

Chapter II

The Concepts of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, and Related Texts To Other Sources as Appear in The Pāli Canon

2.1. Introduction

This chapter summarizes related findings of this research in relation to the term *Satipaṭṭhāna*. First a presentation a general definition of the term *Satipaṭṭhāna* and second a discussion of the different kinds of *Satipaṭṭhāna* given in the *Suttanta Piṭaka*. Moreover each of the three kinds of *Satipaṭṭhāna* is further subdivided in classification as discussed in and according to the explanation of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. And then an exploration of the important aspects of the *Satipaṭṭhāna*'s concepts and its practical application with respect to the various meditation techniques as popularly practiced in Theravada Buddhism at the present day. Before embarking on a description and evaluation of the structure and contents of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* presented in Chapter II, it is important to understand the exact meaning of the term *Satipaṭṭhāna* and to understand the applicable role and functional importance of *Satipaṭṭhāna* in practice – *samatha* meditation and *vipassanā* meditation – to use this knowledge to gain an obvious light for the practice it is essential to have a clear definition of this term.

2.2. Definitions of the Term *Satipaṭṭhāna*

*Satipaṭṭhāna*¹ is the Pāli word for the Buddhist concept of the

¹ For the traditional use of the translation, "foundations [*paṭṭhānā*] of mindfulness," see, e.g., Gunaratana (2012) and U Silananda (2002). For appraisals supporting the parsing of the suffix as *upaṭṭhāna*, see, e.g., Anālayo (2006), pp. 29-30; and, Bodhi (2000), p. 1504. Anālayo argues from an etymological standpoint that, while "foundation [*paṭṭhāna*] of mindfulness" is supported by the Pāli commentary, the term *paṭṭhāna* (foundation) was otherwise unused in the Pāli nikayas and is only

foundations of *mindfulness*. The corresponding word in Sanskrit (Skt.) is *smṛtyupasthāna*.

The *four foundations of mindfulness* (Pāli *cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*) are four practices set out in the Satipatthana Sutta for attaining and maintaining moment-by-moment mindfulness and are fundamental techniques in Buddhist meditation. The four foundations of mindfulness are:

Mindfulness of the body (*Kāya*)

Mindfulness of feelings or sensations (*vedanā*)

Mindfulness of mind or consciousness (*citta*) and

Mindfulness of mental phenomena or mental objects (*dhammā*).

The Buddha referred to the four foundations for establishing mindfulness as a "direct" or "one-way path" to the realization of nirvana. These practices continue to be recognized, taught, and practiced as key techniques for achieving the benefits of mindfulness, especially in modern Theravadan Buddhism and in the Vipassana or Insight Meditation Movement. Satipaṭṭhāna is a compound term that has been parsed (and thus translated) in two ways:

Sati-paṭṭhāna has been translated as "foundation of mindfulness," underscoring the object used to gain mindfulness.

first used in the Abhidhamma; in contrast, the term *upaṭṭhāna* (presence or establishment) can in fact be found throughout the nikayas and is readily visible in the Sanskrit equivalents of the compound Pāli phrase *satipaṭṭhāna* (Skt., *smṛtyupasthāna* or *smṛti-upasthāna*). Thus Anālayo states that "presence of mindfulness" (as opposed to "foundation of mindfulness") is more likely to be etymologically correct. Like Anālayo, Bodhi assesses that "establishment [upaṭṭhāna] of mindfulness" is the preferred translation. However, Bodhi's analysis is more contextual than Anālayo's. According to Bodhi, while "establishment of mindfulness" is normally supported by the textual context, there are exceptions to this rule, such as with SN 47.42 (pp. 1660, 1928 n. 180) where a translation of "foundation of mindfulness" is best supported. Soma (1941/2003) uses both "foundations of mindfulness" and "arousing of mindfulness."

Sati-upaṭṭhāna has been translated as "presence of mindfulness" or "establishment of mindfulness" or "arousing of mindfulness," underscoring mental qualities co-existent with or antecedent to mindfulness.² While the former parsing and translation is more traditional the latter has been given etymological and contextual authority by contemporary Buddhist scholars such as Bhikkhu Analayo and Bhikkhu Bodhi. The four foundations of mindfulness are one of the seven sets of "states conducive to enlightenment" (Pāli *bodhipakkhiyādhammā*) identified in many schools of Buddhism as means for progressing toward Enlightenment or Awakening.³

The four foundations of mindfulness are practices for attaining and deepening skillful mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) and, less directly, skillful concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) parts of the Noble Eightfold Path. The four foundations (Satipaṭṭhāna) meditation practices gradually develop the mental factors of insight (*vipassana*) and focus *samatha*. The four foundations of mindfulness are regarded as fundamental in modern Theravadan Buddhism and Vipassana or Insight Meditation Movement and in the many traditions of Buddhism that emphasize meditation, including Mahāyāna traditions.⁴

2.3. Theories of the Term Satipaṭṭhāna

According to the practical traditions of Theravada Buddhism there are different methods of meditation practice that are to be taught and practiced in everyday life so as to achieve the purpose corresponding to the concept of "the mindfulness of the Satipaṭṭhāna", as mentioned

² D. II.374.

³ Bhikkhu Bodhi. (tr.). **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha.** vol 1. Oxford: PTS., 2000.p.278.

⁴ M.III.949.

broadly in the *Visuddhimagga*. Within that it refers to the background or the basic uniqueness for mental development, i.e., Buddhist meditation practices which consist of forty types of meditation practice (*kammaṭṭhāna*) including the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna as well. The “*Kāyagatāsati*” or “the Mindfulness as regards the Body”,⁵ sometimes refers only to contemplation on the thirty-two parts of the body and sometimes to all the various meditations under ‘Contemplation of the Body’ (*kāyānupassanā*) and is one of the four ‘Foundations of Mindfulness’ (*satipaṭṭhāna*) consisting partly in Concentration (*samādhi*) exercises and partly in Insight (*vipassanā*) exercises. On the other hand it is included in the cemetery meditations (*sīvathikā*), the same as the ten contemplations of loathsomeness (*asubha- bhāvanā*), and contemplation on the thirty-two parts of the body, which is called the ‘Reflection of Impurity’ (*paṭikūla-saññā*). To find out some real aspects of *kāya* (the body), in terms of “elements” particularly, comes under the description of development of the Definition of the Four Elements, which was listed as the ‘One Defining’ next to Perception or Repulsiveness in it. This general concept is given in two ways in brief and in detail as mentioned in several discourses e.g., the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *Mahārāhulovāda Sutta*, *Mahāhatthipadūpamā Sutta*, *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*, and the *Girimānanda Sutta*.

Throughout this research on Buddhist Texts and other sources, especially the *Tipiṭaka*, it was found in a number of discourses in relation to the techniques of meditation based on the way to practically develop mindfulness of the *satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and right understanding of its

⁵ Horner, I.B. (tr.). Majjhima-Nikāya: **The Middle Length Sayings** (The Middle Fifty Discourses). vol 2. Oxford: PTS., 1997. P,572.

ultimate reality as well as its main purpose: the levels of mental attainment, which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

2.4. An Indication of The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Satipaṭṭhāna as the “direct path” to Nibbāna received a detailed treatment in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya. Precisely the same discourse recurs as the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, the only difference being that this version offers a more extensive treatment of the four noble truths, the last of the Satipaṭṭhāna contemplations.⁶ The topic of Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta has moreover inspired several shorter discourses in the Samputta Nikāya and the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Apart from the Pāli sources, expositions on Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta are also preserved in Chinese and Sanskrit, with intriguing occasional variations from the Pāli presentations.

Most of the discourses in the Samputta Nikāya and Aṅguttara Nikāya mention only the bare outline of the four Satipaṭṭhāna, without going into the details of their possible applications. This functional division into four Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta seems to be a direct outcome of the Buddha’s awakening and a central aspect of his rediscovery of an ancient path of practice.⁷ But the detailed instructions found in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta apparently belong to a later period when the Buddha’s teaching had spread from the Ganges valley to distant *Kammāsadhamma* in the *Kuru* country where both discourses were spoken.⁸ The starting and concluding section of the discourse is a passage that states that Satipaṭṭhāna constitutes the direct

⁶ DN.II.342.

