

# THE DIRECT PATH FOR THE PURIFICATION OF BEINGS:

Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Based on the text as initially translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli

**Majjhima-Nikaya 10 — Satipatthana Sutta**

**The Four Foundations of Mindfulness**

An Outline of Notes for a Series of Dhamma-Lectures

Compiled, Edited, and Presented by

**Anagarika Tevijjo**

*With Some Explicatory Insertions*

## Introduction

In his introduction to the *Middle Length Discourses*, the Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi has explained the tight focus of investigation of the Satipatthana Sutta [in a nutshell], writing (on page 5):

... “at the close-end of the spectrum, the Buddha’s teaching discloses the radical impermanence uncovered only by sustained attention to experience in its living immediacy: the fact that all the constituents of our being, bodily and mental, are in constant process, arising and passing away in rapid succession from moment to moment without any persistent underlying substance. In the very act of observation they are undergoing “destruction, vanishing, fading away, and ceasing” (MN 74.11).”

Systematically, we could explain the whole of the Buddha’s teachings by taking the individual words and phrases of the above sentence as inter-dependent terms and analyzing and explicating their inter-related meanings, but, let’s do it in an even-more direct way by interpreting the sutta itself, in which the Buddha gives directions upon:

# Contemplation of Phenomena

## The Most Clear and Direct Path for the Purification of Beings

### *The Theme Stated in Concise Form:*

*Any phenomenon which we want to cling to arises and passes away.*

*This is true for the body, the feelings, the mind and all phenomena.*

The Satipatthana Sutta begins:

#### 1. THUS HAVE I HEARD.<sup>i</sup>

[The speaker, of course, is Ananda, the Buddha's attendant, reciting the Buddha's words to the First Council of 500 Arahants.]

And he says:

On one occasion

the Blessed One was living in the **Kuru country**

at a town of the Kurus named **Kammasadhamma**.<sup>ii</sup>

[Which was near what is, now, modern-day Delhi, and far-off the annual-path which the Buddha normally took in his travels.]

Dr. Banjob Bannaruji has told the present writer that the people there were well-off, and they were also well-trained in mindfulness, so they had the *time and the inclination to want to listen*.

Bhante Gunaratana, in his *Retreat on the Satipatthana Sutta*, [See his MP3 series of the same name] has further explained

that the Buddha gave this address in the state of Kuru because the people there tended to be intellectual and **the people were trained and tamed in mind.**

The people of Kammasadhamma were well-trained in the Dhamma, **as they maintained full-focus during the actions of their daily work.**

The reason the Buddha chose to speak to these people was because he knew they were capable of taking-it-in

— *all-in-one-sitting* —

just as if they had been actual bhikkhus or bhikkhunis.

So, to continue,

In the village of Kammasadhamma,

The Buddha addressed them thus:

“Bhikkhus.”

“Venerable sir,” they replied.

The Blessed One said this:

2. “Bhikkhus, this is the **direct path**<sup>iii</sup> **for the purification of beings** [56],

- for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation,
- for the disappearance of pain and grief,
- for the attainment of the true way,
- **for the realisation of Nibbana** –
- namely the **Four Foundations of Mindfulness**.<sup>iv</sup>

\*

**Let us look at some alternate translations:**

**The Four Ways of Arousing Mindfulness**

**Four Applications of Mindfulness**

**The Four ways for Setting-up Mindfulness**

**The Four Ways of Establishing Mindfulness**

## The Four Frames of Reference

Here, we see how a lot may be lost within the process of translation, so, what was clear in the Pali, may not be fully-clear in the English, and, thus, *the problem of translation can become quite troublesome.*

*Explanitory note:*

*Discussing this problem, for example,*

Bhikkhu Bodhi, has said, that he prefers the word “establishment” rather than the word “foundation,” — designating the “establishment of attention” as a “setting-up” of focused concentrated-mindfulness, which leads towards the unconditioned, the un-caused and unborn.

[Ref. MN0052\_MN-010.MP3]

See/audit the Bodhi Monastery MP3 Lectures on the Majjhima Nikaya Series.

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Note that **the direct path for the purification of beings** means the

- overcoming of all worldly attachments of consciousness
- through setting-up *concentrated-mindfulness*,
- which is the single, one and only path,
- dependent on mind-body investigation,
- leading to Nibbana, as outlined [below],
- in the Satipatthana Sutta

\*

Bhante Gunaratana has further said that the people of Kammasadhamma would understand

“this single, one and only way” as including all of the factors of the

**Noble Eightfold path, taken together,  
as one, so there would be no confusion.  
about - “the one and only direct path  
leading to the purification of beings.”**

*[But let's not jump-the-gun  
by anticipating an end of  
what has not yet begun.]*

**Instead, let's go back to the beginning, with  
the Buddha's explanation [of “the instructions”]  
or the **directions** written in the words of the text.**

**The Buddha starts by asking:**

3. **“What are the four? [What are these Four Satipatthanas?]  
[What are these Four Foundations of Mindfulness?]  
[What are these four ways of Arousing-Mindfulness?]**

And the Buddha answers:

“Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu<sup>v</sup> abides contemplating [the mind dwells seeing clearly]

- **BODY** as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief [longing and dejection] for the world.<sup>vi</sup>

[The body in the body inside and outside and both inside and outside at the same time]

He abides contemplating

- **FEELINGS** as feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief [longing and dejection] for the world.

[Feelings arising inside and outside and both inside and outside at the same time]

He abides contemplating

- **MIND** as mind, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief [longing and dejection] for the world.

[Mind as mind inside and outside and both inside and outside the mind]

He abides contemplating

- **CONSCIOUSNESS** of phenomena as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief [longing and dejection] for the world.<sup>vii</sup>

[Phenomena as phenomena inside and outside and both inside and outside the mind]

**Here, the Buddha is segregating or de-limiting these four aspects of concentrated-mindfulness, abstractly from one-another, for the sake of analysis, as constituents of experience, seen in isolation from one another; and, simultaneously, known and comprehended as being separated from any allusion to or illusion of a wholly unified-self.**

*Note, we shall be, occasionally, injecting references into Bhikkhu Bodhi's text to many alternate translations, which Bhikkhu Bodhi himself, [after further reflection upon the words of the texts], likes to mention, as being more preferable and understandable, as explained in his series of lectures, at Bodhi Monastery.*

[MN0052\_MN-010.MP3]

For example, in the above-mentioned lecture/audio-clip, Bhikkhu Bodhi speaks of

**“Clear comprehension as ... a full, active, clear knowing of what is taking place (or) ... A full discriminating understanding of what is taking place,” in these Four Applications of Mindfulness, [of body, feeling, mind, consciousness]**

*and, as we should know, in his analysis, he is actually only isolating and discussing a “recollection” of the immediate contact-experience of the recent present as recorded and recoverable in memory. [The present is/was paradox]*

\*

Explaining these four points of

(i) body, (ii) feelings, (iii) mind, and (iv) phenomena  
is the structural-purpose of the Buddha's discourse,  
so, now, let's start to work our way, forward,  
following the outline, to see where it leads us.

**CONTEMPLATION OF THE BODY IS  
THE FIRST OF THE FOUR FACTORS**

The Buddha starts with:

## 1. Mindfulness of Breathing

4. “And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating the body as a body?

Here a bhikkhu,

**[having] gone to the**

**forest** or to the

**root of a tree** or to an

**empty hut,**

**sits down;** [and] having

**folded his legs crosswise** [and]

**set his body erect, and [set-up]**

**established-mindfulness in front of him, —**

**Ever mindful he breathes in,**

**[Ever mindful he breathes out]**

**Breathing in long,** he understands:

‘I breathe in long’; or breathing out long,

he understands: ‘I breathe out long.’

**Breathing in short,** he understands:

‘I breathe in short’; or breathing out short,

he understands: ‘I breathe out short.’<sup>viii</sup>

[Note, how the text, then, stresses a shift in

wording from “understanding’ to “training”

*First, he understands and knows what to do  
and, then, [by practicing,]*

He **trains** thus:

‘I shall breathe in, experiencing the whole body  
[the whole of this in and out breath]’;

he **trains** thus:

‘I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body [breath body].’<sup>ix</sup>

He **trains** thus:

‘I shall breathe in tranquillizing the bodily formation’;

he **trains** thus:

‘I shall breathe out tranquillizing the bodily formation.’<sup>x</sup>

Through such training and practicing, he eventually,  
“**directly experiences**” what he had, at first, only  
understood by hearing about the method in theory.

Thus, through the subtleness of the mindfulness of the breathing practice,  
within the bodily process, he gradually calms the coarser-bodily-formations.

And to illustrate:

The Buddha uses, as an analogy, the simile of a joiner training an apprentice:

**Just as a skilled-turner** or his apprentice, when making

a long turn [as on a woodworker’s lathe], understands:

‘I make a long turn’; or, when making a short turn, understands:

‘I make a short turn’; so too, breathing in long, a bhikkhu understands:

‘I breathe in long’ ... he trains thus:

‘I shall breathe out **tranquillizing the bodily formation.**’

**And this is what we do concentrating on the breath:**

**[What do we learn from this?]**

## **INSIGHT**

5. “In this way

- **he abides contemplating the body as a body**

**internally,**

or he abides contemplating the body as a body

**externally,**

or he abides contemplating the body as a body

**both internally and externally.**<sup>xi</sup>

*[Discuss]*

*(i) internally, (ii) externally. (iii) both internally and externally*

Or else he abides, contemplating in the body its

**arising factors,**

or he abides contemplating in the body its

**vanishing factors,**

or he abides contemplating in the body

**both its arising and vanishing factors.**<sup>xii</sup>

*[Discuss]*

*(i) arising (ii) vanishing (iii) both arising and vanishing*

*— [how all phenomena are arising and ceasing]—*

Or else mindfulness **that**

**‘there is a body’ is simply established in him**

to the extent -

**necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness.**<sup>xiii</sup>

This means constantly-maintained, continual,  
and uninterrupted mindfulness of the body]

[Awareness as applied to experience]

*[Discuss Knowing the body is only a body — constantly changing]*

And [finally] he abides

**independent,**

[independent - without attachment to any conditions]

[which means:]

**not clinging to anything - [any phenomena] - in the world.**

That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

A bhikkhu abides

**directing attention to direct experience - as arising and passing away -  
and this applies not only to the sitting position.**

**But also what are called:**

## **2. The Four Postures**

6. “Again, bhikkhus, when walking,

a bhikkhu understands:

‘I am **walking**’;

when **standing**, he understands: ‘I am standing’;

when **sitting**, [57] he understands: ‘I am sitting’;

when **lying down**, he understands: ‘I am lying down’;

or he understands accordingly **however his body is disposed**.<sup>xiv</sup>

[This refers to whatever bodily action/motion he may be performing,]

[*This is explained by giving examples as below:*]

[When getting-up, bending down, lifting or placing an object, etc.]

[Intending, - whatever bodily action is intended, etc.]

[With full concentrated awareness of each bodily moment]

[In each momentary, bodily intention, gesture or action or movement]

[Optimally, at least, without letting the mind wander-away to anything else]

7. **“In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body  
internally,  
externally,  
and both internally and externally ...**

And he abides

**independent,  
not clinging  
to anything in the world.**

**That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.**

Note this refrain which was initially, introduced, at the end of section one.

This the same “refrain” which is used at the end of the breathing section  
**appears as a refrain at the end of each section of the Satipatthana Sutta.**

(i) **body, (ii) feelings, (iii) mind (iv) consciousness**

So we ought not underestimate its importance for **mindfulness** and **awareness**,  
as we are seeing and “experiencing” each “**movement**” as “**what it really is.**”

**This is how a bhikkhu abides when contemplating the body within the body.**

**[And what does this practice lead to?]**

**To Full Awareness**

**And what does full awareness mean?**

**It means:**

**Clearly-Comprehending and Knowing the Actions of the Present.**

**It means having clear and full awareness of contemplation of phenomena.**

**Before engaging in any mindful-activity, one has to have a clear grasp of the purpose or intention of one's action, as it is arising and ceasing, so that one will only ever act in ways, using appropriate methods, which will be wholesome and conducive to one's true benefit, thus contributing to one's growth, in harmony with the Dhamma.**

**What is most important is:**

**The Consistency and Continuity of the Meditative State of Mind.**

**Note:**

**Clear Comprehension, here, does not yet, mean "full knowledge" but, can be compared rather to a seed, which has been planted and tended for and leading to growth and knowledge, by viewing one's experiences, in a thorough, clear,**

and comprehensive way, which is precise, analytical  
and, additionally, takes account of the varied-relationships in which different  
mindful-activities are set-up and established.

Here, we are talking about clear comprehension of the object,  
and we must also be aware that this also means maintaining:

the meditative-objective  
before one's mind  
in the midst of one's daily activities,

all throughout the day,  
so the object does not slip away

and wander to other feelings,  
arising out of contact with other things,  
or through conscious arising of thoughts,  
which can allow

the mind-consciousness to become carried-away,  
into realms of illusions and of unrealistic dreams.

Moreover,

if the mind *does* slip away to stray-thoughts and imaginary things,

it is of primary importance to catch-the-mind, immediately,

and bring it directly-back to focus on the object of meditation,

[whatever activity that might be] in the routine of everyday life,  
**which means:**

**Never abandon an object of mindfulness in the midst of an activity.  
This may be called Clear Comprehension of the Meditative Domain.**

**[MN0053\_MN-010.MP3]**

And further,

The Buddha says,

8. “Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu is one who acts [or practices] in full awareness when going forward and returning,<sup>xv</sup>

**[walking forwards and walking back]**

who acts in full awareness when

**looking ahead and looking away;**

who acts in full awareness when

**flexing** [bending] and

**extending** his limbs;

who acts in full awareness when

**wearing** his robes and

**carrying** his outer robe and bowl;

who acts in full awareness when

**eating,**

**drinking,**

**consuming food, and**

**tasting;**

who acts in full awareness when

**defecating** and

**urinating;**

who acts in full awareness when

**walking,**

**standing,**

**sitting,**

**falling asleep,**

**waking up,  
talking, and  
keeping silent.**

In short, in every act during the day  
and into the evening and the night.

9. “In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body

**internally,  
externally,  
and both  
internally and externally ...  
And he abides  
independent,  
not clinging to anything in the world.**

That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

**When we can constantly maintain the attentiveness  
to the momentary activity of “the mind object”  
[which we now translate as “phenomena”]**

**and, so, experience the body as body,  
in each and every momentary action.  
This, gradually, leads to **insight wisdom,****

**which, (if continued), will lead to  
the further realization that there is —  
**actually, no abiding-self,  
but only a series of body-activities,  
which we mistakenly take****

**through false view and delusion  
to be a self — as me and myself,  
[as somebody independently.]**

**When we attain the fruit of such insight wisdom,  
we see-through the wrong view  
of the delusion of self and, then,  
gradually, through more ardent  
concentration, we are finally liberated  
from the fetters of attachments to self.**

**[Audit Bhikkhu Bodhi at MN0053\_MN-010.MP3]**

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**What else can, then, be learned based on the contemplation of the body?**

**We realize the “unattractiveness” of the body “seen the way it actually is.”**

**And thus, next, we come to:**

#### **4. The “Foulness” of the Bodily Parts**

**As we continue to look into, to investigate and to understand the natural  
process of the body and the basic bodily functions,  
we, then, become aware of the body’s impurities:  
both externally and internally,  
realizing the body’s inherent unwholesomeness  
(sometimes with loathsomeness)  
as opposed to the illusion of the attractiveness  
of the body as being-beautiful —**

**which is a misleading, allusive delusive idea.**

As the Buddha continues the sutta:

10. “Again, bhikkhus,  
a bhikkhu **reviews this same body** [through body contemplation]  
up from the **soles of the feet** and  
down from the **top of the hair,**

**[from head to toe and toe to head]**  
**bounded on the outside by a bag of skin,**

**by what we may call nature’s body-bag, -**

**And both externally as well as internally  
full of many kinds of impurities thus:]**

‘In this body there are

**head-hairs,**  
**body-hairs,**  
**nails,**  
**teeth,**  
**skin,**  
**flesh, [muscles]**  
**sinews,**  
**tendons**  
**bones,**  
**bone-marrow,**  
**kidneys,**  
**heart,**

**liver,  
diaphragm, [pleura]  
spleen,  
lungs,  
large intestines,  
small intestines,  
contents of the stomach,  
feces,  
bile,  
phlegm,  
pus,  
blood,  
sweat,  
fat,  
tears,  
grease,  
spittle,  
snot,  
oil of the joints,  
and urine.’<sup>xvi</sup>  
etc.,**

NB. Brain is one part which is not mentioned here,  
but it is mentioned elsewhere in other Pali texts.

(Heart isn’t mentioned either, but there is a reason.)

(In the texts ‘heart’ is synonymous with ‘mind.’)

**Would you like to have your body dissected?**

**Would you like to perform a body dissection?**

**Would you like to be a medical student?**

(Would you like to “have my brains?”)

(Would you like to hold my beating heart in your hands?)

Any Discussion?

**To continue,**

**The Buddha, once, again, makes an analogy:**

**Comparing the body-sack to a bag of grain:**

**Just as though there was a bag [or sack]**

**with an opening at both ends**

full of many sorts of grain, such as

hill rice,

red rice,

beans,

peas,

millet, and

white rice,

and a man with good eyes were to open it and review it thus:

‘This is hill rice, this is red rice, these are beans, these are peas, this is millet, this is white rice’;

**so too, a bhikkhu reviews this same body ...**

as full of many kinds of impurity thus:

‘In this body there are head-hairs ... and urine.’

**When contemplated clearly and closely,  
the individual body parts may be seen as**

**not as pretty, lovely, tasty, or as attractive  
but, rather, as unwholesome, ugly, smelly,**

**sweaty, slimy, oily, greasy, itchy, sticky, etc.,**

with its germ-infested, repulsive, disgusting, external-internal organs, which we wouldn't, ordinarily, willingly want to think about, — especially when it concerned ourselves, and the stark reality of our own bodily functions.

*Would you want to think about it?  
Would you want to talk about it?  
I thought not.*

Coming back to the text we read,

11. “In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally,  
externally,  
and both  
internally and externally ...

And he abides  
independent,  
not clinging to anything in the world.

That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.  
This means: **With concentrated mind, lacking any actual contact to anything substantial in this world**

[We must, again, note the repetition of this “**refrain**” i.e.  
(i) internally,  
(ii) externally,  
(iii) internally and externally  
which appears at the end of each of the four sections.]

[Note: A “refrain” at the end of a verse is meant to stress the main point]  
[so we can explicate the refrain to clarify the Buddha’s central message.]

**Go through the words of the refrain, again,  
word-by-word, to be sure what it means.**

**Any discussion ...?**

**Next, with determined purpose, the Buddha goes on to examine and explain,  
even more closely, the constituent elements of the body as independent in  
themselves,**

**with no actual contact to anything in this world - except as being made-up of  
individual, miniscule elements - which break down (as imperceptible  
dhammas,) and (flow or radiate) back into the stream from which they came  
within the cosmos, within which they will be, sooner or later, recycled again.**

**[Here,]**

**quite ironically, the Buddha is explaining to mere “worldlings” —  
the impermanence of what has always seemed permanent to them.**

**[explaining, on the contrary],**

**how all phenomena are forever breaking-down into ever-changing elements,  
and**

**how there is yet another way to explain this dependent on body constituents,  
and**

The Buddha further says in the sutta:

### **5. Concerning the Four Elements:**

12. “Again, bhikkhus,  
**a bhikkhu reviews this same body,  
however it is placed,**

**however disposed,  
as consisting of elements thus:**

‘In this body there are  
the **earth** element,  
the **water** element,  
the **fire** element, and  
the **air** element.’<sup>xvii</sup> [58]

Again we stress how here:

The Buddha is indicating how anything can be broken-down into its parts.  
How the body consists only of its parts and does not exist as a unified whole.

**[And here, once again, the Buddha makes another analogy  
illustrating the way everything is constituted of its parts:]**

The sutta reads:

**Just as** though a **skilled butcher** or his apprentice **had killed a cow**  
and was seated at the crossroads with it cut up into pieces;  
**so too, a bhikkhu reviews this same body** ... as consisting of elements thus:

‘In this body there are  
the **earth** element,  
the **water** element,  
the **fire** element,  
and the **air** element.’

13. “In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body  
**internally,**  
**externally, and**

**both internally and externally ...**

And he abides

**independent,**

**not clinging to anything** in the world.

That too is how a bhikkhu abides

**contemplating the body as a body.**

**[Note again the refrain which always keeps coming back, again and again.]**

**Just like the cow dissected into meat,**

**[The body is not an abiding, unitary entity but consists only of its parts.]**

**[And even the parts are not solid, substantial and lasting things.]**

**[The body is, from birth, always in the process of dissipating and dying.]**

**Thus**

**The Buddha destroys this illusion  
that any “individual” is here to stay,**

**by turning the analytical power  
of the mind of man around and  
bringing it to contemplate upon**

**“the transience the body,”**

**through concentration upon a final understanding  
that everything there is in the world is impermanent.**

**The next section helps illustrate through contemplation of dead bodies:**

#### **6-14. The Nine Charnel Ground Contemplations**

[The Cemetery Contemplations]

14. “Again, bhikkhus, [it is ] as though he were to see a

**corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground,**

**one, two, or three days dead,**

**bloated,**

**livid,**

**and oozing matter,**

a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus:

**‘This body too is of the same nature,**

**it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.’<sup>xviii</sup>**

15. “In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body

internally,

externally,

and both internally and externally ...

And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

And the sutta continues:

16. “Again, as though he were to see a corpse, thrown aside in a charnel ground, being

**devoured by**

**crows,**

**hawks,**

**vultures,**

**dogs,**

**jackals,**

**or various kinds of worms,**

A bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus:

‘This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.’

17. “ ... That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

And the text continues:

18-24. “Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside

[and left to rot] in a charnel ground, [gradually becoming]

**a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together with sinews ...**

**a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together with sinews ...**

**a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together with sinews ...**

**disconnected bones scattered in all directions**

— [imagine]

here a **hand-bone, there a foot-bone,**

here a **shin-bone, there a thigh-bone,**

here a **hip-bone, there a back-bone,**

here a **rib-bone, there a breast-bone,**

here an **arm-bone, there a shoulder-bone,**

here a **neck-bone, there a jaw-bone,**

here a **tooth, there the skull ...**

A bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus:

‘This body [and each and every body too] is of the same nature,  
it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.’<sup>xix</sup>

25. “ ... That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

And the text continues:

26-30. “Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground,  
bones bleached white, the colour of shells ...

bones heaped up, more than a year old ...

bones rotted and crumbled to dust [59],

**- a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus:**

**‘This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that,  
it is not exempt from that [slowly developing] outcome.’**

**[And what is to be learned from this?]**

## **INSIGHT**

31. “In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body **internally**, or he abides contemplating the body as a body **externally**, or he abides contemplating the body as a body **both internally and externally**.

Or else he abides contemplating in the body its **arising factors**, or he abides contemplating in the body its **vanishing factors**, or he abides contemplating in the body **both its arising and vanishing factors**.

Or else **mindfulness that ‘there is a body’ is “simply established” in him** to the extent necessary for **“bare knowledge and mindfulness.”**

[Explicate]

And he abides **independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.**

**[Thus ends the exposition on the body as body.]**

**[When there is nothing substantial to cling to, what does one do?]**

**Can one also somehow question what is unsubstantial?**

**[Can one try to analyze feelings in a similar way?]**

**[Indeed, one may,]**

**But, [as with the body and the elements], one ultimately, comes to realize that what we think we are “feeling” has no external reality [either] but is only based on individual “inclinations” of the mind, — inclinations which, incidentally, could never be the same in any two individuals, because the *combinations of factors and conditions* of individual dispositions could never ever be similarly constituted.**

**[Here is how the Buddha analyzes clinging to feelings:]**

## **CONTEMPLATION OF FEELINGS IS THE SECOND FACTOR**

This second section sets out to show that:

Because feeling is a causal and dependent linking factor between the body and the mind, without first having this linking between body and mind, there would be no experience:

**The Buddha explains the process of feeling, thus:**

32. “And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide

**contemplating feelings as feelings?**<sup>xx</sup>

(i) —Here, when feeling a **pleasant** feeling, a bhikkhu understands:

‘I feel a pleasant feeling’;

(ii) —[And] when feeling a **painful** [unpleasant] feeling, he understands:

‘I feel a painful [unpleasant] feeling’;

(iii) —[And] when feeling a **neither-painful-nor-pleasant** feeling, he understands:

‘I feel a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.’

When feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, he understands:

‘I feel a worldly pleasant feeling’;

When feeling an unworldly pleasant feeling, he understands:

‘I feel an unworldly pleasant feeling’;

When feeling a worldly painful feeling, he understands:

‘I feel a worldly painful feeling’;

When feeling an unworldly painful feeling,

he understands: ‘I feel an unworldly painful feeling’;

When feeling a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling,

he understands: ‘I feel a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling’;

When feeling an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling,

he understands: ‘I feel an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.’

