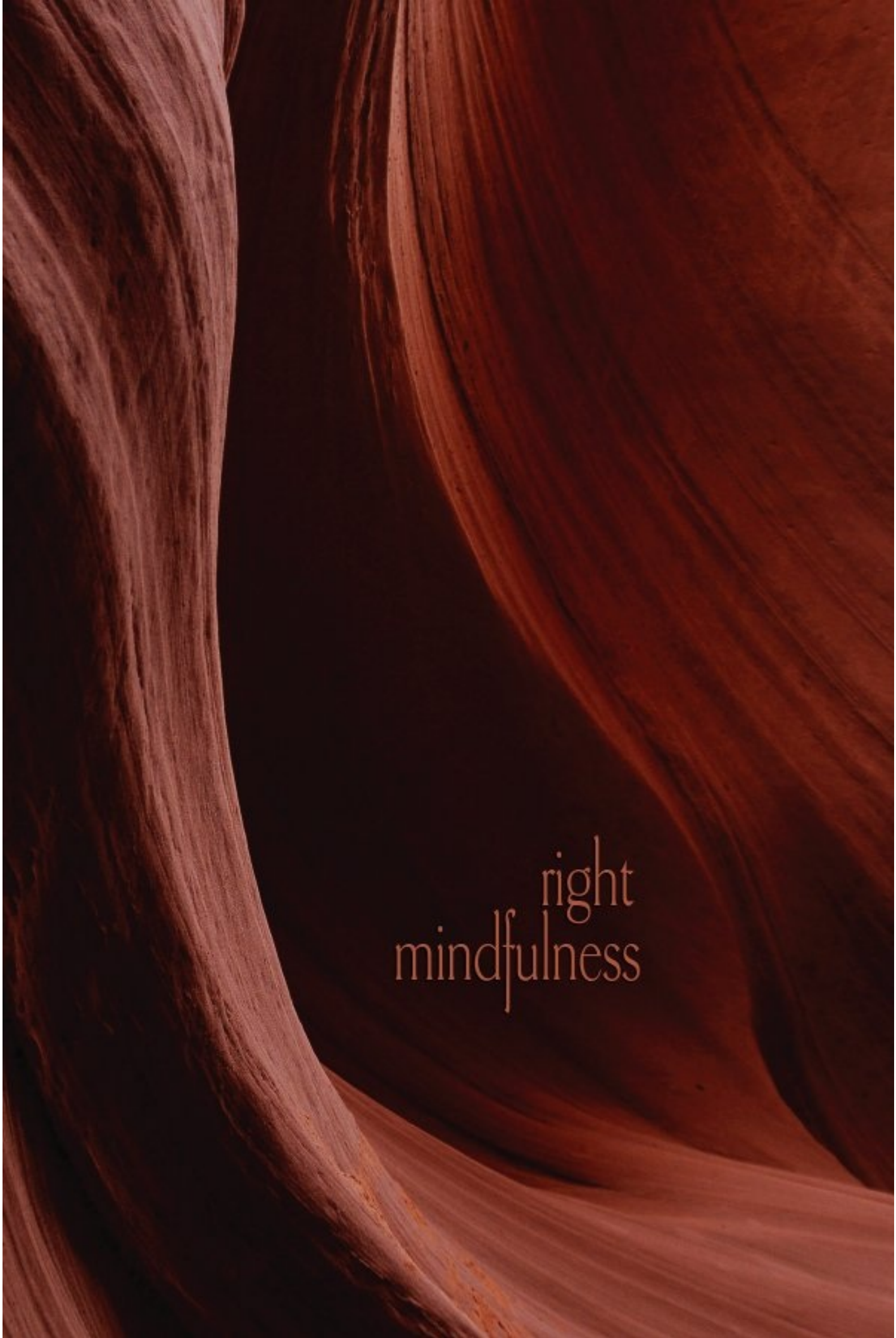
right
mindfulness

right mindfulness

MEMORY & ARDENCY ON THE BUDDHIST PATH

ṬHĀNISSARO BHIKKHU
(GEOFFREY DeGRAFF)

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"Just as a royal frontier fortress has a gatekeeper—wise, experienced, intelligent—to keep out those he doesn't know and to let in those he does, for the protection of those within, and to ward off those without; in the same way, a disciple of the noble ones is mindful, endowed with excellent proficiency in mindfulness, remembering & recollecting what was done and said a long time ago. With mindfulness as his gatekeeper, the disciple of the noble ones abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is blameless, and looks after himself with purity." — AN 7:63

Abbreviations

AN	*Aṅguttara Nikāya*
Cv	*Cullavagga*
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
DN	*Dīgha Nikāya*
Iti	*Itivuttaka*
MN	*Majjhima Nikāya*
SN	*Saṁyutta Nikāya*
Sn	*Sutta Nipāta*
Thag	*Theragāthā*
Thig	*Therīgāthā*
Ud	*Udāna*

References to DN, Iti, and MN are to discourse *(sutta).* Those to Dhp are to verse. The reference to Cv is to chapter, section, and sub-section. References to other texts are to section *(saṁyutta, nipāta, or vagga)* and discourse. Numbering for AN and SN follows the Thai Edition of the Pali Canon.

All translations from these texts are by the author, and are based on the Royal Thai Edition of the Pali Canon (Bangkok: Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya, 1982).

Introduction

For the past several decades, a growing flood of books, articles, and teachings has advanced two theories about the practice of mindfulness *(sati).* The first is that the Buddha employed the term *mindfulness* to mean bare attention: a state of pure receptivity—non-reactive, non-judging, non-interfering—toward physical and mental phenomena as they make contact at the six senses. The second theory is that the cultivation of bare attention can, on its own, bring about the goal of Buddhist practice: freedom from suffering and stress. In the past few years, this flood of literature has reached the stage where even in non-Buddhist circles these theories have become the common, unquestioned interpretation of what mindfulness is and how it's best developed.

The premise of this book is that these two theories are highly questionable and—for anyone hoping to realize the end of suffering—seriously misleading. At best, they present a small part of the path as the whole of the practice; at worst, they discredit many of the skills needed on the path and misrepresent what it actually means to taste awakening.

The main aim of this book is to show that the practice of mindfulness is most fruitful when informed by the Buddha's own definition of right mindfulness and his explanations of its role on the path. As he defined the term, right mindfulness *(sammā-sati)* is not bare attention. Instead, it's a faculty of active memory, adept at calling to mind and keeping in mind instructions and intentions that will be useful on the path. Its role is to draw on right view and to work proactively in supervising the other factors of the path to give rise to right concentration, and in using right concentration as a basis for total release.

The discussion here falls into three parts. Part One (Chapters One through Four) explores the mental qualities that comprise right mindfulness, showing how they relate both to other factors of the path and to the causes of suffering and stress that the path is designed to abandon. Chapter One starts with an analysis of the Buddha's standard formula for the practice of right mindfulness, in which mindfulness is one of three qualities brought to the act of remaining focused on a frame of reference, the other two qualities being ardency and alertness. Ardency is of particular importance, for it constitutes the proactive element in mindfulness practice.

The chapter then shows how right mindfulness keeps in mind the three aspects of right view: the proper framework for regarding experience (the four noble truths); the motivation for adopting that framework; and the duties prescribed by the framework—duties that ardency is meant to follow. The discussion then focuses on the ways in which right mindfulness relates to two highly proactive factors of the path: right effort and right concentration. Its relationship to these factors is so close that all three interpenetrate one another in bringing about release.

Chapter Two deals with the ways in which right mindfulness is developed through a sensitivity to the workings of cause and effect—a sensitivity that can be gained only by consciously manipulating the intentional bodily, verbal, and mental fabrications that shape experience.

Chapter Three explains why conscious fabrication is a necessary part of the path, exploring the implications of the fact that, in dependent co-arising, fabrications conditioned by ignorance precede and shape not only the act of attention, but also contact at the senses. This means that these unskillful fabrications have to be replaced by skillful ones, conditioned by knowledge in terms of the four noble truths, if the path is to succeed in undercutting the causes of suffering. This fact determines the role of right mindfulness in turning attention into *appropriate* attention, and supervising the development of the skillful fabrications of the path.

Chapter Four explains why the common modern view of mindfulness has to be rejected because it doesn't do justice to the dual role of fabrication: both as a precondition for attention and sensory contact, and as a part of the path to the end of suffering and stress. This defect in the common view has practical consequences, in that it can provide only a limited range of strategies for putting an end to stress when compared to the strategies provided in the discourses.

Parts Two and Three take the lessons learned in Part One about the proactive nature of mindfulness practice and apply them to a reading of the two major canonical discourses explaining this practice.

Part Two (Chapters Five through Seven) focuses on the Ānāpānasati Sutta (MN 118). Chapter Five explains how the skillful act of reading any of the Buddha's teachings is, in and of itself, a part of mindfulness practice, equipping right mindfulness with knowledge in terms of the three aspects of right view. This chapter also discusses the Buddha's own instructions on how to listen to (and, at present, to read) his teachings: penetrating the meaning of each discourse on its own terms, and pondering its relationship to his other discourses. These instructions guide the discussions in both Part

Two and Part Three.

Chapter Six focuses on the lessons to be learned from the structure of MN 118, particularly concerning the way in which the sixteen proactive steps of breath meditation are related in practice to one another and to the practice of establishing mindfulness *(satipaṭṭhāna).* Two points here are of central importance. The first is that the sixteen steps fall into four tetrads (sets of four) corresponding to the four frames of reference used in the practice of establishing mindfulness: body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities in and of themselves. The second point is that these tetrads are actually four aspects of a single practice—remaining focused on the breath—which means that any of the four frames of reference can be developed while remaining focused on the first: the body in and of itself. This point has practical implications for all varieties of mindfulness practice.

Chapter Seven draws lessons both from MN 118 and from other canonical discourses to flesh out the details of how the sixteen steps of breath meditation can most effectively be mastered as skills.

Part Three (Chapters Eight through Ten) focuses on the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22). Chapter Eight shows how DN 22, despite its considerable length, covers only a part of the satipaṭṭhāna formula—the various frames of reference—while giving next to no guidance on how to apply ardency in the context of those frames.

To fill in this blank, Chapter Nine—in addition to providing a detailed practical analysis of the various exercises and categories listed in DN 22 for each frame of reference—draws on other discourses to flesh out the role of ardency with regard to those exercises and categories. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how the four frames of reference interact in practice, showing how the latter three frames of reference can be developed while focusing on exercises related to the first.

Chapter Ten focuses on the parts of DN 22 that discuss the motivation for developing right mindfulness: It's a path going one way only *(ekāyana magga)* to the goal.

The book concludes with three appendices. Appendices One and Two, respectively, contain translations of the full texts of MN 118 and DN 22. Appendix Three examines one of the central tenets of the common modern view of mindfulness: that *jhāna* (meditative absorption) is unnecessary for awakening. The importance of this tenet to the modern view would suggest that it should be discussed in Part One. However, I found that the amount of space required to treat it adequately would have created too long a digression from the flow of that part of the book. That's why I assigned it its

own space as an appendix.

Several features of the approach taken in this book deserve a few words of explanation. The first is that, wherever relevant, I have pointed out why the common modern interpretation of mindfulness gets in the way of benefitting fully from the practice the Buddha taught. I have not done this to stir controversy. Rather, I have learned from experience that, given the wide-ranging misunderstandings on the subject, any discussion of what mindfulness *is* must include a discussion of what it *isn't.* Otherwise, views shaped by the common interpretation will act as a distorting lens, blurring our vision of what the Buddha actually taught and our understanding of how to put it into practice.

Early Buddhists adopted a similar approach when organizing the first two nikāyas, or groups of discourses, in the Pāli Canon. They opened both nikāyas with discourses on teachings the Buddha rejected (see DN 1, DN 2, MN 1, and MN 2), before explaining the teachings he endorsed. This approach served to clear the air so that the main points of the teaching could be more readily discerned. That's why I have adopted it here.

To give an accurate presentation of the common modern view, I quoted passages from the writings of those who endorse it, particularly in Chapter Four and Appendix Three. However, I have not identified the authors of these quotations, for two reasons. First is that monks are instructed not to disparage others when teaching the Dhamma (AN 5:159). In practice, this means not identifying, in a public talk or public writings, the names of people who one feels are misinterpreting what the Dhamma has to say. Second, my aim in quoting these passages is to focus not on individuals but on the general features and underlying misconceptions of the common view. I realize that leaving one's sources unnamed is not in line with modern practices, but I can state honestly that I have tried to find passages that give the clearest and most responsible expression of the common view so as to highlight its salient features. I hope that you, the reader, will understand why I have handled these quotations in this way.

Some readers will find the discussion in Chapters Two through Four too technical for their tastes. For this reason, I have gathered the main points of those chapters at the beginning of Chapter Five, so that if you want, you can skip from Chapter One to Chapter Five, and from there straight into the discussions in Parts Two and Three.

Two further points need to be explained with regard to the discussions in those parts of the book. The first concerns the range of materials from which I

have drawn to flesh out the areas of mindfulness practice where MN 118 and DN 22 give only implicit guidance or none at all. To ensure that the context from which I have drawn these added teachings is as close as possible to the context in which MN 118 and DN 22 were recorded, I have taken as my primary source the parts of the Sutta Piṭaka—the Collection of Discourses—most generally considered to contain the oldest discourses in the Canon: the Dīgha Nikāya, Majjhima Nikāya, Saṁyutta Nikāya, and Aṅguttara Nikāya, along with the oldest books in the Khuddaka Nikāya: the Dhammapada, Udāna, Itivuttaka, Sutta Nipāta, Theragāthā, and Therīgāthā. Where relevant, I have also taken a few passages from the Vinaya Piṭaka, the Collection on Discipline, as these seem to come from the oldest strata of the Canon as well.

I have touched only rarely on the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, and on the vast commentarial literature that has grown up around the topic of mindfulness both in the Visuddhimagga (Path of Purity) and in the commentaries and sub-commentaries on the relevant sections of the Canon. The discourses appear to predate the Abhidhamma by a century or two, and the commentaries by many centuries more. Both the Abhidhamma and the commentaries use an interpretative framework that differs markedly from the discourses'. So I thought it would be best to look directly at what the discourses have to say on this topic, with a minimum of filtering through later lenses. Anyone interested in studying how the Abhidhamma and commentaries later developed the teachings on mindfulness in the discourses is welcome to take the discussion here as a base line for comparison.

The second question that may arise with regard to the discussions in Parts Two and Three is: Why do these texts require so much explanation? The answer is twofold. First, there is no way they could give complete coverage to the topic of right mindfulness. As the Buddha noted in MN 12, even if people were to question him on the topic of satipaṭṭhāna for 100 years, he could respond without repeating himself and they would never come to the end of his answers. The topic is that large. The second answer is that none of the discourses were ever meant to stand on their own. Each is embedded in a canon of texts memorized by a living community of practitioners who would use them as memory aids, both for teachers and for students. This means that each discourse had to be long enough to convey the most important points but short enough to be easily memorized. To get the most out of these memory aids, you have to take them in context—a context provided both by the collection of discourses as a whole and by the living tradition of the monastic community, in which meditation is learned as part of a teacher-apprentice relationship.

