

IX

AWAKENING

The last spoke in the wheel of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice presented here is contemplation of the awakening factors. The instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* for the first of the awakening factors proceed as follows (MN 10):

If the mindfulness awakening factor is present within, one knows: “the mindfulness awakening factor is present within me”; or if the mindfulness awakening factor is not present within, one knows: “the mindfulness awakening factor is not present within me”; and one knows how the unarisen mindfulness awakening factor arises, and one knows how the arisen mindfulness awakening factor is perfected by development.

This type of instruction applies to all seven awakening factors, which are:

- mindfulness,
- investigation-of-dharmas,
- energy,
- joy,
- tranquillity,
- concentration,
- equipoise.

Comparable to the two-stage procedure in contemplation of the hindrances, the present exercise also seems to involve two stages: the first stage requires recognition of the presence or absence of an awakening factor; the second stage then concerns exploring conditionality. This takes place by turning awareness to the conditions that lead to the arising of an awakening factor and those that will further strengthen it.

In actual practice, I suggest cultivating this first stage of recognizing the awakening factors based on the experience of joy due to the absence of the hindrances experienced with the previous contemplation. Such wholesome joy has manifested as a result of having become established in *mindfulness* as the all-important foundation and then having investigated the mind to check for the presence or absence of any of the five hindrances. This *investigation* has

been carried out with sufficient *energy* to make sure the hindrances have indeed gone into abeyance. The *joy* that has arisen at such times naturally leads on to *tranquillity, concentration, and equipoise*. In this way, the build-up of practice achieved through the previous contemplation of the hindrances can be used as a launching pad for cultivating the awakening factors.

An important implication of the very presence of these seven awakening factors in our own mind is that it testifies to our capacity to awaken. However weak these awakening factors may be at present, through sustained cultivation they can be made to grow and become stronger. This in a way serves as a complement to our insight that body, feeling, and mind are empty, that they are not something we can truly own. At the same time, we do own something rather precious: the potential to awaken.

MINDFULNESS

Regarding the second stage in contemplation of the awakening factors, the main condition for the arising of the awakening factors is mindfulness itself. When *sati* is lost, the awakening factors lack their foundation. When mindfulness has been established, a sequential building up of the awakening factors can take place (Anālayo 2003: 235ff and 2013: 215ff).

Mindfulness as an awakening factor can be aroused through *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation itself (MN 118, SN 54.13, SN 54.14, SN 54.15, SN 54.16). The same can also happen, however, while listening to a talk (SN 46.3). A proper appreciation of this alternative requires a return to the topic of the relationship between mindfulness and memory, already broached in [Chapter 1](#) (see [here](#)). There I mentioned what seems to me to be a significant implication of this relationship for actual practice: mindfulness of what is present should be undertaken with the same kind of intent interest and open receptivity we would bring to anything that we are to remember later.

Imagine being given the task to witness a talk and later give an accurate report of it to others, but for some reason not being able to take notes and also not having access to anything that could be used for digital recording. Although such a scenario may seem somewhat remote nowadays, it does resemble quite closely the standard situation in the oral setting of ancient India. Thus to relate the awakening factor

of mindfulness to the situation of listening to a talk would have been a natural way, in the Buddha's time, to illustrate the type of mental attitude and quality of the mind required in order to be able to remember later what was said.

Successfully remembering the talk and being able to give an accurate report to others would require that we arouse an attitude of keen interest and open receptivity while listening to it. We should do our best to avoid getting caught up in minor details and tangential associations. It would also be important to maintain a balanced attitude of unbiased observation rather than getting carried away by emotional reactions. Only in this way will we be able to ensure that we arrive at a balanced and comprehensive appraisal of the talk as a whole.

These qualities are precisely what *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation tries to inculcate: a keen interest, an open receptivity, as well as a balanced and unbiased observation. Here the two situations meet: the attempt to listen to a talk and remember it well, and the meditative cultivation of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

When the time has come to give our report of what we heard (or even when just wanting to recollect it for our own purposes), it would be helpful to establish a mental attitude as close as possible to the original situation of hearing. The more our state of mind resembles that of hearing the talk, the more comprehensive and precise will our recall of it be. This concords with the two dimensions of the contribution of mindfulness to facilitating memory: improved comprehensiveness and balance when storing information in the mind and ease of recall of that information later on. The same facilitation of taking in information and of its subsequent processing is a central dimension of the awakening factor of mindfulness during meditation practice.

A flavour of the awakening factor of mindfulness during actual practice could be summarized as its "sap", a summary based on combining the first letters of the following three qualities:

- soft,
- awake,
- presence.

Here “soft” is meant to represent the openness and receptivity that the mind acquires when *sati* is well established. This combines with an “awake” quality that comes about through following up the implications of the memory nuance of mindfulness, whereby we meet every moment with that inner wakefulness that will enable us to remember it vividly and distinctly. Based on a foundation in such inner wakefulness, mindfulness acquires its fully “awake” quality on being combined with the other awakening factors. The third quality of “presence” comes about when with mindfulness we remain fully in the present moment. In this way, the flavour of the “sap” of establishing mindfulness as an awakening factor could be summarized as a “soft awake presence”. The combination of these three qualities can serve as a guide and reference point for knowing whether mindfulness is present (or absent) and for recognizing how *sati* arises and how to perfect it by development.

