind and remain...” (M 68, 6.2/1:463). (I thank Brahmavaṃso for pointing this out.)

¹⁴⁵ “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**: “Bhikshus, 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**

24.3 Bhikshus, this in-and-out-breathing is a certain body amongst the bodies,¹⁴⁷ I say.

24.4 Therefore, bhikshus, on that occasion, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells contemplating the body in the body,¹⁴⁸ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.

(B) Contemplating feelings [Entry into dhyana]

25 Bhikshus, when a monk [84]

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (5) trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing zest [joy], | I will breathe in’; ¹⁴⁹ |
| when he trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing zest [joy], | I will breathe out’; |
| (6) when he trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing happiness, | I will breathe in’; |
| when he trains himself thus: | ‘Experiencing happiness, | I will breathe out’; |
| (7) when he trains himself thus: | ‘Knowing the mental formations, | I will breathe in’; ¹⁵⁰ |
| when he trains himself thus: | ‘Knowing the mental formations, | I will breathe out’; |
| (8) when he trains himself thus: | ‘Calming the mental formations, | I will breathe in’; |
| when he trains himself thus: | ‘Calming the mental formations, | I will breathe out’; |

25.3 —then, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating feeling in the feeling**,¹⁵¹ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.

25.3 Bhikshus, full attention¹⁵² to the in-and-out-breathing¹⁵³ is a certain feeling amongst the feelings,¹⁵⁴

(*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).

¹⁴⁶ “World” (*loka*). **The Vibhaṅga** says: “This very body is the world, and the five aggregates of clinging (ie form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) is the world—this is called the world.” (Vbh 195). However, in his amplified tr at Vbh 105, U Thittila has “world (ie, in ideational objects)” as *dhammā*, mental objects (Vibh:T 139).

¹⁴⁷ “A certain body amongst the bodies,” *kāyesu kāy’aññatara*. Nyanaponika: “one of the bodily processes” (1962: 167). **SA** on Kimbila S (S 54.10 @ SD 16.11): “I call it the wind body (*vāyo,kāya*) among the bodies of the 4 elements. Or else, it is a ‘certain kind of body’ because it is included in the tactile base amongst the various components of the form body” (SA 3:271). This sentence is missing from Thich Nhat Hanh, 1990. The breath is “a body” because it is a part of the “body of air” (*vāyo,kāya*) or the wind element (*vāyo dhātu*), one of the 4 primary elements (*mahā,bhūta*) making up the body (and everything else). It is included in the base of tangibles among bodily phenomena because the 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 (3.4).

¹⁴⁸ **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).

¹⁴⁹ “Zest,” *pīti*, see §19(5)n.

¹⁵⁰ Or, “Mental functions,” *citta,saṅkhāra*, see §19(7)n.

¹⁵¹ “Contemplating feeling in the feeling,” *vedanāsu vedanā’nupassī*, ie “one who contemplates feeling as feeling.” See §24n.

¹⁵² **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.

¹⁵³ “Full attention to the in-and-out-breathing” (*assāsa,passāsam sādhukam manasikāram*). 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)

¹⁵⁴ “A certain feeling amongst the feelings,” *vedanāsu vedanā’nñatara*. There are 3 types of feelings: pleasant (*sukha*), unpleasant (*dukkha*) and neutral (*adukkham-asukha*)—we contemplate on any of these as each arises. Cf §24n on “a certain body amongst the bodies.” Comy on Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S says that it is not easy to be mindful of a neutral feeling, and that it should be best approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unplea-

I say .

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

(C) Contemplating the mind

26 Bhikshus,

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

26.2 then, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating the mind in the mind**,¹⁵⁵ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.

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

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

(D) Contemplating dharmas [Emerging from dhyana]

27 Bhikshus,

- (13) when a monk trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe out’;
 (14) when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating fading away (of lust),¹⁵⁶ I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating fading away (of lust), I will breathe out’;
 (15) when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating cessation (of suffering),¹⁵⁷ I will breathe in’;
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating cessation (of suffering), I will breathe out’;
 (16) when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating letting go (of defilements), I will breathe in’;¹⁵⁸
 when he trains himself thus: ‘Contemplating letting go (of defilements), I will breathe out.’;

27.2 —then, bhikshus, the monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating dharmas in the dharmas**,¹⁵⁹ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world.

27.3 Having seen with wisdom the abandonment of covetousness and displeasure, [85] he closely looks

sant feelings. Comy illustrates with the example of a hunter seeing tracks before and after a rock, thereby inferring the track of an animal (MA 1:277). **Dhamma,saṅgaṇī** says that only the sense of touch is accompanied by pain or pleasure, while feelings arising at the other 4 sense-doors are invariably neutral (Dhs 139-145; Abhds 2). The suttas however speak of pleasant and unpleasant sights, sounds, smells, and tastes, that in turn condition the arising of corresponding feelings of pleasure or displeasure (S 4:115, 119, 125, 126). “This *Abhidhammic* presentation offers an intriguing perspective on contemplation of feeling, since it invites an inquiry into the degree to which an experience of delight or displeasure in regard to sight, sound, smell or taste is simply the outcome of one’s own mental evaluation” (Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:171). See **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**, SD 13.1 (3.4).