Over the centuries, the lessons taught in the context of this apprenticeship in different communities have come to diverge from one another, sometimes quite widely. To sort out which of these lessons are authoritative, we have to check them against the memory aids provided by the Canon. As the Buddha stated in DN 16, "Whatever Dhamma & Vinaya I have pointed out & formulated for you will be your Teacher when I am gone." That's why the primary emphasis in this book is to discover what can be learned about right mindfulness from the context provided by the discourses, which contain the oldest extant records of the Dhamma. Whichever teachings in the living traditions are in line with that context can be taken as authoritative; whichever are not should be rejected. However, always keep in mind that the context provided by the discourses, while authoritative, was never meant to be complete. It has to be augmented by living traditions that are in harmony with it.

A note on translation: In some of my previous writings I have translated *satipaṭṭhāna* as *frame of reference;* in others, as *establishing of mindfulness.* In this book I have adopted the latter translation, as it gives a better sense of satipaṭṭhāna as process, and I have used *frame of reference* to denote the topics that are kept in mind—body in and of itself, feelings in and of themselves, mind in and of itself, and mental qualities in and of themselves—as part of the process of establishing mindfulness.

Many people have read this book in manuscript and provided helpful suggestions for improvement. In addition to the monks here at the monastery, these people include: Ven. Varadhammo Bhikkhu, Michael Barber, Matthew Grad, Addie Onsanit, Nathaniel Osgood, Narciso Polanco, Dale Schultz, Mary Talbot, Josephine Wolf, and Jane Yudelman. Ruby Grad kindly provided the index. I am grateful to all these people for their assistance. Any errors that remain in the book are, of course, my own responsibility.

I hope that this book is helpful as aid and encouragement in your practice of right mindfulness for the sake of total release.

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu
(Geoffrey DeGraff)

Metta Forest Monastery
July, 2012

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Mindfulness the Gatekeeper

The Buddha adopted the term *sati* from the languages of his culture. It's related to the Sanskrit term *smriti,* which means remembrance or the act of calling to mind. However, there is no record of his having defined the term *per se.* Instead, the texts depict him as observing that there are two types of sati when viewed from the perspective of a person trying to put an end to suffering: right and wrong (MN 117; MN 126; AN 10:108). The texts also show him defining the faculty of sati *(sat'indrīya),* which is equivalent to right sati:

> "And which is the faculty of sati? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has sati, is endowed with excellent proficiency in sati, remembering & recollecting what was done and said a long time ago. He remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & having sati—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves… the mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & having sati—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called the faculty of sati." *— SN 48:10*

This definition of right sati falls into two parts. In the first sentence, the Buddha is obviously retaining the meaning of its Sanskrit cognate—remembrance—showing how sati, when developed to the point of being a faculty, or dominant factor in the mind, is able to remember words and actions far into the past.

The second part of the definition is identical with the definition of right sati in the noble eightfold path, and is often called the establishing of sati *(sati + upaṭṭhāna* [establishing, setting near] = *satipaṭṭhāna).* This part of the definition sets out the task that sati is meant to keep in mind, along with the other mental factors that have to be developed, and the concerns that need to

be subdued, to help keep sati firmly established on its task.

In the practice of the path, sati and satipaṭṭhāna are mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, as the satipaṭṭhāna formula states, sati is one of the factors brought to bear on the task of remaining focused as a part of satipaṭṭhāna. On the other, SN 48:11 notes that the practice of satipaṭṭhāna gives rise to strengthened sati.

> "And which is the faculty of sati? Whatever sati one obtains from the four establishings of sati: That is the faculty of sati." *— SN 48:11*

So, just as physical strength grows by being used in exercise, sati is strengthened by being applied to the task of the four establishings of sati. This has practical consequences that we will discuss further below.

The central task of satipaṭṭhāna is to remain focused on any one of four topics as a frame of reference. The phrase, "remaining focused on" is nowhere defined in the Canon, but the Pāli term *(anupassanā = anu* [follow] + *passanā* [seeing]) is commonly used for two types of meditative practice: keeping watch over a particular topic in the midst of other experiences, and looking for a particular quality in experiences as they arise.

Both types of anupassanā are relevant in the practice of establishing sati. An example of the first comes in the standard satipaṭṭhāna formula. Remaining focused on the body in and of itself, for example, means keeping track of the body or a particular aspect of the body as a frame of reference in the midst of all your sensory experiences. Even when another topic looms large in your awareness, you try to keep track of where the body is in the midst of that awareness, or of how that other topic and the body interact. In this way, the body remains your frame of reference regardless of whatever else may arise. The same principle applies when remaining focused on feelings, mind, or mental qualities in and of themselves.

As for the second type of anupassanā—looking for a particular quality in experiences as they arise—an example would be the practice of looking for inconstancy *(anicca)* in all phenomena. This, as we will see in Chapter Two, is one of the steps by which sati is established through breath meditation.

The four topics to remain focused on are body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities. "Body" means the physical body; "feelings" covers feeling tones of pleasure, pain, and neither pleasure nor pain; and "mind" covers states of mind. The phrase "mental qualities" *(dhammas)* covers a wider range of phenomena. Its primary meaning in this context covers mental events or mental actions, but it also covers any physical or mental experience viewed

as an event. All of these meanings play a role in how right sati makes use of this frame of reference. There is some overlap between the content of "mind" and "mental qualities" as frames of reference, but as we will see in Chapters Six through Nine, their difference lies primarily in their respective functions. "Mind" is concerned primarily with how the mind relates to the object of its focus; "mental qualities" are concerned with the qualities and thought-categories involved in the process of fending off any defilements or distractions that surround that focus or threaten to interfere with it.

The duty of sati is to remember to remain focused on any one of these topics *in and of itself.* The Pāli passage expresses this idea literally by saying, "body in the body," "feelings in feelings," etc., with the locative case—a grammatical case indicating location, often translated as "in"—also meaning "with reference to." In other words, each of these topics is viewed solely with reference to itself, on its own terms, without subsuming it under a larger frame of reference, such as the world outside. Each topic is thus a frame of reference in and of itself.

Sati is one of three mental factors that should accompany the activity of remaining focused in this way. The other two are alertness and ardency.

The Canon defines alertness *(sampajañña)* as knowing both events in the mind and activities of the body as they are happening:

> "And how is a monk alert? There is the case where feelings are known to the monk as they arise, known as they become established, known as they subside. Thoughts are known to him as they arise, known as they become established, known as they subside. Perceptions are known to him as they arise, known as they become established, known as they subside. This is how a monk is alert." *— SN 47:35*

> "And how is a monk alert? When going forward & returning, he makes himself alert; when looking toward & looking away… when bending & extending his limbs… when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, & his bowl… when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring… when urinating & defecating… when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself alert. This is how a monk is alert." *— SN 36:7*

This means that for sati to be properly established, it must not only remember far into the past, but also be coupled with a clear awareness of what's going on in the present.

Ardency *(ātappa)* is the desire to avoid what is unbeneficial.

Ven. MahāKassapa: "And how is one ardent? There is the case where a monk, (thinking,) 'Unarisen evil, unskillful qualities arising in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,' arouses ardency. (Thinking,) 'Arisen evil, unskillful qualities not being abandoned in me…' … 'Unarisen skillful qualities not arising in me …' … 'Arisen skillful qualities ceasing in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,' he arouses ardency. This is how one is ardent." *— SN 16:2*

The discourses often pair ardency with compunction *(ottappa),* fear of the consequences of doing evil, perhaps because the words are so similar in meaning and—in Pāli—in sound. (Here I am using *compunction* in its American sense, as a twinge of scrupulous conscience *prior* to doing wrong.) Working together, these two qualities find expression in the determined abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities. Without them, the goal would be impossible to attain.

"A person without ardency, without compunction, is incapable of self-awakening, incapable of unbinding, incapable of attaining the unsurpassed safety from bondage. A person ardent & compunctious is capable of self-awakening, capable of unbinding, capable of attaining the unsurpassed safety from bondage." *— Iti 34*

"If, while he is walking, there arises in a monk a thought of sensuality, a thought of ill will, or a thought of harmfulness, and he does not quickly abandon, dispel, demolish, or wipe that thought out of existence, then a monk walking with such a lack of ardency & compunction is called continually & continuously lethargic & low in his persistence. [Similarly if he is standing, sitting, or lying down.]

"But if, while he is walking, there arises in a monk a thought of sensuality, a thought of ill will, or a thought of harmfulness, and he quickly abandons, dispels, demolishes, & wipes that thought out of existence, then a monk walking with such ardency & compunction is called continually & continuously resolute, one with persistence aroused. [Similarly if he is standing, sitting, or lying down.]" *— Iti 110*

Ardency is thus closely connected with right effort. In fact, it's synonymous with the desire explicit in the definition of right effort, and motivated by the discernment of what's skillful and unskillful—the element of right view implicit in that definition.

> "And what is right effort? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen: This, monks, is called right effort." *— SN 45:8*

It's worth noting here the centrality of desire in right effort. As AN 10:58 observes, all phenomena are rooted in desire. This observation applies to skillful as well as to unskillful phenomena. Without skillful desire, it would be impossible to develop the path (SN 51:15). This means that the path is not a truth available to passive observation. It's a truth of the will: something that can become true only if you want it to happen. By applying the desire of right effort, the element of skillful purpose, to the act of remaining focused, ardency enables sati to be established as right sati.

Taken together, these mental factors of sati, alertness, and ardency indicate that right sati, as a factor in the path to the end of suffering and stress, brings memories from the past to bear on a clear alertness of events and actions in the present with the purpose of abandoning unskillful qualities and developing skillful ones both in the present and on into the future. In this way, alertness and ardency ensure that right sati points not only in one direction, to the past, but to all three directions of time at once: past, present, and future.

When, in the nineteenth century, T. W. Rhys Davids encountered the word *sati* while translating DN 22 into English, he tried to find an English term that would convey this meaning of memory applied to purposeful activity in the present. Concluding that English didn't have an adequate equivalent, he made up his own: mindfulness. This, of course, wasn't a total invention. In fact, Rhys Davids' choice was apparently inspired by the phrasing of the Anglican prayer to be ever mindful of the needs of others—i.e., to always keep their needs in mind. Rhys Davids simply turned the adjective into a noun. Although the term *mindfulness* has its origins in a Christian context, and although its meaning has ironically become so distorted over the past century, its original meaning serves so well in conveying the Buddhist sense of memory applied to the present that I will continue to use it to render *sati* for the remainder of this book.

A. RIGHT VIEW, RIGHT MINDFULNESS, RIGHT EFFORT

The role played by mindfulness in applying memory of the past to present activities—for the sake of present and future results—is best illustrated by a passage in MN 117, in which the Buddha presents the first seven factors of the noble eightfold path as requisites for right concentration, the final factor in the path. With each of the first five factors, the three factors of right view, right mindfulness, and right effort work together to abandon the wrong version of the factor and to develop the right version as an aid in noble right concentration. For example, with the factor of right resolve:

> "Right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong resolve as wrong resolve, and right resolve as right resolve: This is one's right view.… One makes an effort for the abandoning of wrong resolve & for entering into right resolve: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong resolve & to enter & remain in right resolve: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities—right view, right effort, & right mindfulness—run & circle around right resolve." *— MN 117*

As we will see in Chapter Nine, this aspect of right mindfulness comes under the fourth frame of reference in the establishing of mindfulness: keeping mental qualities in and of themselves in mind as a frame of reference. In this role, right mindfulness builds on right view and remembers to apply right effort to develop each factor of the path.

The standard definition of right view is that it pertains not just to the factors of the path, the fourth noble truth, but also to all four noble truths. And its relation to those truths—stress, its origination, its cessation, and the path of practice leading to its cessation—is not simply a matter of knowing what they are. It's a matter of knowing *in terms of* those truths (SN 45:8). The phrase "in terms of"—again expressed by the locative case—means that right view uses the four truths as a framework for classifying experiences as they happen: knowing which experiences count as stress, which count as the origination of stress, and so forth. One of the duties of right mindfulness is to keep this framework in mind and to apply it to present experience.

However, the Buddha's first exposition of right view in SN 56:11 shows that there is more to right view than just a framework of four truths. It also includes the motivation for adopting the framework, as well as the duties enjoined by the framework. In the Buddha's exposition, the motivation actually comes first. Before introducing the framework, he explains why it should be adopted. It's part of a path that—avoiding the extremes of sensual indulgence and self mortification, both of which lead to suffering—"leads to

stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding *(nibbāna)":* i.e., to total freedom from suffering. By beginning with this motivation, the Buddha indicates the role that desire has to play in the path, for as we just noted, all phenomena, even the path, are rooted in desire. In recognition of this fact, he starts with an explanation of why you would desire to adopt the framework of the four noble truths.

After explaining the framework, the Buddha points out that each truth carries a duty: stress is to be comprehended, its origination abandoned, its cessation realized, and the path to its cessation developed. Only when these duties have been completed is total awakening achieved. So right view consists of three parts: a framework for viewing experience, an understanding of the motivation for adopting the framework, and knowledge of what should be done in light of the framework.

All three parts of this knowledge are what right mindfulness remembers and applies to the present. It remembers to keep a particular frame of reference in mind; it remembers the purpose for keeping it in mind; and it remembers lessons from the past—"things said or done" by oneself or others—that indicate what would be best to do in any given present situation in light of that frame of reference, taken within the overall framework of the four noble truths. In the context of the passage from MN 117, this would mean recognizing that right and wrong resolve, as mental qualities, fall under the fourth frame of reference; remembering what distinguishes wrong resolve from right resolve; remembering the duty appropriate to each—abandoning wrong resolve, and entering and remaining in right resolve—as well as remembering why it's worthwhile to make the effort to fulfill these duties.

This is where right mindfulness connects directly with right effort, for it directs right effort in light of the three aspects of right view. It remembers the framework of the four noble truths—which, in the formula of right effort, is translated into the distinction between skillful and unskillful qualities. It remembers the motivation provided by right view so as to generate the desire central to right effort. And it remembers the duties appropriate to the four noble truths, which are translated into slightly different terms in the formula for right effort: The effort to prevent the arising of unskillful qualities that have yet to arise, and to abandon unskillful qualities that have already arisen, corresponds to the abandoning of the second noble truth. The effort to give rise to skillful qualities, and to develop them once they have arisen, corresponds to the developing of the fourth noble truth. The effort to bring the skillful qualities of the path—and in particular, the quality of

discernment—to the culmination of their development requires the comprehension of the first noble truth and leads to the realization of the third. In this way, the primary duty of right mindfulness is to remember to keep these aspects of right effort in line with the three aspects of right view.

However, there is some complexity in the relationship between right mindfulness and right effort in this project, for these two factors are not radically distinct. Right mindfulness doesn't simply give directions and motivation to right effort, for right effort is actually a part of right mindfulness. This is indicated in the satipaṭṭhāna formula not only by the presence of the quality of ardency, but also by the concluding passage of the formula: "subduing greed & distress with reference to the world." It's worth looking carefully at this passage, for the subduing and restraining aspect of right mindfulness is often overlooked.