**Note:**

**Before continuing, there is somewhat of a paradox in these above lines, which we may mention, before we get into an explication of the words of the texts.**

The Buddha speaks from the standpoint that

**a feeling is just a fleeting-impression which has no lasting permanency**

**— and we might ask: —**

**“Who cares about how a “non-entity” *feels* about a “non-existent object?”**

**This is the essential paradox of existence; it is the existential predicament.**

**And the answer is:**

**“Mundane man” considers his self as an existent object in the world,]**

**but**

**this is just a trick of nature to give man a sense of orientation in the world.]**

**Indeed, all living beings have orientation devices for their own protection.]**

**Man believes in the “existence” of animals and insects, in the same way he believes in his own “existence,” by depending on a nature-given frame of (self) reference (this-ness) which gives him some sense of pshycho-physical “referents” in fixing his location/relation within his (that-ness) surroundings.]**

**And he has to either believe-in what he “*thinks*” he sees, or accept the conclusion that the whole world is a false-illusion. So what does man do?**

**He accepts the data of the senses, formulated by the mind to survive.**

**And this is the conventional formulation in which worldlings believe.**

**[This Is The So-Called Conventional Realm.]**

**Although the Buddha (for the sake of reality) attempts to show, also, (for those who really want to know) that there is, (*in actuality*),**

**no solid and conventional world at all, but an unending and unsubstantial ultimate inter-connectedness of radiations and waves within a consistent set of laws of cause and effect (of causal dependence), which has no beginning, in which all phenomena are arising and vanishing, simultaneously and instantaneously, innumerable times, within the flash of an eye.**

**We may conjecture why the Buddha posed the problem at this juncture and why he explained it within the scope of human mind-body, “feeling.”**

**But the**

**reason he did it was “out of compassion for the needless-suffering of man”:**

**He did it to free us of mind-body perceptual-delusion about phenomenon.**

**This may be hard to grasp, at first, but if you are confused, keep listening.**

**The Buddha explains our feelings in terms of natural causal laws as follows:**

**Within the conventional world of the senses, within man as a natural animal, when pleasure arises, there may be a tendency towards the unwholesome, worldly factor to arise in the observer due to base/coarse-attractions and attachments to the senses and, thus, he will consequently suffer, if he is an individual bound by such attachment.**

**Likewise, when dislike arises, there may be an inborn-tendency towards the unwholesome factor of dislike, hate and anger, rage and violence, and so on, and so he may suffer.**

**\*Similarly, when a neutral state arises, there may be a latent tendency for complacency to arise in which delusion is easily-strengthened,**

**but**

**because all phenomena are delusory,**

**we must be wary to keep in touch**

**with ultimate reality by learning**

**the method of seeing phenomena**

**arising and ceasing**

**the way they really are,  
so that we don't suffer.**

**Therefore, in the contemplation of feelings, the bhikkhu or practitioner must always be carefully-aware and observant, which way the phenomenal tendencies may be inclining or tending (or leaning and falling) so that he does not allow himself to get carried-away from fixed-focus on concentrated awareness and mindfulness of things "as they really are" in ultimate reality [as opposed to the conventional world].**

**We must always be watching our states of mind, [being aware as they are arising that they are purely imaginary], because we can easily become overwhelmed and harmed, by the illusions formed, if we are not mindfully observant.**

**For instance, in meditative practice, to avoid momentary mental delusion, when we are doing breathing and/or body contemplation, we must be carefully watching for arising pleasant or unpleasant or neutral feelings, which can easily appear and get a foothold, hidden-and-unheeded, within the mind, without our ever noticing potentially dangerous attachments to pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feelings.**

**Yet another positive way to practice is to investigate the successive process of thoughts in the mind as they are randomly arising and watch to see which sorts of feelings are, then, accompanying and “associating-with” them.**

**In this way, one can gain clarity of insight into delusional thinking.**

**The Buddha’s instructions say:**

**Citta (mind) is constantly changing; it is not a fixed entity. Citta is the process of cognition; citta is always arising and flowing away, which is the causally- dependent nature of the mind.**

**Our textual exposition is full of erudition which can easily lead us astray, so let us suffice it to summarize and say:**

**Nothing what-so-ever is certain; everything is impermanent. This is the thesis.**

**On the conventional level, we have a tendency to be beastly, natural creatures, but we also have the latent potentiality to rise further and higher, beyond that.**

**Indeed, in order to aim to attain a higher level, it is, beneficial always to be waiting and watching for the arising of wholesome feelings, leaving the door open for them to come-in and develop, if they are (even if at least temporarily) conducive to calm peace and harmony within a balanced-state of the mind.**

**Moreover, it is clearly beneficial to be, constantly, on-guard at the six doors of the senses, [like a sentinel], where one will be able to discern and recognize approaching unwholesome feelings which are potentially harmful and which are seeking to “sneak-their-way-in,” so one (having**

been observant) can, then, slam the door, smack in their faces, to block-them-off, to knock them off balance, before they have had a chance, [like nasty little ninja], to gain a firm stranglehold on the mind and set-up a stronghold within the heart.

**What do we learn from contemplating the feelings?**

**Insight**

**The answer is:**

**Feelings, like everything else, have only fleeting cognitive reality, and, just like any other sorts of phenomena, they are just impermanent momentary series of arising images, flashing in the mind, always transiently arising and vanishing.**

**[What does this mean?]**

**INSIGHT**

**[Now, comes the same refrain which keeps appearing again and again.]**

33. “In this way

**he abides contemplating feelings as feelings internally,**

Or he abides contemplating feelings as feelings **externally,**

Or he abides contemplating feelings as feelings **both internally and externally.**

Or else he abides contemplating in feelings their **arising factors,**

Or he abides contemplating in feelings their **vanishing factors,**

Or he abides contemplating in feelings  
**both their arising and vanishing factors.**<sup>xxi</sup>

**Or else mindfulness that  
'there is feeling' is simply established in him  
to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness.  
And he abides  
independent, not clinging to anything in the world.**

That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating feelings as feelings.

**[Thus ends the exposition on the feelings.]**

### **CONTEMPLATION OF MIND\* IS THE THIRD FACTOR**

\*The Pali word for mind is "citta."

**"Contemplation of the Mind,"** here,

**[means "mind watching the mind-in-the mind" to discern any arising of delusory views (unclear comprehension)].**

**[And how does one practice to be able to discern one's own false views?]**

The answer is that, for example,

**[Consciousness of the mind watching the workings of the mind frees and liberates the mind from its baser-feelings and cravings by investigating and analyzing the cause-and-effect relations at such times when the observer, as a subject is, for example, vainly-desiring "to seize control" over totally intangible objects.]**

**As the contemplative mind begins to discern "wrong views," arising from distorting/coloring bare perceptions, the mind "avoids" unwholesome objects.**

**How is this so? How does this happen?**

**We learn concentration of mind by being able, for example:**

**to replace base, unwholesome, unheedful and harmful, craving states of mind, through developing an awareness of their illusive, delusive, allure and attraction, leading through desire to vain hope and, then, inevitably, through**

dissatisfaction, disappointment, desperation and despair, and distraction, because the root of the feeling is “unsatisfactory” by nature.

We come to realize,

- through gradual practice of withdrawal and detachment from frustrating attractions and situations
- through training the mind to relinquish debilitating states attached to the lower levels of the mind.

We learn by **reacting\*** skillfully to craving for mundane worldly things, in order to attempt to be capable of replacing them with their opposites, on higher levels, leading towards more pure and sublime planes of contentment and happiness, ultimately, leading to the cessation of unnecessary and avoidable suffering, [whilst developing gradually on the path to Nibbana.]

Such a **reaction\*** comes when one has discerned an unwholesome mind-factor in which one has mentally-distorted and colored (or flavored) a pure perception of bare awareness, due a leaning or tendency of individual disposition [such as bitterness or attractedness etc.,] and replaces it with a more-balanced mental state, which is unagitated — pure, calm and peaceful.

Another analogy can be made by imagining —

a carpenter replacing a rotten peg with a fresh, new one made of heartwood.

Coming back to the text, the Buddha asks:

34. “And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu **abide contemplating mind as mind**?<sup>xxii</sup>

[BB also refers to citta as “mind-in-the-mind,” as always aware it is changing.

[We might also call it the “mind watching the mind.”]

[watching, investigating, analyzing the mind process]

[the observant part watching the obsessive possessive part]

The text continues,

“Here a bhikkhu understands mind affected by

**lust as mind affected by lust**, and **mind unaffected by lust** as mind unaffected by lust.

He understands mind affected by

**hate** as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate as mind unaffected by hate.

He understands mind affected by

**delusion** as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion.

He understands mind as being

**contracted** [restricted] mind as contracted mind,

and

**distracted** mind as [side-tracked] distracted mind.

He understands

**exalted** mind as exalted mind,

and

**unexalted** mind as unexalted mind.

He understands

**surpassed** mind as surpassed mind, [on lower levels] and

**unsurpassed** mind as unsurpassed mind. [higher Jhana mind states]

He understands

**concentrated mind as**

**concentrated mind and**

**unconcentrated mind**

**as unconcentrated mind.**

He understands

**liberated** mind as liberated mind, (partially freed through practice) and

**unliberated** mind as [as yet] unliberated mind.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Notice there is a pattern or progression of developing mind-states suggested here which indicates there may be process of mind development which we can follow, but we will come back to this sequence, after, first, dealing with a related question.

And this question is...

Did you notice the mention of opposites as we went through the list sequentially?

**Does this have something to do with establishing a balance of opposites?**

**You can bet your boots it does!**

**For example, if we go through the text**

**and we**

**look for opposite states of mind**

**we find:**

**lust and no lust**

**hate and no hate**

**delusion and no delusion**

**rigid-minded and open-minded**

**distracted and non-distracted**

**exalted and not exalted**

**surpassed and unsurpassed**

**concentrated and unconcentrated**

**liberated and unliberated**

**Now, even normal human beings, if they attempt to learn to contemplate the mind skillfully can become capable of differentiating between different states as they arise in the mind, as the mind is in the process of changing perspective.**

**But, normally, we do not ask ourselves:**

**“What am I feeling?”**

**“What am I thinking?”**

**We just blindly follow our basic feelings,**

**without thinking**

**without considering the consequences.**

**But if we were to focus on the process of such feeling and thinking, we could save ourselves and others a lot of trouble — thereby, avoiding a lot of suffering, pain and lamentation.**

**And, if**

**just a little bit of mindfulness can be useful,**

**why not apply a whole-lot of concentration?**

**This is the process of analysis suggested:**

**The mind, when watching and observing, sees that:**

**Lust cause more trouble than no lust,**

**Hate causes more trouble than no hate,**

**Delusion causes more trouble than no delusion,**

**Stubborn-mindedness cause more trouble than open-mindedness,**

**And, moreover, it stands to reason that**

**Exalted mind is preferable than unexalted mind,**

**Unsurpassed mind is preferable to surpassed mind,**

**Concentrated mind is better than unconcentrated mind,**

**Liberated mind is better than unliberated mind,**

**And so we slowly learn through our own observations and efforts**

**That progress in mindfulness is better than no progress in mindfulness.**

**So the result, of establishing such a process of investigative analysis,**

**often, continues “happening,” [almost on its own, after a time], once it starts going,**

**and picking-up momentum and experiencing more and more progress**

**so that the mind, — after having started developing on the path —**

**has the tendency/inclination to want to continue the process of analysis**

**of the workings of the mind,**

**in a consciously-directed and contemplative effort.**

**and**

**this makes us realize, when we look back, much later,**

that we have changed for the better, (over time),

**so we would never want to go back to where we were before.**

This is how we do it, once we know the possibility is there.

Moreover, we learn, through further observation and investigation, that there is still *a lot more to learn* through following this process.

For example, now,

let's look at some of the ways the inclination of the mind

taints, colors or flavors the individual experiences of images:

If citta is taken as experience of phenomena in the mind, there are also other mental factors [cetasika] which color our perception of the arising object of the mind and make us see it in a different way than others might, dependent on our present state of mind, mood or disposition and other related factors.

To explain this Bhikkhu Bodhi uses a simple analogy: [MN058\_MN-010.MP3]

If bare awareness of objects as phenomena may be compared to clear/pure water and the inclination for certain feelings to arise in us towards such objects may be compared to coloring/flavoring, then our disposition towards the phenomena observed may cause certain differences based on individual reactions — which would not be shared by other persons — which could, thus lead to disagreements and trouble. [See Endnote1]

Suppose that if we are feeling bitter or sour, dependent on previous or present factors, we may quite readily view an object with bitterness which someone else might view with satisfaction while imaging sweetness.

Here, **“WE are the problem”** because we are “coloring” [*\*see endnote 1*]

the perception of experience with an attitude or outlook which is not pure and natural and wholesome and should be got rid of, if our view is to become real and normal, both for our own and for others' good.

If we have learned to be skillful in discerning the roots of our own feelings, we

may have the insight to know why we are reacting in such a way and why it is not wholesome, due to some resentfulness which affects our way of seeing the thing in a negative light.

The unwholesome root may be there because of some earlier experience(s) within this or perhaps even an earlier life. If we can “rip out the root,” so much the better, but if we cannot, we can, in the moment, at least, prudently change the attitude and behavior for the better.

Now, based on this one “particular” example of coloring experienced phenomena, imagine the range of mental factors in normal worldly [meaning not so good] behavior and the range in possible modes of exalted [pure and good] behavior which can influence one’s views towards any possible situation in which one may experience a mental reaction.

This is difficult to imagine, due to the wide spectrum of potential experiences.

So let’s employ the kind of analogy suggested by Bhikkhu Bodhi [MN057\_MN-010.MP3] in order to bring the problem of the influence of mental factors into an understandable image.

In our new analogy,

We might imagine pure water, colored and flavored by different tones and tastes, by adding new elements/ingredients, which change the way it looks and tastes, and thereby influences our attitude towards it.

We may, for example, like or dislike blueberry or strawberry for any number of reasons, which will certainly be different based on the individual inclinations of others.

But if we understand that both “liking” and “disliking” can be impulses, causing negative results, aroused in this case by a certain view of some liquid-solution due to potential attachment to “not wanting” or “wanting,” or “indifference,” we may further understand, also, that the *problem* has something to do with our own individual inherent “view” *inclination or tendency* which will need some investigating and adjusting, for the sake of proper mental balance, so we may, then, see the phenomena “the way it really is” rather than the way we tend to feel and think and color it to be.

It is a matter of changing wrong view into right view, which would mean experiencing equanimity towards the mind-object, rather than inclining one way or another.

Needless to say, having the ability to do this and develop a requisite equanimity towards all things in all situations necessitates a lot of mind-

**training, plus the monitoring of a skilled teacher, who himself has experienced and sees the ways and attitudes of the mind truly and can thereby be a guide to the student when he is inclining the wrong way.**

**Next, to continue this analogy further, imagine the water is the “stuff” of bare experience in the mind and the coloring/flavoring are the added ingredients which we put there due to our own mind’s “peculiar” characteristics.**

**The task before us is to purify our minds so as to see the phenomena the way they really are for the sake of knowing and experiencing with clarity and knowledge the true nature of arising phenomena.**

**[See Endnote which attempts to illustrate the way impressions can be colored.]**

**What do we learn from this?**

### **INSIGHT**

At the end, of the section on Contemplation of the Mind, we hear the refrain repeating the same theme as **before**, again, **once more for the third time**:

The text reads;

35. “In this way he abides contemplating mind as mind **internally**, or he abides contemplating mind as mind **externally**, or he abides contemplating mind as mind both **internally and externally**.

Or else he abides contemplating in mind its **arising** factors, [60] or he abides contemplating in mind its **vanishing** factors, or he abides contemplating in mind **both its arising and vanishing factors**.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Or else mindfulness that ‘there is mind’ is **simply established** in him to the extent necessary **for bare knowledge and mindfulness**.

And he abides **independent**, **not clinging to anything in the world**.

**That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind as mind.**

The literary refrain is, again, saying:

When we investigate in the body, feelings or mind what we find is impermanent.

Discuss:

1. Arising and vanishing;
2. Bare knowledge, as cited above.

**[Thus ends the exposition on contemplating mind as mind.]**

## **CONTEMPLATION OF MIND-OBJECTS IS THE FOURTH FACTOR**

[It is here that BB, states that he, now, prefers to call *mind-objects* “phenomena.”]

**He also says that contemplation of the mind objects or phenomena may be seen as a process of development — through a set that constitutes a group of steps dealing with mental phenomena in an intelligible pattern. And he begins the first step with:**

### **1. The Five Hindrances**

These are the five most important obstacles to be overcome before proper mind development can start. They are the main obstacles to wholesome mental progress and, therefore, it is worth taking our time to analyze and understand them in preparation for understanding how to develop the subtle skills needed in order to overcome them.

This is a set of directions which the practitioner may follow to reach the end of the path.

**We have the directions and we have the equipment, so we had better get on with it:**

First, the Buddha is quoted as asking:

36. “And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide **contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects?**<sup>xxv</sup>

[i.e. contemplating phenomena as phenomena]

And the Buddha says:

“Here a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of

The five hindrances.<sup>xxvi</sup>

And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances?

Here,

1. There being **sensual desire** in him, a bhikkhu understands:

‘There is sensual desire in me’;

or there being *no sensual desire* in him, he understands:

‘There is no sensual desire in me’; and he also understands

how there comes to be the *arising of unarisen sensual desire*,

and how there comes to be the *abandoning of arisen sensual desire*,

and how there comes to be the *future non-arising of abandoned sensual desire*.’

2. “There being **ill will** [and/or anger] in him ...

3. There being **sloth and/or torpor**\* in him ... \*[laziness and/or drowsiness]

4. There being **restlessness [worry] and remorse** in him ...

5. There being **doubt** [uncertainty or a lack of full confidence] in him,  
a bhikkhu understands:

‘There is *doubt in me*’; or there being *no doubt in him*, he understands:

‘There is no doubt in me’; and he understands how

There comes to be the *arising of unarisen doubt*, and how

There comes to be the *abandoning of arisen doubt*, and how

There comes to be the *future non-arising of abandoned doubt*.

Notice the repetition in the sequence after each section.

This is a sequence which must be explained and understood.

**And what do we gain from this, we ask?**

**And then we note that:**

**The same refrain which appeared at the end of the first three factors repeated, again, once more, at the end of the fourth.**

**The refrain appears, repeated, here again, with its urgent message.**

## **INSIGHT**

The answer is:

37. “In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects **internally**, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects **externally**, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects **both internally and externally**.

Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects their **arising factors**,  
or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their **vanishing factors**,  
or he abides contemplating in mind-objects **both their arising and vanishing factors**.

Or else mindfulness that ‘there are mind-objects’ is **simply established** in him to the extent necessary **for bare knowledge and mindfulness**. And he abides **independent**,  
**not clinging to anything in the world**.

That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating [phenomena] mind-objects as mind-

objects [phenomena] in terms of the five hindrances.

**Now, this first set of obstacles needs some explaining: —**

**Why do the Five Hindrances appear, here, in the Satipatthana Sutta?**

**The reason is that everybody has these mental hindrances:  
and, while the hindrances can easily cause our eventual downfall,  
our having such obstacles and learning to deal with them  
can become a beneficial means leading to our salvation.**

**Having hindrances as obstacles is good.**

**And for what are they good?**

**Hindrances as obstacles are good for practicing overcoming.**

**Hindrances can be useful in teaching us to achieve purification of mind.**

**Hindrances can be useful in helping us watch the workings of the mind.**

**“They can become helpers on the road to liberation.”**

**[Audit M0058\_MN-010.MP3]**

**We can learn to deal with our lives and our minds through analyzing them,  
by letting hindrances come in *almost like friends* and getting to know them.”**

**Note:**

**If we fight too hard against them they become more stubborn and obstinate,  
but watching and learning to understand them will motivate mental growth.**

**Turning them into mental objects of observation gradually weakens them.**

We get to become familiar with them — through mental contemplation.  
We watch and observe the hindrances until we get to know their tricky ways.  
It is better to deal with evil ways you know than evil means you do not know.  
It is better to know the ways of the mind, when it's doing just what it wants to.  
It is like living and dealing with unruly children and teaching them to behave.  
It is like living and dealing with wild beasts and training them to follow you.  
It is like living with wild spirits until they begin to do what you want them to.  
This is the analogy.

**It is better to control your inherent impulses than it is to let them control you.**

How exactly does this work, we might want to ask? And the answer is that there was a well-known textual process which bhikkhus and bhikkhunis knew.

In the Satipatthana Sutta it says:

We can divide contemplations of the hindrances into four sections:

Noting the presence or absence of any of the five hindrances of

(i) sensual desire and/or **greed**; (ii) **ill-will**, anger, resentment and enmity; (iii) **laziness** and/or drowsiness [sloth and torpor] (iv) restlessness, **worry** and remorse (v) **doubt**, uncertainty and lack of confidence

So when a hindrance arises, the well-trained mind may already be clearly aware of it, and, what is more, as the mind continues noting, in this way, the mind may develop cleverly the ability to investigate and notice subtle and, then, even more subtle differences on more-and-more subtle levels, so that the mind gradually becomes more-and-more refined and, until it is dis-attached from the baser-obstacles, which formerly grounded and hindered its progress on the path of purification, so the mind can then become free to function in realms which it had never dreamed of as long as it was bound within the narrow prison of the mental hindrances.

We concentrate and watch what happens in the process of eliminating the arising of mental hindrances: such as desire, anger, laziness, worry; and restlessness lack of confidence and doubt, and we come to understand the mental “workings” in the mind and how they function in a negative, and harmful way which hinders us from developing ourselves.

Eventually and ultimately, when the mind knows and understands how it has

thus been blocking itself from progressing, the mind goes through a process of eliminating and cutting-through the hold which the hindrances originally had on the determination of mind, to go through whatever steps were necessary to make the mind escape to be free to elevate to other levels.

The technique is to note an arising of a hindrance as it is coming-up and instead of letting it grip us and propel us into unskillful behaviour — we note it and let it go — it's like stopping a propeller by taking-away its power, before it has the capacity to affect feeling and consciousness in a negative and unskillful way.

It may be compared as a way of stopping oneself before one rushes ahead and jumps-in and does something self-detrimentally foolish merely due to ignorance — due to a lack of knowledge of what we might call, metaphorically speaking, “the science of the mind.”

Indeed, sometimes, as we are noting a hindrance in this way, the darkness of ignorance just falls away of its own accord, and everything becomes bright and illuminating.

We are naturally curious about the affects and prospects of the hindrances as they pop-up in the mind, but when we come to understand how they are just going to allow us to [unnecessarily] entangle ourselves and dissipate our potentially positive powers, we are happy to detach ourselves by cutting unnecessary anchors and lines and fetters to obstacles and freeing ourselves to go ahead.

When a hindrance is thus gone, we are aware that it is thus gone and aware of our success in subtle concentration. We are aware of our understanding and knowing'

The process works in this way:

The *first* state is in noting in the arising and passing and ceasing of the hindrance.

The *second* state is in the noting of arising of as yet unarisen hindrances.

The *third* state is in the abandoning of the arisen hindrance

The *fourth* state is in the understanding of the future non-arise state and in understanding of the future abandoning of the hindrance, cutting-it-off, there and then, so it will not arise again. It is thus extinguished and gone so that it will not arise in the future.

**Sensual desire** is unwise attention to a sensual arising object with a tendency

**towards potentially unheedful and unskillful attachment.**

**Sensual attraction arises out of unwise-attention.**

**And if we observe the actions of the mind, closely, with investigation and subtle-observation, we can actually distinguish between two quite different kinds of things happening:**

**The first arises out of an image appearing only in the mind in association with what we may call retained-memory. A flash from the past can set our minds running, in a way we enjoy, in fantasy, in what sometimes feels like pure poetry, and we indulge ourselves in such flights of the mental imagination until we seem to be carried-up into the clouds in images of delight and glee.**

**The problem with such flights of fancy is that they exist only in our imaginations and have no more reality than unsubstantial dreams, so that when such wishful dreams are over, we come crashing-back down-to-the-ground and find ourselves, momentarily, at least, in a somewhat sorrier state than before.**

**Incidentally, the converse is also true, about bad dreams: the difference is that, when we wake-up, we feel relieved and elevated rather than deflated and badly let-down. How many times have we “exited” a bad dream state and been relieved that the perceived reality is not true?**

**Curiously, this true of both night-dreams and day-dreams: How many times have we come to our senses and realized that the terrible things we have been imagining while in a fearful state of awaking, whilst sitting daydreaming, are in no way true?**

**The mind wandering can take us to terrible and wonderful places, none of which are true, so learning and using the technique of discerning what *is* and what *is not* true is a useful and beneficial thing to do.**

**It may take a lot of concentration and patience, but so does any technique which leads gradually to developing the discernment requisite for subtle mind surgery, for cutting-out the developing parts of thoughts is delusory and untrue.**

**Similar and comparable to the medical surgeon, the more we practice the mental technique, the better we become able to do it.**

**The first kind of mental sensual attraction and satisfaction is imaginary, and we usually don't get what we imagine/want.**

**The second kind of mental sensual attraction is psychical [and corporally**

possible] but usually not realizable. We cannot live and have all the things that the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the sense of touch and the mental faculties might desire. It is in the nature of desire never to get enough and never to be satisfied. Desire is a bottomless pit-which would suck the whole world down into it, if it could.

We can only enjoy as much sensual attraction satisfaction as we can mentally-psychically impress and record and experience and organize in the fleeting process of the moment [which has already become a memory]. We would like a lot more but due to mind-body limitations we are incapable of processing all we could possibly imagine experiencing and having.

To put it quite simply, we are greedy but greed can never be satisfied.

Make this a general rule/law/axiom, and always apply it, while mindfully practicing moderation in everything.

It sounds too simple to be true, but it works only for those who can do it.

For most people, as we may observe, it does not work, because they are greedy and they want everything they can get.

They are controlled by their uncontrolled senses rather than having their senses controlled by them. Learning the latter is a long and arduous process which can only be maintained and practiced by a few.

That's why the rest of the world seems and appears so crazy. It's because everybody else is out there grabbing-up all that they can get for themselves, even if they would not know what to do with it if they got it.

The technique to be learned so that sensual desire can be controlled has been already been mentioned above, by the Buddha, but let's come back to the texts and go over his words again, to try to realize what the Buddha's advice means to each of us, individually, and how we can use the practice suggested to modify the overwhelming tendency to go overboard and always be sloshing around and about within powerful waves from the worldly hindrances, from which there seems to be no escape but drowning in self-indulgence.

We can divide the contemplation of the hindrances into four main sections:

The hindrances are the obstacles which have to be overcome before we get anywhere and, [in case you have forgotten], they arise out of sensual desire, resentment, basic laziness, restlessness and worry and personal doubt or uncertainty. The hindrances may be compared to a

wave of gravitation which keeps pulling us down, as long as it maintains sway over us.

The way to go against and arise up and out of this figurative gravitational field is according to the following process:

First, we practice mentally noting the presence or absence of any of the five hindrances, and when we begin noting hindrances arising in the mind, we watch and perceive exactly what is mentally happening, and through watching and observing carefully, we see whether the hold of the hindrance is getting stronger and stronger or whether, through tempering of the mind, the hold of the hindrance is getting weaker and weaker, progressing through subtle levels, dependent upon previously-developed mind cultivation, following a tendency toward purification rather than an impure inclination towards baseness.

Bhikkhu Bodhi has made the analogy [MN058\_MN-010.MP3] that the baseness of a hindrance is like the driving force of a propeller which propels [us motivated by gravitational force of attraction] towards the unheedful inclination, and thereby working unskillfully against more wholesome alternatives and levels of more subtle inclinations, as the mind gradually becomes freed of the pull of the “motor” which is the generator of the feelings linked to the baser motives.

So the mental process goes, — we can develop the skill to see the arising and passing of mental hindrances: we can know and understand, for example, that (i) there is no sensual desire in me or (ii) there is sensual desire in me; (iii) or I see the arising and ceasing of sensual desire in me; or (iv) I see the possibility of as yet unarisen desire arising in me; (v) or I see the possibility of as yet unarisen and undesirable sensation ceasing in me; or (vi) I see future non-arising abandoned desire in me.