⁷ *Samputta Nikāya*, vols. I-V. ed. M. Leon Feer. Oxford: PTS, 1970-1991. p.363.

⁸ M.II.367.

path to Nibbāna. The next section of the discourse offers a short definition of the most essential aspects of this direct path. This “definition” mentions four Satipaṭṭhāna of specific mental qualities that are instrumental for Satipaṭṭhāna: one should be diligent (aaṭaāpī), clearly knowing (sampajāna), mindful (sati), and free from desires and discontent. After this “definition” the discourse describes the four Satipaṭṭhāna of body, feelings, mind, and dhammas in detail.⁹

The range of the first Satipaṭṭhāna ranges from contemplation of the body proceeds to mindfulness of breathing, postures, and activities, via analyses of the body into its anatomical parts and elements to contemplating a corpse in decay. The next two Satipaṭṭhāna are concerned with contemplating feelings and mind. The fourth Satipaṭṭhāna lists five types of dhammas for contemplation: mental hindrances, the aggregates, the sense-spheres, the awakening factors, and the four noble truths.¹⁰ After the actual meditation practices the discourse returns to the direct path statement and as prediction about the time within which realization can be expected. Throughout the discourse a particular formula follows each individual meditation practice. This Satipaṭṭhāna “refrain” completes each instruction by repeatedly emphasizing the important aspects of the practice.⁹ According to this “refrain” Satipaṭṭhāna contemplation covers internal and external phenomena, and is concerned with their arising and passing away. The “refrain” also points out that mindfulness should be established merely for the sake of developing bare knowledge and for achieving continuity of awareness.¹¹

⁹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya**, USA, 2000. p 101.

¹⁰ T. W. Rhys Davids, **Dīgha Nikāya**, vols. II. ed. Oxford: PTS, 1995. P 382.

¹¹ M II.592.

According to the same “refrain” proper Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta contemplation takes place free from any dependence or clinging. The entire discourse is framed by an introduction, which conveys the occasion of its delivery and a conclusion, which reports the delighted reaction of the monks after the Buddha’s exposition.

By placing the “definition” and the “refrain” at the center of the above figure intends to highlight their central role in the discourse. As the figure shows the discourse weaves a recurring pattern that systematically alternates between specific meditation instructions and the “refrain”. Each time the task of the “refrain” is to direct attention to those aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna that are essential for proper practice.¹²

The same pattern also applies to the start of the discourse where a general introduction to the topic of Satipaṭṭhāna through the “direct path” statement is followed by the “definition” which has the role of pointing out its essential characteristics. In this way both the “definition” and the “refrain” indicate what is essential. Thus, for a proper understanding and implementation of Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the information contained in the “definition” and the “refrain” is of particular importance.

2.5. The General Mention of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

The Lord Buddha preached this sutta. In this sutta the Lord Buddha directs the ways to overcome sorrow and distress, evaporation of pain and sadness and for gaining the right path to realization of Nibbāna. According to this sutta the basic technique for meditation starts with the Four Foundation of mindfulness.¹³

¹² D III. 379.

¹³ T. W. Rhys Davids, **Dīgha Nikāya**, vols. I, ed.. Oxford: PTS, 1982, P.642.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are: Contemplating body as body; Contemplating feels as feelings; Contemplating mind as mind; Contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects.

1. Contemplating of the Body (*Kayanupassana*)

Contemplation of the body can be emphasized in the following ways.

- a. Mindfulness of Breathing
- b. The Four Postures
 - a. Walking
 - b. Sitting
 - c. Standing
 - d. Lying down
- c. Clear Awareness

Awareness of go forward, go backward; physical movement of the body in action.

- d. Parts of the Body

Concentration on the thirty-one part of the body, such as head-hairs, body-hairs, stomach, liver, heart etc.

- e. The Four Elements
 - a. The Earth-element (*Pathavi*)
 - b. The Water-element (*Āpo*)
 - c. The Fire-element (*Tejo*)
 - d. The Air-element (*Vāyo*)

- f. The Nine Charnel – Ground

- a. A body dead one, two, or three days; swollen, blue and festering, thrown in the charnel ground,

- b. Eaten by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals or by different kinds of worms,
- c. Reduced to a skeleton with some flesh and blood attached to it, held together by the tendons.
- d. Reduced to a skeleton blood-besmeared and without flesh, held together by the tendons.
- e. Reduced to a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together by the tendons.
- f. Reduced to disconnected bones, scattered in all directions here a bone of the hand, there a bone of the foot, a shin bone, a thigh bone, the pelvis, spine and skull.
- g. Reduced to bleached bones of conch like color.
- h. Reduced to bones, more than a year-old, lying in a heap.
- i. Reduced to bones gone rotten and become dust he then applies this perception

2. Contemplating feeling (*Vedananupassana*)

- a. Painful feeling
- b. Pleasant feeling
- c. Neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling

3. Contemplating of Mind (*cittanupassana*)

- a. Strong desire for sexual gratification (lustful mind)
- b. Hatful mind
- c. Deluded mind (mislead mind)
- d. Contracted mind (smaller mind)
- e. Distracted mind (astray mind)
- f. Developed mind (matured mind)
- g. Surpassed mind (out trip mind)

- h. Concentrated mind (focused mind)
- i. Liberated mind (mind of freedom)

4. Contemplating mind-objects

a. The Six Internal and External Sense-Bases

- a. Sight-objects from eye
- b. Sound-objects from ear
- c. Smell-objects from nose
- d. Taste-objects from tongue
- e. Mind-objects from mind
- f. Tangible-objects from body

b. The Five Aggregates

- a. *Rupakkhandhā* = Aggregate of Corporeality
- b. *Vedanakkhandhā* = Aggregate of Feeling
- c. *Saññakkhandhā* = Aggregate of Perception
- d. *Saṅkhārakkhandhā* = Aggregate of Mental Concomitants
- e. *Vīññāṇakkhandhā* = Aggregate of Consciousness

c. The Five Hindrances

- a. Sensual desire
- b. Ill-will
- c. Sloth-and-torpor (lack of emotion)
- d. Worry-and-flurry (anxiety and excitement)
- e. Doubt (suspect)

d. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment

- a. Mindfulness (*sati-sambojjhaṅga*)
- b. Differentiation of states (*Dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga*)
- c. Energy (*vīriya-sambojjhaṅga*)
- d. Rapture (*pīti-sambojjhaṅga*)

- e. Tranquility (*passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*)
- f. Concentration (*samādhī*)
- g. Equanimity (*upekka-sambojjhaṅga*).