The word "subduing" *(vineyya)* is related to the word for "discipline" *(vinaya).* This suggests that greed and distress are not yet uprooted in this part of the practice. They are simply put aside and kept in check. The tense of the verb—it's a gerund—can mean either "having subdued" or "subduing." In other words, the activity is either already accomplished or in the process of being accomplished. Both meanings are appropriate here, in that greed and distress have to be brought under a measure of control simply to start the process of establishing mindfulness. Because they are not yet uprooted, they have to be continually put aside as they arise.

As for the word "world" in this passage, this has two meanings in the Canon. In general usage—as when the Buddha refers to the world with its devas, Māras, etc., or as the world of beings to whom the four immeasurable attitudes of good will, etc., are directed—"world" means the ordinary sense of the world outside: a place in which we move and interact with other beings.

On a more technical level, "world" simply means the six senses, the data they transmit, and the feelings they engender.

> Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "'The world, the world *[loka],'* it is said. In what respect does the word 'world' apply?
>
> "Insofar as it disintegrates *[lujjati],* monk, it's called the 'world.' Now what disintegrates? The eye disintegrates. Forms disintegrate. Consciousness at the eye disintegrates. Contact at the eye disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye—

experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

"The ear disintegrates. Sounds disintegrate.…

"The nose disintegrates. Aromas disintegrate.…

"The tongue disintegrates. Tastes disintegrate.…

"The body disintegrates. Tactile sensations disintegrate.…

"The intellect disintegrates. Ideas disintegrate. Consciousness at the intellect disintegrates. Contact at the intellect disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect—experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

"Insofar as it disintegrates, it's called the 'world.'" *— SN 35:82*

Because events known purely at the intellect are included in this list, this second sense of the word "world" covers not only sensory input from the world outside, but also any input dealing with inner worlds of the mind, such as the states of becoming induced by the practice of right concentration. As we will see, this point has important applications in the practice.

Apparently, the word "world" in the last part of the satipaṭṭhāna formula covers both senses of the word. On the one hand, the act of subduing greed and distress with reference to the world is a way of keeping your frame of reference with, for example, the body in and of itself, and not allowing that frame of reference to shift to the world in which the body moves and to which it relates. In other words, you pay no attention to the body as viewed in the context of the world outside—as to whether it's attractive to others, strong enough to do work, etc.—and instead attend strictly to the issues of the body in and of itself.

On the other hand, the act of subduing greed and distress with reference to the world of the six senses is a way of not allowing any extraneous sense data to interfere with the work at hand: that of getting mindfulness established and keeping it established in line with its duties on the path. At a later stage, the act of subduing is also a way of overcoming any attachment to the worlds of becoming created by the practice of right mindfulness itself.

So, considering this passage in line with both meanings of "world," it's easy to see that one of the important duties of mindfulness is to remember the right effort of restraint: the need to exclude any mental frameworks that would dislodge the proper frame of reference, and to exclude any defilements that would interfere with the proper actions in line with that

framework.

This point is illustrated by two similes in the Canon. The first simile shows the dangers of leaving the territory of satipaṭṭhāna and wandering off into the territory of sensual pleasures.

> "There are in the Himalayas, the king of mountains, difficult, uneven areas where neither monkeys wander nor human beings. There are difficult, uneven areas where monkeys wander, but not human beings. There are level stretches of land, delightful, where monkeys wander and so do human beings. There, hunters set a tar trap in the monkeys' trails, in order to catch some monkeys. There, those monkeys who are not foolish or careless by nature, on seeing the tar trap, avoid it from afar. But any monkey who is foolish & careless by nature comes up to the tar trap and grabs it with its paw. He gets stuck there. Thinking, 'I'll free my paw,' he grabs it with his other paw. He gets stuck there. Thinking, 'I'll free both of my paws,' he grabs it with his foot. He gets stuck there. Thinking, 'I'll free both of my paws and my foot,' he grabs it with his other foot. He gets stuck there. Thinking, 'I'll free both of my paws and my feet as well,' he grabs it with his mouth. He gets stuck there.
>
> "So the monkey, snared in five ways [symbolizing the five 'strings of sensuality' described below], lies there whimpering, having fallen on misfortune, fallen on ruin, a prey to whatever the hunter wants to do with him. Then the hunter, without releasing the monkey, skewers him right there, picks him up, and goes off as he likes.
>
> "This is what happens to anyone who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others. For this reason, you should not wander into what is not your proper range and is the territory of others. In one who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others, Māra gains an opening, Māra gains a foothold. And what, for a monk, is not his proper range and is the territory of others? The five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable by the eye —agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Sounds cognizable by the ear.… Smells cognizable by the nose.… Tastes cognizable by the tongue.… Tactile sensations cognizable by the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. These, for a monk, are not his proper range and are the territory of others.
>
> "Wander, monks, in what is your proper range, your own ancestral

territory. In one who wanders in what is his proper range, his own ancestral territory, Māra gains no opening, Māra gains no foothold. And what, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory? The four establishings of mindfulness.… This, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory." *— SN 47:7*

The other simile shows the safety that comes when you can stay within the territory of a proper frame of reference and are able to subdue any greed and distress with regard to the world of sensual pleasures.

"Once a hawk suddenly swooped down on a quail and seized it. Then the quail, as it was being carried off by the hawk, lamented, 'O, just my bad luck and lack of merit that I was wandering out of my proper range and into the territory of others! If only I had kept to my proper range today, to my own ancestral territory, this hawk would have been no match for me in battle.'

"'But what, quail, is your proper range?' the hawk asked. 'What is your own ancestral territory?'

"'A newly plowed field with clumps of earth all turned up.'

"So the hawk, proud of its own strength, without mentioning its own strength, let go of the quail. 'Go, quail, but even having gone there you won't escape me.'

"Then the quail, having gone to a newly plowed field with clumps of earth all turned up and climbing up on top of a large clump of earth, stood taunting the hawk, 'Come for me *now,* you hawk! Come for me *now,* you hawk!'

"So the hawk, proud of its own strength, without mentioning its own strength, folded its two wings and suddenly swooped down toward the quail. When the quail knew, 'The hawk is coming at me full speed,' it slipped behind the clump of earth, and right there the hawk shattered its breast.

"This is what happens to anyone who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others. For this reason, you should not wander into what is not your proper range and is the territory of others. In one who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others, Māra gains an opening, Māra gains a foothold. And what, for a monk, is not his proper range and is the territory of others? The five strings of sensuality." *— SN 47:6*

Because one of the first steps of right concentration practice is to seclude the mind from sensuality, these similes show how the act of subduing greed and distress with reference to the world leads the practice of right mindfulness directly into the practice of right concentration.

B. THE GOVERNING PRINCIPLE

When we consider all the elements of the satipaṭṭhāna formula, we can see that right mindfulness plays a supervisory role in keeping your practice on the right path: It remembers, from right view, how to recognize the right path from the wrong path; it also remembers to stay alert and focused on the task at hand; it motivates right effort by remembering why the right path is worth following, at the same time reminding right effort of what to do to stay on the path. Right mindfulness also incorporates right effort in its own activity of subduing any concerns that would pull the practice off course. Right effort, in turn, tries to keep right mindfulness established, maintaining it and furthering its development (see Chapter Two).

This interplay of mutual support explains why some maps of the practice —such as the seven factors for awakening—place right mindfulness before right effort, whereas others—such as the five faculties and the noble eightfold path—place right effort before right mindfulness.

The supervisory role played by right mindfulness is in line with the Buddha's observation in AN 10:58 that "all phenomena have mindfulness as their governing principle." Mindfulness—whether right or wrong—is a factor present in any experience where memories from the past are brought to bear on what is happening within that experience: It supplies a framework for understanding the experience, it can remember motivating reasons for why the framework should be applied, while the framework in turn indicates what action(s) should be performed. If the framework or motivation is wrong, the resulting action is likely to be detrimental.

The Buddha, in including right mindfulness in the path, takes the role that mindfulness plays in any experience where memory is brought to bear on the present and points it in a skillful direction. This is an important point to note. Instead of telling you to abandon past memories so as to approach the present with totally fresh eyes and bare awareness, he's saying to be selective in calling on the appropriate memories that will help keep you on the path to the end of suffering. And instead of telling you to watch passively as things arise and pass away on their own, he's saying to keep remembering the need to complete any uncompleted tasks required by the path, and to protect any

attainments that have already been attained. In other words, there are some things you have to remember to *make* arise and to *prevent* from passing away.

> "This holy life is lived… with mindfulness as its governing principle.… And how is mindfulness the governing principle? The mindfulness that 'I will make complete any training with regard to good conduct that is not yet complete, or I will protect with discernment any training with regard to good conduct that is complete' is well-established right within. The mindfulness that 'I will make complete any training with regard to the basics of the holy life that is not yet complete, or I will protect with discernment any training with regard to the basics of the holy life that is complete' is well-established right within. The mindfulness that 'I will scrutinize with discernment any Dhamma that is not yet scrutinized, or I will protect with discernment any Dhamma that has been scrutinized' is well-established right within. The mindfulness that 'I will touch through release any Dhamma that is not yet touched, or I will protect with discernment any Dhamma that has been touched' is well-established right within.
>
> "This is how mindfulness is the governing principle." *— AN 4:245*

Several similes and descriptions in the discourses give a sense of how mindfulness plays this supervisory role. In Sn 1:4, for instance, the Buddha compares mindfulness to a goad: a sharp implement that a farmer uses to poke a beast of burden that has become distracted from its task—to remind it of its task, to warn it of the dangers of forgetting its task, and to get it moving. In this simile, the beast of burden is persistence. In the same way, mindfulness serves to poke right effort to change its focus from unskillful distractions—such as greed and distress with reference to the world—and to direct it back to the duties dictated by the proper frame of reference.

Other similes for the role of mindfulness are more complex. For instance:

> "Just as a royal frontier fortress has a gatekeeper—wise, experienced, intelligent—to keep out those he doesn't know and to let in those he does, for the protection of those within, and to ward off those without; in the same way, a disciple of the noble ones is mindful, endowed with excellent proficiency in mindfulness, remembering & recollecting what was done and said a long time ago. With mindfulness as his gatekeeper, the disciple of the noble ones abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is blameless, and looks after himself with purity." *— AN 7:63*

This simile shows how mindfulness brings three sorts of memory to bear on the present moment. Remembering the need to protect the fortress corresponds to remembering motivation. Knowing how to recognize friends from potential enemies corresponds to remembering the proper framework to apply to a given situation. Remembering to admit friends and exclude strangers corresponds to remembering what to do in any given situation in light of that framework. Actually keeping out the potential enemies corresponds to subduing greed and distress with reference to the world.

Another simile indicates that the role of mindfulness is to remember what to look for in the present moment so that adjustments can be made to help the mind settle down pleasantly in concentration.

> "Now suppose that there is a wise, experienced, skillful cook who has presented a king or a king's minister with various kinds of curry: mainly sour, mainly bitter, mainly peppery, mainly sweet, alkaline or non-alkaline, salty or non-salty. He picks up on the theme *[nimitta, sign, signal]* of his master, thinking, 'Today my master likes this curry, or he reaches out for that curry, or he takes a lot of this curry, or he praises that curry. Today my master likes mainly sour curry.… Today my master likes mainly bitter curry… mainly peppery curry… mainly sweet curry… alkaline curry… non-alkaline curry… salty curry… Today my master likes non-salty curry, or he reaches out for non-salty curry, or he takes a lot of non-salty curry, or he praises non-salty curry.' As a result, he is rewarded with clothing, wages, & gifts. Why is that? Because the wise, experienced, skillful cook picks up on the theme of his own master.
>
> "In the same way, there is the case where a wise, experienced, skillful monk remains focused on the body in & of itself… feelings in & of themselves… the mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, his mind becomes concentrated, his defilements are abandoned. He picks up on that theme. As a result, he is rewarded with a pleasant abiding here-&-now, together with mindfulness & alertness. Why is that? Because the wise, experienced, skillful monk picks up on the theme of his own mind." — *SN 47:8*

Of course, the cook in this simile is not simply watching his master. He's also adjusting his cooking to please him so as to gain a reward of clothing, wages, and gifts. In this way, this simile also illustrates the three types of

memory appropriate to right mindfulness: remembering the motivation for seeing things in line with the framework of right view, remembering what is significant to look for in terms of that framework, and remembering what right effort should do in response to what is significant.

C. RIGHT MINDFULNESS & RIGHT CONCENTRATION

The Canon contains a number of similes showing that the state of awareness appropriate for the restraining role of right mindfulness can be either narrowly focused or broadly relaxed, as the need may be. This is important to note, because some modern writers—in an effort to draw a radical distinction between mindfulness and concentration—maintain that mindfulness is broad and receptive, whereas concentration is narrow and exclusive.

Actually, this distinction misrepresents the Canon in two important ways. The first is that it misrepresents the relative breadth of the two qualities. As we learned from the similes of the monkey and the quail, the proper establishing of mindfulness requires that you set limits on the range of your mindful awareness. Other discourses show that when defilements are strong, those limits have to be extremely narrow so that you can stay focused on the problem at hand and avoid the very real dangers of distraction.

> "If, on examination, a monk knows, 'I usually remain covetous, with thoughts of ill will, overcome by sloth & drowsiness, restless, uncertain, angry, with soiled thoughts, with my body aroused, lazy, or unconcentrated,' then he should put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head; in the same way, the monk should put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities." *— AN 10:51*

Mindfulness in this case reminds the monk that the need to abandon unskillful mental qualities takes precedence above all else, and that he shouldn't allow himself to be distracted by other issues. This is a time to focus attention exclusively on this task.

Here's another simile making the same point:

> "Suppose, monks, that a large crowd of people comes thronging together, saying, 'The beauty queen! The beauty queen!' And suppose that the beauty queen is highly accomplished at singing & dancing, so that an even greater crowd comes thronging, saying, 'The beauty queen is singing! The beauty queen is dancing!' Then a man comes along, desiring life & shrinking from death, desiring pleasure & abhorring pain. They say to him, 'Now look here, mister. You must take this bowl filled to the brim with oil and carry it on your head in between the great crowd & the beauty queen. A man with a raised sword will follow right behind you, and wherever you spill even a drop of oil, right there will he cut off your head.' Now what do you think, monks? Would that man, not paying attention to the bowl of oil, bring heedlessness outside?"
>
> "No, lord."
>
> "I've given you this simile to convey a meaning. The meaning is this: The bowl filled to the brim with oil stands for mindfulness immersed in the body." *— SN 47:20*

These two similes show that there are times when the dictates of mindfulness can require an intensely focused and narrow state of attention, blocking out all distractions.

At other times, mindfulness can be broad and relaxed, especially when the mind is free from unskillful thinking. When the mind tires even of skillful thinking, this broadened mindfulness prepares the mind to enter into the jhānas: the stages of right concentration.

> "And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with renunciation… non-ill will… harmlessness arose in me. I discerned that 'Thinking imbued with harmlessness has arisen in me; and that leads neither to my own affliction, nor to the affliction of others, nor to the affliction of both. It fosters discernment, promotes lack of vexation, & leads to unbinding. If I were to think & ponder in line with that even for a night… even for a day… even for a day & night, I do not envision any danger that would come from it, except that thinking & pondering a long time would tire the body. When the body is tired, the mind is disturbed; and a disturbed mind is far from concentration.' So I steadied my mind right within, settled, unified, & concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind would not be disturbed.
> …

"Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been gathered into the village, a cowherd would look after his cows: While resting under the shade of a tree or out in the open, he simply keeps himself mindful of 'those cows.' In the same way, I simply kept myself mindful of 'those mental qualities.'