There are subtle and yet more subtle mental levels of understanding which the wholesomely-directed mind can understand and achieve, first on the level of understanding and later on the level of directly experiencing.

And this same subtle process of mental analysis is true for all of the five hindrances: not only of (i) sensual desire; but [*as we have said above and will come back to later*] also of (ii) ill-will/anger; (iii) and sloth/drowsiness; (iv) restlessness/worry; (v) doubt and uncertainty.

These are the chains of the mind-body which we must somehow learn to free ourselves of. In some practitioners, the process of mind-development

**works more quickly, whereas in others it becomes a slowly-developing, lifetime process.**

**It is a very subtle process, indeed, but, once we gain understanding and knowledge, through continuing experience of observation and analysis, through what we may call “the science of mind,” the whole mental process actually becomes/appears in awareness quite clear and simple, once we have finally got the knack of it.**

**Unfortunately, for the world, there are very few who can look back over the full-range of their meditative experience and say that. You don’t know what it will be like before you get there, and (usually) you don’t even know whether you have been making progress until you look back to the stage where you were before and realize you would not want to go back there anymore.**

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**Before we begin to range around too loosely and slide off topic, it will behoove us to return with a proper sense of decorum and remember, more soberly, along with Bhikkhu Bodhi [MN058\_MN-010.MP3] that contemplation of the thirty-two parts of the body sets up a counteractive force which balances-out potentially enticing aspects of the body or sensual satisfactions arising out of the sensual mental desires of the body, so that, eventually, we come to feel a sort of indifference to both the attractiveness and unattractiveness of the body and senses because of the potential dangers they pose.**

**One becomes strong in meditative consciousness of the lure and dangers of sensuality and one uses power of mind to neutralize them, so there is no harmful imbalance.**

**When we have developed that skill in concentration, it is easy to bring the mind back to skillful concentration.**

**Moreover, it is mentioned that one can also overcome and abandon arisen sensual desires by (i) guarding against mental intrusion by the hindrances, (ii) guarding against lack of moderation in food-consumption by over-eating thoughtlessly, thereby causing sluggishness and laziness which leads to lack of attentiveness and opens the mental-sensual doors to unwise attention, (iii) cultivating noble friendship and conversing about the dhamma in a way which will be mind-expanding and purifying, (iv) abandoning of non-arising sensual desire so all craving is eradicated and eliminated and will never come back .**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi, at this point in his explanation, also, refers to two similes which are helpful in the elucidation of overcoming the hindrances:**

In the *first simile*, due to a lack of wise attention one's reflection upon water may be compared, [both literally and figuratively], to being clear or muddied. The point of the analogy is that due to some extraneous element of which we are not aware [but which somehow seems quite natural to us], the surface of the body of water may take on a certain coloring, because the water has been sensually-tainted by a color or dye such as red, blue, yellow, green pink [and so on] so that we cannot see a true reflection of our face the way it really is. The taints are the various sorts of sensual attractions and the simile explains itself.

In the *second simile*, due to a lack of wise attention one may be said to be in bondage to sensual attachment, in bondage to the grip of sensual desire, as one might be in debt to a creditor, who will never be satisfied, who will never get enough. One may be said to be unknowingly in bondage to one's own sensual desire. In bondage to perpetual craving and lust, which can never ever get enough and we cannot run from this creditor because he is always ahead of us.

While on the topic of sensual arousal and detachment, we should stress and remember that there is also an antidote to sensuality:

Picture a pure young princess of marriageable-age who is so exquisitely beautiful that just her exotic/erotic visual image would be enough to throw a normal-minded prince into fits of ecstasy so that he could not sleep and he would tear at his hair in distraction, just at the thought that he might not get her to be his bride. The distracted mind may wonder: Perhaps she might be betrothed to another? Maybe she might be secretly in love with his older brother? What would he do then? Would he be happy? No! And if for some reason he could not get her, what should, would or could he do?

This may sound like a children's story or a romantic fantasy, but, if we were to admit it, each and every one of us has, probably, at some time in our lives, been so enamoured of somebody that we have suffered enormously and driven ourselves almost crazy, just as a result of such a similarly sensory/sensual attraction.

The Buddha knew about this potential mental problem, just as he knew about everything else, but he also knew a solution to the root of this sensual attraction causing such suffering. The solution was to be careful about becoming attached to someone/anyone due to contact based upon the senses and the wandering imagination and the wild desires which might be thereby aroused, being driven by a self-centered lusting which is - if examined and

**broken-down carefully and analytically - actually something disgusting.**

**What! One might say, “How could my lust be disgusting?” And the answer is implicit in the question:**

**One’s wishing to use someone, just to satisfy one’s own desires will include tendencies which are both base and selfish. If one looks realistically at what one is wanting, it involves a desiring of satisfaction just to please oneself, irrespective of what the “unmentioned-other” may think and feel.**

**So to keep it short, we notice we also feel a certain aversion and repulsion when we become fully-aware of our own ignoble inclinations. This is one thing we can learn a lot by looking at ourselves.**

**At the same time, however, the Buddha taught his disciples to avoid the lure of sensual inclinations by looking at the “other individual” in the mental fantasy who is certainly, in this case, not what she seems to be in the young prince’s vivid imagination but only a human body - (albeit a pretty one) - in the process of growing and being used-up and dying — The body he sees in the moment of inspiration is only a momentary phenomena in the process of growing older.**

**There is no way he can hold on to the ephemeral object of his fantasy because it is disappearing, every moment, in the process of dissolution, in the process of vanishing.**

**The prince does not visualize the image that will be at his side as his aging wife, 40 years later, if they live that long. Instead, he see an image of what he has not yet got, which is only in the process of momentarily arising and just-as-quickly disappearing.**

**To state it succinctly, in actual reality, the prince loves an image which will already be gone by the time the senses perceive and store it in memory. What he doesn’t clearly know and understand is that there is no happiness in loving a fleeting fantasy which one cannot hang onto. This is attachment to an unsubstantial impression, which does not even exist but which, through delusion, has come to inhabit the mind for a while [impermanently] to make the mental-physical organism feel unhappy and distraught.**

**We must realize that it is our wanting and desiring which is causing our own suffering, and we are just ignorant enough to allow such a paradoxical situation to carry on until we finally get wise to it.**

**Once we become wise to the nature of the body, we see it only as a body — the body in the body — and, thus, we do not get attached to it, whether it be**

someone else's body or our own.

We cannot hang onto one or the other so we might as well let go.

*For the prince who hangs madly onto his delusions, there are always the cemetery meditations.*

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Since the five hindrances are so important, as obstacles, which might block our mental progress, forever, let's just summarize them, again, one more time, to be sure we understand:

- (i) just as **sensual attachment** can blind us to reality, so
- (ii) **anger** once it starts burning in the mind can take us wholly out of touch with reality, so
- (iii) **mental laziness** and mental inertia can keep us from thinking and understanding, and just so
- (iv) **mental restlessness**, confusion and worry can cloud the mind, so it cannot see clearly, and,
- (v) **doubt and uncertainty** can so inhibit the mind so that the mind becomes incapable of doing anything constructive.

So long as our minds are entangled-in-a-tangle, - in a tangle of confusion, - we will not be able to see clearly, but once we get wise to the dominating role of the five hindrances in perpetuating ignorance, then there is hope that we may find our way-out-of the tangle.

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From here, we can further follow the sequence which Bhikkhu Bodhi earlier mentions in connection with the mental hindrances. [MN058\_MN-010.MP3] We can gradually begin to see the sequence which we need to follow, to steer ourselves clear of further obstacles which cause unclear perception, due to the role of the senses in the thought process.

When the mind is clear, the awareness becomes the presence and this applies to the other four hindrances, equally, as well, thus let us, now, leave the realm of sensual contact and fantasy behind us and go on, [following the Bodhi Monastery lectures] of Bhikkhu Bodhi [MN058\_MN-010.MP3] to the manner in which he [BB] explains the second hindrance which is ill-will and arising of anger and its consequences.

Put simply, **ill-will is the second factor** in the sequence, and one observes its arising and continually investigates and watches it, until it, finally, [as with

sensual attachment] hate becomes weaker and weaker and eventually fades and goes away also.

We might paraphrase Bhikkhu Bodhi in the following way:

Similarly to the way which we trained to overcome the hindrances in looking for sensual hooks, we are also watchful to look for the trigger-points of ill-will and irritability within the hidden, nasty, mean and mischievous mental processes of the trivial workings of our own minds, and once we locate them, we continue to watch and investigate and observe them, until we get to know them so-well that they have or will become neutralized and eventually lose their power to unsettle the calm-surface of the mind.

When the mind is clear, the awareness is the presence.

This is true whichever of the five hindrances we are clearing away.

This is part of the sequence in training in the Satipatthana Sutta.

Once we have isolated the hot-spots of ill-will and rancor, we radiate-in upon and systematically with the flame of the Dhamma eradicate them, one-by-one.

**Mentally extinguish irritations as enemies of peace of mind and contentment.**

Such silly irritations, as obstacles, should be properly recognized, as much too trivial and despicable to hinder the mental clearing of the mind, so we ask ourselves: “Why we should be bothered with them, and why we should allow them to continue to exist anyway?”

[The process to follow to be able to get rid of them is as listed below.]

The control of ill-will can be weakened by:

- Using loving-kindness as an antidote to ameliorate the cause of ill-will, through gradually softening them, to the point at which there is no irritation left;
- Following reflection on the impermanence of the elements until the mind comes to see there is nothing substantial to be angry with;
- Watching for the places in which the mind is habitually looking for trouble and, then, skillfully eliminating them.
- Asking yourself which are the problems that are particularly annoying for you, and then continually examining the causes of irritation until you see that it is your own internal reaction to external contacts which upsets your balance and causes the problem.
- Seeing that the over-sensitivity which triggers the problem always arises

*in you* for some reason and when you come to understand the cause of the reason you are able to let it go as a hindrance or weakness.

To explain the presence of ill-will and anger, the Buddha has provided two similes:

- In the first one, to put it simply, he says that when the mind is upset, it is like boiling water in which you cannot see the reflection of the hateful face you are making, and the more fuel that you add to the fire, the hotter and more out of control the anger and the distortion of your face will get — even though you will not be capable of seeing the repulsiveness of your visage. This, by the way, clearly illustrates how we become incapable of seeing the delusions we are fabricating in our minds based on mental distortions within the process of contact and feeling.
- The second simile is based on the analogy of one being ill to the point at which no medicine is good enough to promote a cure. The comparison is to a man who is so mentally-ill [due to intense aversion] that his perceptions are distorted by hate to the point at which nothing is good enough to satisfy him, and nothing agrees with him, and he dwells in annoyance and avoidance, eschewing acceptance of anything at all which is good for him, [more-or-less out of spit], to show his mental dissatisfaction and distress. This is a form of stupidity which could go on to infinity unless he were to somehow develop the insight that his insisting upon refusal and indifference will only bring about his own undoing so that rather than actually harming the one(s) he mentally hates, he is personally punishing himself.

The distorted-mind will always have difficulties in seeing through the multiples of paradoxes which it delusively sets-up and, then, quite stubbornly and obdurately insists upon never resolving.

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Next, we shall go on and continue to discuss (iii) **the third set of hindrances** of dullness and drowsiness and **laziness, and so on**.

Put simply, laziness-of-the-mind is a third hindrance, which one can examine in the sequence of investigation and analysis, until one subtly notices its arising and then continually keeps observing and watching it until, finally, [*just as with (i) sensual attachment and (ii) ill-will and anger*], (iii) laziness of mind, as a result of being constantly watched and constantly caught being

slothful and inclined to inaction, and as a result of this watching and recognition, such laziness-of-mind arises less-and-less frequently and eventually disappears entirely.

We might paraphrase Bhikkhu Bodhi's explanation of mental laziness in the following way:

Similarly to the way which we eradicated (i) sensuousness and rancor, (ii) mental laziness, dullness, so (iii) laziness, drowsiness and torpor may be watched monitored, and so-closely-observed that one begins to note subtly how slothful obstacles slow the action of the mind down, weighing upon it, so the mind does not want to work, and whether from laziness or stubbornness falls into dullness and drowsiness, so that it becomes rigid and inflexible instead of cooperating to arouse itself and throw off its lethargy and be ready to seek clarity

Once the mind knows itself, and clearly knows and sees its own tendency to lethargy and sluggishness, the mind, is in fact, able to do something about it, - by mentally arousing an opposite force of energy as an antidote to the harm that being blatantly ignorant and mindless can dependently cause oneself.

Once one sees the urgency of overcoming such laziness, one is able to make the extra effort in the pursuit of applied mindfulness and achievement of mental clarity to awaken and arouse the mind to protect it from the inherent mental dangers which laziness-of-mind could cause itself.

Just as with sensuous lust and uncontrolled anger, in the case of drowsiness and laziness, there are also antidotes which may be practiced and applied, for the attainment and achievement of the desired mental effect:

The primary antidote is mindfully exerting careful attention to

- Arousing in exerting of energy
- Persevering in arousing energy
- Continuing in arousing energy

These are the three essential words: arousing, persevering and continuing.

If you stop at any point due to lack of attention and exertion, you will lose everything which you have to that point worked so hard for, so you feel a sense of urgency.

Some of the well-known antidotes are

- Applying the three exertions with determined mindfulness,

- **Moderating intake of food, so the stomach doesn't work so much,**
- **Changing the body position from long sitting to rapid walking,**
- **Perceiving of brightness such as the sun, the moon or bright light,**
- **Concentrating on bright light to dispel apathy and arouse energy,**
- **Going out into the fresh air, where a refreshing breeze is blowing,**
- **Stimulating the mind through conversation with a teaching elder.**

To explain how to overcome mental laziness, the Buddha provides two similes:

- **In the first, a state of mental drowsiness may be compared to looking into a surface of water which has been grown over by green algae so that one cannot get a clear image of oneself because of the dullness of the mind. One must shake-off this sluggishness and awake to a realization of our real situation.**
- **In the second, we are compared to being in a prison from which we cannot get out of unless we make a special, exerted effort — an effort to break the chains of bondage — to change the narrow, deluded view that we are cramped and compacted and obstructed within a limited situation we have not the strength to break free of. Lots of people drown in their own lethargy.**

Next, we shall go on to discuss the **(iv) fourth set of hindrances** connected to **restlessness and worry**, which cause uneasiness of and disturbance of mind, perhaps due to an inclination that something is somehow wrong [or that one has done something wrong or not done something right] or things are not working-out the way we think they ought to be, which becomes the cause of mental uncertainty and disturbance and even, sometimes, a lingering sense of anxiety and/or remorse.

As with the other hindrances, there are antidotes which can be effective, if practiced and applied in an attempt to balance an unsettled mind.

- **Unless controlled skillfully, worried restlessness of mind can take over and influence everything which enters the mind, and, thus, this is a dangerous situation which calls for discernment and discretion, so that we are able to see things as they really are, as opposed to the way of imaginary worry in which we falsely deem or fear them to be**

unsatisfying or threatening. [Additionally, we may feel restless because we are bored and dissatisfied with our situation or the results of our efforts, and we want to do something exiting or adventurous as a form of compensation or recompense, but we should pay heed to the dangers of unskillful seeking of such unnecessary nourishment.]

- If we feel ungrounded mental-anxiety and worry, we must calm the feelings and emotions or needs for nourishment and potential compulsions through mindfulness of the real situation and take the appropriate action before something foolish, unheedful and unguarded happens.
- This can be achieved by using a meditation subject which would normally mean turning to concentrate on whatever meditation object or action has been the most effective in calming you in the past – especially in tranquilizing the mind when you sense it is getting restless. It can be any meditation object that normally works for you.
- Thinking about the qualities and characteristics of the Buddha can also calm and quiet and uplift the mind to levels of calm and tranquility and even rapture, making us forget whatever trivial action or anxiety was making the mind worried and restless. We simply turn away from the worldly cause of anxiety and go to another mental level.
- Concentrating on a meditation subject such as loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy at the success of others or equanimity – the four sublime states – can also be calming and uplifting and conducive to developing and settling the and focusing consciousness in the process of achieving peace of mind.
- Concentrating on mindfulness of breathing is the nearest mind object and, for many, perhaps the best, because awareness of the breath body focuses the mind on one-pointedness and takes it away from the object of disturbing consciousness, and even when the restless keeps coming back, we can keep returning to the breath meditation until the body has calmed itself through being less-and-less agitated. This works well for experienced practicing meditators.
- Another way of calming and raising the level of the mind is recalling to one's mind the knowledge of the Dhamma. If one has been trained in the Dhamma, one will automatically know when the mind is becoming restless and worried and, as with the other hindrances, there will be situations in which, through right mindfulness and concentration, one

will remember what the Buddha explained one should do in such situations, — so one thinks back to the teacher or the texts or the training practice in the Dhamma and once more reverts to what works.

- A final way is to spend time [or think of time-spent] listening to elder monks carrying on suitable and noble conversation about the Dhamma, and whilst keeping the purity of the Dhamma in mind, transferring one's attention away from restlessness and worry and anxiety to focus on the knowledge, understanding and wisdom of the Buddha. Thinking about the elders with their tranquility calm and wisdom and emulating them as best you can, is the best you can do, — doing what you think or know they would be doing they were in your situation.

As with the first four hindrances, the Buddha concludes this fifth section by, once again, following the pattern of explaining with two similes:

As with the other hindrances, here are the **two similes** which the Buddha uses to illustrate:

- In the first simile, a surface of water is disturbed by wind so that it cannot give a clear reflection and this vehicle is compared to the reflection within the stirred-up and agitated minds of men of men being incapable of clear reflection.
- In the second simile, the Buddha compares worry and mental agitation to slavery in the sense that restlessness is a kind of bondage which it is hard for the mind to escape. It is compared to a kind of human bondage in which one is shackled by the chains of worry and prevented from being free. The cause of the bondage is ignorance rooted in attachment to arising anxiety and agitation of mind.

Finally, as **(v) the fifth and last hindrance**, we come upon the preponderance of **doubt**. There is no harm in worry, if through clear analysis one is able to dissolve and resolve uncertainties and thereby clear-up and dismiss misunderstandings. This is what we might call **good doubt**. The Buddha, indeed, says that we should doubt everything until we have sufficiently tested it. This is one of the first tenets of his teachings.

On the other hand, however, the Buddha warns that unless one's practice is grounded on unshakable confidence and certainty, perseverance and concentrated determination, leading to knowledge and understanding, through actual experience, it may have not have the solid foundation needed to build upon.

There may also be what we might call **bad doubt**, which arises periodically caused by personal uncertainty due to, for example, too much dependence upon self and resultant contradictions which arise between what one wants to believe and the more subtle teachings of the Buddha which one has not yet perceived.

Indeed, we ourselves may always be having doubts about the teaching, the Buddha and the Dhamma which undermine our practice and sometimes makes it begin to crumble, even after it has been building-up over long periods.

If we may insert an editorial comment, even a good monk may develop uncertainties which make him doubt certain aspects of the practice, and the result can be that he begins to become careless, for example, in arousing sufficient energy and effort to arouse attention to mindfulness and contemplation until he may eventually begin to go with the flow of the world. The Buddha warns us about this in the simile which says it is hard to swim against the stream.

According to the Buddha, if one wavers in doubt, one is behaving unskillfully and doubt, thus, becomes an obstacle to progress.

When people around us begin to influence us through assuming how and what they feel and believe is good, and we are foolish enough to believe and follow them, our own good intentions can easily dissolve away like carefully-built sand-castles on a slowly-lapping shore.

Doubt works different ways on different people and since the Buddha was fully aware of this, he prescribed the following **antidotes** for when the mind is wavering between opposing contrasts.

He suggests, for example, exertion upon:

- **Attention to contrasting mental qualities:** in other words, opening the mind to understanding the possibility of abandoning doubt and uncertainty and other obstructing factors by realizing that there may be an opposite to mental hindrances as in the following: wholesome versus unwholesome; skillful versus unskillful; beneficial versus harmful, ...
- **Through subtle analysis,** by watching the mind foolishly wavering and suffering in uncertainties, one can see that there might be another possibility of the mind experiencing the exact opposite.
- **In other words,** instead of giving-in to unwholesome, unskillful and harmful tendencies caused by ignorance and clouding-the-mind in

uncertainty, one can break through the clouds in a moment of mental insight and realize the possibilities of seeing the view from the other shore from exactly the opposite attitude.

- When one realizes this and examines the root cause of one's wrong view, one realizes, [sometimes instantly], that the problem lies in one's doubt and uncertainty concerning the practice and the teaching and so one is, thus, motivated to put aside doubt and continue practicing analyzing the mind to find and root out the causes of its uncertainty blocking the path to purity. Indeed, one can be so relieved to be free of doubt that one practises with newly-aroused effort and revitalized energy,
- To summarize, one realizes, that through mental observation of the process of mind, one may finally find what is purifying for the mind as opposed to obstacles having unwholesome, unskillful and harmful effects.
- Such a process is good for you and good for others: Instead of wavering this way and that way, it clears away your doubts by ultimately cultivating: generosity in the place of greed; loving-kindness in the place of hatred; and wisdom in the place of uncertainty, doubt and delusion.
- So another antidote to doubt is resolve or resolution and determination which becomes a full-commitment not to be unsettled by uncertainties of arising doubt but, instead, to locate and isolate them and rip them out to eradicate them.

Just as with the other hindrances, the Buddha uses two similes to explain:

- Just as in water that has become dark and clouded, there can be no reflection so in the mind of which is clouded and turning dark with doubt there will be a lack of mental clarity which cannot be overcome.
- An analogy is also given of travelling alone in a barren desert until one finally reaches a fork in the road and one does not know which way to go. The situation seems desperate. We may figuratively compare this to life, which on the side of uncertainty and ignorance seems so harsh, hopeless and uncertain, yet — on the other side — one may know, through cultivating the mind, internally, — from having been watching attentively and heedfully following the path of purity, — one will know that there is really only one way to go. This is a way which one can only know if one has already gained some degree of firm-footing in the foundations of mindfulness. In this world, the ignorant man will not know which way to go, but the man who has developed mindfulness will

stay on the path and follow through, no matter how barren a stretch or period of life may sometimes seem to be. He will know, and because he knows, will continue to go the right way.

Here, we shall insert two important points of information from Bhikkhu Bodhi's lecture on the five hindrances: [MN058\_MN-010.MP3]

- As we may here note, Bhikkhu Bodhi is clear in saying, in this section of the lecture, that accompanying doubt leaves you only at the point of stream entry, so the implication is, "Don't get discouraged if you sometimes feel uncertain along the way. Strive on with diligence to overcome doubt when it gets in the way."
- At this juncture, Bhikkhu Bodhi also reminds us of the point that the Four Foundations of Mindfulness need not be practiced in sequential order, although, ultimately, they must be eventually modulated for the sake of balance and equanimity.

This brings our treatment of the five hindrances to an end.

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## The Five Aggregates

So, now, we are ready go on, to continue the process of the systematic-effort to find a way out of the maze of the mind's entanglement, with regard to an understanding of the

The Five Aggregate are listed as:

- (i) form,
- (ii) feeling,
- (iii) perception,
- (iv) phenomena
- (v) consciousness.

In this next systematic step of the Satipatthana Sutta, the Buddha analytically explains what we need to understand about *these five aggregates or khandas*:

Let's look at the Buddha's quote:

### 2. The Five Aggregates [khandhas]

38. "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects [phenomena]

as phenomena [mind-objects] [61] in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging.<sup>xxvii</sup> And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging? Here a bhikkhu understands:

[The system is to start taking apart the mundane and false view of perception as being a substantial unity or fixed image, until we are able to see it merely as a phenomena arising, appearing and breaking down sequentially in a series of parts]:

1. ‘Such is material **form**, such its origin, such its disappearance;
2. such is **feeling**, such its origin, such its disappearance;
3. such is **perception**, [mind] such its origin, such its disappearance;
4. such are **phenomena**, such their origin, such their disappearance;
5. such is **consciousness**, such its origin, such its disappearance.’

39. “In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as “mind-objects,” as phenomena.

**internally,**

**externally,**

and

**both internally and externally ...**

**And he abides independent,**

**not clinging to anything in the world.**

That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects [phenomena], as mind-objects [phenomena] in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging.

**Now, if the truth is to here to be admitted, this final sentence just above has always been hard to comprehend because of the awkward and traditional term “mind-objects.” Originally, someone must have translated it thus with sincerity with the best intentions but somewhat too vaguely and unclearly and, then, it got stuck in the Pali English texts — at least until Bhikkhu Bodhi, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, re-thought the mental process as described in the Pali Canon and finally changed the term mind objects to “phenomena.”**

**One problem with “mind-object” is the implication that there is an “object” to be contemplated upon. “Object” implies “objective” and indirectly suggests**

“subjective,” and, therefore a “subject,” but this line of thought unfortunately leads to the contrary of what the Buddha wanted to explain.

In Bhikkhu Bodhi’s new translation, there are neither subject nor object but just unsubstantial “phenomena or dhammas in the process of changing.”

The Buddha explained the contemplation of the field of experience, and to do that, he devised a system that at least some men [with little dust in their eyes] could understand.

And the way he did it was to divide the field of experience up into four primary domains of experience which could be contemplated with mindful awareness: (i) body, (ii) feelings, (iii) states of mind, and (iv) the contemplation of the actions of the mind

For the sake of focus and balance, let us repeat the Buddha’s originally-posed purpose in setting-up this structure the way he did in the Satipatthana Sutta

The contemplation of phenomena is explained in Pali under the heading of the contemplation of “dhammas,” and “dhammas” may here be taken to mean concentrating on the tiniest units in the process of changing phenomena [much in the way the tiniest particles and being broken down into even more tiny impulses in particle physics], which [in the case of body, feeling, mind states and movements and actions in the mind] we may considered to consist of no more than waves or vibrations.

**Dhammanupassana** is the name used for contemplation of such phenomena or dhammas and this is the fourth and final field for examination of mental phenomena or dhammas in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness – The Satipatthana Sutta.

Dhammanupassana is where the first three fields converge, says Bhikkhu Bodhi, although he is also careful to state and point out that any one of the other three previous fields, can, on its own, lead to liberation.

[MN0059\_MN-010.MP3]

Optimally speaking, however, we may say that the highest and clearest field for concentration is the Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness which is often described in terms of Insight Meditation or Vipassana.