e. The Four Noble Truths

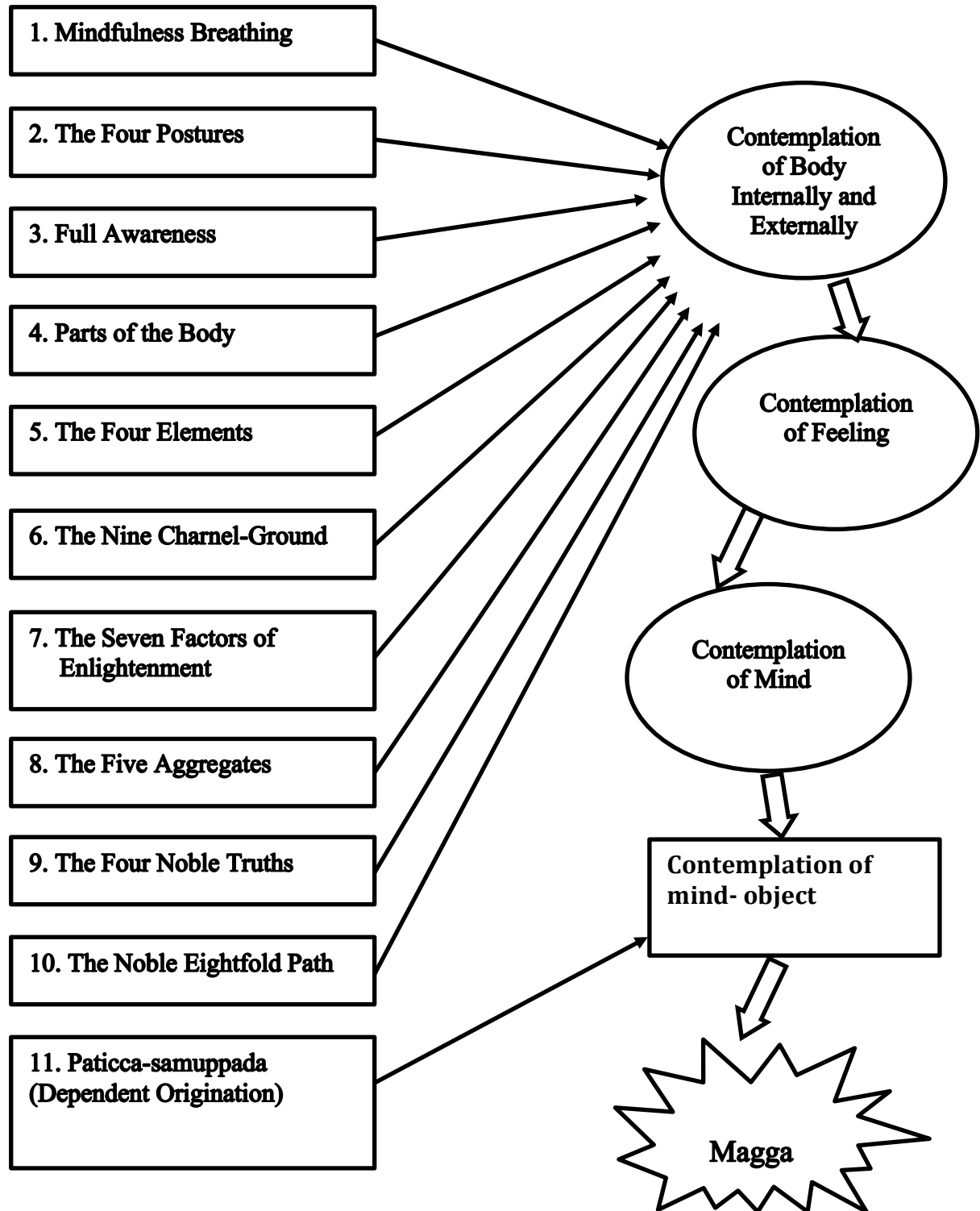
- a. The Noble Truth of Suffering (*Dukkha Sacca*)
- b. The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*Samudaya Sacca*)
- c. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*Nirodha Sacca*)
- d. The Noble Truth of the Way of Practice leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*Magga Sacca*)

f. The Noble Eightfold Path

- a. Right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*),
- b. Right resolve (*sammā-saṅkappa*),
- c. Right speech (*sammā-vācā*),
- d. Right action (*sammā-kammanta*),
- e. Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*),
- f. Right effort (*sammā-vāyama*),
- g. Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and
- h. Right concentration (*sammā-samādhī*)

These are the techniques that are stated in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and are shown in Figure 1:

Figure (1) A General Analysis of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta



2.6. Interpretation of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

When the Buddha was in the land of the Kurus he told the itinerant monks:

‘The only way to overcome suffering and misery, to purify the mind, to enter the true path and attain Nibāna is to practice The Four Foundations of Mindfulness’.¹⁴

So what are these four? The monk lives intently observing his body, fully conscious of it and understanding its nature. Likewise he lives examining his emotions, his states of mind, and his thoughts. He lives alone, reliant on no one, attached to nothing, having abandoned all emotional responses towards the world.

2.6.1 Mindfulness of the Body (*Kayanupassāna*)

How does a monk live contemplating the body? He goes to the forest, to the foot of a tree or to an empty place. He sits down cross-legged, holds his body erect, and focuses on the breath in front of himself. Mindfully he breathes in and mindfully he breathes out. When inhaling a long breath he thinks: ‘I am inhaling a long breath.’ When exhaling a long breath he thinks: ‘I am exhaling a long breath.’ Likewise, he knows when he is breathing in or out a short breath.¹⁵

He is like a skilled turner who knows exactly when he is making a long or short turn on the lathe.¹⁶ He trains himself thinking: ‘Conscious of the whole body, I breathe in. Conscious of the whole body I breathe out. Calming the whole body, I breathe in. Calming the whole body I breathe out.’ He carefully observes his own body and the bodies of others. He observes how bodily sensations arise and pass away and what causes

¹⁴ M II.10. P.708.

¹⁵ D II.375.

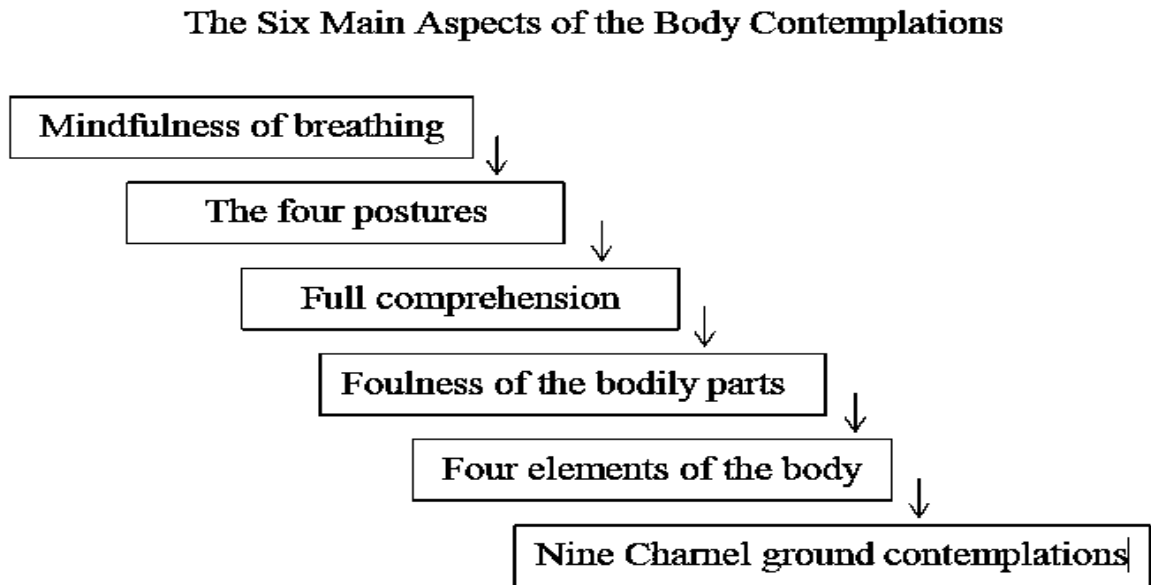
¹⁶ SNIII.P. 942.

them to do so. He focuses on his body solely for the purpose of understanding its true nature. And he lives alone, reliant on no- one, attached to nothing in this world. Furthermore, when walking a monk thinks: ‘I am walking.’ When standing he thinks: ‘I am standing.’ Likewise he knows when he is sitting or lying. He deliberately calms his breathing and his body in each of these postures.

He is equally mindful when coming and going, when looking forward or around him; when bending and stretching; when wearing his robes and carrying his bowl; when eating, drinking, chewing and tasting; when excreting and urinating; when falling asleep and waking up; when talking and remaining silent.

He surveys his body upwards from the soles of his feet, or downwards from the hairs of the head. He examines the 32 constituent parts of the body and sees them all as repulsive. He analyses the body in terms of the four elements.¹⁷ If possible he will examine a corpse throughout the nine stages of decay, thinking: ‘My body is just like that one and cannot escape its fate.’ In these ways a monk contemplates the nature of the body.

¹⁷ MN. I. 59, op. cit., p, 451.