"Unflagging persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established. My body was calm & unaroused, my mind concentrated & single. Quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered & remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I entered & remained in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture I remained equanimous, mindful, & alert, and sensed pleasure with the body. I entered & remained in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joy & distress—I entered & remained in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain." *— MN 19*

So mindfulness is not always a broadly receptive state of mind. The relative breadth of its focus has to be elastic, dictated by the strength of restraint needed in the presence or absence of strong defilements.

And it's ironic that mindfulness is often portrayed as broad in opposition to the supposed narrowness of concentration, for concentration is actually the mental state that the Buddha consistently describes as expansive. This is easily seen in the similes he uses to describe the four jhānas, all of which involve a full-body awareness:

The first jhāna: "Just as if a dexterous bathman or bathman's apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again & again with water, so that his ball of bath powder —saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within & without—would nevertheless not drip; in the same way, the monk permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of seclusion."

The second jhāna: "Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from within, having no inflow from the east, west, north, or south, and with

> the skies supplying abundant showers time & again, so that the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would permeate & pervade, suffuse & fill it with cool waters, there being no part of the lake unpervaded by the cool waters; in the same way, the monk permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of concentration."
>
> *The third jhāna:* "Just as in a lotus pond, some of the lotuses, born & growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated & pervaded, suffused & filled with cool water from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those lotuses would be unpervaded with cool water; in the same way, the monk permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture."
>
> *The fourth jhāna:* "Just as if a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; in the same way, the monk sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness." *— MN 119*

So, to the extent that there is a distinction in the way the discourses represent the relative breadth of mindfulness and concentration, concentration is the quality consistently portrayed as broad and expansive, whereas mindfulness has to shift the breadth of its focus—sometimes broad, sometimes narrow—in line with events.

The need to qualify this distinction, however, brings us to the second problem with the common portrayal of the radical difference between mindfulness and concentration, which is that—instead of drawing a sharp line between these two qualities—the discourses actually portray them as interpenetrating. Just as right mindfulness contains elements of right effort, right concentration contains elements of right mindfulness.

The above passage from MN 19 shows how right mindfulness leads naturally to right concentration. This point is in keeping with the general framework of MN 117, noted above, that right mindfulness cooperates with right view and right effort in developing the first seven factors of the path as requisites for noble right concentration. However, right mindfulness is not only a factor leading to right concentration; it's an integral part of right concentration itself.

> Sister Dhammadinnā: "Singleness of mind is concentration; the four establishings of mindfulness are its themes; the four right exertions are its requisites; and any cultivation, development, & pursuit of these qualities is its development." *— MN 44*

In fact, the Buddha describes the establishing of mindfulness as a type of concentration and recommends developing it in a way that clearly leads through the four jhānas.

> "Then, monk, you should train yourself thus: 'My mind will be established inwardly, well-composed. No evil, unskillful qualities, once they have arisen, will remain consuming the mind.' That's how you should train yourself.…
>
> "Then you should train yourself thus: 'I will remain focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.' That's how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture… not accompanied by rapture… endowed with a sense of enjoyment *[sāta];* you should develop it endowed with equanimity. [Similarly with the other three establishings of mindfulness.]" *— AN 8:63 (Thai: AN 8:70)*

The mention of directed thought, evaluation, rapture, and equanimity in this passage is apparently an implicit reference to the four jhānas, for these stages of concentration are elsewhere related both to the establishings of mindfulness and to jhāna in an explicit way.

> "Having abandoned the five hindrances—imperfections of awareness that weaken discernment—the monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings… mind… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. Just as if an elephant trainer were to plant a large post in the ground and were to bind a forest elephant to it by the neck in order to break it of its forest habits, its forest memories & resolves, its distraction, fatigue, & fever over leaving the forest, to make it delight in the town and to inculcate

> in it habits congenial to human beings; in the same way, these four establishings of mindfulness are bindings for the awareness of the disciple of the noble ones, to break him of his household habits, his household memories & resolves, his distraction, fatigue, & fever over leaving the household life, for the attainment of the right method and the realization of unbinding.
>
> "Then the Tathāgata trains him further: 'Come, monk, remain focused on the body in & of itself, but do not think any thoughts connected with the body. Remain focused on feelings in & of themselves, but do not think any thoughts connected with feelings. Remain focused on the mind in & of itself, but do not think any thoughts connected with mind. Remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, but do not think any thoughts connected with mental qualities.' With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters the second jhāna."
>
> *— MN 125*

Given that simply dropping thoughts about any one of the frames of reference would put you in the second jhāna, the implicit message here is that when the establishing of mindfulness is strong enough to allow you to do that without losing focus, it's already in the first jhāna.

So it seems fairly obvious that both AN 8:70 and MN 125 are describing ways in which the concentration attained with the establishing of mindfulness can be further developed in line with the standard descriptions of the four jhānas. As we will see in Chapter Two, this corresponds to a more advanced level of mindfulness practice that SN 47:40 terms the "development of the establishing of mindfulness."

The intimate connection between right mindfulness and the practice of jhāna is a point that has to be stressed repeatedly, for some of the cardinal tenets of the modern interpretation of mindfulness are that mindfulness practice is radically different from jhāna practice, that jhāna is not necessary for awakening, and that the modicum of concentration attained through mindfulness-as-bare-awareness practices is enough to qualify as right concentration. Because these tenets fly in the face of the standard definition of the path factor of right concentration, which defines right concentration as the four jhānas (DN 22; MN 141; SN 45:8), there have been many efforts to find passages in the Canon showing that jhāna is not always necessary for awakening, or that right concentration can be defined in other terms. We will examine some of these passages in Appendix Three. Here we can simply note that, when closely examined, these passages don't support the claims based on them. Right concentration, in the discourses, always means the

practice of the jhānas. And as we have seen, these states of concentration are intimately connected with the practice of right mindfulness. Right mindfulness forms the themes on which they stay focused; the practice of right mindfulness, when well-established in line with the satipaṭṭhāna formula, constitutes the first jhāna; when further refined, it can lead through all the jhānas.

So there is no clear line between mindfulness practice and jhāna practice. In fact, they should interpenetrate as much as possible for both mindfulness and concentration to be truly right.

D. MINDFULNESS, JHĀNA, & RELEASE

The path does not end with the practice of jhāna. Instead, it uses jhāna to provide the trio of right mindfulness, right effort, and right view with a foundation for developing all the path factors to an even more refined degree so as to lead to total release.

Jhāna can provide this foundation because the act of mastering strong concentration changes many of the basic dynamics within the mind. As you find more and more that a solid happiness can be found by subduing all greed and distress with reference to the world, your search for happiness focuses less on the world and more exclusively on maintaining mindful concentration at all times. Your desire to produce and consume happiness becomes more focused right here. And because the mind in concentration is so clear and bright, right view can watch this desire and its results more clearly as they occur. In this way, concentration provides an excellent basis for exposing the processes of fabrication *(saṅkhāra)*—the intentional processes by which the mind shapes experience—as they occur within the levels of concentration itself. When you finally come to realize the limitations even of concentration, right view together with right mindfulness and right effort develop dispassion for the process of fabricating it. Because fabrication depends on passion and desire, this dispassion puts an end to all fabrication. And with that, the mind is released.

> [In the fourth jhāna:] "There remains only equanimity: pure & bright, pliant, malleable, & luminous. Just as if a dexterous goldsmith or goldsmith's apprentice were to prepare a furnace, heat up a crucible, and, taking gold with a pair of tongs, place it in the crucible: He would blow on it time & again, sprinkle water on it time & again, examine it time & again, so that the gold would become refined, well-refined, thoroughly refined, flawless, free from dross, pliant, malleable, &

luminous. Then whatever sort of ornament he had in mind—whether a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain—it would serve his purpose. In the same way, there remains only equanimity: pure & bright, pliant, malleable, & luminous. One discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure & bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of space, I would develop the mind along those lines, and thus this equanimity of mine—thus supported, thus sustained—would last for a long time. One discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure and bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness… the dimension of nothingness… the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, I would develop the mind along those lines, and thus this equanimity of mine—thus supported, thus sustained—would last for a long time.'

"One discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure & bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of space and to develop the mind along those lines, that would be fabricated. One discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure and bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness… the dimension of nothingness… the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception and to develop the mind along those lines, that would be fabricated.' One neither fabricates nor mentally fashions for the sake of becoming or un-becoming. This being the case, one doesn't cling to anything in the world. Not clinging, one is not agitated. Unagitated, one is totally unbound right within. One discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

— MN 140

Right mindfulness plays a consistent role in this process—not only giving rise to concentration and maintaining it, but also reminding you of the framework, motivation, and duties of right view: to examine the results of your concentration for any traces of stress and, when finding them, to abandon their causes through the subtlest level of right effort.

In this way, even after they have directed all the other factors of the path to right concentration, the trio of right view, right mindfulness, and right effort continue to work in harmony to bring about total release.

Even after attaining total release, arahants continue practicing the four establishings of mindfulness. However, having completed the path, their motivation for practicing right mindfulness has now changed. Because they have nothing more to add to their attainment—and are now totally disjoined from the objects on which mindfulness is based—their fully developed

mindfulness finds these four establishings a natural place to settle.

> "Even those who are arahants—whose effluents are ended, who have reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who are released through right gnosis—even they remain focused on the body in & of itself—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded, disjoined from the body. They remain focused on feelings in & of themselves… on the mind in & of itself… on mental qualities in & of themselves—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded, disjoined from mental qualities."
> *— SN 47:4*

SN 54:11 makes an even stronger claim for the concentration of mindfulness of breathing, which MN 118 equates with right mindfulness: Not only do arahants practice it, even the Buddha used it as one of his favorite meditative dwellings.

> Then the Blessed One, having emerged from seclusion after the passing of three months, addressed the monks: "Monks, if wanderers of other sects ask you, 'By means of what dwelling, friends, did Gotama the contemplative mostly dwell during the rains residence?': You, thus asked, should answer them in this way: 'It was by means of the concentration of mindfulness of breathing that the Blessed One mostly dwelled.' …
>
> "For whatever one rightly speaking would call, 'a noble dwelling,' 'a brahmā dwelling,' 'a Tathāgata dwelling,' it would be the concentration of mindfulness of breathing that he, speaking rightly, would call, 'a noble dwelling,' 'a brahmā dwelling,' 'a Tathāgata dwelling.'
>
> "Those who are learners, who have yet to attain their hearts' desire, who stay resolved on the unexcelled security from bondage: When the concentration of mindfulness of breathing is developed & pursued by them, it leads to the ending of the effluents.
>
> "Those who are arahants, whose effluents are ended, who have reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who are released through right gnosis: When the concentration of mindfulness of breathing is developed & pursued by them, it leads to a pleasant abiding here-&-now and to mindfulness & alertness." *— SN 54:11*

This means that right mindfulness functions not only as a factor of the path, but also as a pleasant pastime for those who have fully developed the path and tasted its ultimate fruit.

> Pañcasikha the gandhabba: "Just as the water of the Ganges runs together & harmonizes with the water of the Yamuna, in the same way the path of practice leading to unbinding is well-promulgated by that Blessed One for his disciples. They run together, unbinding and the path of practice." *— DN 19*

This doesn't mean that right mindfulness is identical with unbinding—after all, as Iti 90 points out, right mindfulness is fabricated whereas the realization of unbinding is not—simply that the practice of right mindfulness is compatible with a mind that, through the realization of unbinding, is totally unfettered by defilement and free.

CHAPTER TWO

The Lessons of Fabrication

Three passages in the Canon—one in SN 47:16, one in SN 47:40, the other in MN 118 and at least five other discourses—explain how the establishing of mindfulness is to be cultivated and developed.

The first passage sets out the prerequisites for properly establishing mindfulness:

> Ven. Uttiya: "It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief so that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute."
>
> The Buddha: "In that case, Uttiya, purify the very basis with regard to skillful qualities. And what is the basis of skillful qualities? Well-purified virtue & views made straight. Then, when your virtue is well-purified and your views made straight, in dependence on virtue, established in virtue, you should develop the four establishings of mindfulness.… Then, when in dependence on virtue, established in virtue, you develop these four establishings of mindfulness, you will go beyond the realm of Death." *— SN 47:16*

We have already noted the importance of right view ("views made straight") as a prerequisite for right mindfulness. This passage adds to the list of prerequisites the path factors related to virtue, which MN 44 identifies as right speech, right action, and right livelihood. It's not hard to see why these factors would be required for mindfulness to become right: If you engage in harmful behavior, you'll want to forget the harm you have done. This forgetfulness puts barriers in your memory that are sure to weaken mindfulness. A bad conscience can also weaken alertness, as you develop a tendency not to want to look carefully into your motivations for acting (AN 3:69). This is why mindfulness can be established rightly only in dependence on virtuous behavior. At the same time, a lack of virtue makes it difficult to gladden the mind, an important step in using mindfulness to develop right concentration.

The second passage in the above list, SN 47:40, sets a more encompassing

framework for developing the establishing of mindfulness.

> "And what is the development of the establishing of mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, remains focused on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, remains focused on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.
>
> "He remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to feelings… with regard to the mind… with regard to mental qualities, remains focused on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, remains focused on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities—ardent, alert, & mindful —subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called the development of the establishing of mindfulness.
>
> "And what is the path of practice to the development of the establishing of mindfulness? Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is called the path of practice to the development of the establishing of mindfulness."
>
> *— SN 47:40*

Two points stand out here, one general and one specific. The general point is that right mindfulness has to be developed through the practice of all eight factors of the path, including right effort and right concentration. This means that, whereas right mindfulness leads to and acts as an integral part of right concentration—as noted in the preceding chapter—the development of right concentration in turn aids in the development of right mindfulness. In other words, each supports the other in strengthening the path. This point is confirmed by the standard descriptions of the four jhānas, which state that the fourth jhāna is the stage at which mindfulness becomes pure.

The more specific point lies in what this passage adds to the standard satipaṭṭhāna formula: the fact that the development of the establishing of mindfulness lies in remaining focused—in each of the four frameworks—on the phenomenon of origination, passing away, and origination-and-passing-away with reference to that particular frame.

The phrasing of this passage contains two details worth noticing. First is the use of the locative case to express the idea of origination *in reference to* each of these four frames. SN 47:42, using the genitive case—a grammatical

case that indicates possession—identifies the origination *of* each of these objects: nutriment as the origination of the body, contact as the origination of feeling, name-and-form as the origination of mind, and attention as the origination of mental qualities. But that's not what you're being told to look for here. Instead of looking for the origination *of* your frame, you watch origination and passing away of phenomena as viewed *in reference to or in the context of* that frame.