Bhikkhu Bodhi says that the first three stages are the preparation for

**Dhammanupassana, in other words, they are the preparation for the contemplation of phenomena in order to reach mental states in the field of phenomena, which have never been reached and seen clearly before — in order to see subtle levels of phenomena — in order to clarify the mind so that it becomes a “fit instrument” in the process of contemplation which is necessary in order to overcome the five hindrances.**

**This is why the five hindrances have to be dealt with at the very beginning of the sequence of mind contemplation, in the Satipatthana Sutta, i.e. in order to be able to pass on to the more deep and profound contemplations, one has to become capable of breaking through (at least temporarily, at first,) to see the five hindrances.**

**Once the five hindrances subside and disappear, one is able to contemplate, very clearly, the nature of mental and physical phenomena.**

**So, in this next section, we come to the primary scheme of categories for classifying mental and physical phenomena which is the disentangling and understanding of the Five Aggregates subject to “clinging-to” or “holding-onto” an object with a view or expectation of extracting pleasure from it, due to holding a wrong view of the mentally-projected value of clinging and craving.**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi points out, in other words, that this analysis is a very systematic way of showing how we “hold onto” and “grasp onto” different aspects of our own experience and are actually “attracted” to engagement in identifying with such experiences.**

**If we may be allowed to insert some editorial comment, here, this “attraction” is part of the natural human process, although such attraction, craving and grasping are not invariably good for us, especially when we have to “engage” or struggle excessively-hard before we, become able to overcome the tendency towards grasping at the object of attraction to avoid being disappointed.**

**Such striving to “cling to” may be a part of the natural process, but while this process is what sustains us with just the requisites necessary for life, the gravitation of such attraction is (i) always a never-ending and anguishing struggle to keep nourishing our needs, which is bad enough [as we all know from experience], but which, (ii) often also far exceeds the basic needs necessary for survival and causes us even more trouble [which nobody needs to tell us].**

**As a consequence, within such a process, when greed exceeds need, there will always be a negative, accompanying effect in one way or another, [although it**

sometimes takes us a long while to figure out and finally realize that].

When we exceed the essential, requisite level of basic need, this is called “greed” as manifested in all of its possible senses, which invariably lead to dire and stressful consequences, which, as a result cause us to be perplexed and confused and which make us seek an “escape-route” from the situation which such excessive grasping invariably causes.

The mental insight we may get is that greed always causes, [as a resultant effect], something we dislike and want to avoid. [We got what we want but we also got something more that we don’t want, to along with it.]

Greed and excess always cause stress for someone [as a creature of nature] in one way or another, which creates a negative burden or debt or imbalance which will have to be paid-for, sooner or later.

The escape-route is to contemplate understanding the categories of the five aggregates and their subtle effects on the aspects of mental phenomena which accompany them

Bhikkhu Bodhi says, “The Five Aggregates are set-up by the Buddha as a primary scheme of classification.” [MN059\_MN-010.MP3]

The problem of “engaging in identifying” with our phenomenal-experience means “taking” or assuming different aspects as an accumulation of that experience to be “I,” “Mine,” and “Myself.”

The problem, may be explained as “attaching to an attitude of wanting to identify with some point of view we want to cling to” and then viewing such an experience as “self.” That is the way it happens in common, conventional, everyday unexamined life.

Although this is a convenient and understandable form of arising wrong view, it is always accompanied by troubles too.

We should not blame ourselves, but, [because we all suffer in the same manner if we cling to such a wrong view], we have to eventually realize that to avoid distortion, delusion and resultant suffering and dissatisfaction, we will have to “*turn-around*” this potentially dangerous way of identifying ourselves with accumulations of perceptions and make a mental paradigm-shift in order to regain a balanced and corrected clear awareness or view.

That’s one reason they say that Buddhism is a process of unlearning conventional, assumed and commonly-accepted wrong views.

“Identifying with “I,” “Mine,” and “Myself” are called the three primary OBSESSIONS of the subjective way of thinking.” [MN059\_MN-010.MP3] The

problem is we take things which stand in relation to ourselves and assume them to be “Mine.” In other words, we take the point of reference from which we see them to be “mine-and-self.” [See Endnote2]

Instead of calling it the “self” or “I” or “me,” we call it the **five aggregates** which are parts of perception of mental experience of changing nature of the elements and phenomena.

Instead of calling it “x,” we might call it “something else,” — with experience broken down into five parts — which are understandable as points of reference.

The Buddha classified such experience into what he called the five aggregates which hold together at least the parts or points of phenomenal experience which we may know and experience,

According to this aggregate-system of classification, when we use the word “we,” we are doing it only hypothetically to stand for the various aspects of experience which coincide together, in what can only be said to be a fraction of a fraction of a second of perceptivity.

There is no continuity, — even though there seems to be, — and this is what fools us into thinking [falsely imagining] that we are a continuing unity or entity. To use a figure of speech, to illustrate, the sun is nothing but a series of nuclear explosions even though it seems to be the thing in our galaxy with the most dependable continuity.

What the Buddha said about the five aggregates and clinging, he said not only once but he kept repeating it, over and over, throughout the texts for the benefit of instruction of the monks and laypeople.

So what do we do with the idea of self? If it is not true, then how do we get behind the trick, the delusion of the “I,” to expose it as being an imposter?

Bhikkhu Bodhi says that, “The notion “I” is an idea which arises spontaneously as a part of experience,” [MN059\_MN-010.MP3-] moreover, this may be taken to mean that, [like it or not], when we have thoughts and reflections through the six senses, this phenomena [some sense of ‘I’] is there, somewhere, in our mind.

When that notion of “I” is taken-up by reflective thought, we try to figure out, “What is this I?” and, then, we try to work-out some understanding, explanation or doctrine of the “I.”

If we are careful and mentally heedful, we have to ask ourselves, “Where is this sense of the “I” lurking, because it is not immediately perceptible or

observable. In other words, “How can it be present when we cannot perceive it?”

“Can it possibly be only: ‘perceiving’ perceiving?”

This would have to be analyzed in terms of the action of perceiving [verb] doing the act [gerund] of perceiving. One is an action and one is an activity. If we pursued this line of thinking far enough there would only be verbs “acting” but actually no nouns “existing.”

But this is not the place to get sidetracked.

To try to solve the mystery, “What is this I?” we start thinking that the “I” cannot be the body because it is “perishing” and temporary, — just as feelings and thoughts cannot be “I” — because they are all temporary [impermanent].

We might also think: “The body cannot be “I” because it is headed for annihilation. This does not seem like an agreeable argument, because, if the body were annihilated the “I” would be annihilated with it.

Who would want to accept that?

Others may have the view that “I” is an eternal entity — that it would last forever — which would mean a permanent and eternal everlasting and universal absolute self, which would, indeed, be very re-assuring, but if one starts looking at this view, analytically, lots of questions arise:

“Would “I” be boundless or finite?” “Would “I” have form, or would “I” have no-form and, if so, where is a boundless or finite or formless form of “I” to be placed, found or located? The perplexing questioning goes around-in-circles and gets us nowhere. Despite all such efforts, the “I” still continues to delude us — the illusive “I” is to be found nowhere.

To cut it short, none of the above attempts to establish the existence of a self can be proven to be true. You can chose to believe in any one of them [at your own risk and expanse] but mere unestablished belief has never made anything true.

Those of us who hold any one of these above-mentioned views will always be grasping onto a “wrong view” for the sake of mental security. In fact, it may here be observed that this is exactly what most people, in fact, do — even though they may inherently know that such a wrong view, doctrine or theory does not insure their so-called security, even one iota — in any way.

What it ultimately comes down to is that the bhikkhu who understands the emptiness of all such untenable theories “abides, not subject to clinging to anything in this world.”

The term aggregates as described by the Buddha, sets aside the question of “fixed-self” as being delusive [as a result of the wrong question] and talks, instead, about parts of experience as mere [kalapas]: tiny points or pixel-like waves of motion in terms of related frames of references.

To continue the literary analogy, the point on the navigator’s paper map does not actually exist. The point in the navigational field does not exist because it is a hypothetical coming-together of frames of reference, which are always changing, moving infinitely quickly, relative to one another:

There is a momentary point of focus of inter-reacting impulses drawn from (i) body-reactions; (ii) one from changing feelings; (iii) one from movements of the mind; and (iv) one from mental relations to moving phenomena, but it is more like navigation based on relationships of particle-phenomena moving within empty space rather than a plotted-place on a seaman’s chart.

The fixed place on the map may be wrongly-understood as a “person,” but the confluence of converging-impulses, constantly moving within space would better be conceived as a field of causally-related inter-changing [impersonal] phenomena.

Now, coming back from space within which particles are moving within fields of phenomena, — coming back a little closer to something we can understand and visualize — the Buddha explains the irrelevance of the question of self by focusing analysis on the phenomena of form.

“Aggregate” may be taken to mean a totality of all experience dependent upon all factors of form made up of earth, water, fire and air and any combination made-up of them, according to the predominance of different factors in mixtures in combinations with the others.

### **Aggregate of form.**

It is defined as “form” [in the unsubstantial sense] because it is affected by the impermanence of any state of elements and their combination, **consisting of (i) solid, matter or resistance; (ii) liquid, fluidity or cohesiveness; (iii) energy, burning changing temperature, and (iv) aridity, mobility, expansion or contraction.**

“Form” so defined is also dependent on changing factors and conditions; thus, “form,” so defined, is totally without fixed-substance.

Due to the changing nature at all times of the experience of the senses in contact with phenomenal mixtures and substances of the earth, water, fire and air elements, in differing combinations, there is always uncertainty and

insecurity.

Nothing is what it seems to be, because nothing is stable and everything is always changing. Nothing can be fixed and grasped-onto —even as a idea — [such as fixed-form] because of the fleeting nature of phenomena, and this is very unsettling for the common man’s everyday mind when it is wanting and grasping after assurance of some kind of permanency, solidity and absolute certainty.

The unsettling mental problem is that the mind, wanting and needing some sense of security in what it assumes to be a fixed-scheme of experienced of things, is never, never-ever satisfied. What the mind ironically wants, [when it is thus deluded], is a system of absolute permanency, which it can count-on in any set of circumstances, which could invariably be anticipated and calculated to happen in a certain way which is acceptable to volition, but this is a view which is ultimately based on delusion and ignorance of things the way they really are.

The problem is “volition” or what the mind wants, so we shall have to study volition more carefully later on as we go along.

To help us in our perplexity, the Buddha gives a **series of similes** which help illustrate the impermanence of each of the **five aggregates**, as supposed substances and permanent states:

We shall follow the text of Bhikkhu Bodhi’s lecture here [with some interpolations]

**First simile:**

Regarding “form,” the Buddha compares form to a bunch of bubbles floating in the Ganges which his listeners could visually see or imagine, based on their own experience in the India of those days. We are told that, if a man of keen eye-sight were to look carefully at such a lump of foam, he would see that it was empty, hollow and void, and, then, as the point [or tenor] of the figurative comparison, the simile says that, in the same way, if the examiner carefully inspects any such clump of foam with careful and wise attention, he will find it as empty, hollow and void.

Here, — [with a knowing chuckle] — Bhikkhu Bodhi explains that this is the way physicists explain matter and form today, and he illustrates by using the analogy [M0059] of an atom being compared to something the size of a football field, with the nucleus being compared to a basketball in the middle of the field, and he compares various flies buzzing around within the field to what could be comparatively-viewed as electrons and particles, with the space

between the basketball and the flies as being open and empty.

So it is with everything: if we go in and are able to explain micro-cosmically, what gives the impression of solidity, externally, is that, when these particles and electrons come together, with their binding force, they give the impression of being a unity with convincing, compact solidity substantiality and sustainability, although we know that if we were to study using the instruments and capacities of high technology, we would find that everything which came under the scope of our investigation would be similarly and ultimately be empty — and so it is with the particles and atoms of the human body too — others' bodies and our bodies too.

### Aggregate of feeling

#### Second simile:

Next, comes the aggregate of the **feelings** simile (vedana). Feeling is not emotion but a simple affective quality of experience, that is to say “how” we experience the quality of things, with the experience, for example, having the quality of:

- (i) Pleasant feelings
- (ii) Painful feelings or
- (iii) Neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings - [neutral]

Bhikkhu Bodhi calls it “modality” ranging from pleasant though painful to neutral feelings. Even our feelings are changing, dependent on arising factors and conditions, as we are in the process of experiencing them.

Bhikkhu Bodhi also reminds us that another way of talking about them is to classify the six kinds of feelings according to where they come from [M0059]. For example through contact to/with the (i) eye; (ii) ear; (iii) nose (iv) tongue; and (v) mental faculties. This means that contact and experience are resultant from having a body and feelings are resultant from contact to body sense and mental contact and dependent relations determine feelings in the interconnectedness of things. Feelings can please and uplift us but also lead to disappoint us or leave us feeling indifferent.

How are we to understand this further?

We look at the Buddha's simile on the feelings.

The simile to illustrate feelings is a water bubble caused by a drop which falls on the surface of the water, and each time such a water bubble drops on the surface, it causes what appears (at least) to be the form of a bubble-like

formation.

In the rain the surface of a pond will appear to be all covered with bubbles caused by water drops actively impacting on the water, similarly, causing each bubble impacting, to be forming such a bubble-like formation which then pops as the water follows its gravitational tendencies again to become level with the surface of the water. Such a process can be compared with the impacting of a contact which arises into a sense or mental field and thereby causes an instantaneous bubble of feeling which arises and then follows its natural tendency to flow back to a balanced and neutral level again.

Every feeling may be compared to a water bubble which arises for an infinitesimal duration and then pops as a part of a process with no permanency — because feelings like water bubbles are ever arising and breaking-up.

Even though we seem to be having the same continuing feelings of persisting pleasure or pain, [or indifference] if one examines the process of feelings with close attention, one will see this as just a “momentary continuity” ... a continuity of momentary, incremental feelings which have the same qualities as impulses and, therefore, seem to be continuing with an on-going unbroken reality.

To reiterate, impulses of feeling are like the bubbles which arise and break, arise and break, arise and break, [in a series in which each one is separate and impermanent] ... and so on, ... and so on ... and they keep on continually doing-so until factors and conditions change and the factors conditioning feeling change so the qualities of feelings change along with them.

Not only do bubbles of feeling arise and break, arise and break, but there is an imperceptible interval in between them, so the implication is that if we are observant, we can cut feelings at any point in the continuum following a break in impulses, but it takes a very attentive mind to watch and observe and be aware and be able to do that.

In short, during a break in the normally unnoticeable increments of feeling make a clean break in between them. It goes without saying that one must be an advanced practitioner to be able to do this. Monastics can, but there are very few laymen who would even believe it may be possible, — and this brings us to the end of the second simile.

**Aggregate of perception**

**Third simile:**

Soon we will come to the third simile which will be preceded by a long introduction concerning terminology, following the motto: “Before you proceed, define your terms.

Next, we deal with what is translated from Pali (sanna) as **perception**), which in Buddhist terms [as opposed to conventional terms] is a particular mental function of the mind which selects and identifies the features of the phenomenal field under observation [“phenomenal field”] cannot be taken as objective now that we have dropped the misleading term “mind-objects.”]

Before we look at the actual simile, let’s first take an investigative approach to some of our terminology:

Perception identifies the appearance of fields of phenomena as being of particular types, and perception is responsible for the different conceptual fields which we use for understanding our experiences. Thus, sanna or perception has a wide range: beginning from the simple, primary and elementary experience of bare arising phenomenal perceptions and continuing on up and through to more complex types of mental conceptual operations.

An explanation would be in the words of the text, “it perceives that it perceives and is, therefore, called perception,” which would designate an ongoing operation or activity within the process.

We must note here that “perceiving perceiving” is like “knowing knowing” which in both cases precludes a person as go-between i.e. — This means there are no longer the “knower” and the “known” as two separate entities, but only active awareness of flowing [as verb], which we may call or designate as a flowing [noun-gerund] inherent in the process. [The syntax of the sentence actually describes the flowing process, starting from verb which becomes or takes on (at least conceptually) of a verbal gerundial form which is working as a noun].

This new way of explaining, we may repeat, to be sure we make our point, is philosophically novel and interesting because it implies that (i) action of perceiving has preceded (ii) perception as an already conceived thing so, (as has been stated above) we may as well understand sanna as (i) “perceiving [verbally] as (ii) perceiving [gerundively],” first, as a mental activity and, secondly, as a function, operation or activity.

Within the sense of the Dhamma, what this means that there is no activity other than arising increments of “perceiving appearing and ceasing” in a continuum of such increments which appears and seems, [if not put to the test of close analysis], to flow continuously and, therefore, be taken to be one unity

with continuity.

This is one way of “trying” to explain sanna, but, as may be expected, the functionality of the operation when, in its own turn, is broken down into parts, is also much more complex than it might, at first, have seemed. It is not a unity. It starts as an activity of picking-up and receiving and recognizing such simple aspects such as blue, yellow, red, white as aspects of perception and then the process goes on ...

The first moment of recognition is an action [which becomes, at least in words, a function] which is only one of many aspects within the process of recognition.

Sanna/perception starts with the first contact and continues through multiple stages which keep changing as long as information is afterwards added to the original impression, thus, still incrementally receiving and processing, even at a later date and even over longer periods of time in which factors and conditions can still keep changing and the resultant memory impressions are added to the original store of increments.

Perhaps as a warning, before continuing, so that our thinking does not get off track, and lead to misunderstanding, we should stop to explain, here, that the functions of the aggregates are all happening at one and the same time, and there is no mental way that the functioning of one aggregate can ever be isolated from the functioning of others.

In trying to be better able to analyze and understand them and their simultaneous functioning within the overall process of experiencing and thinking, we must stress that we can only talk about one aggregate and one factor and function at one time.

However, (as we have observed with the changing of the elements) if we can see and determine which one of the aggregates is primary and dominant, at any one given moment, this will also be beneficial for our understanding.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, when it concerns the five aggregates, usually the aggregate which we can observe as the most prominent is sanna/perception, which thereby allows us to identify with what is happening in the phenomenal field of observation, *which is usually also visual, but of course need not be* because there are six classes within the aggregate of sanna — [the Pali word, sanna, here, being preferential, to the English word “perception,” — with all of its conventional connotations and allusions. In English, nobody knows exactly what “perception” means because of its many emotive and romantic associations and connotations.

**Note: the words emotive and emotion do not belong in a discussion of sanna; they are off-the point, and come under investigation of feeling, so let's set them in suspension, for now, until they appear within their own classification at a later stage of the analytical process.**

**The six senses [in the Pali rendering] are (i) form, (ii) sound, (iii) odor, (iv) tactile touch and (v) mental thoughts.**

### **Third simile:**

**The Buddha uses the third simile to make this intention clear, and the simile goes like this:**

**Someone is travelling through the desert and sees a “mirage,” which according to the Buddha, gives us a delusive perception — the phenomena being perceived is actually only an illusion — but that mirage or image inserts itself into the mode of perception which is sustained in mind, the memory and conception, based on not knowing it is, in fact, based on false perception, — the ignorance which accepts and *uses* it as supposedly being real as the appearance, the senses and the mental perspectives are retained and processed in memory.**

**This is what “seems or appears” to happen, (when, actually, since everything consists only of impulses and vibrations), though the image received must be a delusive view or picture, which, paradoxically, might, indeed, be at least *useful*, — as far as it goes, — for giving us a set of referents within our surroundings, but, here, such a “wrong view” has reality, only in terms of the conventional tools which are used to register the mirage, along with all the others, and, subsequently, use it relative [to them] for the sake of orientation within the scheme of seeing things as conventional realities within a merely mentally, conveniently, constructed world.**

**That our sense of self and our location and orientation [relative to the phenomenon] is a false image deters us in no way from using it, in conjunction with simultaneously arising and related-processes, because that is our habit. That is how we normally relate to things in the conventional world.**

**Indeed, sometimes we believe in plotting-out our territory in a way which we strongly, feel not only some sense of propriety, but we can come to regard as our “own territory,” which we would accordingly be prepared to aggressively fight-for and defend.**

**This shows and gives evidence of a delusive and self-protective sense-possession which could easily lead to hostile confrontation, and we ask, ourselves” “What in the world could be more ignorant?” Why fight over**

ownership of an impermanently arising and disappearing mirage consisting ultimately only of impulses?

Sometimes, we fool ourselves because we want to be fooled, but that is another matter which will be discussed in another section.

It must be stressed again, here, that the word “perception” as used to designate sanna in terms of incrementally divisible images of phenomena is something markedly different from the word “perception” in the way we generally use it in everyday language — especially when “perception” refers to or implies a subjective reaction to things as objects.

We need to note, at the same time, that within the purely phenomenal context which is designated by sanna, — which means divisible functional/mechanical phenomenal process, — we must be very careful never to use the term “subjective,” for the reason that it does not fit into the above-mentioned impersonal realm of mind-body mechanical phenomenal functions but, rather, suggests something which may be misconstrued or viewed as having something to do with a self which is wholly but delusively convinced it has its own personal or subjective point of view.

You cannot have your cake and eat it to, so you must choose between the two.

The present writer prefers to avoid words like “subjective” and “objective,” which are suggestive a sense of “person” and a way of cognizing consequently leading to “Wrong View.”

The problem with words like “subjective” and “objective” is that they posit a person as an observer. They posit an observer and an observed. Now, we ask, if there is no self, what is mind? That is the question, and the answer might be given that mind may be considered as a phenomenal mental process.

Moreover, it is possible that the process of the mind has within it an inherent function which seeks to attain and maintain a balance which establishes coordination and a clear awareness of things “as they really are” for the sake of unshakable stability and equanimity.

If the point of the exercise is mental clarity and mental purity, we do not want the mind to be hindered by such a subjective “wrong view” with a self-centered focus and range of experience.

Nature is bigger than just “self-centered,” and so we, sensibly, choose the broader view.

An accompanying danger of subjective wrong view [misperception of sanna] is that the subjective self may develop delusions of permanence and some form

or forms of lasting pleasure and perhaps, in particular, even some sense of grasping after Eternal Selfhood, which would continue to be fueled by all the energy being burned-up and wasted in craving and clinging and grasping to things which we think we “perceive” but, like a mirage in the desert, are not really there.

Such perceptions are explained in the simile above ... as a “mirage” to give us an understanding that, although things may seem and appear to have some sort of reality, ... some kind of substantiality, solidity and stability, promising some kind of permanent pleasure, *pointing in the direction of fulfillment*, ... — if we may coin a simile of our own — the pointing is like that of a pointer-dog — pointing in the direction of satisfaction, when there is actually nothing there to be satisfied with.

“What a dirty trick!” you might think, but the mind is full of such tricks to keep pulling and drawing us through the inexplicably magnetic-attraction to run after objects in the mind which we might readily want but usually can never have.

Indeed, there is no written rule anywhere that says the world is there to make us happy. The basic facts are that we live in imminent danger every moment and are lucky to survive at all without becoming the prey of some predator for the sake of its need for nourishment.

The greatest irony, which man does not see is that “he,” without realizing it subjectively, is the largest and most-cunning and most dangerous and dumbest of predators.

Man in his quest to be satisfied will continue to consume everything he can get, until there is nothing left.

#### **Fourth aggregate**

Next, we come to the fourth aggregate, — **the sankhara aggregate**, — [which the Buddha will also illustrate using a simile], but before we get into that, ... let’s mention that translating the word, sankhara, is subtle and difficult, because sankhara can be contemplated and analyzed on so many levels.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, however, knowing the problem, cuts to the quick of the matter when he states that sankhara as a volitional aggregate can be broken down into six classes of volition [cetana]:

We shall attempt to paraphrase his words, at this particular point, for the purpose of relying on his expert opinion. He says there are volitions, intentions, and purposes regarding the six types of objects:

He also tells us that the Pali text is not so clear on this point:

Indeed, Bhikkhu Bodhi starts out, stating quite-frankly that if one translates the original text, literally, word for word, it comes out to say that:

“They [the volitions] are constructing the constructed; therefore, they are called the “constructing,” [which, upon first] look, seems to contain some confusion in the agreement between verb and object.]

If we may explain in other words, to make the point more clearly, it means the volitions are “making-it-up” as they go along, as in a “game of make-believe,” as in an exercise of self-indulgent delusive-imagination. We must be warned to stand back and see the volitions the way they are ... and not get drawn into them.

We must be warned that volition and confusion will always fight, back-to-back, like defensive warriors, to get what they want, and no one can get in-between them when they are in action.

However, the good news is that it doesn’t make any sense at all to try to fight against what is “fabricated by the delusions of imagination,” because all that one actually has to do is just stand back and be detached and observe that arising volitions are merely “wished-for thinking,” with no substantive reality. And, the more the volitions wish-for, the more substance and matter they add to the developing image.

All we have to do is stand back and view them for what they are, as being similar to magicians-tricks [which people are presently playing on themselves] — somewhat similarly to in the previous simile.

If we know that the “volition-ing” [let’s make it a verbal now] is comparable to “wishing,” “wanting,” we will come to know that all volitions are empty of anything which we, through “delusively desiring,” put in there.

Paradoxically and ironically, there was, is and never will-be anything within any such volition except the momentary energy being wasted in the action of wishing it.

What appears to make it even more complex than it really is, in daily-life, may be explained by the simple statement that “wishing,” can of course, also be replaced by the terms “intending,” “hoping,” “planning,” and “expecting” — up through levels of complexity which may (even in imagination) reach to an expected result at the end of a projected life ... etc., etc,

When we see the impossibility of this, we may rightfully ask: “How could we be so ignorant as to fool ourselves about our future prospects like that?”

We may also explain, further, that such “constructing,” “building,” and “adding-to” is conditioned by impulses and flashes in the mind which could come from anywhere within memory or fantasy of any experience — from the primitive to the social to the cultivated.

To keep things civilized, let’s take, for example, the idea of a “perfect wedding.” It is only an idea which starts as an impulse but which can grow into gigantic proportions. So, similarly, all volitioning which starts in the mind can grow to such gigantic proportions, depending on how much imagination we put into self-indulgently hoping and wishing and fooling ourselves.

Actually, speaking more realistically, any volition, (no matter how small), is “conditioned,” — dependent upon expectation — and it is this conditioning which makes us dissatisfied when we do not get our ways and wishes, beginning from the simplest up to the most-complex of levels.

“Volition cannot be unconditioned.” It is as simple as that: and volition is, therefore, yoked [again, back-to back] to suffering and frustration.

While there is such a thing as the “unconditioned,” it does not fit [is outside] this classification of volitioning and does not fit into the sequence of this present discussion.

To reaffirm Bhikkhu Bodhi’s postulation, there is what is formed or conditioned in sankhara or volitional formations which mentally “shapes” and builds-them-up, [in other words] enhances them, appears to instill-life-to-them, to make them become what we suppose they “are” within our craving and grasping minds, — despite the fact that we are only vainly projecting a mental dream or mirage of what they “are or may become” based upon the way we delusively want and desire them to be.