INVESTIGATION

Whether mindfulness has been established during a talk on the Dharma or with *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, the next awakening factor comes into being by examining, scrutinizing, and investigating the information that has become available through the open receptivity of mindfulness. The instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* regarding the awakening factor of investigation-of-dharmas, *dhammavicaya*, are:

If the investigation-of-dharmas awakening factor is present within, one knows: “the investigation-of-dharmas awakening factor is present within me”; or if the investigation-of-dharmas awakening factor is not present within, one knows: “the investigation-of-dharmas awakening factor is not present within me”; and one knows how the unarisen investigation-of-dharmas awakening factor arises, and one knows how the arisen investigation-of-dharmas awakening factor is perfected by development.

This particular awakening factor could be compared to using a magnifying glass. The rim that holds this magnifying glass is the teachings. These are the basic reference point for investigating whatever is happening in the present moment.

Such investigation-of-dharmas finds its expression in an attitude of keen interest, an inquisitiveness, a wish to follow things up and really understand them. An illustrative example would be the formulation used for contemplation of the elements in the *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. The instructions are: “In this body, is there the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the wind

element?”

Now there can hardly be any doubt that these four elements are found in the body. Hence I take it that the use of a question format conveys the type of attitude appropriate for investigation. The point at stake is to have an interested or even curious and inquisitive attitude, which does not necessarily have to be framed in words.

Following the lead provided by this example in the *Ekottarikaāgama* discourse, instead of just noting that things are impermanent, we might query: “Let me see, is this really changing? Is it indeed impermanent?” Holding this type of inquisitiveness as an attitude in mind, be it verbally or non-verbally, conveys a characteristic flavour of investigation-of-dharmas.

A particularly fruitful way of directing such an enquiring attitude during actual *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation is towards the condition of our own mind. This is precisely where the distinction made with the help of this awakening factor between what is skilful or wholesome (*kusala*) and what is unskilful or unwholesome (*akusala*) matters most. Investigating our own mind has an immediate benefit in so far as it supports the continuity of mindfulness, simply because any tendency towards distraction will more easily and more quickly be noticed. Such directing of investigation within can foster a form of meta-awareness that offers substantial support for *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation.

ENERGY

Establishing such an attitude of inquisitiveness within requires some persistence. A sustaining of investigation is needed in order for genuine progress to unfold. What sustains such investigation is the next awakening factor of energy, *virīya*. The instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* on this awakening factor proceed as follows:

If the energy awakening factor is present within, one knows: “the energy awakening factor is present within me”; or if the energy awakening factor is not present within, one knows: “the energy awakening factor is not present within me”; and one knows how the unarisen energy awakening factor arises, and one knows how the arisen energy awakening factor is perfected by development.

The energy mentioned in these instructions does not refer to the vital energy in the bodies of living beings. Instead, energy in the present context rather stands for persistence, in the sense of an active and continuous engagement with what we are doing and experiencing. According to the description given in the discourses that present the

sequential building up of the awakening factors, such energy should be “unshaken” (*asallīna*). This confirms the importance of perseverance, of keeping with the task at hand, as a central nuance of energy as an awakening factor. Such active engagement can take on a bodily and a mental dimension.

JOY

The combination of being mindful, having an inquisitive attitude, and the sustaining support of active engagement leads up to a wholesome type of joy, *pīti*. The instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* are:

If the joy awakening factor is present within, one knows: “the joy awakening factor is present within me”; or if the joy awakening factor is not present within, one knows: “the joy awakening factor is not present within me”; and one knows how the unarisen joy awakening factor arises, and one knows how the arisen joy awakening factor is perfected by development.

The joy mentioned here relates to the subtle joy of being in the present moment, discussed in [Chapter 6](#) on the contemplation of feeling (see above [here](#)). It is this same subtle joy at a more mature and developed stage that can grow into the awakening factor of joy. The descriptions of the sequential building up of the awakening factors make it clear that such joy should be of an unworldly type. This circumscribes the kind of joy that can serve as an awakening factor. Rejoicing in the temporary absence of the hindrances from the mind would be a good example of a type of joy that fits the case.

Now the discourses regularly refer to a natural pattern where wholesome forms of joy lead on to tranquillity and concentration. This is the case to such an extent that there is no need to formulate an intention for wholesome joy to lead to tranquillity of body and mind, and for a tranquil body and mind to lead via inner happiness to concentration (AN 10.2; Anālayo 2003: 166). This in turn implies that an intentional arousing of the first awakening factors up to joy can build the foundation for a natural progression that sets in once joy is established, with only a need to monitor that this natural progression through tranquillity and concentration culminates in equipoise. Based on mindful investigation that is sustained by energy, the intentional arousing of joy seems to be a key factor in this whole sequential building up of the awakening factors.

TRANQUILLITY

The naturally soothing effect of wholesome joy leads on to tranquillity of the mind. The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* instructs:

If the tranquillity awakening factor is present within, one knows: “the tranquillity awakening factor is present within me”; or if the tranquillity awakening factor is not present within, one knows: “the tranquillity awakening factor is not present within me”; and one knows how the unarisen tranquillity awakening factor arises, and one knows how the arisen tranquillity awakening factor is perfected by development.