In other words, while maintaining any of the four frames of reference as a framework for your attention, you keep watch over how events arise from causes and how they pass away, all with reference to that frame. This is particularly clear in the context of the body: You aren't interested in looking just at the role of food in sustaining the body, for that would trivialize the practice. Instead, you watch how the experience of the body has an impact on the origination and passing away of physical or mental phenomena experienced in the present, and how their origination and passing away have an impact on the body. A similar principle applies to the other frames of reference as well. For example, with feelings: You notice how the way you breathe influences feelings of pleasure or pain, or how feelings of pleasure or pain influence states of mind.

The second important detail to notice is that this passage uses the term "origination" *(samudaya).* This is sometimes mistranslated as "arising," giving the impression that you simply watch passively as phenomena come and go. However, the word *samudaya* actually carries the meaning of *causation,* which means that you must also ferret out exactly what is causing those phenomena to come and go. As any scientist knows, establishing a causal relationship involves more than simply watching. You have to make experimental changes in your environment to test what is and is not affecting the phenomenon in which you're interested. If, for example, you suspect that the temperature of your room is having an impact on your health, you have to raise or lower the thermostat to see what effect that has on how healthy you feel.

Similarly, to keep watch on the origination of phenomena with reference, say, to the sense of the body, you have to make adjustments in your physical and mental actions to see what is actually causing what.

This observation is borne out by five passages in the discourses. The first is that, as SN 47:40 shows, the process of remaining focused on the origination of phenomena is developed by cultivating all the path factors, and especially the practice of right concentration. Now, right concentration requires consciously shaping the state of your mind. Through the process of

learning what works and what doesn't work in giving rise to the jhānas, you gain hands-on experience in manipulating the causes of the mental phenomena you are trying to develop or abandon. This is how the process of origination becomes clear.

This point is confirmed by the passages from AN 8:70 and MN 125 that we noted in Chapter One can be read as illustrating the development of the establishing of mindfulness. As these passages point out, you deepen the level of concentration attained in the first stage of mindfulness practice by consciously dropping layers of thought and refining the feelings that result from establishing mindfulness. This requires hands-on familiarity with the patterns of causation at work in the processes of the mind—a familiarity that can come only by manipulating those processes to achieve the desired effect.

The fourth passage illustrating the need for the manipulation of causal factors is the simile of the cook (SN 47:8), which we encountered in Chapter One: The cook has to keep varying his food to find exactly what pleases his master. Otherwise, his master will tire of his cooking and stop giving him rewards. In the same way, as a meditator you have to keep adjusting physical and mental phenomena to provide the mind with just the right conditions for settling down. This can be accomplished only by actively exploring cause and effect.

The fact that the process of origination is understood through the manipulation of causal factors is also borne out by a fifth passage, in MN 118, in which the Buddha explains how the establishing of mindfulness is to be cultivated and developed. In this case, his instructions are more specific, showing the precise way in which his approach to meditation is proactive and experimental. The passage starts by describing sixteen steps in breath meditation, and then shows how each tetrad, or set of four steps, brings one of the four establishings of mindfulness to the culmination of its development. We will consider the full passage in more detail in Chapters Six and Seven. Here I would like to focus on the steps themselves, and the establishing of mindfulness that each tetrad develops. I have put the steps in boldface so that you can easily locate them again when you want to remind yourself of what each step entails.

The steps developing the first establishing of mindfulness:

"[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' [3] He trains

himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' [4] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

The steps developing the second establishing of mindfulness:

"[5] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.' [6] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.' [7] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.' [8] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.'

The steps developing the third establishing of mindfulness:

"[9] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.' [10] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in gladdening the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out gladdening the mind.' [11] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in steadying the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out steadying the mind. [12] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in releasing the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out releasing the mind.'

The steps developing the fourth establishing of mindfulness:

"[13] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.' [14] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on dispassion *[literally,* fading].' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.' [15] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on cessation.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on cessation.' [16] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.'" *— MN 118*

What stands out most prominently in this list of steps is the amount of willed, proactive activity they involve. Steps 3 through 16 are all described as acts of self-training, in which you set the intention to breathe in a particular way and—while consciously breathing—to pay attention to a particular topic with the purpose of developing it in a particular direction. You're not simply aware of what's happening in the present moment, for each training is expressed in the future tense: "I will breathe…" You want to move the

present moment into a particular future direction. This is how these sixteen steps develop not only mindfulness and alertness, but also their companion quality of ardency.

Intention in the role of fabrication figures explicitly in steps 4, 7, and 8. The terms *bodily fabrication (kāya-saṅkhāra)* and *mental fabrication (citta-saṅkhāra),* used in those steps, are explained as follows:

> Sister Dhammadinnā: "In-&-out breaths are bodily fabrications. Directed thought & evaluation are verbal fabrications. Perceptions & feelings are mental fabrications." — *MN 44*

This means that in step 4 you deliberately try to calm the breath. In step 8, after sensitizing yourself to the effect of perceptions and feelings on the mind in step 7, you try to cultivate perceptions and feelings that will have a calming effect. And although verbal fabrication is not mentioned by name in any of the steps, the use of the training phrase "I will breathe" is, in itself, an example of using verbal fabrication skillfully. So all three forms of fabrication play a role in these sixteen steps.

The proactive nature of these steps is also clear in steps 10 through 12, in which you try to move your mind in a skillful direction: gladdening it when its energy is low, steadying it when its energy is scattered or uneven, and releasing it—at least temporarily—from unskillful mind states, or from the factors of the lower stages of concentration so as to move it to higher stages. Similarly, in steps 13–16 you direct the mind in an even more skillful direction by focusing it on topics that will lead step by step to full release.

The Buddha was clearly conscious of the proactive nature of these sixteen steps, for he explicitly recommended them as superior to a more passive and equanimous approach to mindfulness of breathing.

> The Blessed One said, "Monks, do you develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing?"
>
> When this was said, Ven. Ariṭṭha replied to the Blessed One, "*I* develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, lord."
>
> "But how do you develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, Ariṭṭha?"
>
> "Having abandoned sensual desire for past sensual pleasures, lord, having done away with sensual desire for future sensual pleasures, and having thoroughly subdued perceptions of irritation with regard to internal & external events, I breathe in mindfully and breathe out mindfully."

> "There is that mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, Ariṭṭha. I don't say that there isn't. But as to how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is brought in detail to its culmination, listen and pay close attention. I will speak." [The Buddha then details the sixteen steps.] — *SN 54:6*

The Commentary reads Ariṭṭha's statement here as indicating he has reached the third level of awakening, non-return, where all sensuality and irritation have been totally abandoned. But the fact that Ariṭṭha has to subdue irritation here shows that he hasn't totally abandoned it. In fact, from what we know of him from other discourses in the Canon (such as MN 22, where he refuses to abandon a pernicious wrong view), it's highly improbable that he has reached any high level of attainment. A more likely interpretation is that he's simply practicing mindful equanimity in the present moment, having temporarily subdued desire for past and future sensual pleasures, and having temporarily subdued any thought of irritation with regard to the present.

The important point here is that, although this relatively passive approach counts as a type of mindfulness of breathing, the Buddha does not recommend it. Instead he recommends the more active approach of the sixteen steps. His reasons for doing so relate to issues in right concentration, right effort, and right view: the three factors of the path that, as we have seen, interact most directly with right mindfulness. We will focus on the issues related to right view in the next chapter, and those related to right concentration and right effort here—although bear in mind that right view is inevitably connected with these issues as well.

First, with regard to right concentration, SN 54:8 states that the practice of the sixteen steps develops not only the four establishings of mindfulness but also all the levels of right concentration. Now, according to AN 10:71, two mental qualities are necessary for the development of the four jhānas: tranquility *(samatha)* and insight *(vipassanā).*

> "If a monk would wish, 'May I attain—whenever I want, without strain, without difficulty—the four jhānas that are heightened mental states, pleasant abidings in the here-&-now,' then he should be one who brings the precepts to perfection, who is committed to inner tranquility of awareness, who does not neglect jhāna, who is endowed with insight, and who frequents empty dwellings." — *AN 10:71*

AN 4:94 describes tranquility as resulting from the ability to steady the mind, settle it down, unify it, and concentrate it. It describes insight as the

understanding that comes from investigating fabrications in an appropriate way. Notice that these two qualities—tranquility and insight—are just that: qualities. Nowhere in the Canon are they referred to as specific meditation exercises. Instead, they are described as qualities used by and developed through the exercises leading to jhāna.

The sixteen steps are a primary example of how this can happen, in that they give hands-on experience both with settling the mind and with investigating fabrication in the steps where you consciously calm bodily and mental fabrication. In this way they develop tranquility and insight in tandem (AN 4:170). As we will have occasion to note throughout this book, a distinctive feature of the Buddha's approach is that he often has you employ as tools on the path physical and mental processes that he also wants you to contemplate and comprehend in action. The practice of gaining sensitivity to fabrication by calming it to promote tranquility, insight, and right concentration is a prime example of this approach.

As for the issues related to right effort, the Buddha recommends the more proactive approach of the sixteen steps because even though mindful equanimity is, in some cases, enough to uproot causes of stress, it's not enough in all.

> "And how is striving fruitful, how is exertion fruitful? There is the case where a monk, when not loaded down, does not load himself down with pain, nor does he reject pleasure that accords with the Dhamma, although he is not fixated on that pleasure. He discerns that 'When I exert a fabrication against this cause of stress, then from the fabrication of exertion there is dispassion. When I look on with equanimity at that cause of stress, then from the development of equanimity there is dispassion.' So he exerts a fabrication against the cause of stress for which dispassion comes from the fabrication of exertion, and develops equanimity with regard to the cause of stress for which dispassion comes from the development of equanimity. Thus the stress coming from the cause of stress for which there is dispassion through the fabrication of exertion is exhausted, and the stress resulting from the cause of stress for which there is dispassion through the development of equanimity is exhausted." *— MN 101*

Notice that the Buddha offers no specific guidelines for when equanimity will work in giving rise to dispassion and when the more proactive approach of "exerting a fabrication" or "fabricating exertion" is needed. This means that you have to discover from personal experience what works in a

particular case and to employ the appropriate corrective. The role of mindfulness in these cases is to keep this range of options in mind, and to remember what has previously worked in cases similar to what you are currently facing.

Of the two main options—equanimity and the fabrication of exertion—the latter phrase appears elsewhere in the Canon in the context of the four bases of power *(iddhipāda)*, which in turn are related to the practice of right concentration.

> "There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on *desire* & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on *persistence* & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on *intent* & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on *discrimination* & the fabrications of exertion." *— SN 51:15*

This indicates that the fabrication of exertion relates, at the very least, to the conscious effort needed to fabricate a state of right concentration. The Canon doesn't explain which fabrications these passages are referring to, but there's every likelihood that all three types—bodily, verbal, and mental—are intended, as all three are required to develop strong concentration. As SN 36:11 points out, verbal fabrication is present in the first jhāna; bodily fabrication, in the first three jhānas; and mental fabrication, in all four jhānas and the first four formless dimensions based on the fourth jhāna. This may explain why the sixteen steps of breath meditation focus so much attention, explicit and implicit, on bodily, verbal, and mental fabrication.

As concentration develops, all three types of fabrication are stilled: verbal fabrication in the second jhāna, bodily fabrication in the fourth, and mental fabrication in the cessation of perception and feeling—an attainment that results, at the very least, in the third level of awakening: non-return. In this way, the skillful fabrication of exertion leads to the pacification of all fabrications, and so to release. The sixteen steps of breath meditation, with their conscious calming of fabrication, are a clear embodiment of this approach.

However, the three types of fabrication play a role not only in stilling the mind but also in giving rise to dispassion for different causes of stress. Consciously breathing in a particular way to develop a sense of wellbeing would help make some causes of stress seem less appealing, for you would have an immediate sense of pleasure to measure them against. This would

make it easier to feel dispassion for them. Directing your thoughts to a particular topic (as in the six recollections—see Chapter Seven) and evaluating the matter would help engender dispassion for other causes of stress. Adjusting your feelings and perceptions (as in step 8 of breath meditation) would help with others. In particular, many of the Canon's passages on developing discernment recommend specific perceptions—such as the perceptions of inconstancy, stress, and not-self—to develop the dispassion leading to release. This would count as a skillful use of mental fabrication. There are also cases where various combinations of these three types of fabrication would help in instilling dispassion for still other causes of stress.

Because the sixteen steps of breath meditation give practical experience in adjusting these types of fabrication, they cultivate a sensitivity to and dexterity in the process of fabrication, both of which aid in developing the full range of the skills needed to deal with any factor causing stress.

As for equanimity, even though the passage from MN 101 contrasts it with the fabrication of exertion, we have to remember that it's a mental feeling (SN 36:31), one of the five aggregates *(khandha),* and so it's a fabricated phenomenon. When used on the path, it differs from the fabrication of exertion only in that it requires much less effort. In fact, one of the important insights leading to release is that even subtle forms of equanimity are no less fabricated than mental states requiring much more energy. This point is borne out by the fact that when equanimity is employed instead of the fabrication of exertion, it's used with a particular purpose in mind: to abandon unskillful qualities. This means that it has an underlying agenda, the agenda of right effort, and is not totally free from preference.

In fact, several passages in the Canon—most prominently in the list of the seven factors for awakening (SN 46:53)—indicate that, in the interest of developing the path, equanimity has to be consciously developed through the fabrication of exertion and, ultimately—again through the fabrication of exertion—abandoned.

To begin with, the ordinary equanimity of being nonreactive to sensory input should be supplanted with the consciously fabricated equanimity of the higher states of concentration.

> "There is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity; and there is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.
>
> "And which is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on

multiplicity? There is equanimity with regard to forms, equanimity with regard to sounds… smells… tastes… tactile sensations… ideas. This is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity.

"And which is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness? There is equanimity dependent on the dimension of the infinitude of space, equanimity dependent on the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness… dependent on the dimension of nothingness… dependent on the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.

"By depending & relying on equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, abandon & transcend equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending." *— MN 137*

For some reason, this passage does not list the equanimity of the fourth jhāna under equanimity coming from singleness. This is strange, because the standard description of the four jhānas states that the fourth jhāna is the stage where not only mindfulness, but also equanimity becomes pure. Also, MN 140 portrays the equanimity of the fourth jhāna as then being applied to the formless dimensions so as to give rise to the formless attainments, which would mean that the equanimity of the formless attainments is identical with the equanimity of the fourth jhāna.

Whatever the case, even though the equanimity of these higher states of concentration is superior to ordinary equanimity at the senses, it can act as an object of clinging and so stand in the way of awakening.

"There is the case, Ānanda, where a monk, having practiced in this way —(thinking,) 'It [any object of attention] should not be and it should not occur to me; it will not be; it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon'—obtains equanimity. He relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it. As he relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it, his consciousness is dependent on it, clings to it/is sustained by it. With clinging/sustenance, Ānanda, a monk is not totally unbound."

"In clinging, where does that monk cling?"

"The dimension of neither perception nor non-perception."

"Then, indeed, in clinging, he clings to the supreme clinging."