(Fig: 2) Mindfulness of the Body (*Kāyaānupassāna*)

2.6.2 Mindfulness of Emotion (*Vedanānupassanā*)

In accordance with *Vedanānupassanā* (the contemplation of feeling or sensation) it should be understood quite clearly that when feeling a pleasant feeling *sukha-vedanā* one understands: ‘I feel a pleasant feeling’; when feeling an unpleasant feeling *dukkha-vedanā* one understands ‘I feel an unpleasant feeling’; when feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling *Adukkhamasukha-vedanā*,¹⁸ one understands ‘I feel a neither-painful-nor pleasant feeling’; when feeling a worldly pleasant feeling one understands: ‘I feel a worldly pleasant feeling’; when feeling a worldly painful feeling one understands ‘I feel an worldly painful feeling; when feeling worldly neither-painful nor - pleasant feeling one understands ‘I feel a worldly neither painful- painful-pleasant feeling’.¹⁹

¹⁸ Woodward, F.L, *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Trans. Vol. I, London: PTS, 1970.p.873.

¹⁹ SII. p.719.

All feelings are arising in one; they should be clearly perceived and noticed as they really are so as to know and identify what is agreeable and disagreeable feeling of the body and mind, sensual and super-sensual feeling, or indifferent feeling.

(Fig-3) Mindfulness of Vedanā

The three six types of the feeling contemplations	
Sukha- Vedanā	Sāmisa-sukha-vedanā
	Nirānisa-sukha-vedanā
Dukkha-vedanā	Sāmisa-dukkha-vedanā
	Nirānisa-dukkha-vedanā
Adukkhama-sukha-vedanā	Sāmisa-adukkhamasukha-vedanā
	Nirānisa-adukkhamasukkha-vedanā

2.6.3 Mindfulness of States of Mind (*Cittānupassanā*)

During the later part of the previous satipatthāna, contemplation of feeling and awareness was concerned with the ethical distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings. The same distinction occurs at the start of the next satipatthāna which directs awareness to the ethical quality of the mind, namely to the presence or absence of lust (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).²⁰

Contemplation of the mind makes use of eight categories. In each case the task of sati is to know a particular mental quality or its opposite. Thus contemplation of the mind actually covers sixteen states of mind.

²⁰ SII. 54.P.482.

The same set of sixteen states appears elsewhere in the discourses in relation to telepathic abilities. Therefore from the perspective of the discourses this set forms a representative list of states of mind that is relevant both to personal introspection and to assessing another's mind. These sixteen states of mind can be subdivided into two sets. The first set contrasts unwholesome and wholesome states of mind; while the second set is concerned with the presence or absence of higher states of mind.²¹

The different states of mind will be examined individually following an introductory assessment of contemplation of the mind in general.²² Underlying this satipatthāna is an implicit shift in emphasis from the ordinary way of experiencing mind as an individual entity to considering mental events as mere objects analyzed in terms of their qualitative characteristics.

Contemplation of the mind also includes in accordance with the satipatthāna “refrain” awareness of the arising and passing away of the states of mind being contemplated thereby revealing the momentary character of all mental events.²³ In addition, sustained contemplation of the mind will also expose the degree to which one takes to be one's own mind is in fact influenced by external conditions. In this way realizing the impermanent and conditioned nature of the mind accords with the general thrust of satipatthāna towards detachment and no identification.

²¹ Paṭisambhidāmagga: **The Path of Discrimination**. Trans. Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu Series No. 43, London: PTS, 1982.p.274.

²² DII. 475.

²³ A.III.154.

(Fig: 4) Mindfulness of States of Mind (*Cittānupassanā*)

“Ordinary” state of mind	“Higher” state of mind
Lustful (sarāga)	Great (mahaggata)
Angry (sadosa)	Unsurpassable (anuttara)
Deluded (samoha)	Concentrated (samāhita)
Distracted (vikkhitta)	Liberated (vimutta)

2.6.4 Mindfulness of Thought (*Dhammānupassanā*)

Relating to the contemplation of mind objects (*Dhammānupassanā*) one understands and contemplates mind objects as mind objects in terms of the following five aspects as shown below in the Table 5. In summary having studied the Sutta we turn to the assurance of attainment, which was given by the Buddha himself.²⁴ But before we study this assurance let us recapitulate what we have studied so far. In this Sutta the Buddha taught the four foundations of Mindfulness in twenty-one different ways. The four foundations of Mindfulness are the contemplation of the body, the contemplation of feelings, the contemplation of consciousness and the contemplation of the Dhammas.²⁵ The contemplation of the body is described in fourteen ways: mindfulness of breathing, the postures of the body, clear comprehension of activities, reflection on the repulsiveness of the body, on the material elements, and the practice of the nine cemetery contemplations. Contemplation of feelings is described only in one way because although there are three basic feelings, as feelings they are only one; they express the quality of sensations experienced with respect to an object. The contemplation of consciousness is also described only in one

²⁴ E.M. Hare *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Trans.. Vol. III, London: PTS, 1973.

²⁵ M.III.537.

way because although there is consciousness accompanied by lust–raga and others; as the awareness of the object they are only one.²⁶ The contemplation of the Dhammas however is described in five ways: the contemplation of the five hindrances, the five aggregates of clinging, the six internal and six external sense-bases, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the four noble truths

(Fig: 5) Mindfulness of Thought (*Dhammanupassanā*)

1. Five Nīvarana <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensual desire • Ill-Will • Sloth and torpor • Remorse and restlessness • Doubt or uncertainty 	One should understand: each of the hindrances arises in him or not arises in him, how there comes to be the arising of unarisen hindrances and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen hindrances, and how there comes to be the future non- arising of abandoned hindrances
2. The five Aggregates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material form • Feeling • The formations • Consciousness 	One should understand: ‘such is material form, such its origin, such its disappearance; such its feeling, such its origin, such its disappearances; such are the formations, such their origin, such their disappearance; such is consciousness such its origin, such its disappearances.
3. The six internal sense bases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The eye = the sight • The ear = the sound • The nose= the taste • The tongue= the mind-objects 	One should understand: through the sense both internally and externally, the fetter arises depending on each other; how there comes to be the arising of unarisen fetter, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen fetter, and how there comes to be the future non- fetter.
4. The seven factors of enlightenment: Mindfulness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truth investigation • Energy • Rapture • Tranquility, Concentration • Equanimity 	One should understand: there arises each of seven enlightenment factors in him or not arises in him; and how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen enlightenment factors, and how the arisen enlightenment factors come to fulfillment by development.

²⁶ Anālayo, Satipaṭṭhāna, **The Direct Path to Realization**. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003.p.78.

5. The four noble truths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suffering or misery • The cause of suffering • The cessation of suffering • The path leading to sensation of suffering 	One should understand as it actually is: this is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering; this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering
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2.7 Essential Aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna

The “direct path” to *Nibbāna* described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta presents a comprehensive set of contemplations that progressively reveal ever-subtler aspects of subjective experience.²⁷ The mental qualities required for this direct path of *Satipaṭṭhāna* are according to the “definition” part of the discourse, a balanced and sustained application of effort (*ātāpī*), the presence of clearly knowing (*sampajāñña*), and a balanced state of mind, free from desires (*abhijjhā*) and discontent (*domanassa*).²⁸

These three qualities revolve like three spokes of a wheel around the central mental quality of sati. As a mental quality sati represents the deliberate cultivation and a qualitative improvement of the receptive awareness that characterizes the initial stages of the perceptual process. Important aspects of sati are bare and unanimous receptivity combined with an alert, broad, and open state of mind.²⁹ One of the central tasks of sati is the de-automatization of habitual reactions and perceptual evaluations. Sati thereby leads to a progressive restructuring of perceptual appraisal and culminates in an undistorted vision of reality “as it is”. The element of non-reactive watchful receptivity in sati forms the foundation

²⁷ Bhikkhu Bodhi. (tr.). Saṃyutta–Nikāya: **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha**. vol 1. Oxford: PTS., 2000.p.309.