¹⁵⁵ “Contemplating the mind in the mind.” See §24n. MA says that although the meditator takes as his object the sign of the in-and-out-breathing, he is said to be “contemplating mind in the mind” because he maintains his mind on the object by arousing mindfulness and full understanding, two factors of mind.

¹⁵⁶ “Fading away,” *virāga*, also translated as “dispassion” (see §42).

¹⁵⁷ “Cessation,” *nirodha*: see §21 (15).

¹⁵⁸ See §21 (16) n.

¹⁵⁹ “Dharmas” (*dhammā*) here refers to “mind-objects” or “the nature of things” that arises in the mind. See **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10), SD 10.1 (5D).

on with equanimity.¹⁶⁰

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

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

III. PERFECTION OF THE 7 AWAKENING-FACTORS

29 And how, bhikshus, are the 4 focuses of mindfulness cultivated and often developed to bring the 7 awakening-factors to perfection?¹⁶¹

(A) Contemplating the body

30 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells contemplating the body in the body,¹⁶² then unconfused¹⁶³ mindfulness is established in him.

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

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

31 (2) Living thus mindful, he investigates and examines¹⁶⁴ 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**¹⁶⁵ 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 (3) In one who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused.

¹⁶⁰ Samyutta Comy on **Kimbila S** (S 54.10 @ SD 16.11): Here “**covetousness**” (*abhijjhā*) is only the hindrance of sensual lust; by “**displeasure**” (*domanassa*) is meant the hindrance of ill will.* This tetrad is stated by way of insight only. These two hindrances are the first of the 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” (*paḥānaṃ*) 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 ajjupekkhitā 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” (*ajjupekkhanā*) can also refer to the conascent mental states (in meditation) or to the object. Here, the looking on at the object is intended. (SA 3:272 f). [*Although “**covetousness and displeasure**” is taken by the Sutta’s Comy to refer to only the first two mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*), sensual lust and ill will, in the early Suttas, the dvandva is clearly a synecdoche (or short form) for all the 5 hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇā*) themselves, whose removal leads to mindfulness (*sati*), mental concentration (*samādhi*) and dhyana (*jhāna*). See SD 13.1 (4.2.5).]

¹⁶¹ 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).

¹⁶² “Contemplating the body in the body.” See §24n.

¹⁶³ Be Ce Ee *asammuttā*; Se Ke *appammaṭṭhā*.

¹⁶⁴ Thus Ke Ce Se PTS. Be *pavicarati*.

¹⁶⁵ *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 “factors” that help this awakening to be realized (Nm 456). **Milinda, pañha** compares *dhamma, vicaya sambodhi* to a sword, which in order to cut needs the use of the hands (representing the other 5 factors) (Miln 83): see Gethin 2001:185. On the two applications of *dhamma, vicaya*—in the teaching and in the meditation contexts—see **Bojjhaṅga Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.1(1).

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**¹⁶⁶ is aroused in him.

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

33 (4) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual¹⁶⁷ zest [joy] arises.

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

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

34 (5) In one whose mind is zestful, the (mental) body is tranquil.¹⁶⁸

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then, too, he cultivates that awakening-factor of equanimity, and at the same time, by cultivating it, the equanimity awakening-factor is perfected in him.¹⁶⁹

(B) Contemplating feelings

37 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating feeling in the feeling**,¹⁷⁰ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world, then unconfused mindfulness is established in him.

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

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

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

Bhikshus, when, a monk, living thus mindful, investigates and examines that state with wisdom and

¹⁶⁶ *Vīriya sambojjhaṅga*. This is identical to the 4 right efforts of the noble eightfold path.

¹⁶⁷ *Nirāmisā*, “not of the flesh,” here meaning ‘non-carnal’ or ‘spiritual’, which according to Comy refers to the six zestful feelings connected with the sense-doors, **but not dependent on sense-desire** (MA 1:279). Its opp is *s’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 **Saḷ’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.

¹⁶⁸ On **the (mental) body** (*nāma, kāya*), see SD 10.15 (4.4.2) esp 4.4.2.1.

¹⁶⁹ 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.

¹⁷⁰ “Contemplating feelings in the feeling.” See §24n.

makes a thorough inquiry of it, then **the awakening-factor of dharma-investigation** is aroused in him.