"In clinging, Ānanda, he does cling to the supreme clinging; for this—the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—is the supreme clinging. There is (however,) the case where a monk, having practiced in this way—'It should not be and it should not occur to me; it will not be; it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon'—obtains equanimity. He does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain fastened to it. As he doesn't relish that equanimity, doesn't welcome it, doesn't remain fastened to it, his consciousness isn't dependent on it, doesn't cling to/isn't sustained by it. Without clinging/sustenance, Ānanda, a monk is totally unbound." *— MN 106*

This is why MN 137—after discussing how equanimity coming from multiplicity should be abandoned by developing equanimity coming from singleness—states that equanimity coming from singleness should be abandoned by non-fashioning *(atammayatā):* the ability to not fashion any sense of self or possession around that equanimity.

"By depending & relying on non-fashioning, abandon & transcend the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending." *— MN 137*

"But a person of integrity notices, 'The Blessed One has spoken of non-fashioning even with regard to the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, for by whatever means they construe it, it becomes otherwise from that.' [In other words, whatever the ground on which you might base a state of becoming—a sense of your self and the world you inhabit—by the time that state of becoming has taken shape, the ground has already changed.] So, giving priority to non-fashioning, he neither exalts himself for the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception nor disparages others. This is the quality of a person of integrity." *— MN 113*

Non-fashioning is a principle that can be applied at many levels. When applied to a particular activity, it helps to pry loose any sense of conceit or identification that might surround that activity. When applied to the most refined possible activity—the equanimity in the highest formless attainments—it brings the mind to the threshold of awakening. At that level, it lies beyond both the fabrication of exertion and on-looking equanimity, in a state of poise that is hard for the untrained mind to grasp, in that it neither moves (like fabrication) nor stays still (like equanimity).

Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him, "Tell me, dear sir, how you crossed over the flood."

"I crossed over the flood, my friend, without pushing forward, without staying in place."

"But how, dear sir, did you cross over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place?"

"When I pushed forward, my friend, I was whirled about. When I stayed in place, I sank. And so I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place."

The devatā:

"At long last I see
a brahman, totally unbound,
who
        without pushing forward,
        without staying in place,
has crossed   over
        the entanglements
        of the world." *— SN 1:1*

However, when non-fashioning is mentioned in the Canon, it usually follows on the mastering of the fabrications of exertion through the development of the factors of the path (MN 78; MN 113). At the same time, as the highest and subtlest form of right effort, it has a purpose: true happiness and wellbeing.

"What do you think, monks? If a person were to gather or burn or do as he likes with the grass, twigs, branches, & leaves here in Jeta's Grove, would the thought occur to you, 'It's us that this person is gathering, burning, or doing with as he likes'?"

"No, lord. Why is that? Because those things are not our self, nor do they belong to our self."

"In the same way, monks, whatever isn't yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term welfare & happiness. And what isn't yours? Form isn't yours… Feeling isn't yours… Perception… Fabrications… Consciousness isn't yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of

it will be for your long-term welfare & happiness." — *MN 22*

The progression from equanimity at the senses, through equanimity based on concentration, to non-fashioning shows that generic non-reactivity at the senses is not enough to engender the dispassion capable of uprooting all the causes of stress. To succeed in the practice, you have to *want* to put an end to stress, to actively ferret out the causes of stress—even those hidden in equanimity—and to be willing to employ any method required to uproot them. This is why desire is an integral part of the definition of right effort, as well as being part of the first base of power. One of the duties of right mindfulness is to keep these facts in mind, so as to help direct right effort in its task.

That, however, is only one of the ways in which right mindfulness is developed through the practice of fabricating right effort and right concentration. As it's trained to the point of right concentration in the midst of fabrication, keeping track of the origination and passing away of physical and mental states, right mindfulness provides a steady basis for observing the processes of both the truth of suffering and the truth of the path in action. In this way right mindfulness helps to sharpen right view, at the same time providing itself with more precise memories of what does and doesn't work, so that it can remind right effort of more effective ways to lead to right concentration. Right mindfulness, when part of right concentration, also provides a level of refined pleasure that gives insight the strength it needs to abandon pleasures that deflect from the path (MN 14). With this improved level of steadiness, it's in a better position to remember the lessons gained from the past when they are appropriate to fabricating improved states of right concentration in the present.

In short, as right mindfulness is developed into right concentration, it can more effectively remember to provide information from the past to apply to the present. At the same time, by remembering to provide a solid frame of reference in the present, it enables right view to be more effective in picking up precise information from the present that right mindfulness will be able to carry into the future. This connects with the point noted in the quotation from SN 48:11 in Chapter One: that the practice of right mindfulness not only applies mindfulness to the present, but also strengthens mindfulness for the sake of future practice.

As for why the lessons of fabrication are so important in this process, that's an issue of right view that we will discuss in the next chapter. Because right view is so intimately connected with right concentration and right effort, this will entail looking at many of the same points we have just

covered but from a slightly different angle. The added depth of perspective provided by right view—particularly in its most detailed explication, as dependent co-arising—should more than compensate for any repetition this will involve.

CHAPTER THREE

Experience Is Purposeful

Dependent co-arising *(paṭicca samuppāda)* is the Buddha's most detailed explanation of how stress and suffering are caused and how they can be put to an end. It's also notoriously complex, containing many non-linear feedback loops in which events appear at multiple points in the causal sequence, and can turn around and act as conditions for factors that condition them.

Still, the map of dependent co-arising has some blatantly obvious features, and one of the most obvious is also the most relevant for understanding why right mindfulness is best developed through mastering the processes of fabrication: the fact that so many factors of dependent co-arising, including fabrication, occur prior to sensory contact. This means that sensory experience is primarily active, rather than passive. The mind is not a blank slate. Even before contact is made at the senses, the factors of bodily, verbal, and mental fabrication have already gone out looking for that contact, shaping how it will be experienced and what the mind will be seeking from it. Because these fabrications, in an untrained mind, are influenced by ignorance, they lead to suffering and stress. This is why insight has to focus on investigating them, for only when they're mastered as skills, through knowledge, to the point of dispassion can they be allowed to cease. Only when they cease can suffering and stress be brought to an end.

As we noted in the preceding chapter, the main role of right mindfulness here is to remember to provide a solid framework for observing the activity of fabrication. At the same time, it remembers lessons drawn from right view in the past—both lessons from reading and listening to the Dhamma, as well as lessons from reading the results of your own actions—that can be used to shape this activity in a more skillful direction: to act as the path to the end of suffering, which—as we noted at the end of Chapter One—is also a form of fabrication. This means that right mindfulness doesn't simply observe fabrications, nor is it disinterested. It's motivated by the aim of right view: to put an end to suffering. It's a fabrication that helps to supervise the intentional mastery of the processes of fabrication so that they can form the path of the fourth noble truth.

As part of this task, it has to interact with all of the factors in dependent co-arising, and in particular with those that precede sensory contact. These preliminary factors are: ignorance, fabrication, consciousness, name-and-form, and the six sense media. SN 12:2 explains them in reverse order:

> "And which *contact?* These six contacts: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, intellect-contact. This is called contact.
>
> "And which *six sense media?* These six sense media: the eye-medium, the ear-medium, the nose-medium, the tongue-medium, the body-medium, the intellect-medium. These are called the six sense media.
>
> "And which *name-&-form?* Feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: This is called name. The four great elements and the form dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This name & this form are called name-&-form.
>
> "And which *consciousness?* These six consciousnesses: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness.
>
> "And which *fabrications?* These three fabrications: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, mental fabrications. These are called fabrications.
>
> "And which *ignorance?* Not knowing in terms of stress, not knowing in terms of the origination of stress, not knowing in terms of the cessation of stress, not knowing in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called ignorance." *— SN 12:2*

Among these factors, it's especially important to note the place not only of fabrication but also of consciousness and of attention (under name-and-form) in the causal sequence, for these are the components of sensory experience with which right mindfulness must most closely interact. This interaction is fairly complex. To begin with, right mindfulness must remember from right view exactly where these factors come in the causal sequence, so that it can direct right effort to deal with them in time. Second, right mindfulness has to remember that fabrication underlies and shapes them, so that it can focus right effort on the most effective strategies for using fabrication to turn unskillful instances of attention and consciousness into more skillful ones. Third, it has to remember how to apply skillful instances of attention and consciousness in fabricating the path. This entails remembering that, given the non-linear pattern of dependent co-arising, skillfully fabricated

consciousness and appropriate attention can turn around and shape the very conditions that underlie them. This is why they can help in the path's fabrication.

These are the classic lessons that right mindfulness draws from right view, in the form of dependent co-arising, about consciousness and attention.

However, because of the modern tendency to equate mindfulness with bare awareness or bare attention, we have to look particularly at what dependent co-arising has to say concerning the nature of attention and consciousness (which is often confused with bare awareness) and their relationship to right mindfulness.

The first lesson is that neither of them is bare. In the untrained mind, each is conditioned by intentional activity—through the factor of fabrication, and the sub-factor of intention in name-and-form—so that by the time they come into contact with sensory data, they are already preconditioned by ignorance to receive and attend to those data in a particular way.

Even in the mind on the path they are still preconditioned, because the purpose of knowledge in terms of right view is to condition consciousness and attention in another direction, toward the ending of suffering. Only when ignorance is totally eradicated, at the culmination of the path, is there an experience of unconditioned awareness. Until that point, consciousness and attention are inevitably purposeful in aiming at happiness: unskillfully in the untrained mind; with increasing skill in the mind on the path.

The second lesson is that neither attention nor consciousness is identical with mindfulness. Consciousness is the act of receiving and registering phenomena; attention, the act of choosing which phenomena to focus on. However, even though these functions are not identical with mindfulness, they do play a role in the establishing of mindfulness, because they are both related to the activity of remaining focused, in that attention is the quality that has to stay focused on the most important events detected through consciousness in the present. In the case of consciousness, the discourses present this relationship only in an implicit way, for consciousness is not mentioned by name in the satipaṭṭhāna formula. However, the formula would obviously not work without the presence of consciousness. The relationship is more explicit in the case of attention, for MN 118—in showing how the sixteen steps of breath meditation fulfill the practice of satipaṭṭhāna—speaks of close attention to the breath in terms that connect it with the activity of remaining focused and alert (see Chapter Six).

The relationship between mindfulness and attention grows even closer when mindfulness becomes right mindfulness; and attention, appropriate

attention. As these qualities are trained to act skillfully for the end of suffering, they both become forms of *anupassanā,* or remaining focused on something. In Chapter One, we have already noted how this happens in the case of mindfulness. In this chapter, we will see how appropriate attention is a form of *dhammānupassanā*—the act of remaining focused on mental qualities—directed by the framework of the four noble truths with the purpose of performing the duties appropriate to the four noble truths in relation to those qualities.

This means that, although mindfulness is not identical with bare attention, appropriate attention—as a purposeful process guided by the agenda of right view—serves as an aspect of right mindfulness.

At the same time, right mindfulness plays a role in training attention to be appropriate. By remembering that both consciousness and attention are shaped by fabrication, which in turn is shaped either by ignorance or knowledge, right mindfulness is able to supervise the task of using this knowledge to provide fabricated—and thus purposeful—consciousness and attention with a skillful purpose.

To understand how this is done, we have to look in more detail at the factors of dependent co-arising that provide consciousness and attention with their sense of purpose. And the most coherent way to do that is to review the above factors in forward order, starting with ignorance.

"Ignorance" in the context of dependent co-arising doesn't mean a general delusion or lack of information. It means not viewing experience in terms of the four noble truths. Any other framework for viewing experience, no matter how sophisticated, would qualify as ignorance. Typical examples given in the Canon (MN 2, MN 38, SN 12:20) include seeing things through the framework of self and other, or of existence and non-existence: What am I? What am I not? Do I exist? Do I not exist? Do things outside me exist? Do they not?

Viewing experience with right view means not getting involved in trying to answer these questions. Instead, right view focuses directly on the questions of what stress is, how it's caused, and how it can be brought to an end. As we noted in Chapter One, viewing experience in terms of the four noble truths also includes understanding the motivation for using this framework and knowing the tasks directed by the framework: comprehending stress, abandoning its origination, realizing its cessation, and developing the path to its cessation.

The motivation, of course, is the desire to put an end to suffering and

stress. Without this desire, you would see no reason to replace ignorance with knowledge, and the path would never take root. In recognition of the fact that all phenomena are rooted in desire (AN 10:58; SN 51:15), you have to replace the desires underlying ignorance with the desire to focus primary attention on how to understand suffering and bring it to an end. You adopt the framework of the four noble truths because you're convinced that it will direct you to where you want to go.

As for the tasks dictated by the framework, these are an essential element in the knowledge replacing ignorance as well. The Pāli word the Buddha chose for ignorance—*avijjā*—is the opposite of *vijjā,* which means not only "knowledge" but also "skill," as in the skills of a doctor or animal-trainer. In stating that people suffer from not knowing in terms of the four noble truths, he wasn't just saying that they lack information or direct knowledge of those truths. He was also saying that they lack skill in handling them. They suffer because they don't know what they're doing.

This lack of skill conditions the way the mind intentionally fabricates or manipulates bodily states, verbal events, and mental states. As we noted in the preceding chapter, the breath is the primary means for fabricating bodily states, and practical experience shows that—in giving rise to feelings of comfort or discomfort—it has an impact on mental states as well. Even just breathing, when colored by ignorance, can act as a cause of suffering. As for verbal events, directed thought and evaluation are the means for fabricating sentences. Mental states are fabricated by feelings of pleasure, pain, and neither pleasure nor pain; and by perceptions—the labels the mind applies to things.

The role of fabrication here is to take the karmic potentials for experience coming from past actions and to shape them into actual present experience, at the same time introducing a purposeful element into that experience. For instance, with reference to the five aggregates *(khandhas):*

> "And why do you call them 'fabrications'? Because they fabricate fabricated things, thus they are called 'fabrications.' What do they fabricate as a fabricated thing? For the sake of form-ness, they fabricate form as a fabricated thing. For the sake of feeling-ness, they fabricate feeling as a fabricated thing. For the sake of perception-hood… For the sake of fabrication-hood… For the sake of consciousness-hood, they fabricate consciousness as a fabricated thing. Because they fabricate fabricated things, they are called fabrications." *— SN 22:79*

This means that conditioned experience, even at the most basic level, is for

the sake of something at all times, both in the present and on into the future. Now, this "for the sake of something" functions on many levels. As SN 22:60 indicates, the mind isn't infatuated with the aggregates for their own sake; it's infatuated with them for the sake of the pleasures they provide. In other words, they're tools. Because the mind uses the aggregates as tools in the pursuit of pleasure, experience starts by fabricating the tools it wants.

This process of fabrication relates to all three time frames. Informed by the past, it shapes the present as it leans toward to the future. The future orientation of fabrication is illustrated by the skillful verbal fabrications we noted in MN 118, which are expressed in the future tense: "I will breathe.…" The same principle, of course, operates in unskillful verbal fabrications as well. At the same time, the purpose at which fabrication aims has to be shaped by memories from the past, of what has and hasn't worked in producing happiness. As long as those memories are ignorant, the present- and future-leaning quality of fabrication will lean toward suffering and stress.

As SN 22:79 shows, the factor of sensory consciousness that follows on fabrication is anything but passive awareness. It's colored and motivated by the sense of purpose provided by the ignorant fabrications that turn it from a potential into an actuality. SN 22:54 illustrates the active nature of consciousness with an analogy: Consciousness is like a seed that grows and proliferates by feeding off the soil provided by form, feeling, perceptions, and fabrications. As dependent co-arising shows, among the proliferations produced by this consciousness is a cluster of mental and physical events called name-and-form.