Tranquillity and calmness arisen in this way influence both body and mind. The body is at ease and the mind becomes calm. This becomes the manifestation of the awakening factor of tranquillity. According to the discourses that depict the sequential building up of the awakening factors, tranquillity of the body and mind leads to happiness (*sukha*), as a result of which concentration naturally arises.

CONCENTRATION

The instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* regarding the awakening factor of concentration proceed as follows:

If the concentration awakening factor is present within, one knows: “the concentration awakening factor is present within me”; or if the concentration awakening factor is not present within, one knows: “the concentration awakening factor is not present within me”; and one knows how the unarisen concentration awakening factor arises, and one knows how the arisen concentration awakening factor is perfected by development.

The standard translation of *samādhi* as “concentration” can at times call up unwarranted associations. However, since this is the generally established terminology, I think it is preferable for me in this case not to deviate from it and instead simply explain my understanding of the significance of the Pāli original. The term *samādhi* carries nuances of a bringing together (Anālayo 2003: 72). Such bringing together of the mind does not necessarily involve a narrow focus and certainly does not inevitably require the use of force, associations that can be called up by the term “concentration”. Translations that perhaps better convey the nuances of *samādhi* would be “collectedness” or “composure” of the mind. All of this points to a condition of unruffled and unified serenity, which is the very opposite of being scattered and distracted.

From the viewpoint of the noble eightfold path, the concentration that arises at this point can fulfil the path factor of right concentration. A definition of this path factor speaks of the concentration that supports and is supported by the other path factors (MN 117; Anālayo 2003: 73). In fact, right concentration does not seem to be just a matter of reaching absorption attainment. The attainment of absorption could

in principle be part of a form of practice that does not have the guiding principle of right view. Such concentration could not be reckoned “right concentration”.

Absorption itself appears to have been already known in the ancient Indian setting before the time of the Buddha (Anālayo 2017a: 163ff). The distinct contribution by the Buddha seems to have been the perspective that such experiences are merely the product of specific conditions. This divests altered states of consciousness of any metaphysical or ontological connotations.

The Buddha’s approach in this respect appears to have evolved from an analysis of absorption into three types to the more commonly found analysis into four types (Anālayo 2017c: 36ff). The existence of these two alternative schemes itself already shows that there is not just one possible mode of reckoning. What both schemes have in common is the analytical approach, the emphasis on conditionality. With the arising of such and such mental factors, such and such a type of concentrative experience can manifest. I take it that this perspective could be the backdrop of the often-found definition of right concentration by way of the detailed description of the four absorptions, reflecting the analytical approach and the vision of conditionality to be applied to these sublime experiences.

This in turn would imply that any level of concentration that has been reached, as long as this comes as part of a cultivation of the noble eightfold path and is approached with the same analytical attitude, deserves to be reckoned right concentration. In this way, differing definitions of right concentration found in the discourses could be reconciled with each other.

Here it would also be relevant that a discourse in the *Samyuttanikāya* identifies the “stream” entered with the first level of awakening as being the eightfold path; hence one who is endowed with this path is called a “stream-enterer” (SN 55.5). This can hardly mean that every stream-enterer must be able to attain the four absorptions (Anālayo 2003: 79–81). Instead, a stream-enterer is accomplished in right view, and this would be what turns concentration, whatever its depth, into “right concentration”.

EQUIPOISE

The culmination point in the cultivation of the awakening factors

comes with equipoise, *upekkhā*, for which the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* enjoins:

If the equipoise awakening factor is present within, one knows: “the equipoise awakening factor is present within me”; or if the equipoise awakening factor is not present within, one knows: “the equipoise awakening factor is not present within me”; and one knows how the unarisen equipoise awakening factor arises, and one knows how the arisen equipoise awakening factor is perfected by development.

In other contexts, the term *upekkhā* stands for “equanimity”. However, in the present context using that translation could be confusing, at least if this is understood to imply a contrast or even conflict with the existence of joy. This is not the case. In order to avoid possible misunderstanding, I prefer the translation “equipoise”. In the context of the gradual building up of the awakening factors, *upekkhā* stands for a superb balance of the mind.

The Pāli description of the gradual building up of the awakening factors speaks of looking on well with equipoise at the concentrated mind. A Chinese parallel specifies that this refers to being free from covetousness and sadness (Anālayo 2013: 216). This relates back to the stipulation in the definition of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, according to which we should dwell free from desires and discontent, or more literally covetousness and sadness. This correspondence conveys how the gradual building up of the awakening factors fructifies in what has been an aim throughout actual *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation: dwelling with inner balance (and returning to it as soon as it is lost).

A balanced cultivation of the seven awakening factors has as its starting point their sequential build-up, starting from mindfulness and culminating in equipoise. Such sequential building up of the awakening factors could be compared to playing a sitar with seven strings. Before beginning a piece of music, a player will first go once through the strings of the sitar one by one, from the lowest to the highest pitch. This is to make sure that they are properly tuned and in harmony with one another. No string should be too tight or too loose. After sounding each string in proper sequence, the sitar player is ready to perform.

Similarly, cultivation of the seven awakening factors can begin with a sequential build-up. Each of the awakening factors can be made to resound singly and in proper sequence. Once this has been done, the performance can start.