Knowing-knowing may observe what we are doing or planning on being, but the gravity of attraction and the pulling of craving will probably be stronger than this knowing, and so we will go on, in bad faith, to deceive ourselves, even as intelligent beings, to knowingly allow ourselves to be hypnotized by the power of attraction.

Often, we knowingly lead ourselves into dissatisfaction and suffering and destruction because the power of the will and determination needed to avoid attraction are lacking. Often, we are ashamed of ourselves because we have knowingly acted in bad faith and this is another kind of suffering which many people feel but never face-up-to or investigate and analyze, due to ignorance.

In summation, to reiterate, we must understand and concede that volitions

and volitioning are not necessarily going to make us happy and satisfied, and that this is the most perplexing paradox in life which worldly people have trouble seeing and dealing with, — a paradox which, consequently, causes most people to deceive themselves continually and consequently causes them to suffer resultant disillusionment, disappointment and ultimate dissatisfaction.

Happily and surprisingly, concerning sankhara, ironically, in contrast to the worldly view, we must also understand that as volitional activities are always in the process of shaping and altering and modifying the aggregates, such modifications will not always necessarily have ill-effects but some sankhara may lead to the good. It all depends on the way the mind is tending.

For example, our wishing-wanting-activities may actually give rise in the mind-body to any volitional activity, ranging from wanting, on a higher level, to perform right actions resulting in a fortunate rebirth, or, if we take a more everyday example, just the activity of wanting to speak kindly and morally correctly.

If we analyze the process, first, the wanting to speak causes nerve impulses, which, in turn, trigger subsequent impulses [motions/actions] so that the vocal chords, in turn start to vibrate and this in turn causes a further series of impulses/actions, so the mouth may begin to form a sound, which may have been volitionally-motivated by a “needing of nourishment” [in an either skillful or unskillful way], which may, develop and become a word [or even a group of words] which can lead to satisfactory [or unsatisfactory] kammic results, — either, immediately, — within this proximate world, — or within the process of resultant rebirth/kamma, caused due to a leaning tendency towards the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of any and all volitional activity, according to arising and changing volitional intentions.

The important thing to notice at this point is this: In the incremental intervals between impulses, the well-trained meditative mind can develop the skill to get in between unskillful and skillful impulses and cut-off and stop harmful processes or motivate and stimulate skillful processes.

Another interesting point to remember is that, according to our intentions, our feelings continue changing, when volitioning is acting upon perception of purpose. This means that, as perceptions are arising, due to prior conditioning, they may already be expecting something to be a certain way in accordance with desired concomitant conditions.

Perplexity of purpose arises when things turn out differently than expected. In other words, we are expecting the data of experience to arise in a certain way [according to our purposes (volitions)] and when this does not occur, we have

**trouble accepting things the way they happen, “the way they really are.”**

**If “the way things really are” does not suit our purposes, so we find the facts as they actually are unsatisfactory and maybe get even angry, to the point of becoming self-assertive or even aggressive.**

**We think we are right in demanding our expectations, but “the fool” in this human comedy is the deluded one who has been doing the volitioning in the first place and who, out of ignorance cannot accept the actual facts as they are unfolding before him without evidencing dissatisfaction.**

**In short — stated concisely — the problem is not with the way things are but, quite paradoxically, with the way we vainly wish, imagine and want them to be.**

**This is what it means when some translators talk about the “coloring” of experience, — imbuing or tinting experience with desired qualities and properties — seeing things the way we wish or want them to be — as opposed to how they actually are in reality.**

**This is a discrepancy drives some people nearly crazy when they cannot have or get what they want.**

**In fact, most of us have, ourselves, been in just such a situation and have, maybe, only grown out of it by eventually developing acceptance and maturity.**

**Some of us are still vainly fighting the world because it did not turn out the way we wanted it to be.**

**To approach the problem more analytically, and pinpoint our mistake, — instead of seeing the facts of reality, — neutrally, with no bias, — the volitional formations affect the way we perceive things, dependent on factors and conditions, based on wanting and believing and mistakenly “expecting” the way they are going to be.**

**“What ignorance!” we say, but, instead of blaming people for not understanding and for “coloring” their “wishful thinking,” we should feel deep compassion for their unnecessarily-self-inflicted-suffering and, if possible, try to teach or help them learn the nature of ultimate reality — even though it may be difficult for them to rip out the roots of ignorance when they are already deeply-imbedded within the deluded minds of men.**

**What we are — we are dependently — depending on factors and conditions which have arisen previously; moreover, what we want also depends on factors and conditions which have happened in the mind previously. We, as**

individual entities, are not all the same and our reactions to external contacts can vary quite differently, depending on the characteristics and the qualities of previous mind-experiences.

Let's take the way one may react to a new baby for instance: a mother may react one way; while a brother or a sister may react differently; while the father [who did not want children] might react in quite another way; which would causally be different, again, from someone who just hates children for any number of different reasons.

People react in different ways to different things, and we have no way of predicting the pattern. We cannot predict our inherent patterns and actions, and we certainly cannot predict the patterns and actions of others.

The fact is that if we take any phenomena and put it to the sankhara test, there will be as many ways of people seeing it as there are people seeing it. No two people react in the same way to the same thing, because their experiences could have never been the same [even identical twins see things and react differently, dependent on differing perceptions retained in memory].

No two people's experiences in the past could ever have been the same, and so there is no predicting the way people see what they want to see or like and dislike or want or don't want or love and hate in differing degrees depending on the feelings of the moment related to feelings and resultant actions in the past.

Another phenomena to use as an example could be picturesque mountain scenery from the window of a train: A loving-couple together might be enjoying it, whereas a lonely man on his own might be wishing he had someone to share it with, while a man who is wholly obsessed with greed or lust for power may not even see the scenery at all because of the intensity of the volitional feelings going on in his mind.

Bhikkhu Bodhi has quoted an apt anecdote to illustrate the point by saying that, "The thief who sees a saint will be wondering where his money is."

This is the problem with volitioning. It prevents the volitionally-deluded one from seeing phenomena as they actually are because the sankhara-mind is delusively changing the mental image into what it wants and needs it to be.

The eye sees what it is looking for instead of seeing what is actually before it.

To give another example: How would you feel if you were a loving father, and you knew the various volitionally-based ways that people were looking at your beloved and lovely, eighteen year-old daughter.

**One might be an educator and view her as a good student with potential, but every boy in the class will have a different way of looking at her, dependent on his individual volitional inclinations, and similarly it would be so with every man on the street and every man in the world.**

**What people want is not always going to be what one wishes for the daughter, especially when some or many or most who see her would just want to use her to satisfy one inclination or another.**

**If you now think and understand that it is appalling the way most people would look at things with selfish volitional inclinations, you might also take an investigative and analytical look at yourself and examine the way you look at things. Is there any reason that makes you any different from others?**

**You may want to love and protect your fellow beings or you may want to simply use them for some self-centered reason to selfishly have your way with them. Or your volitions may be mixed — sometimes one way and sometimes the other, as for example often happens when one is married.**

**Only you can know what goes on in your mind, and, unfortunately, if you are like most others, [with no mental training], most of the time you will be unaware of and confused about your true motives.**

**We all have our own way of looking at things, and, when we analyze the root of our own inclinations we will see that the root cause of our view is not always going to be “desirable” in the good sense of the word. Indeed, the reason there is so much suffering in the world is based on undesirable wrong view dependent on selfish and unwholesome volitions.**

**It should be noted, however, here, that we do not intend to paint a wholly dark and pessimistic view of human nature, because we also realize that the good mother, the good father, the good educator and the saint will all base their views on wanting the good for others.**

**However, since there are very “few with little dust in their eyes,” we have to be careful in dealing with the volitions of others [and ourselves], through being aware of, for example, a mental range, from wily wants of selfish people, to tricks of petty crooks and running all the way down and through the primitive needs of sexual predators and mass murders and much worse.**

**We must learn to analyze our minds to discover which of our needs are desirable in the wholesome sense and which of our needs are based on our own base desires and instincts which are the opposite of desirable and wholesome.**

**Through practice, we must learn to analyze our own volitions and “nip them in the bud” whenever we see that they are not going to lead to the general good.**

**We all have primitive desires, in one way or another, which have come down to us through ages past, through the process of evolution, so, if we have not yet developed into saints, we must be careful when our volitions are selfishly-needy.**

**One more paradox of human nature is that it is one thing to see the bare selfish wants of others, but it is quite another thing to see and recognize them motivating unskillful behavior within ourselves. Such self-analysis is very difficult, because, inherent in volitioning, is the abovementioned tendency of fooling ourselves into delusively seeing unheedful wishes as being good and desirable and delusively justifying them.**

**We believe what we want to believe, so we do not see how the fulfillment of our selfish wishes may cause harm and unhappiness for others. Sometimes, we even blame others for not “going along with the game” and so “spoiling our fun” which seems natural enough to us from our own volitional point of view but can, in fact, be hurtful and harmful to others. A woman who dotes on her daughter’s happiness to the neglect of her husband might be one example. A man who wants to keep two or three wives for his own happiness and satisfaction cannot see that fulfillment of this wish may compromise the women’s happiness and he will be unlikely to agree with them if they tell him his behaviour is wrong.**

**It is good that not everybody is totally bad, based on his/her own volitions, for if that were the case, it would be difficult if not impossible to be optimistic. Knowing, however, that there are people who are “born into good circumstances” and who come to live amongst people “with good inclinations” is one positive and encouraging factor. A second optimistic factor is that, through following the instructions of the Buddha in the practice, there can be many who through investigation and analysis free themselves from the potentially bad karmic effects of their own volitioning.**

**Through following the practice, it is possible to be free.**

**To continue in the same vein, your thinking depends on where your thoughts go and, as you well-know, your thoughts can be wholesome and constructive rather than destructive.**

**Which way you go depends on the way you are tending, so it is good and imperative to be capable of discerning which way the mind is leaning,**

because, [as we all know], the mind in its volitioning is frequently wandering-off onto the wrong track, and, what is therefore, necessary for constructive security through mental action, is for the mind to be always discerning and watching and catching itself the moment which it starts wandering-off the path into unheedful and unwholesome ways and wishes.

You are your own best friend and it is important that you watch yourself in every action. Nobody else knows, what you are thinking or how best to guard your actions, so you have to be the one who helps yourself.

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Ironically, which way you go often also depends on your friends and how they are thinking of behaving.

Strictly speaking, you have two worst enemies: The first is your “self” and the second is your “friends.”

To reiterate, you should be watching (i) which way your own mind is tending (ii) as well the mental leanings of your friends. Just as one draft of wind can be enough to make a carefully built-up house of cards come toppling-down, so the arising a combination, together with your friends, of unwholesome factors, conditions and, volitions, is something against which you should always energetically strive and defend in order to avoid inevitable, resultant suffering and unhappiness.

We are reminded of the Buddhas simile: If you cannot find a good friend, be like the rhino and go alone.

The Buddha employs yet another simile, at this point, as an analogy, using a [plantain] or banana tree to explain the emptiness of everything which arises due to and dependent on volitioning:

In this analogy, a man is wanting some wood for his own purposes, so he goes out onto the forest and cuts down a plantain [banana] tree, thinking that when he peels-away the outward layers [rings] of the trunk, he will come to heartwood inside, but as the layers keep coming off, coil by coil, and he gets to the center. The heartwood which he volitionally expected and wanted is not there.

Inside, there is nothing there at the core and comparatively speaking everything arising out of volition is similarly empty.

To reiterate the point: The Buddha said that the volitional wishes are like the layers building-up and encircling the banana tree, and, so it is with everything which is the result of human wanting and desiring.

Extra and added mental wants are like more and more surrounding layers of the banana tree-trunk, growing around in rings, slowly building-up in the process of volitioning, but when you peel the rings apart, inside, there is nothing there.

If goes without saying that this is also true of the volitional view of self.

One can figuratively compare holding an onion to holding a view of self. When we hold an onion, we think we have something in hand, but as we peel-off the layers of the onion skin, one after another, in the end, there is nothing there.

Of course there are literal onions and literal banana trees but, we are speaking figuratively here.

Figuratively speaking, we make the analogy that every layer of the onion skin which we believe to be there may be compared to something we have “put there,” volitionally, due to [a mental action of] wishful thinking. Each layer we have put there is the result of prior volitional thinking: [in the first place] we want it there, for example, as a form of self-defensive or self assertive covering, simply for protection — and [further] what is, then, afterwards, added in mental sequence is what is build-up accumulating in differing layers of an imaginary personality or self which, in our minds, which we are convinced has not only stability, security and self-confidence but also a lot of other positive qualities or characteristics which merge together into a picture which develops to become the way we want or would like to be.

It is a wholly delusional picture, of course, but, nevertheless, we would believe it to be worth fighting for.

Due to wrong view, we want self to be there [exist], and we want to protect it too and would be following the law of mental gravity, going downhill, be willing to become aggressive to do so.

This becomes a cause of suffering in imaginary people in imaginary situations — much like flitting imaginary images in self-made movies in the mind.

Paradoxically, everything which we volitionally put into building-up and protecting the delusional phenomena of self is, at heart, nothing more than a composite of wishful intentions. If you peel away all the mentally projected-levels of inherent mental volitioning, there is nothing there which may be proven to have any substance or relation to any surrounding elements.

How we create our supposed-self may be compared to conjuring a magical trick of the mind. How we make this imaginary phenomena of self disappear and go away is not so easy, due to the ironically, self-assertive defense

mechanisms which we have unknowingly but willfully built-into it.

This is double-bind, of our own creation, within the mind, and how we can get out of it is by painstakingly analyzing the workings of the mind until we understand and know them. It all comes down to consciousness of mind and proper volition.

There is a lot more we could say about volitioning and sankhara formations, here, about self-perception and self-protection as being comparable to a banana tree, but for the sake of structural balance, let's begin to turn our investigation in the direction of what the Buddha said about consciousness and the six senses.

In summary, the Buddha's simile about the banana tree illustrates how there is nothing which can be taken out of volitional construction which can be called a true self.

What is wrapped-up in the projected protective layers of self is — “no-self.”

It is a difficult simile, but some see its meaning in terms of ultimate reality [in which there are no objective-things but only phenomenal impulses].

It is a sad if not tragic irony is that in the commonplace and everyday realm of the mundane mind, you get what you are looking for. You see what you want to see. You get what you want. Hence comes the cryptic saying: “Be careful what you want or you might get it.”

Our intentions or our volitions shape the four aggregates to make them seem to become what we want. The term “formations” means a changing or shaping of phenomenal things to satisfy our selves according to our unsubstantial wishes. It signifies man's mental fabricational activity of constructing and setting-things-up only in order to suit himself.

### **Fifth Aggregate**

Now we may discuss the fifth aggregate which is **consciousness** [or vinyana] [MN059\_MN-010.MP3] which means some sort of discriminating factor or function of knowing.

It cognizes: What does it cognize? It cognizes, for example, salt, sweet, bitter, etc., but this does not tell us much yet because it is still too close to sanna/perception.

To make a distinction, between consciousness and perception — perception [sanna] has only a selective function — a discriminative function — perception is what fixes on particular aspects of the field and identifies or labels and conceives them as they are arising and classifies and them into recognizable

and communicable concepts or constructs. This is the aggregate of perception  
In terms of consciousness, we get a further distinction [as compared to perception/sanna] because consciousness is distinguished into six sense states:

Through the sense faculties, we experience the arising of:

Eye consciousness

Ear consciousness

Nose consciousness

Tongue consciousness

Body consciousness [and]

Mind consciousness

The function of consciousness is to serve as the “light of awareness,” which “illuminates,” phenomena as they are arising based on a particular sense faculty, which thereby “illuminates” a certain objective field through that particular sense faculty.

Thus, for example, we may have awareness arising through the eye and illuminating what we call form — illuminating the entire domain of form through the eye.

Ear consciousness, similarly, is the basic consciousness which arises through the ear faculty and similarly illuminates the field or domain of sound. It makes the entire domain of sound “acceptable” to our awareness, whereas, the mere perception of sound would be merely limited to the mental functioning of seizing upon selected [already-experienced and known] categorized aspects and, then, identifying them as ... the familiar sound of a friend’s voice, ... the sound of a particular bird ... or the barking of your dog

And consciousness works similarly with the other senses.

What we must be careful to note, here, at the level of consciousness, however, is that in addition to the volitioning, which we have discussed above already we also have another further kind of self-delusion arising within the mind accompanying consciousness.

The simile the Buddha uses to illustrate this consciousness is that of a magician who plays a trick on the crowd which no one can see, but which another magician standing behind him would see. In the trick, the magician uses a delicate silk scroll, rolled up his sleeve, which, in the course of moving his arms in performing the mantras, he is able to then quickly pull out of his

sleeve to exhibit what looks to the onlookers to be for example an elephant, although someone who comes up close or stands behind to investigate will see the nature of the trickery of producing such an image, which is simply a deceptive trick [using delusion].

Likewise, consciousness conjures up stories about our lives and conjures up ideas like ... “my country,” ... “my family”... “my property” ... “not your property” ... “my career” ... “ my money” ...etc., etc., all of which are only figuratively-fabricated, [in the same way which we say lies are made-up and fabricated] in the field of consciousness. Such images in the mind are fabricated in the way which we make-up stories and, then, after having creating such illusions for ourselves, we eventually end up believing in them.

Consciousness conjures up a lot of other things like love, hate and a whole range of feelings and emotions which we both imagine and believe to be true, [in the same way which we imagine ourselves interacting with a substantial world to be true], and we hold onto false images of our “selves” and our lives, the way we want them to be, and if anyone were to question our delusions we would go on the defensive.

“How could we all be so ignorant as to be fooled?” someone may ask.

The answer is that we, as tricksters have fooled ourselves in the way that master magicians who pull tricks, would be quick to deny that they are merely creating illusions.

We know we are tricksters and yet we go on tricking ourselves. We fight when people see through our tricks and challenge us and we go on the defensive because we don’t want to see or admit the truth about our basic delusions and self-deceptions

The Simile of the magician is used for teaching monks and practitioners to get in close to the movements of the mind and to examine what is really happening. The Buddha is talking to those who are ready to see through the tricks of consciousness to see ultimate reality the way it is.

The Buddha is talking to the ones with little dust in their eyes.

In summation, Bhikkhu Bodhi [MN059\_MN-010.MP3] has said quite concisely that consciousness of awareness is what lights-up the screen clearly enough for us to see that the moving-picture [of so-called life] is a total delusion, even though we may be enjoying the ‘moving picture’ in the mind (as opposed to realistically seeing-through-it, as being delusory.)

This is how we get rid of the three OBSESSIONS of “Me,” “I,” and “Mine.”

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Looking back at an overview of the aggregates, Bhikkhu Bodhi, is also careful to point-out that the action of the five aggregates take place simultaneously, to one degree or another, in any mind-body experience and not just one-by-one as we might be falsely led to imagine.

Here, we should stick to Bhikkhu Bodhi's comments closely, because the analysis begins to get technical. [MN060\_MN010.Mp3]

He says that, usually, only two or three of the aggregates will take predominance, depending on what is being experienced, while one or two of the aggregates may be secondary.

For example, in some experiences, the body may be the predominant aggregate, with consciousness through the senses or internally reflecting and judging coming next, while there will also be some perception, sanna, present, and all these three come together, as it were, in a bundle of volitional formations.

If we imagine all the combinations of aggregates possible with different possible series of predominance the number would be considerable. Wouldn't it?

As all these possible combinations sound rather abstract, here an example would help, so Bhikkhu Bodhi gives one to illustrate:

Suppose we are looking for a friend coming around the corner, then, perception will be the predominant characteristic, accompanied by feeling of pleasure or disappointment, plus volition of what you want to do with your friend and so on.

Supposing you have a project, the first characteristic will be volition, then feeling, then perception all present within the factor of consciousness, within the whole picture, so to speak.

In each instance of experience, we would have to understand the conditions of the aggregate's origin and disappearance or arising and passing away through (i) conditions or (ii) or how the arising is dependent on nutriment (ahara).

While there are four types of nutriment:

1. material food
2. contact
3. volition
4. consciousness,

All of these four are not our primary concern here, because all we need to know is that when any one of the aggregates appears, it needs nutriment, it seeks nutriment, not only in the case of the body but in the case of all five aggregates: i.e.

1. Body
2. Feelings
3. Perception
4. Volition
5. Consciousness

What we must understand is that ignorance of craving is what starts a stream of consciousness caused by what consciousness wants.

Initially, there is CONTACT which is the condition necessarily for feelings and what this means is there is a meeting of a (i) sense object, (ii) sense faculty, and (iii) a certain kind of consciousness.

Initially, consciousness goes out to meet the six sense objects and the sense object comes through the door of perception and touches consciousness when contact takes place. Then, feeling arises. Then, perception arises. Then, volition arises. Then, these three aggregates all take *contact* as their strong supporting condition, with the additional supporting conditions of: ignorance, craving and karma.

Then, the fifth aggregate, the aggregate of consciousness, has as its condition nama-rupa, which translates sometimes as mind-body or name and form, i.e. understood as Form+ the three other above mentioned aggregates + contact and intention.

Without the body as a physical organism, without a body with physical and sense faculties, consciousness cannot occur.

Consciousness always arises in association with feeling, perception and volitional formations.

Without feeling, perception, and volition, consciousness cannot occur.

A simile from the Buddha, quoted by Bhikkhu Bodhi, here, is that consciousness and form are like two sheaves of straw which are set up to lean together and support one another. They are mutually supporting conditions which strengthen and support one another.

**In addressing the question, “Where does consciousness come from?” Bhikkhu Bodhi answers that consciousness comes from ignorance in a previous existence and resultant craving in a new existence.**

**It is said that the ignorance and craving combined have brought the stream of consciousness from a past life into a new life, and the particular mode or direction that consciousness takes is governed by kamma.**

**These are the conditions for the arising of the five aggregates and when the conditions cease, from moment to moment, when a particular contact ceases, then the feeling, perception, and volitional formations which depend upon that contact, also cease.**

**A shorter explanation would be that, if there is no contact or connection, there is no reaction. A simple comparison would be that if there were no electrical connection, there would be no sound from the radio.**

**In summation, when contact ceases, then, feelings, perceptions and volitional formations cease. A good comparison would be that, similarly, if a body gets no nourishment, it keeps getting thinner and thinner until it ceases. We can say that, when the five aggregates get no nutrition through contact to what they need to feed on, they cannot arise. This explains how arising is always dependent on nourishment.**

**It is interesting in this connection to illustrate that every moment during which the body is consuming food as nutriment, the cells that make-up the body are always arising, as some are ceasing as they burn-up whatever nourishment they are getting and other cells which are just beginning to get nourishment are just beginning to arise.**

**And so it is with everything phenomenal.**

**All of the aggregates need some kind of nutriment or figurative feed-in, in order to keep continuing. When there is nothing to nourish them because of lack of contact, they stop.**

**So understood, it is easy to see the impermanence and instability of the aggregates, because, if they cease to receive contact, they stop, just as when they have burnt-up all the energy available through contact, they stop.**

**So seen, it is easy to understand that impermanence is awareness of mere arising and passing of phenomena.**

**Thus the bhikkhu sees bodily and mental phenomena are arising and passing.**

**Thus the Bhikkhu sees how:**

- 1. Form — material phenomena in the body is constantly originating and passing away,**
- 2. Feelings — arising as phenomena are constantly originating, arising and passing away,**
- 3. Perceptions — arising as phenomena are constantly arising and passing away,**
- 4. Mental Formations — as conditioned volitions are constantly arising and passing away,**
- 5. Consciousness — as dependent mental wanderings are constantly arising and passing away**

So, when a bhikkhu's mindfulness becomes more fine and clearly-tuned, then the bhikkhu becomes capable of discerning the arising and passing away, on more and more subtle and subtle levels, until one can see and experience, through continuous practice, over a long period of time, how the mind builds-up the — momentum, sharpness, and steadiness to be able to see arising and passing away, many times, even in one second.

Usually, one will be contemplating on one's own aggregates, but eventually one will be able, additionally, to see the arising and passing away of all phenomena within the whole phenomenal field.

One will be able to see, too, that other beings are made of the same aggregates and, hence, are in the process of arising and passing away.

So one abides, also contemplating the arising and passing of others' aggregates with bare knowledge of mindfulness, and he dwells independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how a bhikkhu abides, contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the five aggregates affected by or subjected to clinging.

[MN060\_MN-010.MP3]

\*

Having completed the above commentary, Bhikkhu Bodhi goes on to the next section concerning the six sense bases:

## **2. The Six Bases)**

The sutta says:

40. "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-

objects in terms of the six internal and external bases.<sup>xxviii</sup> And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases? Here a bhikkhu understands the **eye**, he understands forms, and he **understands the fetter** that arises dependent on both; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen fetter, and how there comes to be the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of the abandoned fetter.

**Similarly,**

“He understands the ear, he understands **sounds** ...

He understands the nose, he understands **odours** ...

He understands the tongue, he understands **flavours** ...

He understands the body, he understands **tangibles** [touch] ...

He understands the mind, he understands **mind-objects**,

and he **understands the fetter that arises dependent on both;**

**and he also understands how**

**there comes to be the arising of the unarisen fetter, and how**

**there comes to be the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and how**

**there comes to be the future non-arising of the abandoned fetter.**

41. “In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects

**internally,**

**externally, and both**

**internally and externally ...**

And he abides

**independent,**

**not clinging to anything in the world.**

That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases.

**Bhikkhu Bodhi says that the theme of the Six Senses is explained, [in addition**

to and following the five aggregates], because one of the objectives of the Buddha's teaching is to overcome craving.

The Buddha claims that craving is the root cause of suffering [as explained in the Four Noble Truths].

And how does craving arise?

Craving arises through contact and feeling at the six sense bases, so in order to overcome craving, (i) one has to practice restraint of the senses and (ii) one has to delve more deeply into the nature of the six sense bases and all of the phenomena which arise through the six senses.

The Buddha taught that, without directly understanding the “all” — overall experience — everything — all phenomena — it is impossible to eliminate and to overcome suffering.

And we may ask, “What is it about this “all” which men cannot understand?”

And the answer would be, that without directly understanding the — eye, forms, eye consciousness, eye contact; and, similarly, without directly understanding the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body the mind, mental phenomena, mind consciousness, mind contact and the feelings which arise through mind contact, — it is impossible to eliminate craving and suffering.

But, by directly knowing all, by directly understanding *all phenomena*, it is possible to abandon suffering.

One has to directly know experience and understand the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind, in order to understand by observing through insight and focusing-in, until one finally understand each of the sense faculties and contemplates the sense faculties, [to us an analogy], almost as though one were looking at a microscopic level, to be able to see into the nature of the sense faculties — see their arising and passing away, their selfless nature, their unsatisfactory and selfish nature.