²⁸ D.I.380.

²⁹ Horner, I.B. (tr.). Majjhima–Nikāya, **The Middle Length Sayings**, vol 2. Oxford: PTS. 1997.p.201.

for Satipaṭṭhāna as an ingenious middle path, which neither suppresses the contents of experience nor compulsively reacts to them.

This mental quality of sati has a broad variety of possible applications. Within the context of Satipaṭṭhāna, sati can range from the coarsest activities such as defecation and urination, all the way up to the most sublime and exalted state when sati is present as a mental factor during the breakthrough to Nibbāna.³⁰

A similar breadth of applications can be found in the context of calmness meditation where the tasks of sati range from recognizing the presence of a hindrance to emerging with awareness from the highest meditative absorption. On the basis of the central characteristics and qualities of Satipaṭṭhāna described in the “definition” and in the “refrain” the main thrust of Satipaṭṭhāna, can be summed up as: **Keep Calmly Knowing Change**³¹ With the injunction “keep” the intention is to cover both continuity and comprehensivity in Satipaṭṭhāna contemplation. Continuity of awareness underlies the quality “diligent” (*ātāpī*) mentioned in the “definition”.

The element of comprehensiveness comes up in the “refrain” which enjoins to contemplate both internally (*ajjhata*) and externally (*bahiddhā*) i.e. to comprehensively contemplate both one and others. The qualification “calmly” stands for the need, mentioned in the “definition” and the “refrain”, to undertake Satipaṭṭhāna free from desires and discontent (*vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassā*) and also free from any

³⁰ DII.938.

³¹ DII. 739.

clinging or dependence (*anissito ca viharati, na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*).³²

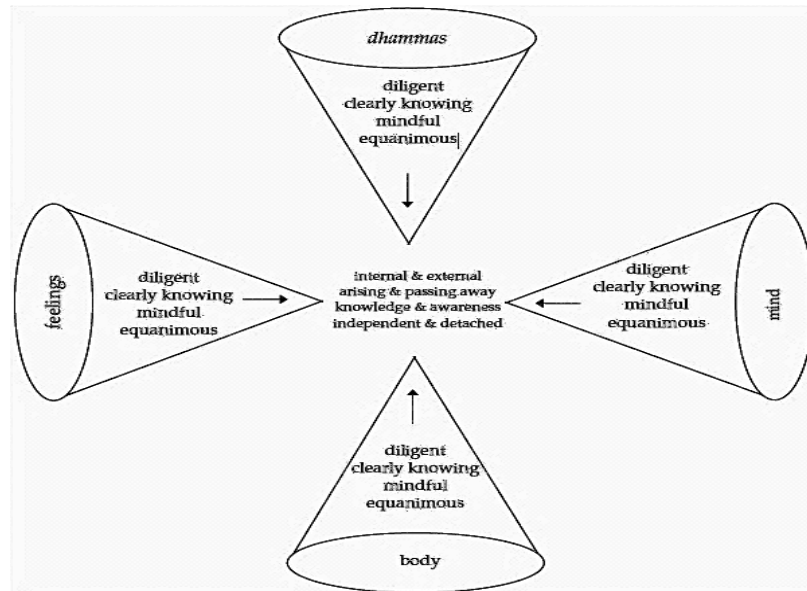
The verb “knowing” echoes the frequent use of the verb *pajānāti* in the discourse. Such “knowing” represents the quality of bare mindfulness (*sati*) combined with clearly knowing (*sampajāna*); again both mentioned in the “definition”. Both occur also in the “refrain” which speaks of contemplating merely for the sake of “bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness” (*ñāoemattāya paṭissatimattāya*). The “refrain” also explains the particular aspect of body, feelings, mind and dhammas to which this quality of knowing is to be directed, namely they are arising and passing away (*samudaya-vaya dhammānupassī*).³³

Such contemplation of impermanence can either lead to an understanding of conditionality or form the basis for understanding the other two characteristics of conditioned phenomena, *dukkha* and *anattā*. It is this growth of insight into the unsatisfactory and empty nature of conditioned existence, based on the direct realization of impermanence that is referred to with the term “change”. The essential features of Satipaṭṭhāna contemplation can also be brought out visually.

³² MIII.708.

³³ M. Leon Feer , **Saṃyutta Nikāya**, vols. I-V. ed.. Oxford: PTS, 1970-1991.p.98.

(Fig: 6) Essential Aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna³⁴



In Fig.6 above I have attempted to illustrate the relationship between the “definition”, the four Satipaṭṭhāna, and the “refrain”. The central aspects mentioned in the “refrain” are in the centre of the figure while the qualities listed in the “definition” are repeated in each cone. These four cones represent the four Satipaṭṭhāna each of which can become the main focus of practice and lead to deep insight and realization.³⁵ As the diagram indicates undertaking Satipaṭṭhāna, contemplation of body, feelings, mind, or dhammas requires the combination of all the four qualities listed in the “definition”. Such contemplation leads to the development of the four aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna as found in the centre of the above figure and mentioned in

³⁴ Analayo, Satipaṭṭhāna, **The Direct Path to Realization**. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003. P,291.

³⁵ Horner, I.B. **Majjhima Nikāya**. Vol. III. Trans. Oxford: PTS, 1999.p.963.

the “refrain” of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.³⁶ In this diagram I intend to show that each of the four Satipaṭṭhānas constitutes a “door” or perhaps a “stepping-stone”. The contemplations included under the four Satipaṭṭhāna are not ends in themselves; rather they are only tools for developing the central aspects described in the “refrain”.

Whichever door or stepping-stone is used to develop insight the main task is to employ it skilfully in order to gain a comprehensive and balanced vision of the true nature of subjective experience. In the *Salāyatanavibhanga* Sutta the Buddha spoke of three “Satipaṭṭhāna” distinct from the practices listed in the four Satipaṭṭhāna scheme. This suggests that the contemplations described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta do not determine the only proper and suitable ways for carrying out “Satipaṭṭhāna” contemplation but only recommendations for possible applications.

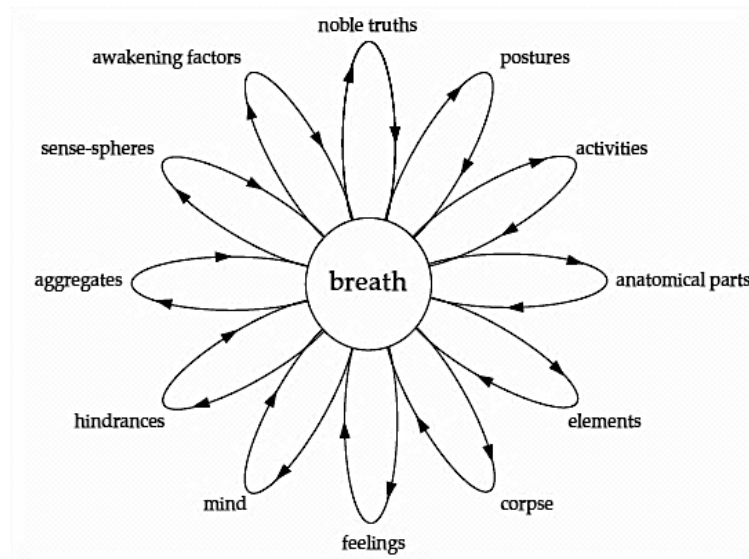
Thus the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna is not necessarily restricted to the range of objects explicitly listed in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.³⁷ The contemplations in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta progress from gross to subtle aspects of experience. It should be kept in mind however that this discourse represents a theoretical model of Satipaṭṭhāna; not a case study. In actual practice the different contemplations described in the discourse can be combined in a variety of ways and it would be a misunderstanding to take progression in the discourse as prescribing the only possible sequence for the development of Satipaṭṭhāna. The flexible interrelation of the Satipaṭṭhāna contemplations in actual practice can be illustrated by taking a cross-section as it were through the direct path of Satipaṭṭhāna,

³⁶ M I, 55

³⁷ DII.346.