The actual performance in the cultivation of the awakening factors is a matter of harmonious balancing. The basic tone that accompanies the entire piece is set by mindfulness. Mindfulness is always required (SN 46.53, Anālayo 2003: 235 and 2013: 204). The remaining six awakening factors fall into two ensembles with three members each. Investigation-of-dharmas, energy, and joy make up the members of the first ensemble, which serves to energize the practice. Tranquillity, concentration, and equipoise make up the members of the second ensemble, which serves to bring calmness to the practice. In actual practice, the concert pitch of these two ensembles could be summarized under the headings of “joyfully sustained interest” and “calmly composed balance”.

Whereas the other six awakening factors need to be brought into balance, mindfulness is always required; it is their foundation and reference point. In a way, the other six almost seem to bring out nuances inherent in mindfulness by way of complementing and rounding off its awakening potential. The element of *inquisitiveness* naturally builds on the keen interest we bring to whatever we encounter through establishing receptive mindfulness, as if we had to remember it later. This element of inquisitiveness or sincere interest needs sustaining, it needs to be propped up with *energy* in the form of persistence. If this takes place without going overboard so as to result in tenseness, the *joy* of being in the present moment will saturate the resultant experience. In this way the three energizing awakening factors of investigation-of-dharmas, energy, and joy make their contribution in the form of a “joyfully sustained interest”.

Alongside such joyfully sustained interest, well-established mindfulness has a natural dimension of *calming* body and mind. A mind with mindfulness established also tends towards *composure* rather than being scattered, and through *satipaṭṭhāna* practice the theme of balance and *equipoise* is very much in the foreground throughout. In this way the three calming awakening factors of tranquillity, concentration, and equipoise offer their contribution by way of a “calmly composed balance”. In the company of these six, as ways of refining the inherent potential of *sati*, mindfulness fully acquires its marvellous awakening quality.

The *Aggi-sutta* illustrates the function of these two groups of three

awakening factors with the example of a fire (SN 46.53; Anālayo 2003: 235 and 2013: 201ff). Wet material can be used to put a fire out, whereas adding dry firewood will make the fire flare up. The appropriateness of each type of material depends on the condition of the fire and what we want to do with it. If the fire is small and we want it to flare up, it is appropriate to add dry firewood and inappropriate to use wet material. The opposite holds for a big fire that we wish to reduce or put out.

The same applies for the cultivation of the awakening factors. Similar to the varying conditions of a fire, at times our mind might be slightly sluggish and at other times slightly excited. Noticing with mindfulness such minor fluctuations enables us to take the appropriate action. When the mind has become slightly sluggish, this is the time to give more emphasis to the first group of three. Giving emphasis to investigation-of-dharmas, energy, and joy will energize the mind and bring it back into balance. It would be unskilful at such times to give emphasis to the other three awakening factors that rather have a calming effect.

Conversely, when the mind has become slightly agitated or excited, it is time to strengthen the second group of three. Giving emphasis to tranquillity, concentration, and equipoise will calm the mind and bring it back into balance. In sum:

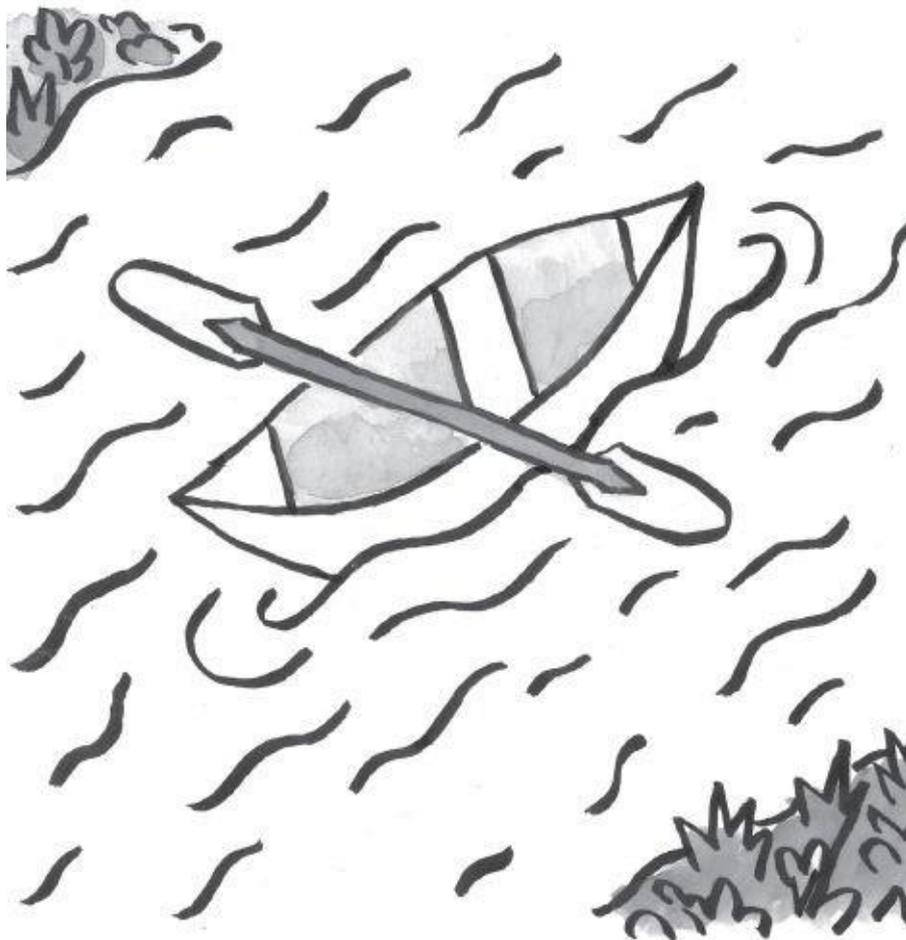
any mind:	cultivate mindfulness,
sluggish mind:	cultivate investigation, energy, joy,
agitated mind:	cultivate tranquillity, concentration, equipoise.