And, next, the text goes on, to mention that one understands the “fetter” that arises, dependent on both (i) the eye and (ii) form.

And what is the fetter? It is the eye the fetter of form or is form the fetter of the eye?

It is neither: It is the fetter itself which binds them, and the fetter is dependent on craving.

**Simile:**

Suppose we have a black bull and a white bull, joined together by a yoke, and

**the question is asked, “Is the black bull yoked to the white bull or is the white bull yoked to the black bull?”**

**What is the answer?**

**The answer is, “Neither.”**

**It is the yoke which fetters the two bulls.**

**The yoke is the craving and lust which join together the eye and form, and form keeps them bound-together to one another.**

**\***

**The fetter can also be explained in terms of three types of feeling:**

**pleasant,**

**unpleasant,**

**neutral.**

**Depending on the eye and form, eye-consciousness arises, and dependent on that, contact and feeling arise, which is experienced as**

**pleasant,**

**unpleasant,**

**neutral.**

**When one is touched by a pleasant feeling, then the underlying tendency towards attraction and lust is inherent within it, so the fetter of craving or lust arises.**

**When one is touched by a painful feeling, if one has the tendency towards sorrow, lamentation and grief [and becomes ready to beat one’s breast], then the tendency to aversion lies within one, which arises as ill-will or hate as a dependent reaction.**

**When one is touched by a neutral feeling — that is a feeling which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant — if one does not understand the danger and the drawbacks and the escape from such feelings, then, the underlying tendency towards ignorance lies within one.**

**And the same thing is said, subsequently, of course, with regard to the ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.**

**And so the three types of feeling arise, through the six senses, and, then, if one responds to these feelings with:**

**craving, towards the pleasant feelings;**

**aversion, towards the painful disagreeable feeling;  
and with a dull ignorance towards the neutral feelings:**

*Those are the Fetters With Regard to the Sense Faculties,* and eventually one comes to understand these “arising of the unarisen fetters,” by responding to the three fetters of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings, through noticing and paying close attention and giving proper heed to them.

**When this happens, the three kinds of unwholesome reactions are naturally arising spontaneously, and it is, only, through gradual and determined observation and analysis, that one finally comes to understand the wisdom of abandoning of these fetters.**

**We have already discussed the hindrances above, on one level, but, here, we are going down into an even deeper and more subtle level — into a new stage of insight leading to a more clear and liberating awakening.**

**The way of developing the abandoning of the arisen fetters is through the arising of a specific kind of insight which leads the mind to an aversion to and a resultant abandonment of the fetters — an insight which specifically sees and knows the real, phenomenal nature of the sense objects and the true, clinging nature of the sense faculties and fetters.**

**Sutta MN149 [in paragraph three] relates that, when one does not know and see the eye, as it actually is; when one does not see form as it actually is; when one does not see eye-consciousness as it actually is; when one does not see eye-contact as it actually is [as conditioned]; the feelings felt as (i) pleasant, (ii) unpleasant, (iii) neutral, arise, still fettered to roots of ignorance, [and, of course, subsequently, the same holds true for the other five of the six sense bases].**

**But when one begins to understand and see the nature of such feelings being conditioned, one begins to realize that an initial insight can be gradually gained, and one, then, continues gaining insight [through observation and investigation] into the empty nature of non-conditioned contacts to empty phenomena.**

**Once such an insight has taken place, one is no-longer enflamed by lust for eye-consciousness; — one becomes unfettered; — as the five aggregates are diminishing, there is an untangling, — leading to an abandoning of craving,**

lust and attachment — and a consequent abandoning of bodily and mental anxieties — which are replaced by peace and contentment in bodily and mental pleasures.

This means that the way to abandoning the fetters, arising through the six sense bases, is to see, through close observation and clear and deep insight, into the “real nature” of the six sense faculties and their objects — which means to see them as having the nature of impermanence or dukkha, and, thus, bound up with suffering and anatta — “not self,” “not mine” and “not I.”

To repeat, when one examines and develops this insight to its very depths, then the fetters are abandoned, cut-off at the root, so they cannot arise in the future.

And, again, to reiterate the sequence, the same is true for each one of the six sense bases “as they actually are ... examined and understood,” so the fetters will not arise if they are just contemplated as phenomena, and in this way the bhikkhu dwells contemplating phenomena just as mental phenomena. [MN0060\_MN-010.MP3]

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Bhikkhu Bodhi begins his final lecture [MN0061\_MN-010.MP3] with the — *The Seven Factors of Enlightenment* — by first providing a review of the structural summary of all he has said, in the foregoing, about Dhammanupassana — the contemplation of phenomena — which, first, begins with an examination of the Five Hindrances, within the scheme of things, the way the Buddha set up the Satipatthana Sutta and, then, as Bhikkhu Bodhi notes, we eventually begin to see that there is an opposition between the Five Hindrances and The Seven Factors of Enlightenment, which he says may be seen in many of the suttas also, showing the way to liberation on the path to Enlightenment.

We repeat and stress again, within the structural scheme of things in the Satipatthana Sutta, the Buddha is leading up to the main contrast between the Five Hindrance and The Seven Factors of Enlightenment — in a “not this” but “instead that” manner:

The Five Hindrances are the factors which have to be overcome and eliminated, and, then, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment are the factors which have to be developed and brought to perfection.

\*

At the same time, however, Bhikkhu Bodhi is careful to stress that

contemplation of phenomena is also related to the development of wisdom, panna, which means “*seeing and knowing things as they are.*”

We must note this above definition of wisdom because it is of central importance and not just a catch-phrase which we throw around when discussing Buddhism.

Next, we are told that there are three categories or classes of things to be *seen and known* [Look at the following structure.]:

1. The Five Aggregates, which we have dealt with
2. The Sense Bases, both internally and externally, totaling twelve, and
3. The Four Noble Truths, — although the Four Noble Truths can only come to full-clarity following maturity of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

This clarification might come as a surprise to some who may have thought they were following and understanding of the Four Noble Truths all along, simultaneously with all of the other factors of the path, but the explanation is that they had not yet practiced and developed “seeing and understanding” of The Four Noble Truths to full maturity and completion.

\*

Concerning the five aggregates and the external sense bases — once these hindrances are overcome, then, these are the things that appear within the sphere of contemplation, so when the mind becomes freed of the five hindrances — when the mind becomes focused and well-concentrated, then one can direct that concentrated mind to explore and investigate the fields of living experience and as one is exploring these fields of experience, one uses the particular schemes mentioned in the Satipatthana Sutta as ways of organizing the totality of experience and seeing experiences in terms of categories of the Dhamma — see experience in terms of these basic structures which serve as the support for the maturing of Panna, of wisdom.

And so with wisdom one sees and understands and explains the five aggregates as they are arising and passing away

Again, with wisdom, with insight, one explores the six sense bases, i.e. the six internal sense bases — that is the faculties and their respective objects and also the fetter which arises, dependent on both.

And, as this investigation begins to gain momentum, to pick up and to speed up power — then the Seven Factors of Enlightenment become prominent —

[actually the seven factors/qualities may have been present even earlier in the practice, but now, they come together into a unity, so-to-speak, as a team, working together towards the end, the goal of Enlightenment.

So that is the reason why the Seven Factors of Enlightenment are here stressed, at this particular point in the scheme of the structure of the process the development system.

So let's examine the section in the Satipatthana Sutta on the Seven Enlightenment Factors. Having introduced and led up to it at some length, we should study and understand the translation carefully. It starts like this:

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#### 4. The Seven Enlightenment Factors

42. "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides  
**contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects  
in terms of the Seven Enlightenment Factors.**<sup>xxix</sup>

And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors? Here, there being the mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, a bhikkhu understands:

1. 'There is the **mindfulness** enlightenment factor in me';

or there being no mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, he understands: [62]

'There is no mindfulness enlightenment factor in me'; and he also understands

how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen mindfulness enlightenment factor, and how the arisen mindfulness enlightenment factor comes to fulfilment by development.

2. "There being the **investigation-of-states** enlightenment factor in him<sup>xxx</sup> ...

3. There being the **energy** enlightenment factor in him ...

4. There being the **rapture**\* enlightenment factor in him ... \*[blissful happiness]

5. There being the **tranquillity** enlightenment factor in him ...

6. There being the **concentration** enlightenment factor in him ...

7. There being the **equanimity** enlightenment factor in him...

a bhikkhu understands:

‘There is the equanimity enlightenment factor in me’; or there being no equanimity enlightenment factor in him, he understands: ‘There is no equanimity enlightenment factor in me’; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen equanimity enlightenment factor, and how the arisen equanimity enlightenment factor comes to fulfillment by development.<sup>xxxix</sup>

43. “In this way

**he abides contemplating** mind-objects as mind-objects

**internally,**

**externally,** and

**both internally and externally ...**

**And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.**

That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors.

**To continue our commentary, in each case, when the bhikkhu understands that the factor is present, he understands that the factor is present and when it isn’t present, he understands that it isn’t present. He understands how this particular factor arises or is as yet unarisen, and, after it arises, he comes to understand how it comes to fulfillment by development.**

\*

**Bhikkhu Bodhi also tells us that various suttas and commentaries help us to see the meaning, for example, he notes that understanding the act of “remembering” and experience should be taken as connected to mindfulness. Sometimes, the word “recollecting” gives us a clearer idea of how this is present in sati.**

**There is a sense, here, of remembering how in the past one has learned to be aware of the present and in so doing, one is remembering how to call the mind to the present – which means clarity of mind in focusing on the present without present-awareness of the past or the future – which means unmuddled mindfulness is established in contrast to a muddled mindfulness which is not yet clearly focused – awareness of things as they are occurring in the present as they are occurring.**

**This is the same sati or mindfulness which has been present in one's practice from the very beginning, so that we cannot say that mindfulness suddenly appears, here, for the first time, as an enlightenment factor.**

**Here, we are talking more about when mindfulness finally comes to cummulation, whereas, earlier exercises in the practice of mindfulness are the seeds out of which development of mindfulness will grow.**

**And there also comes to be the unarisen mindfulness factor, and, to understand this, one has to understand the particular condition for this enlightenment factor — and the answer which we have/find in the suttas is by giving/applying careful attention to the things which are the basis for the enlightenment factor of mindfulness which are the four foundations of mindfulness: (i) body, (ii) feeling, (iii) mind and (iv) consciousness.**

**When one has such comprehension in one's activities in the practice, that will bring along with it the clear state of mind which one needs to be focused in one's meditation, and one should avoid people with muddled, confused minds and associate with mindful people who have a suitable inclination, which means having a tendency in practice towards developing mindfulness.**

**As mindfulness becomes established in the mind, then one becomes able to distinguish more and more clearly and precisely what is taking place in the mind, as one becomes more and more aware of the particular qualities of the mental states.**

**Then, at this point, one starts to looking into the mental states as they are arising, and to distinguish them, to discriminate amongst them, to see what has to be restrained and overcome and what has to be encouraged and stimulated and strengthened.**

**This is the initial stage of investigation of phenomena.**

**In this sutta, it states that the bhikkhu is discriminating that particular dhamma, which he is contemplating with mindfulness, and examines and investigates it.**

**Then, the sutta, regarding what is the principal condition for the contemplation of phenomena says that it is giving careful attention to wholesome and unwholesome states of mind — blameless and faulty states — versus — bright and dark states, so the capacity of discrimination will help further develop the mind, and, as this development continues further, investigation of phenomena will take on a deeper function.**

**It will turn into that factor which will examine phenomena in terms of their**

real characteristics which will allow discrimination of what are the particular characteristics of (i) form, (ii) feeling, (iii) mind and (iv) consciousness, and then it will investigate the general or universal characteristics of phenomena: — the characteristics of impermanence, of dukkha, of suffering and unsatisfactoriness and non-self or anatta.

So now, we are taking the enlightenment factors in sequence, and as one discriminates between wholesome and unwholesome states, one restrains and overcomes the unwholesome states, while one is strengthening the wholesome states.

And as one strengthens the wholesome states, then, the mind becomes charged with more energy — so that sometimes, it seems that one is tapping into previously-unsuspected and –unknown sources of energy — so that the mind is becoming very pure and clear thereby giving access to deep sources of energy, which all become very active, and, thus, it is said that energy is aroused without slackness of mind as a hindrance.

\*

Then, there are some other conditions, which should be mentioned, about investigation/contemplation of phenomena such as: —

**inquiry into the aggregates and studying and looking into them to see and understand their subtle characteristics**

- **personal cleanliness: with a clean body, clean clothes and clean surrounding which will facilitate clean and clear functioning of the mind**
- **balancing of the mental faculties**
- **deep reflection**
- **association with the wise to cultivate understanding and wisdom**
- **having an inclination towards wisdom and understanding**

for these are the conditions which bring the unarisen investigative enlightenment factor, which bring it into being as the mind goes on cultivating these conditions.

They will bring the investigative factor to full development.

As this is happening, energy arises — very powerful energy — and the condition for the arising of this energy is giving careful attention to the three elements [dhatu] of energy.

1. **The first one is the element of arousal: the first stages in which one is**

**arousing energy**

- 2. The second is called the element of endeavor: when one is persisting in one's effort**
- 3. The third element maybe referred to as the unstoppable progress: where the energy is becoming very intense, — burning very strongly — and this is the time, for example, where one can sit in concentration for three hours and still not be tired or where one can continue to go on only three hours of sleep a night**

**So the energy is very intense in the way one may see the arousal of energy described in the texts.**

**When energy starts to pick up strength, when one discovers that the mind is now becoming focused, steady, and energy is arising, the mind is experiencing great purity — and so rapture arises — with such a feel of joy and happiness — which one has never experienced before.**

**This is an elevated rapture which should not to be confused with any connotation the word “rapture” loosely used in connection with the worldly senses connected with a worldly life.**

**The principal condition for the arising of rapture is giving careful attention to things which are one basis for the enlightenment factor of rapture, but the main factor which brings the arousal of is rapture into being is that force of energy which arises, through the intensity of growing, increasing mindfulness and the “power” of investigation.**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi mentions here that one can further strengthen this sense of rapture by**

- concentrating in the three jewels: The Buddha, the Sangha, and the Dhamma;**
- or one can strengthen rapture recollecting others' pure moral practice;**
- or one can recollect the purity of actions in one's own moral practice;**
- or give attention to and reflect upon the path which one is now following towards complete liberation.**

**Such practices as these above will strengthen the power of rapture.**

**Now, rapture in itself is naturally a very powerful experience, but it has a certain edge, element, ingredient of excitement to it — sometimes, bubbling with excitement — so the mind is in a state of exhilaration and [seen in other terms] this is a disturbance.**

**The mind is carried away, having never experienced such states of happiness and bliss before, but that ecstasy, that exhilaration, is also a state of excitement and agitation, — even though it may just be a subtle agitation — but still one has to exert oneself to avoid becoming attached to such pure joy, and, instead, just continue on, merely noting and observing the state of rapturous joy with mindfulness as it arises and passes and then just, “Let it go. Let it go. Let it go,” knowing and understanding that one cannot hang onto it, and, then, having let go of such rapture, observing and attending mindfully to one’s primary object of attention/concentration, the rapture then settles down and the mind becomes tranquil.**

**The text says the body becomes tranquil, so we must also become aware, [if we were not before], that the above-mentioned sense of rapture also pervades the body.**

**The body is excited and the mind is excited, but when one let’s rapture go and just continues to steadily concentrate on the main object of contemplation, [such as the of action breathing, (to pick the most obvious possibility), or the rising and falling of the abdomen], while focusing on any of the five aggregates, one might, for example, be concentrating on one of the three characteristics: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness or selflessness or whatever particular phenomena one may be contemplating as mind object.**

**When one contemplated and concentrates so, the body becomes tranquilizes, the mind becomes tranquil.**

**In summary, Bhikkhu Bodhi tells us that the principal conditions for tranquility are giving careful attention to tranquility of body and giving careful attention to tranquility of mind.**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi repeats that this means not getting carried away by rapture, not becoming attached to rapture and letting go of rapture**

**And bringing the concentration back to the main object one was contemplating upon in the first place.**

**As one goes on observing the main object, one enters the above-mentioned state of tranquility — and, arising from tranquility, the mind becomes filled with sukha — sukha which means happiness or pleasure which is something different from rapture, because the sense of happiness or pleasure intended is a very quiet, very calm type of happiness or joy.**

**It is not the same excited, rapturous, ecstatic “rapture” of the foregoing stage.**

**It is a very, quiet, tranquil peaceful type of happiness — like a cool breeze in the late spring — and in that frame of mind, the mind can settle down ever more steadily fixed upon its object, without wavering, without losing the object/phenomena focused upon — and by settling upon the object, it enters into samadhi — concentration — and so for one whose body is tranquil and who is happy — the mind becomes concentrated — and the principal condition for the arising of concentration is giving careful attention to what is called samatha nimmita — that is called the sign of serenity or also called the sign of non-dispersion.**

**This is the subtle object of meditation — of concentration which arises as one's concentration becomes better, stronger and stronger, there arises a subtle inner object [which might be light for example] so one just steadies the mind on that inwardly-perceived object, and the mind becomes completely absorbed in that object and that becomes samatha — concentration.**

**Then there are some other conditions mentioned by the commentaries again: balancing the spiritual faculties with skill in meditation so that one knows how to apply the proper remedy for the particular fault in the meditation.**

**If the mind is too excited, one knows how to calm it down.**

**If the mind is too inert, one knows how to stimulate and arouse it.**

**If the mind is a bit dejected or discouraged, one knows how to encourage it, and, with others, it should be quite obvious from what we have already said.**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi then repeats what he has been saying about the whole process, and he repeats at length to be sure that the reader has not missed anything, so the reader will be left with a coherent, unified and balanced impression.**

**As bhikkhu Bodhi goes on to say, then, as the concentration deepens, then a factor which has been present from all along in the meditation becomes more and more prominent, and this is equanimity — upekkha — This is the quality of simply looking on from the standpoint of detachment — looking on — observing whatever is happening without being carried away to the right or the left.**

**The text says that as concentration matures, one closely looks at the mind, thus concentrated, with equanimity, whereas in earlier stages, one had to look at the mind to observe if it was excited, and, if it is a little excited, one has to calm it down. If it is a little too sluggish, one has to push it ahead. If it is a little discouraged, one has to encourage it. If it is a bit dejected, one has to uplift it with joy.**

**When all such faults have been overcome, one looks at the mind and one looks with equanimity**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi uses an analogy to say it is a bit like riding a horse: to get the horse started, one maybe has to hit it from the back; when one starts riding, if the horse starts going too fast, one has to pull in the reins to make it go slower; but, once the horse is galloping at a steady pace, one just sits in the saddle, just taking-in the country-side, and one has no more concern about what the horse is doing.**

**And it is said that this equanimity factor arises from giving careful attention to those things which are the basis for the enlightenment factor of equanimity.**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi notes that this point is not elaborated upon further in the suttas and one has to use reflection to draw-out the implications.**

**In other words, it must be experienced through actual practice to be known.**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi states, personally, that the way that he “takes it” is simply by finding and overcoming all of the faults within the concentrating-mind, which gradually, becomes perfectly-concentrated as equanimity reaches its pinnacle**

**This is all explained from the standpoint of what we call serenity or samadhi [gaining concentration], but these particular factors are enlightenment factors which are directed towards the attainment of Enlightenment which means that samadhi, as here described, also and especially function within the framework of developing insight or vipassana. The one is included within the process of the other.**

**He elaborates further that even if one is not developing samatha or concentration to the level of the deep jhanas, still, the mind is capable of reaching a certain level of samadhi or concentration, and one can use that concentrated mind to investigate phenomena including breathing and all, indeed, other phenomena dependent and arising through the aggregates and the six sense bases, observed, investigated and understood in terms of the three characteristics: impermanence; unsatisfactoriness and non-self, and, as one does so, the same seven factors of enlightenment will also be operative; they will also be functioning, because one is observing. One is aware of the impermanent nature of these phenomena.**

**The awareness of these phenomena is being performed with mindfulness. One is examining and looking deeply into them and that examination of them, that deep inspection of them, that closely seeing into them is seeing the nature of phenomena the way they really are, as phenomenal, as without substantial content.**

**This is investigation of mind.**

**As the mind is investigating things, backed by mindfulness, this is also being powered by energy, and, as there is energy, that will bring along rapture, and that rapture, again, has to subside and give way to tranquility, and, at a certain point within this process of examination, of seeing, of seeing deeply, the mind is steadily concentrated, although this is not the concentration of absorption, not on the concentration of just one object [phenomenon], because in insight meditation, the examination of objects is always changing.**

**This is dependent on changing phenomena which are occurring moment-by-moment, so that the mind is fixed on whatever is occurring at the moment, moment-after-moment in the continuum of ever flowing phenomena, — so that, even at the micro-level, even at the microscopic level, one is observing steadily with continual processes of phenomena arising, with everything breaking up and passing — arising, braking up and passing away — and as one is observing the flow of phenomena with a concentrated mind, the mind is simply standing back — seeing a host of observations and characterized by equanimity — not being attached to phenomena — not in interaction with them — not being held and pushed away by them — but simply observing with equanimity.**

**\***

**Bhikkhu Bodhi here informs us that he is ready to move onto the next section, which fits seamlessly together with what he has just been saying.**

**Observation with insight into the impermanent, unsatisfactory and selfless nature of phenomena which is already taking place with the seven factors of enlightenment can now come to maturity, come to strength and this is already the beginning of the contemplation of The Four Noble Truths, so with the Four Noble Truths, the contemplation of phenomena in the four sections of the Satipatthana Sutta now come to a climax — a culmination**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi says that the way he understands it, Dhammanupassana, which means contemplating dhammas as phenomena in terms of the categories of the Buddha's teaching now comes to a climax — a culmination — in order to penetrate the Dhamma as the truth of Buddha's teaching.**

**Now, the penetration of the Dhamma as the truth of the Buddha's teaching is what takes place in the section on the Four Noble Truths.**

**Bhikkhu quotes the text as saying:**

## 5. The Four Noble Truths

44. “Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides **contemplating mind-objects** as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths.<sup>xxxii</sup> And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths? Here a bhikkhu understands as it actually is:

1. ‘This is **suffering**’; he understands as it actually is:
2. ‘This is **the origin of suffering**’; he understands as it actually is:
3. ‘This is **the cessation of suffering**’; he understands as it actually is:
4. ‘**This is the way, [through the Noble Path,] to the cessation of suffering.**’

**As Bhikkhu Bodhi has already said, this final stage of the overall scheme and structure of the sutta comes to a culmination here at the end, to affirm the way that all of the forgoing steps were concurrently gathering insight and energy leading up to the realization of the four steps or stages of the Four Noble Truths, which are also explained consecutively in the texts.**

**The Satipatthana Sutta is much more closely organized than most people realize.**

**Dhammanupassana, [to stress the point again], means contemplating with insight the phenomena of the five aggregates or the six sense bases as impermanent, dukkha, suffering, non-self and in the process of this contemplation, the seven factors of enlightenment are all active, they are acting concomitantly, and in so observing the three characteristics of anicca, dukkha and anatta, the five aggregates, the six sense bases, one is already contemplating the First Noble Truth with proper understanding. So one is seeing and understanding it as the way it actually is: — “This is suffering.”**

**And then one can also see — with direct experience —**

**And then one can see-through craving as it really is**

**And how and the way craving actually arises,**

**And thus how craving consequently brings suffering,**

**And how such craving arising is the origin of suffering.**

**What do we learn from all of this?**

## **INSIGHT**

When it comes to mind objects (any kind of phenomena), it is the same repeated refrain: Everything arises and ceases instantaneously and will never ever be repeated again so there is no sense in clinging to any phenomena and wishing it to have lasting existence.

**When one does this, one can see there is less craving.**

**One can see how suffering diminishes.**

**One is able to see this as a matter of direct experience,**

**And so one is able to see how craving is the origin of suffering,**

**— [the first Noble Truth] —**

**And hence one has an insight into the Second Noble Truth,**

**From whence one has an inferential understanding of the Third Noble truth,**

**— [although one may not actually have penetrated it yet] —**

**And one knows at least that this path will bring an end to suffering,**

**Even though it has not yet really penetrated or directly understood**

**The mind continues gaining insight into The Fourth Noble Truth.**

**The contemplation now sees and follows these three characteristics, through deeper and deeper levels, in one who has fully-developed faculties, until one comes to what may be called the “bottom” or “the very depth of the matter” — where these three characteristics all come together, and one comes to see that things were never what one imagined them to be [in a worldly sense] and a door opens which leads from the conditioned world to the unconditioned realm — from the realm of birth and death to the deathless, from samsara to Nibbana.**

**And so when the insight contemplation comes to the very depth of understanding of the truth of these three characteristics, then, the mind breaks through that door which was locked as it were, to use Bhikkhu Bodhi’s own metaphor, which have left us locked in samsara from the beginning.**

**In the beginning, just momentarily, at first, it breaks through the door and comes through to the unconditioned — just “for a peek” so to speak — into the realm of the unconditional and, then, when it goes back, it looks at the five aggregates, the six senses and the eighteen elements, etc., and it looks at the conditions causing formations and conditioned origination and knows:**

**“This is really dukkha; this is really suffering.”**

**The understanding mind looks at the whole chain of conditions — going from ignorance to craving — and knows that following the Noble Path is indeed the way leading to the end of suffering.**

**Once one has broken-through to the unconditioned realm, once one has made the first breakthrough, and once one has developed the process of Dhammanupassana repeatedly, in time, this process, will lead and come to a full-realization of seeing and understanding unconditionality — of understanding of the realm of unconditionality.**

**Bhikkhu Bodhi tells us, it is that breakthrough to the unconditioned, — which brings and becomes the seeing and understanding of the unconditioned nature of all phenomena — that is the direct knowledge, the realization of the full knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, which is the culmination of the Satipatthana Sutta.**

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**Then we come to the refrain:**

45. “In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects [phenomena] as mind-objects

**internally**, or he abides contemplating mind-objects [phenomena] as mind-objects

**externally**, or he abides contemplating mind-objects [phenomena] as mind-objects

**both internally and externally.**

**Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects, [phenomena] their arising factors,**

**Or he abides contemplating in mind-objects [phenomena] their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects both their arising and vanishing factors.**

**Or else mindfulness that ‘there are mind-objects’ [phenomena] simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.**

That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating as mind-objects as mind-objects [phenomena as phenomena] in terms of the Four Noble Truths.