Such a sectional view would resemble a twelve-petal led flower (see Fig. 7 below) with the main object of contemplation (here the breath is used as an example) constituting the center of the “flower”.

(Fig: 7) Dynamic interrelation of the Satipaṭṭhāna contemplations



From awareness of the main object of meditation the dynamics of contemplation can at any given moment lead to any of the other Satipaṭṭhāna exercises and then revert to the main object.³⁸ That is, from being aware of the process of breathing for example, awareness might turn to any other occurrence in the realm of body, feelings, mind, or dhammas that has become prominent and then revert to the breath. Otherwise in the event that the newly arisen object of meditation should require sustained attention and deeper investigation it can become the new center of the flower with the former object turned into one of the petals.³⁹

³⁸ E.M. Hare. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Trans. Vol. III, London: PTS, 1973.p.690.

³⁹ MII.126.

Any meditation practice from the four Satipaṭṭhāna can serve as the main focus of insight contemplation and lead to realization. At the same time meditations from one Satipaṭṭhāna can be related with those from other Satipaṭṭhāna. This indicates the flexibility of the Satipaṭṭhāna, scheme that allows freedom for variation and combination according to the character and level of development of the meditator.⁴⁰ Understood in this way practising Satipaṭṭhāna should not be a question of practising one or another Satipaṭṭhāna but of contemplating one as well as the others.

In fact during the deeper stages of the practice when one is able to abide “independent and free from clinging to anything in the world”, the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna progresses from any particular object or area to a more and more comprehensive form of contemplation that embraces all aspects of experience.

Expressed in the terms of Fig.7 it would be as if when the sun was about to set the twelve petals of the flower gradually came together to form a single bud. Practiced in this way Satipaṭṭhāna becomes an integrated four-faceted survey of one’s present experience taking into account its material, affective, and mental aspects from the perspective of the Dhamma. In this way one’s present experience becomes an occasion for swift progress on the direct path to realization.

2.8 The Significance of Satipaṭṭhāna

The Buddha recommended the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna to newcomers and beginners and also included advanced practitioners and arahants among the cultivators of Satipaṭṭhāna. For the beginner

⁴⁰ Paravahera Vajirañāna Mahāthera. **Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice**. 3rd Edition. Jaya: P.K.S., 1987.p.103.

embarking on Satipaṭṭhāna practice the discourses stipulate a basis in ethical conduct and the presence of “straight” view as necessary foundations. According to a passage in the Aṅguttara Nikāya the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna leads to overcoming weakness with regard to the five precepts.⁴¹ This suggests that the ethical foundation required to begin Satipaṭṭhāna might be weak at the outset but will be strengthened as practice proceeds. Similarly the “straight” view mentioned earlier might refer to a preliminary degree of motivation and understanding that will develop further with the progress of Satipaṭṭhāna, contemplation.⁴²

Additional requisites for undertaking Satipaṭṭhāna practice are to limit one’s activities, to refrain from gossiping, excessive sleep, and socializing, and to develop restraint and moderation with regard to food. It might already have come as a surprise that a newcomer to the path should be encouraged to cultivate Satipaṭṭhāna right away. That the Buddha and his fully awakened disciples should still engage in the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* might be even more surprising. Why would one who has realized the goal continue with Satipaṭṭhāna?

The answer is that arahants continue with insight meditation because for them this is simply the most appropriate and pleasant way to spend their time. Proficiency in Satipaṭṭhāna together with delight in seclusion is indeed distinguishing qualities of an arahant.

Once true detachment has set in the continuity of insight meditation becomes a source of delight and satisfaction.⁴³ Thus

⁴¹ Woodward, F.L. **Aṅguttara Nikāya**. Trans. Vol. II, Oxford: PTS, 2001.p284.

⁴² S III. 299.

⁴³ **Dīgha Nikāya**, vols. I-II-III T. W. Rhys Davids,. Ed. Oxford: PTS, 1982-1995.PS, 2003.p.297.

Satipaṭṭhāna is not only the direct path leading to the goal but also the perfect expression of having realized the goal. To borrow from the poetic language of the discourses: path and Nibbāna merge into one, like one river merging with another.

2.8.2 Review of The Four Satipaṭṭhāna

On closer inspection the sequence of the contemplations listed in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta reveal a progressive pattern (cf. Fig. 8, below).

Contemplation of the body progresses from the rudimentary experience of bodily postures and activities to contemplating the body's anatomy. The increased sensitivity developed in this way forms the basis for contemplation of feelings, a shift of awareness from the immediately accessible physical aspects of experience to feelings as more refined and subtle objects of awareness.

Contemplation of feeling divides feelings not only according to their affective quality into pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral types but also distinguishes these according to their worldly or unworldly nature. The latter part of contemplation of feelings thus introduces an ethical distinction of feelings, which serves as a stepping-stone for directing awareness to the ethical distinction between wholesome and unwholesome states of mind mentioned at the start of the next Satipaṭṭhāna contemplation of the mind.

Contemplation of the mind proceeds from the presence or absence of four unwholesome states of mind (lust, anger, delusion, and distraction) to contemplating the presence or absence of four higher states of mind. The concern with higher states of mind in the latter part of the contemplation of the mind naturally lends itself to a detailed investigation

of those factors that particularly obstruct deeper levels of concentration.

These are the hindrances; the first object of contemplation of dhammas. After covering the hindrances in meditation practice contemplation of dhammas progresses to two analyses of subjective experience: the five aggregates and the six sense-spheres. These analyses are followed by the awakening factors; the next contemplation of dhammas. The culmination of Satipaṭṭhāna practice is reached with contemplation of the four noble truths; full understanding of which coincides with realization. Considered in this way the sequence of the Satipaṭṭhāna contemplations leads progressively from grosser to more subtle levels.⁴⁴ This linear progression is not without practical relevance since the body contemplations recommend themselves as a foundational exercise for building up a basis of sati, while the final contemplation of the four noble truths covers the experience of Nibbāna (the third noble truth concerning the cessation of dukkha) and thus corresponds to the culmination of any successful implementation of Satipaṭṭhāna.

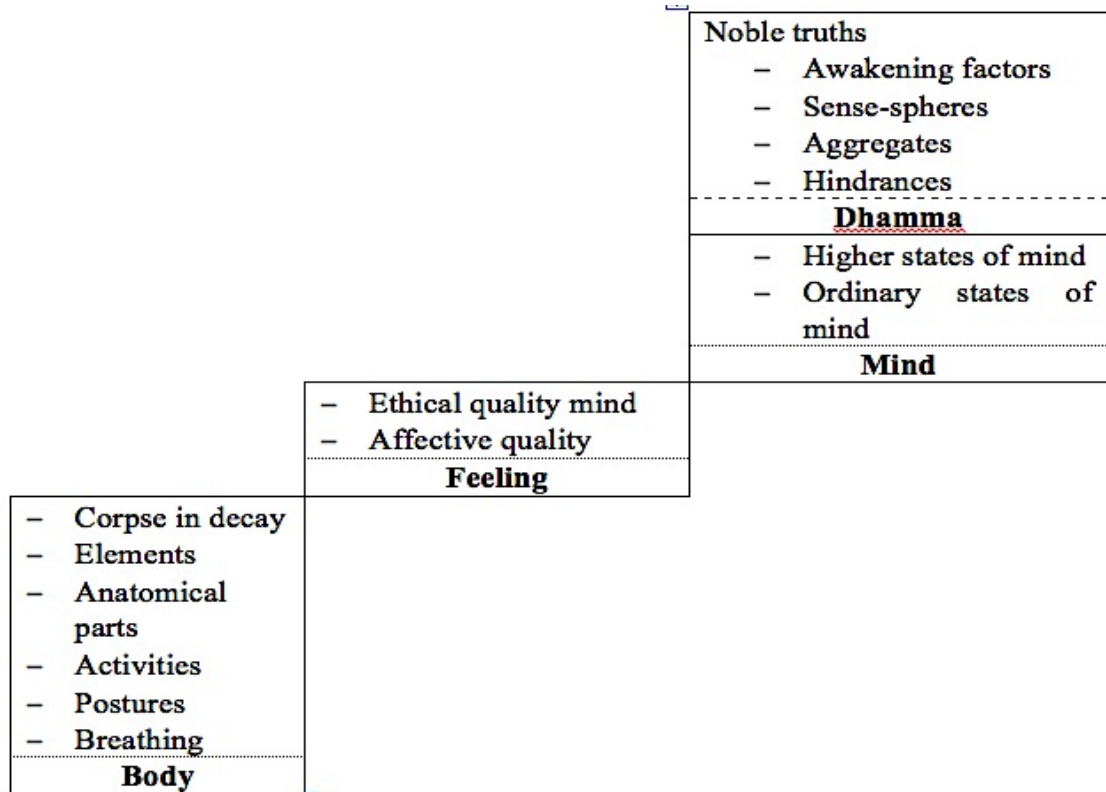
At the same time however, this progressive pattern does not prescribe the only possible way of practising Satipaṭṭhāna. To take the progression of meditation exercises in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as indicating a necessary sequence would severely limit the range of one's practice since only those experiences or phenomena that fit into this preconceived pattern would be proper objects of awareness. Yet a central characteristic of Satipaṭṭhāna is awareness of phenomena as they are, and as they occur. Although such awareness will naturally proceed from the gross to the subtle in actual practice it will quite probably vary from the sequence