In actual practice this could be illustrated with the example of being in a canoe or kayak with a double-bladed paddle. The canoe is carried forward by the flow of a river at exactly the right speed. On the banks to the left and right there is beautiful natural scenery and above is the wide-open sky. Our only task is to stay in the middle of the river so that the journey can continue on its own. This requires keeping an eye on deviating from the midst of the river. When the canoe moves closer to one of the two banks, gently putting one blade of the paddle into the water for a short moment suffices to return to the centre of the

river.

In this simile, the canoe represents mindfulness of the body and the river the continuous awareness of impermanence. The beautiful scenery on both sides of the river illustrates the different insights to be gained during *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation. The wide-open sky represents the open-minded and receptive attitude characteristic of this mode of cultivating mindfulness. The ocean as the final destination of the river corresponds to the realization of Nibbāna.

One who cultivates the four *satipaṭṭhānas* inclines and slopes towards Nibbāna just as the river Ganges inclines and slopes towards the ocean (SN 47.51). It is in particular the cultivation of the seven awakening factors that makes our practice flow towards Nibbāna (SN 46.77; Anālayo 2003: 233).



Returning to the canoe simile, the two blades of the paddle illustrate the emphasis to be given to one or the other of these two groups of three awakening factors. In order to continue the journey forward without getting stuck on the river banks, all that is needed is to keep

an eye on remaining in the middle of the river, the midpoint of balance. Whenever the course of the journey begins to stray even slightly from that midpoint of balance, a brief use of one of the two blades of the paddle will bring about the necessary correction. This can happen either by placing more emphasis on the three awakening factors that energize or else by giving more importance to the three awakening factors that calm the mind. When well established, such balance can continue from sitting to imbue also walking meditation.

CULTIVATING INDIVIDUAL AWAKENING FACTORS

In addition to being grouped together into these two sets of three that are based on and interrelate with mindfulness, the awakening factors can also be cultivated individually. A discourse describes the degree of mastery that can be achieved in this respect (SN 46.4; Anālayo 2003: 240 and 2013: 205). Similar to a king or a minister who can freely choose whatever he wishes to wear from his full wardrobe, in the same way it is possible to learn to dwell in any awakening factor for however long we wish.

This passage encourages cultivating single awakening factors in order to gain familiarity with them and a clear understanding of each. Investigation-of-dharmas, for example, is clearly not confined to formal meditation. It can also be aroused through study and reflection on the teachings (SN 46.3; Anālayo 2003: 235). The same principle holds for other awakening factors. Their applicability to hearing or reflecting on the teachings would stand in the background of the recurrent reports of listeners attaining stages of awakening while the Buddha was delivering a discourse.

An applicability to situations outside of formal meditation would also be relevant to external contemplation, in the sense of noting whether someone else is mindful, for example, or has an investigative attitude, and so on.

Each of these seven awakening factors has its proper nourishment (SN 46.51; Anālayo 2003: 236 and 2013: 206ff). This provides yet another perspective on the conditions for arousing and stabilizing the awakening factors, the second stage in the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. The nourishment for *mindfulness* is of course the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* itself.

Investigation-of-dharmas finds its nourishment in clearly distinguishing between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. Such clear distinction provides a crucial basis for *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation cultivated as an integral part of the noble eightfold path. It also provides a sense of direction for investigation, as the distinction between wholesome and unwholesome becomes naturally meaningful when observing the condition of our own mind. This is what above all needs to be constantly investigated and examined.

The awakening factor of *energy* has as its nourishment the making of an endeavour, which finds a prominent expression within the scheme of the noble eightfold path in right effort. The deployment of right effort is based on the ability to distinguish clearly between what is wholesome and unwholesome, a relationship that highlights the dependency of the awakening factor of energy on the preceding awakening factor of investigation-of-dharmas. In this way, by cultivating mindfulness and investigation we increasingly come to appreciate the distinction between what is wholesome and unwholesome, which in turn informs and directs the application of our effort and energy.

At this juncture of practice comes the experience of non-sensual types of *joy*. Giving attention to such joy (and those things that are a basis for it) is precisely what nourishes and establishes this awakening factor. I take this to imply, or even to sanction, the intentional arousing of wholesome forms of joy in order to proceed on the path to awakening. The next two awakening factors follow the natural course of events, where calmness of body and mind leads to *tranquillity* and in turn via non-distraction to mental composure in the form of *concentration* and eventually to *equipoise*. As already mentioned above, intentionally attending to joy sets the course that leads to the establishing of the remaining three awakening factors.

Another presentation helpful for appreciating practice-related dimensions of the awakening factors is the *Pariyāya-sutta*. The discourse depicts two possible domains for each of the seven, resulting in a total count of fourteen possible manifestations of the awakening factors (SN 46.52). Elsewhere I have discussed variations found in the Chinese parallel (Anālayo 2013: 209ff). In what follows I will rely on the Pāli version.