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

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

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

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

(4) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual¹⁷¹ zest arises.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(C) Contemplating the mind

38 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating the mind in the mind**,¹⁷² removing covetousness and displeasure for the world, then unconfused mindfulness is established in him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

38.9 Bhikshus, when tireless effort is aroused in a monk who investigates and examines that state with

¹⁷¹ *Nirāmisā*, “not of the flesh,” here meaning ‘non-carnal’ or ‘spiritual’, see above §33(iv) n.

¹⁷² “Contemplating the mind in the mind.” See §24n & §25n.

wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, tireless effort is aroused, then **the awakening-factor of effort** is aroused in him.

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

(4) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual¹⁷³ zest arises.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(D) Contemplating dharmas

39 Bhikshus, when a monk, exertive, clearly comprehending, mindful, dwells **contemplating dharma in the dharma**,¹⁷⁴ removing covetousness and displeasure for the world, then unconfused mindfulness would be established in him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bhikshus, when tireless effort is aroused in a monk who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and makes a thorough inquiry of it, then **the awakening-factor of effort**¹⁷⁵ is aroused in him.

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

(4) In one who has aroused effort, spiritual¹⁷⁶ zest arises.

¹⁷³ *Nirāmisā*, “not of the flesh,” here meaning ‘non-carnal’ or ‘spiritual’, see above §33(iv) n.

¹⁷⁴ “Contemplating dharmas in the dharma.” See §24n.

¹⁷⁵ *Vīriya sambojjhaṅga*. See §32n.

¹⁷⁶ *Nirāmisā*, See §33(iv) n.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

40 Bhikshus, when the 4 focuses of mindfulness are thus cultivated, thus often developed, they bring the 7 awakening-factors to perfection.¹⁷⁷

IV. PERFECTION OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND LIBERATION

Conclusion

[88] 41 And how, bhikshus, are the 7 awakening-factors cultivated and often developed to bring true knowledge and liberation to perfection?¹⁷⁸

42 Here, bhikshus,

(1) a monk cultivates the awakening-factor of mindfulness that is dependent on solitude,¹⁷⁹ dependent on fading away (of lust) [dispassion],¹⁸⁰ dependent on cessation (of suffering),¹⁸¹ ripening in letting go (of defilements).¹⁸²

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

¹⁷⁷ MA says that this passage shows that the awakening-factors exist together in each mind-moment in the practice of insight-meditation.

¹⁷⁸ This closing section (M 118.41-44/3:88) is a pericope = **Ānanda S 1** (S 54.13-14/5:333) = **Ānanda S 2** (S 54.14/-5:335).

¹⁷⁹ Here “solitude” (**viveka**) (or seclusion) has a special reference to the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*). This whole phrase, beginning with “dependent on solitude”—*viveka, nissitaṃ virāga, nissitaṃ nirodha, nissitaṃ vossagga, nissitaṃ vossagga, pariṇāmiṃ dhamma, vicaya, sambojjhaṅgaṃ*—is called **the viveka, nissita formula**. See Gethin 2001:162-168. According to **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, there are 5 kinds of “solitude” (*viveka*), ie overcoming of the hindrances: (1) solitude through suppression (*vikkhambhana viveka*); (2) solitude through the substitution of opposite or displacement by opposites (*tad-āṅga viveka*); (3) solitude through cutting off (*samuccheda viveka*); (4) solitude through tranquillization (*paṭipassaddhi viveka*); and (5) solitude through escape (*nissaraṇa viveka*) (Pm 1:27, 2:219-224; Vism 13.12/410, 22.110/693). See also **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (Intro), SD 13.1 §4.2.3.

¹⁸⁰ **Virāga**, also tr as “dispassion.”

¹⁸¹ **Nirodha**, ie, “cessation of suffering.”

¹⁸² MA says that there are 2 kinds of letting go or relinquishment (of suffering) (**vossagga**): “giving up” (*pariccāga*), ie the abandonment of defilements, and “entering into” (*pakkhandana*), ie culminating in nirvana. **Gethin** notes that this phrase is not unique to the 7 *bojjhaṅgā*, but is also found in connection with the factors of the noble eightfold path, the *indriyā* and *balā* (2001:162 f). This formula shows that each *bojjhaṅga* is to be developed successively “as dependent on solitude, dispassion [fading away] and cessation” (Gethin 2001:166).

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

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

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

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

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

43 Bhikshus, when the 7 awakening-factors are thus cultivated, thus often developed, they bring true knowledge and liberation to perfection.”¹⁸³

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

— evaṃ —

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¹⁸³ MA says that the mindfulness that comprehends breathing is mundane. The mundane mindfulness of the breath perfects or fulfills the mundane focuses of mindfulness. The mundane focuses of mindfulness perfect the supramundane awakening-factors, and the supramundane awakening-factors perfect true knowledge and liberation, ie the fruit and nirvana.

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