⁴⁴ Maurice Walshe, **The Long Discourses of the Buddha**, A New Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya (1987). p.758.

depicted in the discourse. A flexible and comprehensive development of Satipaṭṭhāna should encompass all aspects of experience in whatever sequence they occur. All Satipaṭṭhāna can be of continual relevance throughout one's progress along the path. The practice of contemplating the body for example, is not something to be left behind and discarded at some more advanced point in one's progress. Rather it continues to be a relevant practice even for an arahant.⁴⁵ Understood in this way the meditation exercises listed in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta can be seen as mutually supportive. The sequence in which they are practiced may be altered in order to meet the needs of each individual meditator. Not only do the four Satipaṭṭhāna support each other but also they could even be integrated within a single meditation practice. It is documented in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* that describes how mindfulness of breathing can be developed in such a way that it encompasses all four Satipaṭṭhāna.⁴⁶ This exposition demonstrates the possibility of comprehensively combining all four Satipaṭṭhāna within the practice of a single meditation.

⁴⁵ SN II.14,326.

⁴⁶ Horner, I.B. (tr.). **Majjhima-Nikāya: The Middle Length Sayings (The Middle Fifty Discourses)**. Vol 2. Oxford: PTS, 1997. P.83.



2.8.3 Application of Each Satipaṭṭhāna For Realization

According to the Ānāpānasati Sutta it is possible to develop a variety of different aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna contemplation with a single meditation object and in due course cover all four Satipaṭṭhāna. This raises the question how far a single Satipaṭṭhāna, or even a single meditation exercise, can be taken as a complete practice in its own right. Several discourses relate the practice of a single Satipaṭṭhāna directly to realization.⁴⁷ Similarly, the commentaries assign to each single Satipaṭṭhāna meditation the capacity to lead to full awakening. This may well be why a high percentage of present-day meditation teachers focus on the use of a single meditation technique on the grounds that a single-

⁴⁷ Bhikkhu Bodhi. (tr.). **Samyutta–Nikāya: The Connected Discourses of the Buddha**. vol 1. Oxford: PTS., 2000.P,158,

mindful and thorough perfection of one meditation technique can cover all aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna and thus be sufficient to gain realization. Indeed, the development of awareness with any particular meditation technique will automatically result in a marked increase in one's general level of awareness thereby enhancing one's capacity to be mindful in regard to situations that do not form part of one's primary object of meditation.

In this way even those aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna that have not deliberately been made the object of contemplation to some extent still receive mindful attention as a by-product of the primary practice. Yet the exposition in the Ānāpānasati Sutta does not necessarily imply that by being aware of the breath one automatically covers all aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna. What the Buddha demonstrated here was how a thorough development of sati can lead from the breath to a broad range of objects encompassing different aspects of subjective reality. Clearly such a broad range of aspects was the outcome of a deliberate development otherwise the Buddha would not have needed to deliver a whole discourse on how to achieve this.

In fact, several meditation teachers and scholars place a strong emphasis on covering all four Satipaṭṭhāna in one's practice. According to them, although one particular meditation practice can serve as the primary object of attention the other aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna should be deliberately contemplated too, even if only in a secondary manner. This approach can claim some support from the concluding part of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta; the "prediction" of realization. This passage stipulates the development of all four Satipaṭṭhāna for contemplation to lead to the realization of the higher two stages of awakening: non-returning and

arahantship.⁴⁸ The fact that all four Satipaṭṭhāna are mentioned suggests that it is the comprehensive practice of all four that is particularly capable of leading to high levels of realization. The same is also indicated by a statement in the Satipaṭṭhāna Samputta that relates the realization of arahantship to “complete” practice of the four Satipaṭṭhāna, while partial practice corresponds to lesser levels of realization. In a passage in the Ānāpāna Samputta the Buddha compared the four Satipaṭṭhāna to chariots coming from four directions, each driving through and thereby scattering a heap of dust lying at the centre of a crossroads.⁴⁹ This simile suggests that each Satipaṭṭhāna is in itself capable of overcoming unwholesome states just as any of the chariots is able to scatter the heap of dust.

This simile also illustrates the cooperative effect of all four Satipaṭṭhāna since with chariots coming from all directions, the heap of dust will be scattered even more. Thus any single meditation practice from the Satipaṭṭhāna scheme is capable of leading to deep insight especially if developed according to the key instructions given in the “definition” and “refrain” of the discourse. Nevertheless an attempt to cover all four Satipaṭṭhāna in one’s practice does more justice to the distinct character of the various meditations described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and thereby ensures speedy progress and a balanced and comprehensive development.

2.8.4 The Origin of Each Satipaṭṭhāna

The need for such comprehensive development is related to the fact that each Satipaṭṭhāna has a different character and can thereby serve a slightly different purpose. This is documented in the Nettippakarana and

⁴⁸ M.II.602.

⁴⁹ S.II.175.

the commentaries that illustrate the particular character of each Satipaṭṭhāna with a set of correlations. According to the commentaries each of the four Satipaṭṭhāna corresponds to a particular aggregate, i.e. the aggregates of material form (*rûpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), and consciousness (*viññāna*) match the first three Satipaṭṭhāna, while the aggregates of cognition (*saññā*) and volitions (*saṅkhārā*) correspond to the contemplation of dhammas.⁵⁰ On closer inspection this correlation appears a little forced since the third Satipaṭṭhāna, contemplation of the mind, corresponds to all mental aggregates and not only to consciousness. Moreover, the fourth Satipaṭṭhāna, contemplation of dhammas, includes the entire set of the five aggregates as one of its meditations and thus has a wider range than just the two aggregates of cognition (*saññā*) and volition (*saṅkhārā*).⁵¹

Nevertheless what the commentaries might intend to indicate is that all aspects of one's subjective experience are to be investigated with the aid of the four Satipaṭṭhāna. Understood in this way the division into four Satipaṭṭhāna represents an analytical approach similar to a division of subjective experience into the five aggregates. Both attempt to dissolve the illusion of the observer's substantiality.

By turning awareness to different facets of one's subjective experience these aspects will be experienced simply as objects and the notion of compactness, the sense of a solid "I", will begin to disintegrate. In this way the more subjective experience can be seen "objectively" the

⁵⁰ AV.193.

⁵¹ **Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification.** Buddhaghosa. Trans. Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. Singapore: Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre, 1956.p.487.

more the “I”-identification diminishes.⁵² This correlates well with the Buddha’s instruction to investigate thoroughly each aggregate to the point where no more “I” can be found. In addition to the aggregate correlation the commentaries recommend each of the four Satipaṭṭhāna for a specific type of character or inclination.