Mindfulness, investigation-of-dharmas, and equipoise can according to the *Pariyāya-sutta* have either an internal or an external dimension. In the case of mindfulness this is obvious, as the internal and external dimensions are explicitly mentioned in the refrain that comes after each individual contemplation in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*.

In addition to mindfulness, investigation-of-dharmas and equipoise can be directed to what is internal or else what is external. In other words, these three awakening factors appear to be particularly relevant for implementing this part of the refrain in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. In this way, just as mindfulness can be cultivated internally and externally, so too investigation and equipoise can fruitfully be developed towards what happens internally and to what manifests externally.

An interesting aspect of the resultant grouping in the *Pariyāya-sutta* is that, whereas mindfulness is always required, investigation is an energizing factor and equipoise a factor that calms. From a practical perspective, I take this to imply that these two awakening factors can balance each other out. In other words, investigation-of-dharmas should not be taken so far that it results in a loss of equipoise. Conversely, equipoise should not inhibit the enquiry of investigation-of-dharmas.

A similar cross-relation obtains in the *Pariyāya-sutta* between energy and tranquillity. Both awakening factors can manifest bodily and mentally. In this way the external dimension is left behind and the description concerns just the internal dimension, which is further divided into the domain of the body and the domain of the mind. Here, too, an energizing factor and a calming factor stand in relation to each other. In terms of actual practice, I understand this to mean that, based on the balance established between investigation-of-dharmas and equipoise concerned with what is internal and external, in the realm of the internal a similar balance needs to be established between energy and tranquillity. In a way this is a natural interrelation, as too much energy will lead to a loss of tranquillity and excessive tranquillity inhibits the deployment of energy. Both situations equally lead to a loss of balance.

The remaining two awakening factors involve a further analysis of the domain of what is mental. Joy and concentration can be

experienced at levels leading up to and including the first absorption and at deeper levels of absorption. The distinction drawn here involves the presence or absence of *vitakka* and *vicāra*, which as factors of absorption I understand to convey the sense of an application of the mind and its sustaining (Anālayo 2003: 75ff and 2017a: 123ff). In a wider sense, this distinction could also be understood to convey that joy and concentration can be aroused intentionally or else manifest spontaneously.

In the case of the awakening factors of joy and concentration, again a factor that energizes comes together with a factor that calms. Too much joy can become distracting and undermine the stability of concentration. Concentration taken up to a peak with the third and fourth absorptions leads to experiences where joy is left behind. For both to function as awakening factors, balance continues to be of central importance.

Based on the above presentation, the cultivation and balancing of the awakening factors could be visualized as involving three seesaws supported by a single pivot point. The single pivot point is mindfulness. The first seesaw has investigation-of-dharmas and equipoise as its two ends. It has the largest board because it encompasses the domain of what is internal and external. The second seesaw has energy and tranquillity as its two ends. Its board is comparatively smaller because it only covers the domain of what is bodily and mental. The third seesaw has joy and concentration as its two ends. Its board is the smallest because its domain is confined to various levels of deepening concentration.

Summing up, the cultivation of the awakening factors takes place based on a sequential building up. Mindfulness is the single pivot point for the three seesaws of investigation-of-dharmas and equipoise, energy and tranquillity, as well as joy and concentration.

INCLINING THE MIND TOWARDS AWAKENING

Progress to Nibbāna takes place by passing through four distinct yet interrelated meditative themes (Anālayo 2013: 219ff). The culmination point of these four meditative themes is letting go. Such *letting go* is reached via dwelling in dependence on *seclusion*, in dependence on *dispassion*, and in dependence on *cessation*. Just like the three legs of a tripod support its pinnacle, in the same way do seclusion, dispassion,

and cessation support letting go. They invest letting go with the proper direction, in the sense that we need to let go of whatever is not in alignment with these three supports. Here seclusion can be understood to stand for having distanced ourselves from what is unwholesome (in particular the hindrances), dispassion can represent the fading away of attachments, and cessation can refer to the ending of *dukkha*. The final task then is to let go of what is unwholesome, what arouses passion, and what is *dukkha*.

A similar series of four meditative themes makes up the final tetrad of mindfulness of breathing in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta*, which is an alternative mode of cultivating contemplation of dharmas (MN 118; Anālayo 2003: 183). This final tetrad proceeds through the meditative themes of impermanence, dispassion, cessation, and letting go.

In relation to the mode of practice presented here, *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation undertaken so far establishes *seclusion* from the hindrances. During actual practice we keep an eye on this condition of seclusion, *viveka*, by maintaining mindfulness of the present moment without succumbing to distraction.

A secondary meaning of the term *viveka*, recognized in some dictionaries, is discrimination (Anālayo 2017a: 128). Although in its general use in the Pāli discourses the sense of seclusion is clearly the prominent one, this secondary meaning also has practical relevance. Once the mind is secluded from hindrances and distractions, we become able to discern the true nature of existence, in particular its nature of being subject to *impermanence*. This insight had in fact already become comprehensive with the previous three *satipaṭṭhānas*. Seeing the changing nature of all aspects of experience naturally leads on to cultivating dispassion, to a gradual fading away of craving and attachments. Although this is a natural progression, it is nevertheless helpful to incline the mind intentionally towards dispassion. In a way, we are letting the implications of impermanence sink into the mind. We are allowing the flow of change to wash away our craving and attachments.