This is the stage, under the heading of "name," where attention occurs. As if the preconditions for attention weren't already complex enough, its co-conditions in name-and-form add another level of complexity. "Form" means the form of the body as experienced from within as properties of earth (solidity), water (liquidity), wind (energy), and fire (heat), and as shaped by the activity of breathing (part of the wind property). "Name" includes not only attention, but also intention, again (as a repetition of fabrication in general); feeling and perception, again (as a repetition of mental fabrication); and contact, which here apparently means contact among all the factors already listed. The repetition of these factors is an illustration of the non-linear nature of the causal sequence.

All of these conditions, acting together under the influence of ignorance in the unawakened mind, color every act of attention to contact with the world of the six senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, the tactile sense, and the intellect

that knows mental qualities and ideas.

This is why what may appear to be a simple act of attention is anything but simple, and anything but bare. It's shaped, consciously or not, by views and the intentional actions informed by those views. If those views are ignorant, the act of attention is conditioned to be inappropriate: applied to the wrong things, in the wrong framework, and for the wrong reasons, aggravating the problem of stress and suffering rather than alleviating it.

> "There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—does not discern what phenomena *[dhamma]* are fit for attention or what phenomena are unfit for attention. This being so, he does not attend to phenomena fit for attention and attends (instead) to phenomena unfit for attention.…
>
> "This is how he attends inappropriately: 'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?' Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?'
>
> "As he attends inappropriately in this way, one of six kinds of view arises in him: The view *I have a self* arises in him as true & established, or the view *I have no self* … or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive self* … or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive not-self* … or the view *It is precisely by means of not-self that I perceive self* arises in him as true & established, or else he has a view like this: *This very self of mine—the knower that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & bad actions—is the self of mine that is constant, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will endure as long as eternity.* This is called a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress." — *MN 2*

The issue, then, is how to turn attention into appropriate attention, focused on the right questions, to avoid this fetter of views. One seeming

option would be to use something unconditioned or unfabricated as a tool to free attention from the conditions of ignorance and fabrication, but that is an impossibility, for the unfabricated is not the cause of anything (MN 1) and has no features—no arising or passing away—by which it could be used as a tool.

> "Now these three are unfabricated characteristics of what is unfabricated. Which three? No arising is discernable, no passing away is discernable, no alteration while staying is discernable." — *AN 3:47*

Because the unfabricated cannot be used in any way, there is only one possible approach: the Buddha's strategy of using the processes of fabrication informed by skillful knowledge to free the mind from the fabrications conditioned by ignorance so as to arrive at the unfabricated. This is why he called his strategy a *path:* Just as a path to a mountain doesn't cause the mountain, yet following it can take you there; in the same way, the path doesn't cause the unfabricated, but the act of following the path can arrive at the unfabricated. The dynamic of this strategy explains why the path, as a form of fabrication, is so self-referential: On the one hand, it takes the fabricated nature of experience, which is so often unskillful, and applies right effort to fabricate it in a skillful way. On the other hand, it aims at developing dispassion for all fabrications, which means that ultimately it has to turn attention to relinquishing itself.

As we noted in the preceding chapter, there are stages in this process. First the Buddha recommends mastering fabrication by using it as a tool to disband ignorant fabrications. Then he has you observe it as it's being used, so that finally you abandon passion for fabrication of any type. This is the basic dynamic of the path.

The standard description of dependent co-arising shows that when ignorance is fully ended, all the succeeding factors—including fabrication—also end. However, because the type of knowledge that replaces ignorance involves mastering a skill, there are two important points to note:

1) Ignorance is overcome gradually, in stages, as unskillful fabrications are increasingly stilled through mastering the activity of skillful fabrications aimed at dispassion. This is why the path progresses in a step-by-step manner as dispassion grows more encompassing to the point ultimately where fabrications totally disband.

2) The knowledge that replaces ignorance is not a disinterested awareness of things as they are. As the Buddha pointed out, he taught only stress and the end of stress (SN 22:86). The categories of right view are meant to help in

bringing about the end of stress. This means that they're purposeful, aimed directly at developing the skills needed to bring stress to an end.

Because the role of attention on the path—as appropriate attention—is shaped by fabrications, it, too, has to be purposeful. It cannot be merely receptive all-around. It must aim at putting an end to the effluents *(āsava):* unskillful impulses toward sensuality, becoming, and ignorance that "flow out" of the mind and keep it returning again and again to stress. For this reason the role of appropriate attention is to choose to avoid issues that will encourage the effluents and to focus on issues that will help get rid of them.

> "The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for men of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—discerns what phenomena are fit for attention and what phenomena are unfit for attention. This being so, he does not attend to phenomena unfit for attention and attends [instead] to phenomena fit for attention.
>
> "And what are the phenomena unfit for attention that he does not attend to? Whatever phenomena such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen effluent of sensuality arises in him, and the arisen effluent of sensuality increases; the unarisen effluent of becoming arises in him, and the arisen effluent of becoming increases; the unarisen effluent of ignorance arises in him, and the arisen effluent of ignorance increases. These are the phenomena unfit for attention that he does not attend to.
>
> "And what are the phenomena fit for attention that he does attend to? Whatever phenomena such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen effluent of sensuality does not arise in him, and the arisen effluent of sensuality is abandoned; the unarisen effluent of becoming does not arise in him, and the arisen effluent of becoming is abandoned; the unarisen effluent of ignorance does not arise in him, and the arisen effluent of ignorance is abandoned. These are the phenomena fit for attention that he does attend to. Through his not attending to phenomena unfit for attention and through his attending to phenomena fit for attention, unarisen effluents do not arise in him, and arisen effluents are abandoned.
>
> "He attends appropriately: *This is stress … This is the origination of stress … This is the cessation of stress … This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.* As he attends appropriately in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: identification-view, doubt, and grasping at habits &

practices." — *MN 2*

This passage shows that appropriate attention is directly connected to right view, as it keeps the mind focused on the categories of right view. Other passages show that appropriate attention also attends to the duties appropriate to these categories. For example, it helps in comprehending the five clinging-aggregates, which are identical with the truth of stress (SN 56:11):

> Ven. Sāriputta: "A virtuous monk, Koṭṭhita my friend, should attend in an appropriate way to the five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. Which five? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate. A virtuous monk should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a virtuous monk, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant… not-self, would realize the fruit of stream entry."
>
> [This passage goes on to say that this contemplation can lead all the way to arahantship.] — *SN 22:122*

Similarly, SN 46:51 (see Chapter Nine) shows how appropriate attention is used to starve the five hindrances (thus helping to abandon the origination of stress) and to feed the seven factors for awakening (to help develop the path). These are some of the ways in which appropriate attention focuses both on the noble truths and on accomplishing their attendant tasks.

As we will see in Chapter Nine, the four topics mentioned in these descriptions of appropriate attention—the four noble truths, the five clinging-aggregates, the five hindrances, and the seven factors for awakening—all come under the fourth frame of reference: the act of remaining focused on mental qualities in and of themselves. And as we will see in Chapter Six, the primary use of this frame of reference is to subdue greed and distress with reference to the world. For this reason, the activity of appropriate attention—both in terms of the topics it focuses on and in terms of its purpose for focusing on them—falls squarely under the fourth establishing of mindfulness. Informed by right view, appropriate attention also includes the qualities of alertness and ardency in remaining focused. All it needs is

mindfulness—to remember to stay focused—and the identity with the fourth establishing is complete.

All of this shows that there is no role for bare attention or bare awareness on the path. Instead, the type of attention that *does* play a role in the path is aimed somewhere: at dispassion. It plays an active, purposeful role in focusing awareness on how the processes of fabrication are causing stress and how they can be redirected to act as the path to the end of stress.

The sequence of factors listed in dependent co-arising shows what right mindfulness needs to remember in order to supervise the reconditioning of attention to make it appropriate. To begin with, there needs to be at least a rudimentary understanding of the four noble truths to counteract ignorance. This corresponds to right view. This has to be followed by an act of the will —fabrication—to act on the duties assigned by right view. This corresponds to right resolve and right effort. Finally, under name-and-form, there has to be the ability to remember to establish attention in the proper framework so as to keep these views and duties in mind in a way that will develop the steadiness of concentration in which the mind can remember to apply lessons learned from the past, and to pick up new knowledge from the present that can be applied in the future. These are the direct duties of right mindfulness.

This sequence of factors explains why MN 117 states that the factors of right view, right effort, and right mindfulness have to circle around every factor of the path so as to lead to right concentration. Without these combined factors, the processes of fabrication would easily slip back into their old, unskillful ways. With these factors, fabrication can be employed to develop all the factors of the path.

As we noted above, fabrication relates to all three time periods—past, present, and future. This is why the practice of right mindfulness has to relate to all three time periods as well: to the past through mindfulness, to the present through alertness, and to both the present and the future through ardency. Otherwise, right mindfulness would not be able to encompass all the aspects of fabrication and direct them toward right concentration.

Right concentration in turn provides an excellent opportunity for gaining insight into the role played by fabrication in shaping experience. It does this in five interconnected ways.

1) To concentrate the mind on any of the themes provided by right mindfulness, you have to focus on the role of fabrication in shaping sensory experience, for only when this factor is managed skillfully can right mindfulness perform its function of "subduing greed and distress with reference to the world" of the senses. In other words, only when you are

sensitive to the fabricated nature of greed, distress, and the sense of the world nourishing greed and distress, can you successfully disband them so that they don't disturb the focus of the concentration you're trying to develop. This sensitivity helps to bring unskillful processes of fabrication out of the unconscious and into the light of day.

2) The ensuing state of concentration—especially when focused on the breath—requires further sensitivity to all three forms of skillful fabrication within the concentration itself:

sensitivity to the breath (bodily fabrication);

the use of directed thought and evaluation (verbal fabrication) in the first jhāna to bring the mind to stillness and to induce feelings of pleasure (mental fabrication);

and the use of perception (also mental fabrication) to keep the mind with the breath.

Note that these forms of fabrication involve not only the aggregate of fabrication, but also the aggregates of form, feeling, and perception. This means that the practice of right concentration takes advantage of the fabricated nature of all the aggregates to shape them in a positive direction: into the peaceful and pleasant abiding of jhāna.

3) Once you have acquired a taste of the peaceful pleasure that comes from fabricating states of concentration, you have a standard against which to measure the pleasures created by the fabrications of greed, distress, and all other unskillful mental states used to create pleasure in terms of the world. Through this comparison, you learn an important lesson: the calmer the fabrication, the better.

4) Once the mind is established in right concentration, it acquires a solid, still frame of reference against which it can observe even subtler movements of fabrication within the concentration itself.

5) As the mind's sensitivity grows subtler, it can see the stress caused by relatively grosser levels of fabrication within the concentration, which induces it to let them fall away in favor of calmer levels of fabrication. As the various layers of fabrication fall away, the mind progresses through increasingly subtle and stable levels of concentration.

> "When one has attained the first jhāna, speech has been calmed. When one has attained the second jhāna, directed thought & evaluation have been calmed. When one has attained the third jhāna, rapture has been calmed. When one has attained the fourth jhāna, in-&-out breathing has been calmed. When one has attained the cessation of perception &

feeling [which lies beyond the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception], perception & feeling have been calmed." *— SN 36:11*

In fact, this procession through the levels of concentration all the way to the cessation of perception and feeling is one of the ways in which awakening is achieved. This is because the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling entails the ending of all three types of fabrication. That, in turn, entails a level of insight that at the very least can bring about the penultimate level of awakening, non-return. In one sense, this insight is the logical outcome of the pursuit of ever more refined states of calm, based on ever more refined types of fabrication. In another sense, however, this insight comes from a radical break from this progression, in that it confronts the fact that all types of fabrication, no matter how refined, involve some level of stress and disturbance. The only way to find true calm is to abandon fabrication altogether. This is how the pursuit of calm ultimately leads to the unfabricated ease of unbinding.

So the underlying dynamic of the five ways in which right concentration can foster insight into the processes of fabrication is one of sensitivity through manipulation, followed by the use of that sensitivity to bring about calm. This same dynamic is reflected in the basic pattern of the Buddha's sixteen purposeful steps for breath meditation.

For instance, in the first tetrad: When attention is directed to the breath as an object of mindfulness and concentration, you become sensitive to the way in which in-and-out breathing fabricates the experience of the body. From that sensitivity, you can allow that fabrication to grow calm. Similarly in the second tetrad, with the steps connected with feeling: You use the breath to develop rapture and feelings of pleasure, both of which help the mind to settle down. As you do this, you become sensitive to the effect that feelings—and the perceptions around them—have on the mind. Then you can allow that effect to grow calm. Similarly in the third tetrad, with the steps associated with the mind: As you use the processes of fabrication to bring the mind into balance—gladdening it when its energy is low, steadying it when its energy is erratic—you become sensitized to how the three forms of fabrication have an effect on it. That enables you to release it from them. In the fourth tetrad, your hands-on knowledge of fabrication sensitizes you to the inconstant nature of anything fabricated. That allows you to develop dispassion for the fabrications you see as gross. With dispassion comes calming: Those fabrications cease and can be relinquished. As this sensitivity to inconstancy is applied to increasingly subtle levels of fabrication, it ultimately arrives at the radical calm of total dispassion, total cessation, and

total relinquishment.

This dynamic of sensitizing the mind to fabrication by focusing attention on how to calm fabrications is one of the primary ways in which right mindfulness trains attention to become appropriate attention. In doing so, it can use appropriate attention—especially in the fourth tetrad, which is connected with the fourth frame of reference—to turn around and help in the refining of the fabrications that condition it. This shows how the non-linear aspect of dependent co-arising is not a mere formality. It's of immense practical value in the practice.

In a similar way, the dynamic of sensitizing the mind to fabrication by learning how to calm fabrications is also the basic strategy by which the sixteen steps develop tranquility and insight in tandem. As they work together, they foster both right concentration and right view, making right view more precise in its understanding of the effects of fabrication so that it develops the dispassion leading to full unbinding.

However, the qualities of tranquility and insight don't always develop smoothly in tandem, for sometimes insight overtakes tranquility, in which case you have to focus particular attention on the step of steadying the mind. In other cases, it's possible—on attaining the pleasure, rapture, and equanimity of jhāna—to become complacent and to stop short of the goal.

> "Just as if a man were to grasp a branch with his hand smeared with resin, his hand would stick to it, grip it, adhere to it; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the cessation of self-identification, but as he is attending to the cessation of self-identification his mind doesn't leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the cessation of self-identification. For him, the cessation of self-identification is not to be expected.…
>
> "Just as if there were a waste-water pool that had stood for countless years, where a man were to block all the inlets and open all the outlets, and the sky were to not rain down in good streams of rain: the breaching of the waste-water pool's embankment would not be expected; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the breaching of ignorance, but as he is attending to the breaching of ignorance his mind doesn't leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the breaching of ignorance. For him, the breaching of ignorance is not to be expected."
> — *AN 4:178*

In cases like these, right view, right effort, and right mindfulness need to

work together with appropriate attention to provide other tools that will make the heart leap up and grow firm at the prospect of the cessation of self-identification and the breaching of ignorance. These tools are composed of the verbal fabrication of directed thought and evaluation, and the mental fabrication of perceptions, designed to develop insight leading to dispassion for the process of fabrication at work in the activity of jhāna itself. Right view provides the framework for understanding why it's desirable to use these insight-inducing fabrications; appropriate attention directs attention to them; right mindfulness keeps them in mind; and right effort provides the energy to use them effectively.