According to them body and feeling contemplation should be the main field of practice for those who tend towards craving; while meditators given to intellectual speculation should place more emphasis on contemplating mind or dhammas.⁵³ Understood in this way practice of the first two Satipaṭṭhāna suits those with a more affective inclination; while the last two are recommended for those of a more cognitive orientation.

In both cases those whose character is to think and react quickly can profitably centre their practice on the relatively subtler contemplations of feelings or dhammas, while those whose mental faculties are more circumspect and measured will have better results if they base their practice on the grosser objects of body or mind.

Although these recommendations are expressed in terms of character type they could also be applied to one’s momentary disposition: one could choose the Satipaṭṭhāna that best corresponds to one’s state of mind so that when one feels sluggish and desirous, for example, contemplation of the body would be the appropriate practice to be undertaken.

⁵² Horner, **Majjhima Nikāya**. Vol. III. Trans. I.B. Oxford: PTS, 1999.p863.

⁵³ SN.II.239.

Body feelings mind dhammas				
Aggregate	Material form	Feeling	Consciousness	Cognition+volition
Character	Slow craver	Quick craver	Slow theorizer	Quick theorizer
Insight	Absence of beauty	Unsatisfactoriness	Impermanence	Absence of self

(Fig. 9) Correlations for the four Satipaṭṭhāna

The Nettippakarana and the Visuddhimagga also set the four Satipaṭṭhāna in opposition to the four distortions (*vipallāsas*) which are to “mistake” what is unattractive, unsatisfactory, impermanent, and not-self, for being attractive, satisfactory, permanent, and a self.⁵⁴ According to them contemplation of the body has the potential to reveal in particular the absence of bodily beauty; observation of the true nature of feelings can counter one’s incessant search for fleeting pleasures; awareness of the ceaseless succession of states of mind can disclose the impermanent nature of all subjective experience; and contemplation of dhammas can reveal that the notion of a substantial and permanent self is nothing but an illusion.⁵⁵

This presentation brings to light the main theme that underlies each of the four Satipaṭṭhāna and indicates which of them is particularly appropriate for dispelling the illusion of beauty, happiness, permanence, or self. Although the corresponding insights are certainly not restricted to

⁵⁴ AIV.522.

⁵⁵ Horner, I.B. (tr.).Majjhima-Nikāya (Majjhimapaṇṇāsa): **The Middle Length Sayings** (The Middle Fifty Discourses). vol 2. Oxford: PTS., 1997.p. 297.

one Satipaṭṭhāna alone, nevertheless this particular correlation indicates which Satipaṭṭhāna is particularly suitable in order to correct a specific distortion (*vipallāsa*). This correlation too may be fruitfully applied in accordance with one's general character disposition, or else can be used in order to counteract the momentary manifestation of any particular distortion.

In the end however, all four partake of the same essence. Each of them leads to realization, like different gateways leading to the same city. As the commentaries point out, the fourfold division is only functional and can be compared to a weaver splitting a piece of bamboo into four parts to weave a basket. So much for a preliminary survey of the four Satipaṭṭhāna by way of providing some background to the title chosen for this work. Next the two key expressions, “direct path” and “Satipaṭṭhāna”.⁵⁶

2.8.5 The Reality “Direct Path”

The first section of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta proper introduces the four Satipaṭṭhāna as the “direct path” to realization. The passage reads:

‘Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of dukkha and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realization of Nibbāna, namely, the four Satipaṭṭhāna’.⁵⁷ The qualification of being a “direct path” occurs in the discourses almost exclusively as an attribute of Satipaṭṭhāna, thus it conveys a considerable degree of emphasis. Such emphasis is indeed warranted since practice of the “direct path” of Satipaṭṭhāna is an indispensable requirement for liberation. As a set of

⁵⁶ M. Leon Feer, **Samyutta Nikāya**, vols. I-V. ed. Oxford: PTS, 1970 1991.p286.

⁵⁷ A II. 890.

verses in the Satipaṭṭhāna Samputta point out, Satipaṭṭhāna is the “direct path” for crossing the flood in past, present, and future times. “Direct path” is a translation of the Pāli expression ekāyano maggo, made up of the parts eka, “one”, ayana, “going”, and magga, “path”.⁵⁸

The commentarial tradition has preserved five alternative explanations for understanding this particular expression. According to them a path qualified as ekāyano could be understood as a “direct” path in the sense of leading straight to the goal; as a path to be travelled by oneself “alone”; as a path taught by the “One” (the Buddha); as a path that is found “only” in Buddhism; or as a path which leads to “one” goal, namely to Nibbāna. This rendering of ekāyano as “direct path” follows the first of these explanations.

A more commonly used translation of ekāyano is “the only path”, corresponding to the fourth of the five explanations found in the commentaries. In order to assess the meaning of a particular Pāli term its different occurrences in the discourses need to be taken into account. In the present case, in addition to occurring in several discourses in relation to Satipaṭṭhāna, ekāyano also comes up once in a different context.

This is in a simile in the Mahāsāhanāda Sutta that describes a man walking along a path leading to a pit such that one can anticipate him falling into the pit. This path is qualified as ekāyano.⁵⁹ In this context ekāyano seems to express straightness of direction rather than exclusion. To say that this path leads “directly” to the pit would be more fitting than saying that it is “the only” path leading to the pit. Of related interest is also the *Tevijja Sutta* that reports two Brahmin students arguing about

⁵⁸ M II.137.

⁵⁹ SV, 289.

whose teacher taught the only correct path to union with Brahmā. Although in this context an exclusive expression like “the only path” might be expected, the qualification *ekāyano* is conspicuously absent.⁶⁰ The same absence recurs in a verse from the Dhammapada that presents the noble eightfold path as “the only path”.

These two instances suggest that the discourses did not avail themselves of the qualification *ekāyano* in order to convey exclusiveness.⁶¹ Thus *ekāyano* conveying a sense of directness rather than exclusiveness draws attention to Satipaṭṭhāna as the aspect of the noble eightfold path most “directly” responsible for uncovering a vision of things as they truly are. That is, Satipaṭṭhāna is the “direct path”, because it leads “directly” to the realization of Nibbāna.

This way of understanding also fits well with the final passage of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Having stated that Satipaṭṭhāna practice can lead to the two higher stages of realization within a maximum of seven years, the discourse closes with the declaration: “because of this, it has been said – this is the direct path”. This passage highlights the directness of Satipaṭṭhāna in the sense of its potential to lead to the highest stages of realization within a limited period of time.

2.9 Conclusion

In conclusion this Chapter came to understand more clearly the important aspects of Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta practice with reference to the four foundations of mindfulness and the correct way of its practical application, which needs more direct experience. However, having studied the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta thoroughly and its related texts, which have

⁶⁰ MII.563.

⁶¹ DII.305.

been found accordingly, it can be said to be very much similar to Satipaṭṭhāna as taught by the Buddha and maintained apparently in Satipaṭṭhāna: the Sutta no. 10 of Majjhima nikāya 62 and the Sutta no. 22 of Dīgha Nikāya. Any meditation practice from the four Satipaṭṭhāna can serve as the main focus for insight contemplation and lead to realisation. At the same time meditations from one Satipaṭṭhāna can be interrelated with those from other Satipaṭṭhāna. This demonstrates the flexibility of the Satipaṭṭhāna scheme that allows freedom for variations and combinations according to the individual character and level of development of a meditator. Understood in this way to practise Satipaṭṭhāna should be less a question of practising either one or another Satipaṭṭhāna but rather of contemplating one as well as the others. In fact with the deeper stages of the practice, when one is able to abide 'independent and free from clinging to anything in the world', the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna progresses from any particular object or area to a more and more comprehensive way of practice embracing all aspects of experience. Practised in this way Satipaṭṭhāna becomes a fourfold cohesive survey of experience, which in one go takes into account its material, affective, and mental facets and relates it to the *Dhamma* whereby this experience turns into a vehicle for swift progress along the direct path leading to *Nibbāna*.