As our craving and attachments fade away through dispassion, we become increasingly able to be at peace with the ending of things; we are willing to allow things to cease. This serves to go beyond the average unbalanced attitude of only wanting what is young and new,

ignoring what is old and decaying. By attending to the cessation of phenomena, to their ending, we arrive at a more balanced vision. It becomes more and more clear that cessation is not frightening, but actually peaceful. This becomes a practical implementation of insight into emptiness. As identifications lessen, it becomes increasingly easy to allow things to cease. This understanding spurs us onwards on the path to the supreme cessation of *dukkha*.

The more we are able to allow things to end, to be at ease with cessation and recognize its peacefulness, the better we will be at letting go. Gradually letting go of all remaining attachments prepares us for the supreme letting go, the plunge into the deathless, the realization of Nibbāna.

Needless to say, bringing these meditative themes into actual practice is not meant to encourage a tendency to fabricate experience. The proper use of these tools for progress in insight could be compared to a ray of the morning sun that touches a flower, causing it to open. The touch by the ray of the sun is like the skilful use of these themes; what follows is a natural development leading to the flowering of insight.

A simile in the *Samyutta-nikāya* describes a hen sitting on her eggs (SN 22.101; Anālayo 2003: 253). Due to her unrelenting sitting on the eggs, eventually the chicks will break the eggshells and hatch. In the same way, due to our unrelenting sitting on the meditation seat, eventually we will break the shell of ignorance and awakening will take place. It will occur in its own time. Our job is simply to make sure the appropriate conditions are in place. But the experience itself cannot be made or forced to happen. To try to do so would have the opposite result, as it would be directly contrary to what is most needed for awakening to take place: letting go.

In a way all of these meditative themes of seclusion, dispassion, cessation, and letting go point to Nibbāna. Each does so in a way that is a bit more pronounced or clearer than the previous one. Proceeding through these meditative themes is quite different from a self-centred attempt to attain a certain experience. There is nothing to be acquired here. Rather, all and everything is to be let go of. Instead of reaching out to gain something, we allow the mind to resonate ever more strongly with the profound peace of Nibbāna. This is the peak of

dwelling independently without clinging to anything in the world.

According to personal needs and preferences, we might move through these insight themes slowly or quickly. At times it may seem preferable to savour each distinctly. At other times it might feel appropriate to move more swiftly in order to give importance to their dynamic interrelation, leading up to the peak of letting go.

The basic dynamics involved in working through these four meditative themes could be visualized with the idea of a tiny slot between what is happening now and what happens next. Now our basic meditative task is to avoid being drawn into past and future. Instead, with mindfulness well established we learn to remain in the present. Once we are well established in the present moment, however, there remains a tendency of the mind to reach out for what comes next. This is like wanting to get the next spoonful of experience before having properly chewed the present one. By cultivating dispassion, we learn to let go of this reaching out for what is next and come to be at ease in just being with what is now. By moving on to cessation, the ending part of the present moment becomes fully clear to our meditative vision. Earlier this ending part was not properly noticed, due to the tendency to reach out for what comes next. As the ending of the present moment fully emerges, it becomes possible to let go into a tiny slot between what is now and what comes next. By letting go into that very slot, the breakthrough to Nibbāna can take place and timelessness can be experienced.

The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* concludes by listing different time periods of practice leading to the two higher levels of awakening. Together with stressing the fact that *satipaṭṭhāna* is capable of leading to complete freedom of the mind from sensuality and aversion, this part of the discourse also offers the important indication that the time period to reach that goal can vary considerably.

The path to awakening involves a gradual progression, comparable to the gradual deepening of the ocean (AN 8.19; Anālayo 2003: 252). It is important to keep this in mind in order to counter unreasonable expectations of instant results and the consequent frustrations when these do not manifest. At the same time, however, some changes should manifest after sustained practice over a period of time. This is similar to a carpenter who notices that, after repeated use, the handle

of his adze has worn out (SN 22.101; Anālayo 2003: 252). Repeated practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* should leave its marks on how we handle everyday situations. There should be small but noticeable changes for the better in our personal well-being and in how we relate to others.

OPEN PRACTICE

Returning to the actual practice, having aroused and balanced the seven awakening factors, we proceed to open awareness of changing phenomena in whatever way they manifest. We are aware that “there are dharmas” in terms of the awakening factors being established in balance, a balance that takes place in a mind that is firmly rooted in mindfulness of the whole body. Whenever the mind is established in seclusion, we can proceed via dispassion and cessation to letting go.

The contribution made by contemplation of the awakening factors in this way to the hub of the wheel of practice lies in establishing a superb mental equipoise and in imbuing the mind with the quality of being awake. The contribution made to the rim lies in particular in inclining the mind towards Nibbāna, the summit of dwelling independently without clinging to anything.

As for practice outside of formal sitting, at times a particular awakening factor can be aroused in specific situations when this seems opportune. Nevertheless, a cultivation of the whole set of seven is probably too subtle a form of practice to be easily applied in daily life. A helpful perspective for bringing essential dimensions of the present contemplation into ordinary situations can be found in a discourse that describes the factors that lead to the arising or origination of each of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* (SN 47.42; Anālayo 2003: 106 and 2013: 175). In order to contextualize what this discourse has to offer for the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*, I first briefly survey its presentation for the preceding three.