**Then, the Buddha gives what is known as his so-called guarantee statement which promises success to those who are careful and mindful in the process which the Satipatthana Sutta suggests:**

## **CONCLUSION**

The sutta reads like this:

“Bhikkhus, if anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven years, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge, here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

“Let alone seven years, bhikkhus. [63] If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for six years ... for five years ... for four years ... for three years ... for two years ... for one year, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

“Let alone one year, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven months ... for six months ... for five months ... for four months ... for three months ... for two months ... for one month ... for half a month, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

“Let alone half a month, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge, here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

**This section of the Satipatthana Sutta ends with a reference to seven days. In the commentaries, however, it is suggested that the number of seven days, is merely taken for figurative convenience and Bhikkhu Bodhi tells us that, in another sutta, it says that sometimes a disciple might receive instructions in the morning and he will achieve realization in the evening or, if he is given instruction in the evening, he will achieve realization in the morning and there are some very sharp disciples, with very fast faculties who, as soon as they hear the instructions, achieve Enlightenment, at that moment, right-on-the-spot, in the here and now.**

**The end of the Satipatthana Sutta states”**

47. “So it was with reference to this [the systemized path] that it was said:

**‘Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings,  
for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation,  
for the disappearance of pain and grief,  
for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of Nibbana,  
- Namely - the **Four Foundations of Mindfulness.**’“**

That is what the Blessed One said.

The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

**[Thus ends this exposition on contemplation of phenomena as mind objects.]**

### **Some Questions and Answers:**

At the end of his lecture [MN061\_MN-010.MP3], during a Q&A session, Bhikkhu Bodhi makes some insightful comments which we might expand upon using some of our own editorial insertions for the sake of encouraging reflection:

First he explains that a reference in his lecture to the “seven seals” was merely a quickly-conceived image of his own-making, for the sake of brevity and convenience, [and not to be found in the texts].

Then, regarding a query about jhanas, he goes on to suggest that, from the Satipatthana Sutta, we may conclude that the description of going through the stages of insight, into developing from states of mind, from level to level, from pleasure, rapture through upekkha, through liberation to nibbana could be understood as parallel to jhana, [although this is never declared anywhere in the texts], but it would certainly be possible to say that the One and Only Way includes practices similar in aspects to developing jhana states, [although one doesn’t always have to call them by that name or fully-develop and dwell upon them]. It does not depend on the use of one word or the names of stages of samatha meditation, stages, or how long and why one dwells in certain states if the parallels in the vehicle of practice still get the disciple to the same place in the end.

It might be good to suggest that the overall process is all-inclusive rather than

mutually exclusive. This may be hedging the question a bit and not satisfy everybody, but in any case, Bhikkhu Bodhi clearly says that, in the Satipatthana Sutta, we are talking about insight meditation.

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Another question which Bhikkhu Bodhi addresses concerns whether the sequence of the Four Factors of Mindfulness should be understood as going step-by-step, as opposed to concomitantly, and he states that it would be wrong to take the view that the six senses must be overcome before the Seven Factors of Enlightenment may begin.

Joy or *piti*, for example, on the initial level is still connected in some way to sensuality, so one must be mindful also, for instance, that one can slip away from rapture in the purely mental sense back into the sensual sense, if one is not careful.

This means that the hindrances — the work of Mara — have a way of slipping-in anywhere on the path, where the disciple is vulnerable to distraction, leading-away from any state of concentrated mindfulness, and this means right up to the end of anagami and possibly even after, as we remember that even at the time of his enlightenment, the Buddha had to deal with the temptations of the daughters of Mara. We must be constantly aware that they will slip-in anywhere they can get in and one should be constantly on guard against them. If mindfulness slips, all can be lost. Every stage is fraught with danger, so the disciple, to use a metaphor, must be like a bird — ever mindful of the dangers which can come from any direction to harm him.

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It is interesting also to note that even though the five hindrances and the seven factors of enlightenment represent opposites, this in no way means that one will cancel another out. That would be wrong view too. That would be too easy, and we can explain by using the metaphor that it is more like a tug of war, most of the time, in most people. We want to become good and pure but there are always other contacts and attractions pulling us in the other direction. Because the force of attraction could be pulling the disciple in one or another, all the time, throughout a lifetime, the disciple must always be careful from the beginning to the end of the path.

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<sup>i</sup> **Venerable Bodhi's notes on his translation of the:**

**10. Satipatthana Sutta – The Four Foundations of Mindfulness**

<sup>1</sup> This is one of the most important suttas in the Pali Canon, containing the most comprehensive statement of the most direct way to the attainment of the Buddhist goal. Virtually the identical sutta is found as well at DN 22, though with an expanded analysis of the Four Noble Truths attached, which accounts for its greater length. The

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sutta, its commentary, and copious extracts from its difficult but illuminating subcommentary have been presented together in translation by Soma Thera in *The Way of Mindfulness*. A very readable translation of the sutta, with a modern commentary excelling in clarity and depth, will be found in Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*.

ii This town is said by some scholars to have been in the vicinity of modern Delhi.

iii The Pali reads *ekayano ayam bhikkhave magga*, and virtually all translators understand this as a statement upholding satipatthana as an exclusive path. Thus Ven. Soma renders it: “This is the only way, O bhikkhus,” and Ven. Nyanaponika: “This is the sole way, monks.” Nm, however, points out that *ekayana magga* at MN 12.37-42 has the unambiguous contextual meaning of “a path that goes in one way only,” and so he rendered the phrase in this passage, too. The expression used here, “the direct path,” is an attempt to preserve this meaning in a more streamlined phrasing. MA explains *ekayana magga* as a single path, not a divided path; as a way that has to be walked by oneself alone, without a companion; and as a way that goes to one goal, Nibbana. Though there is neither canonical nor commentarial basis for this view, it might be maintained that satipatthana is called *ekayana magga*, the direct path, to distinguish it from the approach to meditative attainment that proceeds through the jhanas or brahmaviharas. While the latter can lead to Nibbana, they do not do so necessarily but can lead to sidetracks, whereas satipatthana leads invariably to the final goal.

iv The word satipatthana is a compound term. The first part, *sati*, originally meant “memory,” but in Pali Buddhist usage it far more frequently bears the meaning of attentiveness directed to the present - hence the makeshift rendering “mindfulness.” The second part is explained in two ways: either as a shortened form of *upatthana*, meaning “setting up” or “establishing” - here, of mindfulness; or as *patthana*, meaning “domain” or “foundation” - again, of mindfulness. Thus the four satipatthanas may be understood as either the four ways of setting up mindfulness or as the four objective domains of mindfulness, to be amplified in the rest of the sutta. The former seems to be the etymologically correct derivation (confirmed by the Sanskrit *sm*, *tyupasthana*), but the Pali commentators, while admitting both explanations, have a predilection for the latter.

v MA says that in this context, “bhikkhu” is a term indicating a person who earnestly endeavours to accomplish the practice of the teaching: “Whoever undertakes that practice. . . is here comprised under the term ‘bhikkhu.’”

vi The repetition in the phrase “contemplating the body as a body” (*kaye kayanupassi*), according to MA, has the purpose of precisely determining the object of contemplation and of isolating that object from others with which it might be confused. Thus, in this practice, the body should be contemplated as such, and not one’s feelings, ideas, and emotions concerning it. The phrase also means that the body should be contemplated simply as a body and not as a man, a woman, a self, or a living being. Similar considerations apply to the repetitions in the case of each of the other three foundations of mindfulness. “Covetousness and grief,” MA says, stands for sensual desire and ill will, the principal hindrances that must be overcome for the practice to succeed, enumerated separately below in §36.

vii The structure of this sutta is fairly simple. Following the preamble, the body of the discourse falls into four parts by way of the four foundations of mindfulness:

I. Contemplation of the body, which comprises fourteen exercises: mindfulness of breathing; contemplation of the four postures; full awareness; attention to foulness; attention to the elements; and nine “charnel ground contemplations” - reflection on corpses in different stages of decomposition.

II. Contemplation of feeling, considered one exercise.

III. Contemplation of mind, also one exercise.

IV. Contemplation of mind-objects, which has five subdivisions - the five hindrances; the five aggregates; the six sense bases; the seven enlightenment factors; and the Four Noble Truths.

Thus the sutta expounds altogether twenty-one exercises in contemplation. Each exercise in turn has two aspects: the basic exercise, explained first, and a supplementary section on insight (essentially the same for all the exercises), which indicates how the contemplation is to be developed to deepen understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Finally the sutta concludes with a statement of assurance in which the Buddha personally vouches for the effectiveness of the method by declaring the fruits of continuous practice to be either arahantship or non-returning.

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viii The practice of mindfulness of breathing (anapanasati) involves no deliberate attempt to regulate the breath, as in hatha yoga, but a sustained effort to fix awareness on the breath as it moves in and out in its natural rhythm. Mindfulness is set up at the nostrils or the upper lip, wherever the impact of the breath is felt most distinctly; the length of the breath is noted but not consciously controlled. The complete development of this meditation method is expounded in MN 118. For an organised collection of texts on this subject, see Bhikkhu Nanamoli, *Mindfulness of Breathing*. See too Vsm VIII, 145-244.

ix MA: The phrase “experiencing the whole body” (sabbakayapatisamvedi) means that the meditator becomes aware of each in-and-out breath through the three phases of its beginning, middle, and end.

x The “bodily formation” (kayasankhara) is defined at MN 44.13 as in-and-out breathing itself. Thus, as MA explains, with the successful development of the practice, the meditator’s breathing becomes increasingly quiet, tranquil, and peaceful.

xi MA: “Internally”: contemplating the breathing, in his own body. “Externally”: contemplating the breathing occurring in the body of another. “Internally and externally”: contemplating the breathing, in his own body and in the body of another alternately, with uninterrupted attention. A similar explanation applies to the refrain that follows each of the other sections, except that under the contemplation of feeling, mind, and mind-objects, the contemplation externally, apart from those possessing telepathic powers, must be inferential.

xii MA: The “arising factors” (samudayadhamma) for the body are the conditions on account of which the body has arisen - namely, ignorance, craving, kamma, and food - together with the concrete fact of the moment-by-moment origination of material phenomena in the body. In the case of mindfulness of breathing, an additional arising factor mentioned by the commentaries is the physiological apparatus of respiration.

The “vanishing factors” (vayadhamma) for the body are

(1.) the cessation of the causal conditions and

(2.) the momentary dissolution of material phenomena in the body.

xiii MA: For the sake of a wider and wider and higher and higher measure of knowledge and mindfulness.

xiv The understanding of the bodily postures referred to in this exercise is not our ordinary natural knowledge of our bodily activity, but a close, constant, and careful awareness of the body in every position, coupled with an analytical examination intended to dispel the delusion of a self as the agent of bodily movement.

xv Sampajanna, also translated as “clear comprehension” (Soma, Nyanaponika), is analysed in the commentaries into four types: full awareness of the purpose of one’s action; full awareness of the suitability of one’s means; full awareness of the domain, that is, not abandoning the subject of meditation during one’s daily routine; and full awareness of reality, the knowledge that behind one’s activities there is no abiding self. See *The Way of Mindfulness*, pp. 60-100; *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 46-55.

xvi In later Pali works the brain is added to the above list to form thirty-two parts. The details of this meditation practice are explained at Vsm VIII, 42-144.

xvii These four elements are explained by Buddhist tradition as the primary attributes of matter - solidity, cohesion, heat, and distension. The detailed explanation is found at Vsm XI, 27-117.

xviii The phrase “as though” (seyyathapi) suggests that this meditation, and those to follow, need not be based upon an actual encounter with a corpse in the state of decay described, but can be performed as an imaginative exercise. “This same body” is, of course, the meditator’s own body.

xix Each of the four types of corpse mentioned here, and the three types below, may be taken as a separate and self-sufficient subject of meditation; or the entire set may be used as a progressive series for impressing on the mind the idea of the body’s transience and insubstantiality. The progression continues in §§26-30.

xx Feeling (vedana) signifies the affective quality of experience, bodily and mental, either pleasant, painful, or neither, i.e., neutral feeling. Examples of the “worldly” and “unworldly” forms of these feelings are given at MN 137.9-15 under the rubric of the six kinds of joy, grief, and equanimity based respectively on the household life and renunciation.

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xxi The arising and vanishing factors for feeling are the same as those for the body (see n.144) except that food is replaced by contact, since contact is the condition for feeling (see MN 9.42).

xxii Mind (citta) as an object of contemplation refers to the general state and level of consciousness. Since consciousness itself, in its own nature, is the bare knowing or cognizing of an object, the quality of any state of mind is determined by its associated mental factors, such as lust, hate, and delusion or their opposites, as mentioned by the sutta.

xxiii The paired examples of citta [which are] given in this passage contrast states of mind of wholesome and unwholesome or developed and undeveloped character. An exception, however, is the pair “contracted” and “distracted,” which are both unwholesome, the former due to sloth and torpor, the latter due to restlessness and remorse. MA explains “exalted mind” and “unsurpassed mind” as the mind pertaining to the level of the jhanas and immaterial meditative attainments, and “unexalted mind” and “surpassed mind” as the mind pertaining to the level of sense-sphere consciousness. “Liberated mind” must be understood as a mind temporarily and partly freed from defilements through insight or the jhanas. Since the practice of satipatthana pertains to the preliminary phase of the path aimed at the supramundane paths of deliverance, this last category should not be understood as a mind liberated through attainment of the supramundane paths.

xxiv The arising and vanishing factors of mind are the same as those for the body except that food is replaced by mentality-materiality, since the latter is the condition for consciousness (see DN 15.22/ii.63).

xxv The word rendered here as “mind-objects” is the polymorphous dhamma. In this context dhamma can be understood as comprising all phenomena classified by way of the categories of the Dhamma, the Buddha’s teaching of actuality. This contemplation reaches its climax in the penetration of the teaching at the heart of the Dhamma - the Four Noble Truths.

xxvi The five hindrances (pancanivarana) are the main inner impediments to the development of concentration and insight. Sensual desire arises through attending unwisely to a sensually attractive object and is abandoned by meditation on a foul object (as in §10 and §§14-30); ill will arises through attending unwisely to a repugnant object and is abandoned by developing loving-kindness; sloth and torpor arise by submitting to boredom and laziness and are abandoned by arousing energy; restlessness and remorse arise through unwisely reflecting on disturbing thoughts and are abandoned by wisely reflecting on tranquillity; doubt arises through unwisely reflecting on dubious matters and is abandoned by study, investigation, and inquiry. The hindrances are fully eradicated only by the supramundane paths. For a fuller treatment, see *The Way of Mindfulness*, pp. 119-130; Nyanaponika Thera, *The Five Mental Hindrances*; and also below, MN 27.18 and MN 39.13-14.

xxvii The five aggregates affected by clinging (panc’upadanakkhandha) are the five groups of factors comprising the individual personality. The aggregates are discussed in the Introduction, p. 26, and are analysed and explained in terms of their origin and disappearance at MN 109.9.

xxviii The internal bases are, as shown, the six sense faculties; the external bases, their respective objects. The fetter that arises dependent upon the pairs may be understood by way of the ten fetters explained in the Introduction, pp. 42-43, or more simply as attraction (greed), aversion (hatred), and the underlying delusion.

xxix How the seven enlightenment factors unfold in progressive sequence is explained at MN 118.29-40. For a more detailed discussion, see Piyadassi Thera, *The Seven Factors of Enlightenment*.

xxx “Investigation of states” (dhammavicaya) means the scrutiny of the mental and physical phenomena presented to the meditator’s mind by mindfulness.

xxxi The commentaries explain in detail the conditions that conduce to the maturation of the enlightenment factors. See *The Way of Mindfulness*, pp. 134-149.

xxxii With this section, the contemplation of dhamma as mind-objects culminates in the understanding of the Dhamma in its core formulation as the Four Noble Truths. The longer Mahasatipatthana Sutta of the Digha Nikaya gives extended definitions and elaborations of each of the truths.

xxxiii Final knowledge, *anna*, is the arahant’s knowledge of final deliverance. Non-return (*anagamita*) is, of course, the state of a non-returner, who is reborn in a higher world where he attains final Nibbana without ever returning to the human world.

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**Endnote 1:**

**An Experiment on the Coloring of Perception**

Regarding how impressions/feelings of phenomena can be mentally biased or colored, [figuratively-compared to putting food coloring in pure water] let's try a "peculiar" analogical, comparative experiment of our own, just for the sake of interest:

First, on a literal level,

(i) imagine you are hypothetically present at an elaborate festive ceremony/function, along with your Dhamma teacher, at which a wide range of what you assume to be and what look like brand-label, name, logo, drinks have been made available in plastic cups on a serving table, (ii) although your assumption is not at all true, because the drinks have actually been made from mixing totally synthetically and artificially powdered concentrated juice-flavored and chemically-based powders with water, from the kitchen water filter, in differing combinations, in mixtures of the four elements.

Let's say, for example that on the table, offered, presented for the taking, are drinks with the artificial colors and flavors and appearances of orange, sugar-lemon, bitter-lime, grapefruit, , apple, avocado, kiwi, coconut, pineapple, peach, pear, plum, passion fruit, plus other powdered-infusions of various colors with synthetically produced commonly-known favorite fruit punch flavors.

We repeat: None of the drinks are, in reality, brand-name logo drinks. All of them are synthetic and artificial. They merely appear phenomenally be similar to commonly-known labeled products but are not the same. They are not what we expect or suppose them to be.

But you do not know that yet. You don't yet know the purpose of the experiment.

In addition, pure, plain water has also been offered on the same table

Now, the experiment continues like this.

You, as an unknowing participant, will be asked to look at and note your reaction to each single drink, while thinking and concentrating on how you would feel about the idea of being allowed to choose just **one-drink-only** from the full range of drinks.

Not knowing about the elaborate hoax, you will be asked to mentally investigate whether and why and how much you (i) like or (ii) dislike or are (iii) indifferent to each one of what you assume and presume to be varied known brand drinks, following your mental processes and connections, for example, from recent contacts, back to memories of previous experiences, - even back to their earliest possible imaginable roots in memory and, - as far as possible, - to analyze and pin-pointing the cause of why you would or would not choose one drink rather than another.

Normally, we would never do this. We would probably just go to the table and casually pick up the drink which we think we like most, while possibly indifferently ignoring the rest.

But, this hypothetical situation is somewhat different from looking quickly for our favorite drink [which may not even be there] and quickly grabbing-up a plastic cup, for quick consumption and fast satisfaction.

So the experiment goes, - being an unknowing participant, - once you pick/choose one of the drinks, you must be prepared to honestly relate why that was the one that you most-wanted and if and why its flavor and the way you consumed the drink, is/was/were really what you expected and whether it was wholesomely good for you. You will be asked if you liked, dislikes or were indifferent to contact with the taste of the drink.

Now, the purpose of this experiment is dual.

**First**, you will be asked to focus to really be aware of what you "assume" to be each drink before you and, then, to fully investigate and understand and know how you are reacting to thinking and being consciously aware of it. This is good concentration training, because it slows-down the mind and, initially, at least, makes the mind equally-aware of everything visually-sensually elementally present, instead of just allowing the eye to be attracted to the one drink only which you "like the most" and go for it [maybe even for the wrong reason].

So the hypothetical analogy goes, - if we could slow-down the mind and analyze every reaction to all phenomena [not just drinks] within our total range of mental experience like this, we would be learning about developing mindfulness and avoiding possible carelessness or heedlessness in any choices or decisions or actions we make.

**Second**, figuratively speaking, the "drink" is meant as an analogy for the inestimable number of possibilities presented to you in every momentary phenomenal situation and the way you behave in the face of such arising, related-factors and

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conditions, (i) whether acting mindfully with equanimity or (ii) whether reacting quickly, without really being aware of what you are doing or (iii) maybe even being angry because they do not have Diet Pepsi Cola with ice-cubes, which is what you really wanted.

The mental exercise, here, depends on being “totally present” and “aware in the moment” and knowing and understanding what and why you are thinking and experiencing the phenomena in every mini-second of the exercise, in every increment of phenomenal experience.

Hopefully, the reader will get the wider-analogy as it applies to contact, feeling, perception and reaction in phenomenology.

In this experiment, we take a limited range of experiences and reactions to likes, flavors and drinks and, then, project it, [in a much wider-and-broader sense] as a comparative analogy for the wider range of any and all mental, phenomenal experiences, always constantly arising, because every waking moment of your life, you are, in fact, being presented and bombarded with a vast and incalculable number of changing phenomena and impressions and making value judgments and choices about them, so you must always try to be mindful to make/take your choices by knowing exactly what you are doing and why you are doing it.

If you are just out to “get what you want” and to avoid what you dislike in the world, then, you are behaving like a normal, untrained-worldling in the mundane realm of, supposedly substantial and conventional, “likeable or dislikeable” things as imagined objective phenomena, which, in actuality, have no more substantial existence than artificially, synthetically-flavored drinks, to which some flavoring/coloring has been added which makes it potentially attractive, unattractive or neither attractive nor unattractive.

If you are one of those persons who thinks you live in a world where external extant things are simply there for your pleasure, so you can choose what you want from them, then, you are sorely-deluded.

All phenomena within the range of contact and experience are made up of ever-changing elements, with no abiding existence, and, just as the drinks on the table are just artificial concoctions of mixtures/emulsions of mere phenomenal elements, so, similarly, our ideas and labels/names for everything else in the world are just fabricated mental concoctions, including, [of course], all images of phenomena in the process of the mind of everything you think you will like or dislike or want or don't want, or have developed feelings toward which influence your thinking in what mundane man wrongly takes-for-granted to be a physical world but is only a realm of phenomenality which does not actually exist in any ultimate sense of reality.

Quite to the contrary, the realm of phenomenal experience is made-up solely of unsubstantial waves of energy visually masquerading around together posing as concrete things in a world where not even people who think they see them are solidly substantial.

It is all just a rapidly moving-picture, a continuing flow of the elements forming and changing.

The analogies of colors and flavours are the way we taint or color pure impressions through mental associations

Now, before we end the comparative analogy, you may be wondering why the teacher was mentioned as being at the function with and for what purpose he was there with you.

We have been saving the teacher for the end.

We might want to ask: “What did the teacher drink?”

And the answer is:

The teacher, who was clearly perceiving the ultimate reality of things, drank plain water because it was pure and not attached to any of the mental associations and formulations connected to merely conceptual names and mental labels of drinks which actually only seem to exist [because we have been tricked by the body senses, feeling. The reaction of the mind and its successive wanderings] and, thus, were mentally perceived as to appear as being “this way” or “that way,” when the liquid-solution was in reality only something artificially mixed and concocted to drink/experience for the sake of the momentary consumption of psychical and mental nourishment.

The teacher was not fooled by such illusions of “concocted” mixtures, which were wholly illusive, including (i) synthetic preservatives and (ii) artificially included colorings and flavors which are (i) not necessarily good for you and (ii) may mislead the mind by fostering attachment just as with contact to many other phenomena.

The mind as mind must clearly see things just as the way they really and truly are.

So the teacher was there to symbolize the “right view” of things and explain to the student how and why the experiment had just been a delusive trick, an elaborately constructed hoax, to get the student, to, finally, come to actually see through the delusions of what he had, [through “wrong view,” without thinking], formerly improperly perceived as a range of ideas of supposedly wholesomely-nourishing, delicious-drinks or other things, imagined in his mind as having tangible reality.

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Now, to conclude making the point of the broader analogy, if consciousness of phenomena flowing in the mind may be compared to the cohesive element of water, then all phenomena which flow in the mind may also be tinged, flavored and colored by latent tendencies towards lust, hate and delusion and narrow-or-distracted mind. We should thus realize that all of the foregoing factors when they become inclinations of the mind tend to make trouble and should be avoided.

The mind factors will definitely have some influence in which way the flow of feelings and thought processes may go.

Thus, those of us who have developed mindfulness will know how to learn to control the potential direction of the flowing of consciousness in the mind.

We will know how to observe what is real and not real and learn to investigate the workings of the mind-in the-mind [internally], and we will know how to view how outside images and impressions [externally] affect the process of phenomena [positively or negatively or indifferently] and we will learn how to contemplate the cause and effect process of phenomena arising and falling in the mind, internally and externally, [simultaneously] so we will be able to maintain our mental balance and equanimity and to continue to strive and to persist to know and understand how to achieve higher states of mind through mind contemplation leading towards more pure mind states and eventually more wisdom.

Endnote 2:

### **Thoughts on the Problem of Self and Conventional Language**

If we may be allowed some comments [based upon our own individual observations], once we take an experience to be “I,” we build upon this latent and inherent tendency and make the mistake of assuming a “personal entity” [rather than a mere agglomeration or aggregate of phenomenal experiences], and we make the mistake of building up an image of “I” and “self” (and eventually maybe even an idea of an on-going-soul-entity) and thereby create the delusion of a duality between conceiving what is going on outside externally and what is going on within experience on the inside, — conceiving them [falsely] to be two different and extant realms of existence.

And if we assume the continuity of internal experience to be self, — we thus posit a sense of self, — which is separate from the outside realm of phenomena, — in other words, we build up a belief in a “self” that is separate from the overall flow of phenomenal reality, — forgetting we are just an integral part of it, — as a relatively-related arising field flowing and ceasing within the larger phenomenal field around us.

We think we are in the middle,[at the center of existence], but this way of thinking is just a hypothetical standpoint and mere pretention of perception — which, then, becomes a “supposed-viewpoint” to which we give the name of “self.”

In actuality, there is no self. There is just a phenomenal perspective which causally-relates to the functioning of experiencing moving, spinning, surrounding phenomena, all dependently and causally relative to one another.

This mistaken perception is only human and can, [when accepted as given and understood] be forgiven for falling subject to error because the perception is based on inherent or latent defensive/aggressive tendencies which lead from contacts to images into false imaginings.

Men may be ignorant of the nature of false perception, but out of compassion, we can and must forgive each and every one of them, and this means including ourselves.

It is human to err — and the Buddha knew this very well, — and so due to his deep compassion, he tried to set the matter straight, at least for “the few with little dust in their eyes” who might understand him and be able to explain to others.

In fact, if we know the true Dhamma, we should not to blame anybody for not understanding; instead, we should attempt [through loving-kindness] to bring them to right understanding. We should try to teach the way to right awareness (vijja) to replace wrong awareness and wrong understanding, based on the ignorance of not knowing (avijja).

If we accept that man has the latent tendency to be ignorant based on a misunderstanding of mentally distorted perceptions, we should ask ourselves, “What can we *say* about that? Or better yet, what should we *do* about that?”

The answer is to teach man to untangle his wrong interpretation of the “seeming” phenomena of experience which are due to his ignorantly “assuming” there is an individual, personal-will and view.

As an abstract analogy, the above may be compared to one individual atom wanting to stand still while watching and thinking: “All this moving around me belongs to me,” — while all other atoms are moving with interconnectivity relative to one another.