The discourse in question, the *Samudaya-sutta*, specifies the condition for the arising of the body to be nutriment. This dependency of the body on being nourished becomes quite evident with contemplation of the elements in particular, as discussed above (see [here](#)). The body requires a constant supply of the earth element in the form of food (together with liquids, the appropriate temperature, and the necessary oxygen) in order to survive.

The *Samudaya-sutta* mentions contact as the condition for the arising of feeling. This highlights the conditionality of feeling, which is indeed the one *satipaṭṭhāna* that most easily lends itself to a direct and practical exploration of dependent arising at the crucial juncture where craving can arise. The impact of contact also underlies the distinction of feelings into bodily and mental types, which is precisely concerned with the type of contact that has led to their arising.

According to the *Samudaya-sutta*, the condition for the arising of the mind is name-and-form. This requires a bit of unpacking. My suggestion here is to read this part of the *Samudaya-sutta* alongside the way the early discourses list the first three of the four nutriments (*āhāra*). These are food, contact, and volition. The *Samudaya-sutta* lists food, contact, and name-and-form. So the first two items correspond in these two presentations; the third item is either volition or else name-and-form.

Now volition is one of the mental factors included in name. Based on this parallelism, I propose to interpret name-and-form in the context of the *Samudaya-sutta* as pointing particularly to the combination of mental processes and material impressions that set the context for and influence volition. By approaching name-and-form with a focus on volition in this way, a bridge to contemplation of the mind is more easily built. *Citta*, the word for mind, is etymologically related to *cetanā*, volition. A central task in contemplation of the mind is precisely to see through a particular train of thought and recognize the underlying current, the volitional driving force that stands behind it. Thus volition as a factor of name-and-form is indeed the condition for the arising of the mind. Just as food discloses the precariousness of bodily existence and contact the dependently arisen nature of feeling, in the same way a spotlight on volition captures an essential dimension of contemplation of the mind.

Turning to the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*, according to the *Samudayasutta* attention (*manasikāra*) is the condition for the arising of dharmas. Similar to volition, attention is a factor of name and thus a quality present in any state of mind (unlike mindfulness). Just as volitions can be wholesome or unwholesome, a comparable distinction holds for attention. The basic quality of attention can be wise or penetrative, *yoniso*, or else it can be unwise or superficial, *ayoniso*.

From the viewpoint of contemplation of the hindrances and the awakening factors, the relationship established in the *Samudaya-sutta* between the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna* and attention acquires further significance. Attention is indeed crucial to both of these contemplations. Attention that is unwise or not penetrative, *ayoniso manasikāra*, leads to the arising of the hindrances and prevents the arising of the awakening factors, just as attention that is wise or penetrative, *yoniso manasikāra*, counters the hindrances and fosters the arising of the awakening factors (Sn 46.24; Anālayo 2012: 199). In other words, the main thrust of the two contemplations of dharmas concerned with the hindrances and the awakening factors could be summarized in terms of cultivating *yoniso manasikāra*, wise or penetrative attention, over its opposite of unwise and superficial attention.

In this way, when viewed from a practical perspective, the presentation in the *Samudaya-sutta* can be interpreted as revealing a key point of contemplation of dharmas that can more easily be carried into everyday-life situations. This can take place through the simple contrast between wise or penetrative attention and its opposite. Directing our attention wisely or penetratingly is indeed amenable to any type of situation. It is also a form of practice that naturally builds a relation to the teachings, since it is precisely the input derived from acquaintance with the Dharma that supports the deployment of wise or thorough attention. The dimension of dependent arising also falls into place, since the thoroughness of vision that results from deploying wise or penetrative attention will sooner or later disclose the conditioned nature of whatever is experienced.

In sum, my suggestion is to bring contemplation of dharmas, in the way presented here as comprising the hindrances and awakening factors, into daily-life situations through the cultivation of wise or penetrative attention, *yoniso manasikāra*, in order to emerge from its opposite, *ayoniso manasikāra*.

Applied to all four *satipaṭṭhānas*, the teaching of the *Samudayasutta* could then be interpreted to point to the four following aspects:

- become aware of the precariousness of bodily existence due to its dependency on *food*;

- explore the dependent arising of feelings at the point of *contact* (and learn to avoid reactions that increase *dukkha*);
- monitor *volition* in the context of *name-and-form* as that which sets the course of the mind;
- pay wise or penetrative *attention* to progress on the path to awakening.

SUMMARY

The task of the present contemplation is to recognize the presence (and absence) of the awakening factors as well as the conditions that arouse and stabilize each of these seven jewels in the mind. Based on *mindfulness* we *investigate* with *energy* such that *joy* arises, which naturally leads to *tranquillity* and *concentration*, culminating in a superb inner *equipoise*. Practice continues by maintaining a balance of these factors in the mind, comparable to a canoe in the middle of a river. Slight sluggishness can be countered by giving emphasis to the three energizing awakening factors, just as slight agitation can be balanced off through emphasis on the three calming awakening factors. Mindfulness is required throughout. With all awakening factors established in balance in a mind *secluded* from the hindrances, we cultivate *dispassion* and *cessation*, leading to ever deeper levels of *letting go*.