Such a thing does not happen with atoms — it is not possible — and it does not happen with people either, despite their persistently-positing point of a separate individual view, — despite how insistently and doggedly they may want to hang onto it.

Hanging on to such a personal view is a way of grasping and holding onto something which a so-called, “assumed individual” does not want to give up, and it’s hard, if not impossible, to convince him of the opposite.

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Some beings are even so stubborn as to want to resist and overcome the natural process of the overall cosmos in order to make things go “their way,” — but this is a long and losing battle in which they will keep burning-up all their energies, for as long as they keep fighting and resisting inevitable reality.

The puzzle is: “*How does one wish (intend) to avoid going with the flow of wrongly-interpreted awareness and resultant ignorance (avijja) and, instead, gain the right understanding to learn and to enable one to go with the flow of ultimate reality?*”

The Buddha explains it, and some people understand it:

Man’s wrongly-interpreted awareness is based upon inherent tendencies of the imagination to want to become and then be an entity. Similar to the way he may see a seed growing-up into a tree and use himself as a comparative analogy — there is a latent tendency present in man towards wishing for seeming subsistence.

This is an inherent urge imbedded within all living things as aggregates of nature to strive for continuing-existence. That’s what keeps things going.

Just as in micro-organisms or insect-eggs and ants, and clinging vines and plants, this is true of all other living organisms, composed of the four elements, but, to be reasonable, a tree, for example, does not grow-up thinking it is a fixed-entity or that it is really “somebody.”

Trees have a passive existence as part of a process within a process within a larger cosmos, and so do people actually.

This is a wonderful illumination.

The problem is that people just do not get-it, [or they do not get-it easily].

The Bodhisattva finally achieved illumination and liberation sitting under a Bodhi tree, so a tree is a fitting image to use to stand for the essence of the Dhamma.

In contrast to a Bodhi tree, one might also explain that based upon ignorance, the living entity, “man,” develops not only a doctrine of “self” but also a firm conviction of the doctrine on “self-continuity.”

Man may be wholly ignorant of the workings of waves of psycho-physical phenomena in the mind, but he is, at the same time very clever and cunning in making-up tricks to fool himself into believing that he actually exists as a thing in the world, and he is so grasping, when it comes to this self-continuity, that he also has the inherent tendency to develop a doctrine of self which desperately wants and desires to carry on after death.

Clever creature this deluded fellow is! He actually wants and needs to prove he exists. Somehow, he inherently senses a potential danger in cessation and non-existence, so he mentally secures his defenses with ideas and doctrines of lasting forms and substances [substantiality].

Not satisfied with requisite nourishment just to live in the moment, he wrongly craves and believes that what he deems to be “his” self will exist forever in some form and possibly hypothetically, in some cases, even out-live his own idea of the cosmos itself.

We might ask: “Why can he not be satisfied with just being an organism within this present cosmos with the capacity to continue to thrive and exist?”

The answer is, [as we have already stressed], that the clever creature wants more than he actually needs: he wants to believe in his self as being much more important than the vast cosmos itself. That’s his deluded way of making him feel fully-secure and sure of himself.

Does he go too far? Most would say, “Yes. That’s madness!” but others would say, “Poor fellow, he is contending with the need to rationalize-away the idea of annihilation of self at the time of or after death.”

Others would contend that he is dependent on a basic latent craving, need and greed for continuing and lasting existence, as something which will never end. Others would say that this is just a conveniently built-in self-delusion which works as part of the natural process for survival.

However, this kind of greed can, indeed, put the existence of self before the continuing existence and well-being of social unity and the whole orb of the globe and the population of the world itself.

For example, if left unheeded and unchecked, unbridled greed and need can easily lead, to ignorant, hateful thoughts like:

“If I can’t get what I want, I don’t care if the whole world blows-up and is totally destroyed.” Sometimes, even children, adults, wives, husbands, world leaders and sovereign rulers, [who should know better], think and react like that.

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There is a fiendish paradox in here somewhere, isn't there?

The resolution is that individual craving is so end-less and insatiable that it could eat-up the whole world and still not be satisfied.

It is in the nature of greed never to be satisfied, but let's not get side-tracked.

To reiterate our point, this is all based on our incorrectly assuming a perceptual flow of reality called "self" has continuity which will go on into an after-life, and we become so attached to this idea of self that it becomes our own separate individual territory, and we are prepared to defend it against what we feel may be predatory attacks, both literally and figuratively.

Here it may be beneficial to stress, once again, that the idea that the way we relate to any surrounding environment is the root of the paradoxical problem of the human predicament, because we take ourselves to be one thing in relation to the other, thereby positing a non-existent duality.

In actual fact, there are only phenomena flowing, and we are part of the process and not "apart" from it as the six senses, contact, perception and mind and experience would want to believe.

Incidentally, when we use the word "we" or any of the personal pronouns, it is only a mental construct which indicates a singular or plural point of perception in relation to its proximate surroundings. We may use "we" like this, [as a linguistic tool meaning only perception right here at the moment], but when the idea of "we" takes on permanence, "we" are using it in a conventional rather than an ultimate sense.

In terms of ultimate reality, the yogi needs to see that there is no sense of "we" and no "me," which is not a part of a great complex of mere, tiny energy particles, the motions of which flow into and make up a perceived-experience in a cosmic process which is wholly impersonal.

"We," as sets of bundles of energy particles, are always part of the changing process and we are always changing with it. This is quite hard for the untrained mind to understand, and this is why need and we have to have a conventional language.

Although "we" can broken-down into its tiniest parts, until there is nothing left but impulses, it is not easy for "people" to grasp the explanation of phenomenality, and this is why "we" need to use the tools of conventional language to communicate.

There is no problem with conventional words as indicators or signs and symbols, as long as they are not taken to stand for something which is extant and unchanging.

Conventional language is useful for being able to communicate with worldly "persons" who have grasped onto the concept of "self" and do not want to let go of their idea of identity.

Conventional language is useful for people who do not want to be part of an ultimate process but, instead, crave to be individual entities in a world of their own making.

[This means, you have to speak to conventional people in conventional language or you cannot talk to them at all.]

An alternative system, which might be used to talk about ultimate reality, as we have already indicated, would be to understand "person" as a complex mind-body organism, a living-being, as a functional, perceptual network of receivers of perceptions of countless and inestimable perceptual contacts with impulses within a vast and almost inconceivably endless process which picks-up and organizes incoming phenomena and dhammas and forms and organizes the data into a composite image which the mind can cognize and work with, on both physical and mental levels, — which would be analogous to trying to observe the movements moving bodies, fields in particle energies in physics].

Realistically, to be quite honest, only a few seers and ascetics, philosophers, physicists, and monks and monastics can see and accept such an explanation [in terms of ultimate reality].

Monks know it through analysis investigation, observation and concentration, in which the mind reaches a point of clear perception of the impermanence and the phenomenality of "things."

Their knowing comes gradually from growing understanding of subtle movements within the mind clearing away the rubble of common understanding. As is often said, the monk's practice is a process of unlearning all of the common assumptions of the conventional world.

In the end of the contemplative process, there is no-more any idea of monk; there is only knowing-knowing.

Rather than being one unified, solidly-fixed body and unchanging form, the psycho-physical organism consists of millions and billions and trillions of particles [including even parts of particles] working within a process which is, so miniscule in its infinitesimal units and, at the same time, so vast in its reach that the human entity normally only has the capacity to simplify it [symbolically] to something it can understand, conventionally, and which acts in accordance with a process of continuing

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nourishment and dependent survival, although it is based on reference to invisible phenomenal signals, like waves and energy impulses, interacting within its field of surroundings, which generate and keep it moving, causally and dependently related to all of the other elements and particles moving around, along and within it.

Does this sound difficult? It surely is, which is why there is no harm in approaching and repeating and explaining it as the phenomenal world in different ways

If we take conventional language as being simply a capacity of designating something symbolically as more than it appears to be on the level of mere contact, form or image, it is easy for the untrained mind to conceptualize that the unity or entity has a posited-existence or even a posited-self, — which is, at least, convenient for talking, communicating and understanding on some levels, — although the truth is that the “posited-object” is only a useful hypothetical concept — a conceptualization which will fall apart again when broken down into its tiniest elements and units.

We are getting closer to explaining the difference in the two levels of language as, (i) conventional and (ii) ultimate, but, as we have said, there are very few who can actually understand it.

For the common, conventional man, it is easier to hook into the assumed-reality of seeming-existence and flow within the everyday-stream. It takes little effort to go with the human-flow of likes-and-dislikes and wants-and-needs. Indeed, this often feels comfortable, especially when one is momentarily, at least, getting what one wants and desires.

The problem is that, as things do not always go the way one wants and desires, then, at that juncture, one will become frustrated and begin to feel dissatisfied. This problem arises because the world does not always do what one wants it to, and, more often than not, one jealously sees someone else getting the object which one has covertly coveted and desired for oneself.

As a consequence, such an experience leads, instead of to pleasure, into displeasure and can easily grow into dislike, anger and hate and even worse.

The problem inherent in going with the conventional flow is that although, (i) on the one hand, we can experience much happiness in life, (ii) on the other, when our individual wills are thwarted, as they invariably are, we feel irritation, dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

Such arising unhappiness also often leads to the blaming other persons for taking what we wanted or to the blaming of someone for doing something which we didn't want him to do, because his actions oppose our individual wills and interfere with the projected ideas of what we have wished-for in order to enjoy the desired fulfillment of our own imagined needs.

We can ask, “What is the root and basis of these never-ending needs?” and the answer is that the root of the problem lies in the fact that everybody in the flow of the stream is fishing for the same thing, — for his own happiness, — although “unhappiness” inevitably happens when there are not enough fish for every individual.

What happens if some other person or persons has/have taken many-more fish than they need? We envy them and we are also angry with them for frustrating our wishes.

We become angry with them because they have taken something we wanted, and this sort of situation, [when allowed to perpetuate], may eventually, lead to smoldering-resentment breaking out into open confrontation.

Confrontation often leads to insolence and offense and eventually, maybe even, as well, to the arising of violence and death.

Who could be happy in such a confrontational world?

Who would want to live in such a world which is based on getting the most first?

The answer is “Nobody,” — but, if that is the level on which you choose to live, maybe you get what you deserve, — especially, when you secretly know that if you could have done so, you would have taken all the fish first for yourself.

The problem with seeing fulfillment of self-indulgence as the highest of goals is that it threatens one's existence, for three reasons:

**One** is that someone will want what you have got and may harm or even kill you to get it. This makes life, [instead of a simple pleasure-ride] an unending strenuous struggle to grasp after what you want and to struggle to keep what you have got.

It makes life confrontational rather than comfortable and compatible.

Nobody wants a life like that!

**Second** is the reason that if one merely considers survival of self and nourishment as the purpose of existence, one becomes just another predator in a forest or jungle which is already full of hungry animals which would just as soon eat you as allow you eat them, and, thus, existence becomes a life-and-death struggle for self-survival.

**Third**, quite ironically, if one were, indeed, unknowingly, delusively fighting for self-survival in a world where, instead

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of self being seen as an abiding mental-construct, self is only an unsubstantial bundle of aggregates which has no concrete existence, one might, out of ignorance, even be ready and willing to fight, out of a paradoxical compulsion to preserve the survival of a posited self which doesn't even really exist — which has no ultimate existence!

This is ignorance, isn't it?

What we must remember is that the world is not outside us, and we are not inside our self. There can be no inside and outside phenomena when every motion and action is part of a larger energy process.

Does this go against what you feel and believe?

It may well do, but it is part of the untangling process of unlearning everything that we have ever assumed and have been told to believe.

Most of us are unable to untangle the tangle.

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If we paraphrase a comment from Bhikkhu Bodhi's well-known lecture given on the Satipatthana Sutta at Bodhi Monastery, [MN059\_MN-010.MP3], we also may examine some further related questions, summarizing his words as follows:

He asks, which are the different aspects of experience [flowing phenomena] which we cling and grasp onto with the idea: "This is me." "This is mine." "This is myself."

And, then, he says:

"These are the three primary OBSESSIONS of the subjective way of thinking."

These are the underlying constructions of an imagined underlying personality, and the point of the Buddha's teaching is obtaining freedom or liberation from these three obsessions, which spontaneously arise in the mind, taking what we assume to be the arising of phenomena of "I," "mine" and "myself."

This notion arises spontaneously, as a part of experience, [arising process of point of view], as a part of the process of identifying, as a "part" of the phenomenal process of nature, (which is an integral part of experience), we take on a point of view which could simply be called perception but which, then, may be mistakenly taken and designated to be some sense of an "I" — a "being, in place with an actual identity" — but there is something wrong with the thinking here, isn't there?

How could "identifying-with" mere experience of a larger and wider process come to be considered as "I"?

There is a jump in the perceptual process here which cannot be explained conventionally or logically.

We might ask, if this could this be taken to mean, "*I*" identify with "*I*" in the sense that the second instance of "*I*" means the totality of experience? We might ask if this could theoretically mean, "I" am the world? Or "I" am the totality of all of phenomena of experience, *but this would be nonsense*.

This cannot be, because man's perceptual capacities and perceivable experiences are narrowly-limited to only what he needs to know to keep on moving and navigating and subsisting, within the range of his immediate and proximate environment.

To help to understand this paradoxical problem, we may explain that in conventional language, there always has to be something separate [as subject] to identify with the totality of the experience [as object], but in ultimate language, the paradox is resolved if the totality of experience excludes any point of reference within it as being a separate and non-participating entity.

The point of reference of the place in experience could, indeed, be assigned the letter "x" and used in mathematical language, although we note that the referent "x" could, certainly and obviously, not be posited to have any personality.

Actually, the locational personal point of view could hypothetically be labeled as "*whatever you want to call it*" within the perspective of quantum physics.

This could also mean that, while such a point of view might be arbitrarily labeled "self" within the syntax of language, the idea — "experience identifying or interconnecting with" — clearly cannot be posited to have a separate personality independent of the totality it is considered to be part of and occurring within.

We might make a pragmatic compromise by saying that because of man's limited perceptual capability, [to say nothing about his vulnerability], he, at least, has a cognitive set of tools to identify happenings within a certain perceptually-restrictive circle of points within the process of phenomenality.

To use a simile to illustrate: Conventionally speaking, a sailor cannot see the whole ocean, but he can navigate his course for his own security and safety with regard to certain proximate recognizable points of reference [using perceivable referents], using the tools he has available in order to calculate and locate and keep track of his present position.

Ultimately, however, the only referents which the psychophysical organism has to use for orientation within the overall

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cycle of the process of life in the cosmos itself are mental awareness of perceptions of increments of change in regard to (i) body, (ii) feelings, (iii) mind and (iv) experienced phenomena, and these mental fields of awareness may be used to figuratively posit or “plot” a hypothetical position, based upon noted, momentary relationships between the referents within a moving overall mental environment, based upon evolving relations between the aforementioned four foundation of mindfulness.

The conventional view may be compared to making measurements within the field of physical geography, whereas the ultimate and wider view may be compared to plotting paths of elements and particles in the science of atomic physics and sub-atomic units which do not yet even have names because they are so hard to locate and measure and research.

The conventional point of view is not much for common man to go on, but *at least* it enables the mind to establish some hypothetical points of reference, as we have said, for the sake of *defense and nourishment*.

We might additionally state that this capability is a sort of defense-system of physical referents which has naturally developed within the emerging and evolving process of the cosmos to protect man (as one of many millions of organisms) from danger and destruction in the face of threatening, approaching co-incident factors and conditions.

Even the flowers fold-up at night, so why should not man, [even though man is part of a part of a much larger evolving, ultimate process], also have some means of immediate protection?

He has the capability, because it is an essential part of a process of insuring on-going and continuing surviving.

To discuss (i) conventional language, with the help of metaphorical devices, we might say that such a system of identification is a trick or tool of nature which a man is able to use as a natural, navigational tool or protection device, [like a sailor being swirled in undulating seas], to locate the point at which he is figuratively “floating” in what might sometimes be calm and sometimes even seem to be made up of surrounding and swirling breakers getting bigger and bigger.

In terms of (ii) ultimate language, symbolically, the ocean may, on a yet a second level, be taken as a confluence of swirling and changing phenomenal elements within an ever-evolving larger process of whirling and changing atomic and sub-atomic elements, in which there is no entity, fixed-form or location at all.

No wonder man is confused. No wonder he grasps onto whatever potential safety-device he imagines might help him fight for his life — especially when the seas are beginning to build and swell-up and crash down around and upon him like falling cliffs in crashing waves of water, becoming bigger and even bigger breakers.

Life is, indeed, as the idiom says, sometimes “harsh, brutal and short,” and we should feel compassion for any entity drifting afloat within any potentially dangerous waves of phenomenal seas, either literally or figuratively designated.

Everything is actually twirling in the ever-in-motion swirling seas of atoms in the cosmos

On the common level our psychophysical radar may not reach very far, but, at least it reaches, far enough to protect us from most of the approaching and immanent dangers around in our environment.

The “fixed” floatation-device of “imagined-position” is just a trick of nature but it works in this situation.

This point of reference which is here designated as the “self” is something we naturally want to hang onto, just as a non-swimmer would desperately grasp onto a life-preserver.

When we use the analogy with reference to common language, it is easy to see how we get attached to the “floatation device as the idea of self”, and it is no wonder we might even, [ironically], want to fight for our “posited-existence” if someone attempted to make us let go of “it” or tried to take it away from us.

That our limited view depends on a need-to-know, narrow and limited range of perception would, in such a case, never occur to us.

This is a paradoxical irony, which only the wise would be capable of seeing.

This is a trick of nature, which works ironically, in this case, for man’s benefit.

Normally, a trick looks like something which cannot be, done, — although when we see it we believe it.

The root of ignorance is that we believe what we see.

Though the self-protective trick of false perception may not be “true,” in an ultimate sense, we may say again that a man in a dangerous-position cannot be blamed for the ignorance or non-awareness which prevents him from seeing a broader perspective beyond the [beneficial] deception behind a protective trick of nature.

Later on, if someone explains how the trick is done, man is no longer ignorant of the true facts — the way they really are. Then, it will no longer be a trick, and there is no longer any deception, at least not in the eyes of those with right view, who can see through deception into the true situation: That a sense of self is just an inherent perpetually operative defensive feeding device needed to keep the psychophysical organism going.

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To reiterate, seen in this way, the figurative picture or image we get of a fixed-point location on the navigational map is helpful in so far as it is beneficial. There is actually no problem in man's using the tool pragmatically as a survival device, as long as he does not identify with it or get wholly carried away by believing in it as having a personality.

To stress the point, man's limited range-of-view gives him a limited sense of self-security, but, he does not and cannot see wider dangers approaching from outside the scope of this practical but limited and three-dimensional range of view within the swirling process of what we call cosmology.

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### **Analogy of an Multi-Dimensional Ocean of Phenomena**

Before concluding, let's take some time to expand upon our ocean image for the sake of illustrating how limited and inflexible and stubbornly ignorant man is:

One might ask: "If we find we are, figuratively speaking, a speck somewhere within a swirling sea of phenomena all around us, and we do not know what kind of mental or physical waves will be coming next, [or from where], what would we normally do?"

Would we continue hanging-onto our surrounding *life-ring of self-identity*, which would mean hanging onto a "self with a suppositional location," in space, as we were, probably and fearfully, likely being swirled and hurled around and about within stormy winds and waves of undulating and unfathomable seas in a cosmic ocean of [arising and ceasing], gathering and breaking energy impulses, giving the appearance or experienced as "spinning mental phenomena, lacking any sense of place?"

What would most of us do in such a case?

We, would most likely, "as supposed individuals," instead of understanding the wider phenomenal truth of ultimate reality of the figurative and phenomenal vastness of the ocean of the cosmos, [i.e. the impermanence of all phenomena continually arising and disappearing], we would probably self-centeredly and frantically be grasping and "hanging-on-tight" while asking:

"Why is this happening to me? Why to me?" As though we were a real person and nature was threatening us with immanent self-annihilation.

As in all distressing situations in life, we would, most likely, quickly become distraught and even angry — because things were not working out the way they were "supposed-to-be," according-to a preconceived-plan, which we had already laid-out within our "own" limited and tightly-encircled, mundane point-of-perspective [wrong view].

Most of us would feel an extreme anxiety in the face of such trouble, even though the root cause of our agitation would be "our" own limited range of narrowed-perception, which is necessarily a field of wrong view, because it does not include everything possible, [outside our security box] within a much-wider and ever-changing, totally unimaginable, vast process of endless numbers of arising radiations and waves of fleeting phenomena within the universe.

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Wrong view depends on ignorance, which is always the proximate cause of unnecessary anxiety, insecurity and suffering.

We might also note that there is a considerable difference between, what is at first, (i) a "simple, point of perception" within a range of seemingly on-going continuum of phenomena — a spark which could potentially grow and evolve into an over-inflated view, which could even go so far, for example, to proclaim: (ii) "I am the preceptor and perceiver of all things."

"Self" is so greedy, that it might, indeed, want to make itself a personal god, although, even if it could, the hungry and insatiable "Self" would still not be satisfied.

This becomes a problem during an evolving process in which so-called "self" is allowed to inflate itself into a big bubble unknowingly nearing the final pressure-point of bursting and breaking-up. Here, we see how the preliminary, weak oxygen-spark of life might grow, uncontrolled and unhindered, [like an ever-expanding self-inflating balloon] to the point of outrageously imagining itself as being omniscient and wanting to know and control everything, while at the same time being unaware it is in the process of breaking-up and wholly ceasing.

Quite paradoxically, there is no total omniscience in Buddhism, and the Buddha has investigated and explained the problem of "Self" in close detail in his analysis of the Five Aggregates and the Six Sense Bases.

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The synopsis below may prove handy for study and overview. It might also be a useful tool for one who has read the complete satipathana sutta in close detail, plus commentary and discussion, and who will benefit from being able to see a structural outline in order to help visualize and simplify the basic scheme within his head again.

We have taken it apart into little bits and now we shall put it back together again.

### **satipatthāna**

the 4 'foundations of mindfulness', lit. 'awareness of mindfulness' (*sati-upatthāna*), are:

contemplation of

- body,
- feeling,
- mind and
- mind-objects. -

For [sati](#), s. prec.

A detailed treatment of this subject, so important for the practice of Buddhist mental culture, is given in the 2 [Satipatthāna Suttas](#) (D.22; M.10), which at the start as well as the conclusion, proclaim the weighty words: "The only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering of the right path, and to the realization of Nibbāna is the 4 foundations of mindfulness."

After these introductory words, and upon the question which these 4 are, it is said that the monk dwells in contemplation of the body, the feelings, the mind, and the mind-objects, "ardent, clearly conscious and mindful, after putting away worldly greed and grief."

These 4 contemplations are in reality not to be taken as merely separate exercises, but on the contrary, at least in many cases, especially in the absorptions, as things inseparably associated with each other. Thereby the Satipatthāna Sutta forms an illustration of the way in which these 4 contemplations relating to the 5 groups of existence ([khandha](#)) simultaneously come to be realized, and finally lead to insight into the impersonality of all existence.

(1) The contemplation of the body (*kāyanupassanā*) consists of the following exercises:

- mindfulness with regard to in-and-outbreathing ([ānāpānasati](#)),
- minding the 4 postures ([iriyāpatha](#)),
- mindfulness and clarity of consciousness (*satisampajañña*, q.v.),
- reflection on the 32 parts of the body (s. [kāyagatāsati](#) and [asubha](#)),
- analysis of the 4 physical elements ([dhātuvavatthāna](#)),
- cemetery meditations ([sīvatthikā](#)).

(2) All feelings (*vedanānupassanā*) that arise in the meditator he clearly perceives, namely:

- agreeable and disagreeable feeling of body and mind,
- sensual and super-sensual feeling,
- indifferent feeling .

(3) He further clearly perceives and understands any state of consciousness or mind (*cittānupassanā*), whether it is

- greedy or not,
- hateful or not,

- deluded or not,
- cramped or distracted,
- developed or undeveloped,
- surpassable or unsurpassable,
- concentrated or unconcentrated,
- liberated or unliberated.

(4) Concerning the mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*),

- he knows whether one of the five hindrances (*nīvarana*) is present in him or not, knows how it arises, how it is overcome, and how in future it does no more arise.
- He knows the nature of each of the five groups (*khandha*), how they arise, and how they are dissolved.
- He knows the 12 bases of all mental activity (*āyatana*): the eye and the visual object, the ear and the audible object, .. mind and mind-object,
- he knows the fetters (*samyojana*) based on them, knows how they arise, how they are overcome, and how in future they do no more arise.
- He knows whether one of the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhanga*, q.v.) is present in him or not, knows how it arises, and how it comes to full development.
- Each of the Four Noble Truths (*sacca*) he understands according to reality.

The 4 contemplations comprise several exercises, but the Satipatthāna should not therefore be thought of as a mere collection of meditation subjects, any one of which may be taken out and practised alone. Though most of the exercises appear also elsewhere in the Buddhist scriptures, in the context of this sutta they are chiefly intended for the cultivation of mindfulness and insight, as indicated by the repetitive passage concluding each section of the sutta (see below).

The 4 contemplations cover all the 5 groups of existence (*khandha*), because mindfulness is meant to encompass the whole personality. Hence, for the full development of mindfulness, the practice should extend to all 4 types of contemplation, though not every single exercise mentioned under these four headings need be taken up. A methodical practice of Satipatthāna has to start with one of the exercises out of the group 'contemplation of the body', which will serve as the primary and regular subject of meditation: The other exercises of the group and the other contemplations are to be cultivated when occasion for them arises during meditation and in everyday life.

After each contemplation, it is shown how it finally leads to insight-knowledge: "Thus with regard to his own body he contemplates the body, with regard to the bodies of others he contemplates the body, with regard to both he contemplates the body. He beholds how the body arises and how it passes away, beholds the arising and passing away of the body. 'A body is there' (but no living being, no individual, no woman, no man, no self, nothing that belongs to a self; neither a person, nor anything belonging to a person; Com.): thus he has established his attentiveness as far as it serves his knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives independent, unattached to anything in the world."

In the same way he contemplates feeling, mind and mind-objects.

In M.118 it is shown how these four foundations of mindfulness may be brought about by the exercise of mindfulness on in-and-out breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*).

#### Literature:

- *The Way of Mindfulness*, tr. of Sutta and Com., by Soma Thera (3rd ed; Kandy 1967, BPS). -
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- *The Foundations of Mindfulness* (tr. of M. 10), Nyanasatta Thera (Wheel 19).
  - *The Satipathāna Sutta and its Application to Modern Life*, V. F. Gunaratna (WHEEL 60). -
  - *The Power of Mindfulness* by Nyanaponika Thera (WHEEL 121/122).

[Thus ends this document]