These fabrications can be applied at any level in the practice of jhāna. Although SN 36:11, above, traces a path to awakening through all the levels of concentration, AN 9:36 shows that awakening can come about even with contemplation of just the first jhāna.

> "'I tell you, the ending of effluents depends on the first jhāna.' Thus it has been said. In reference to what was it said?…
>
> "Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.'
>
> "Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the five lower fetters [self-identification views, grasping at habits & practices, uncertainty, sensual passion, and irritation]—he is due to arise spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world." *— AN 9:36*

Note the four steps in this process. First, you master bodily, verbal, and

mental fabrications to the point where they settle the mind in the first jhāna. Second, you focus attention on the fact that the first jhāna is composed of fabrications with inherent limitations. The perceptions listed in this passage —identical to the perceptions of appropriate attention applied to the clinging-aggregates in SN 22:122, quoted above—are an expansion of the more common list of three: the perception of inconstancy ("a disintegration"), the perception of stress ("a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction"), and the perception of not-self ("alien, an emptiness"). The purpose here is to induce a sense of dispassion for the fabrications of jhāna.

The third step is to develop perceptions that incline the mind to look favorably on the prospect of a deathless happiness that would be free from the limitations of fabrication. ("This is peace, this is exquisite.…") Finally, you have to remember—i.e., be mindful—to protect the mind from developing a sense of passion for the experience of the deathless, for that passion forms the final obstacle to total release.

Right mindfulness plays several roles in this process. To begin with, it acts as the theme on which the mind is concentrated so as to enter jhāna. Then it plays a supervisory role to remind you not to get stuck on that attainment: reminding you to look for the limitations of that jhāna, and reminding you of the perceptions that will help toward that end. It also reminds you to view the ending of fabrications—even the fabrications of the path—in a positive light, and to abandon passion even for the much greater happiness of the deathless that appears when fabrications fall away.

Similarly, appropriate attention plays a purposeful role throughout these steps, directing you first to the object of your concentration, then—as we have noted—turning attention to the processes fabricating that state of concentration, attending to the perceptions that will develop dispassion for that concentration, and looking for any passion that may arise around the experience of the deathless.

Although appropriate attention looks for things as they are directly experienced throughout the stages of gaining insight into jhāna, it also knows—when reminded by right mindfulness—which experiences and fabrications to choose to attend to at which stage in the process. For instance, when the mind is beginning to settle down in jhāna, that's not a time to focus on the drawbacks of jhāna. When the time comes to focus on developing dispassion for jhāna, that's not a time to focus on how much pleasure and rapture the jhāna entails. In this way, appropriate attention is selective in what it attends to because, informed by right view and right mindfulness, it's aimed at a particular goal: the step-by-step mastery of fabrications leading to

the ending of stress.

Only at full awakening, with the full completion of the duties associated with the four noble truths, does the mind drop all agendas and experience things simply as they are—or in the terms of the Canon, purely as they have come to be, free from the activity of present fabrication:

> "Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: 'This is the noble truth of stress'… 'This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended' … 'This noble truth of stress has been comprehended.' …
>
> "'This is the noble truth of the origination of stress' … 'This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned' … 'This noble truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned.' …
>
> "'This is the noble truth of the cessation of stress' … 'This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be directly experienced' … 'This noble truth of the cessation of stress has been directly experienced.' …
>
> "'This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress' … 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed' … 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.'
>
> "And, monks, as long as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, with its people with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & commonfolk. But as soon as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos.… Knowledge & vision arose in me: 'Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.'"
>
> *— SN 56:11*

The three rounds in this knowledge and vision correspond to the three levels of knowledge for each of the noble truths: knowing the truth, knowing the duty appropriate to the truth, and knowing that the duty has been completed. The twelve permutations come from applying these three levels to all four of the truths (3 x 4 = 12). When this knowledge and vision is

completely pure, it yields release and the knowledge and vision of release.

The consciousness attained through this release is the only type of awareness that the Canon recognizes as truly unconditioned, for—unlike every other form of consciousness—it can be known without recourse to sensory contact, even contact at the intellect.

> "'Consciousness without surface, endless, radiant all around, has not been experienced through the earthness of earth… the liquidity of water… the fieriness of fire… the windiness of wind… the allness of the all.'" *— MN 49*

The "allness of the all" here is a reference to the world of the six internal and external sense media.

> "What is the all? Simply the eye & forms, ear & sounds, nose & aromas, tongue & flavors, body & tactile sensations, intellect & ideas. This, monks, is termed the all. Anyone who would say, 'Repudiating this all, I will describe another,' if questioned on what exactly might be the grounds for his statement, would be unable to explain, and furthermore, would be put to grief. Why? Because it lies beyond range." *— SN 35:23*

"Beyond range" here means not "beyond the range of possible knowledge" but "beyond the range of adequate description," for there are other canonical passages indicating that even though the dimension beyond the six senses cannot be adequately described, it can still be directly known.

> Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "With the remainderless ceasing & fading of the six contact-media [vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, & intellection], is it the case that there is anything else?"
>
> Ven. Sāriputta: "Don't say that, my friend."
>
> Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "With the remainderless ceasing & fading of the six contact-media, is it the case that there is not anything else?"
>
> Ven. Sāriputta: "Don't say that, my friend."
>
> Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "…is it the case that there both is & is not anything else?"
>
> Ven. Sāriputta: "Don't say that, my friend."
>
> Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "…is it the case that there neither is nor is not anything else?"

Ven. Sāriputta: "Don't say that, my friend."

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "Being asked… if there is anything else, you say, 'Don't say that, my friend.' Being asked… if there is not anything else… if there both is & is not anything else… if there neither is nor is not anything else, you say, 'Don't say that, my friend.' Now, how is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

Ven. Sāriputta: "Saying… is it the case that there is anything else… is it the case that there is not anything else… is it the case that there both is & is not anything else… is it the case the there neither is nor is not anything else, one is objectifying the non-objectified. However far the six contact-media go, that is how far objectification goes. However far objectification goes, that is how far the six contact-media go. With the remainderless ceasing & fading of the six contact-media, there comes to be the ceasing, the allaying of objectification." *— AN 4:173*

"Monks, that dimension should be experienced where the eye [vision] ceases and the perception of form fades. That dimension should be experienced where the ear ceases and the perception of sound fades… where the nose ceases and the perception of aroma fades… where the tongue ceases and the perception of flavor fades… where the body ceases and the perception of tactile sensation fades… where the intellect ceases and the perception of idea/phenomenon fades: That dimension should be experienced." *— SN 35:117*

After the experience of total release, the arahant returns to an experience of the world of the six senses, but with a sense of being disjoined from it because the mind no longer needs to feed on it.

"Sensing a feeling of pleasure, [the arahant] senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, he senses it disjoined from it. This is called a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones disjoined from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is disjoined, I tell you, from suffering & stress" *— SN 36:6*

Ven. Nandaka: "Just as if a dexterous butcher or butcher's apprentice, having killed a cow, were to carve it up with a sharp carving knife so that—without damaging the substance of the inner flesh, without damaging the substance of the outer hide—he would cut, sever, & detach only the skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in

between. Having cut, severed, & detached the outer skin, and then covering the cow again with that very skin, if he were to say that the cow was joined to the skin just as it had been, would he be speaking rightly?"

A group of nuns: "No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because if the dexterous butcher or butcher's apprentice, having killed a cow, were to carve it up with a sharp carving knife so that—without damaging the substance of the inner flesh, without damaging the substance of the outer hide—he would cut, sever, & detach only the skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between; and… having covered the cow again with that very skin, then no matter how much he might say that the cow was joined to the skin just as it had been, the cow would still be disjoined from the skin."

Ven. Nandaka: "This simile, sisters, I have given to convey a message. The message is this: The substance of the inner flesh stands for the six internal sense media; the substance of the outer hide, for the six external sense media. The skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between stand for passion & delight. And the sharp knife stands for noble discernment—the noble discernment that cuts, severs, & detaches the defilements, fetters, & bonds in between."
— MN 146

Similarly, as we noted in Chapter One, when the arahant after full awakening engages in right mindfulness, it's with a sense of being disjoined from body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities. At the same time, he/she continues to engage in appropriate attention. Although the purpose now is different from that of an unawakened person, there is a purpose nonetheless.

"An arahant should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. Although, for an arahant, there is nothing further to do, and nothing to add to what has been done, still these things—when developed & pursued—lead both to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now and to mindfulness & alertness." *— SN 22:122*

So even though arahants have completed the duties and tasks associated with the four noble truths—and have gained access to an unconditioned awareness outside of the dimension of the six senses—their attention, when sensitive to the world of the six senses, is still a purposeful activity.

Which goes to show that—both in the course of the path and in its aftermath—neither mindfulness nor attention plays a purely receptive role. In line with the Buddha's depiction of the processes of sensory experience in general, they act purposefully. This is true whether the mind is engaged in giving rise to stress, following the path to the end of stress, or sensitive to sensory input after the experience of total release from stress.

In part, right mindfulness and appropriate attention serve overlapping functions on the path, particularly in line with the fourth establishing of mindfulness: that of choosing which phenomena and tasks to focus on in the present moment, and which ones to ignore. However, these qualities start from different functions: memory in the case of mindfulness, choice of what to attend to in the case of attention. Only when they are trained, through the addition of other mental qualities, to become right mindfulness and appropriate attention do their functions overlap. Even then, though, right mindfulness covers a broader range of functions, encompassing all the ways in which memory can be brought to bear on the purpose at hand.

The distinction between mindfulness and attention is an important one, for it's useful in sorting out the various ways fabrication shapes all the functions associated with the path. Only when they are seen clearly as separate types of fabrication can they be developed skillfully. It's like cooking: You want your spices and herbs to be precisely labeled so that you can produce precisely the flavor you want in your food.

At the same time, only when these fabrications are seen clearly as fabrications can insight enable the mind to go beyond them. In other words, an understanding of the fabricated nature of mindfulness and attention is what allows you ultimately to develop dispassion for them when they have performed their duties. The ultimate duty of right mindfulness is to keep this understanding in mind so that, when the time comes, even the refined fabrications of the path—including mindfulness itself—can be recognized as fabrications and so abandoned for the sake of an unfabricated calm. Otherwise, the mind will mistake these refined levels of fabrication for unfabricated phenomena, a mistake that can stand in the way of genuine release.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Burden of Bare Attention

One of the most striking features of mindfulness as taught in the modern world is how far it differs from the Canon's teachings on right mindfulness. Instead of being a function of memory, it's depicted primarily—in some cases, purely—as a function of attention to the present moment. Instead of being purposeful, it is without agenda. Instead of making choices, it is choiceless and without preferences.

In the words of two modern writers:

"Mindfulness is the quality of mind that notices what is present, without judgment, without interference."

"Mindfulness is mirror-thought. It reflects only what is presently happening and in exactly the way it is happening. There are no biases.… Mindfulness is non-judgmental observation. It is that ability of the mind to observe without criticism. With this ability, one sees things without condemnation or judgment.… One does not decide and does not judge. One just observes… [W]hat we mean is that the meditator observes experiences very much like a scientist observing an object under a microscope without any preconceived notions, only to see the object exactly as it is.… Mindfulness is non-conceptual awareness. Another English term for *Sati* is 'bare attention.'… Mindfulness is present-time awareness.… It stays forever in the present, perpetually on the crest of the ongoing wave of passing time. … Mindfulness is non-egotistic alertness. It takes place without reference to self."

From the discussion in the preceding three chapters, it would appear that these writers are not describing mindfulness as described in the discourses. Other modern writers have noted the discrepancy here and yet have maintained that it's only apparent, that in actuality there's no real discrepancy at all. To support their case, they explain the canonical definition in terms that bring it in line with the modern assertion that mindfulness is bare attention. Their explanations fall into two major camps.

One is that the Buddha, in defining the faculty of mindfulness in SN 48:10, didn't actually define it as memory; he defined it as the mental state that allows memory to happen. In other words, attention lies in the background

of the definition without actually being mentioned in it.

However, there are at least two problems with this explanation. One is that attention, in the Buddha's account, plays a role in engendering *all* phenomena (AN 10:58); even the modern interpretation of mindfulness-as-bare-attention identifies attention as the factor providing the basis that allows all other mental factors to happen. So there would be no reason, in defining mindfulness as attention, to single out remembrance as something that mindfulness-as-bare-attention allows to happen. Attention allows *all* mental states to happen.

Second, it's hard to understand how a purely passive state of mind would foster memory. Even a small amount of introspection shows that memory requires the active application of perception to the item to be remembered. If the Buddha's definition of the faculty of mindfulness were meant to point to the faculty of receptive attention, it does a remarkably poor job of doing so.

The second explanation is that the Buddha, in trying to indicate a process new to his system of meditation—that of watchful attention or observation—couldn't find an adequate word in the existing vocabulary of his day. So instead of inventing a new word, as he did in some other cases, he for some reason took the old word for "memory" and gave it a new meaning in practice, even though his formal definition didn't adequately express the new meaning he was, in effect, giving to the term. Although in some cases he continued to use mindfulness to mean memory, it obviously has a different meaning in the case of the establishing of mindfulness. In the words of one writer, "To establish mindfulness isn't setting out to remember something, but adopting a particular stance towards one's own experience… a stance of observation or *watchfulness* towards one's own experience" [emphasis in the original].

However, there are two problems with this explanation. The first is that Pāli had a perfectly adequate word for attention—*manasikāra*—and the Buddha continued to use it with this meaning. Pāli also had a good word for observation and watchfulness: *sampajañña,* which we have translated as alertness. So there was no need for the Buddha to create confusion by indicating attention or watchfulness with a word that normally meant memory.

The second problem with this explanation is that it's by no means obvious that the establishing of mindfulness is divorced from the act of remembering something. As we have noted in the preceding chapters, you have to keep in mind the task of remaining focused on any of the four frames of reference in and of themselves. You have to remember to be alert—this is where the

watchfulness comes in—and to subdue greed and distress with reference to the world. In other words, the establishing of mindfulness is clearly a process of bringing memory to bear on the present moment.

So there's nothing in either the Buddha's definition of mindfulness or his actual use of the term to indicate that he intended it to mean attention or watchfulness. As we will see in our discussion of DN 22 in Part Three, there is every reason to believe that he saw mindfulness as a function of memory and used the term consistently in that sense, whether talking about the establishing of mindfulness or discussing it in other contexts.

The question arises, though, as to whether the modern approach to mindfulness is actually an improvement on what the Buddha taught. If it gives a clearer or more cogent picture of the practice, if it expands the range of tools available to the meditator, leading more effectively to unbinding, then the discrepancies from the Canon don't really matter. This is why it's important to look at the modern interpretation in a little more detail.

One of the cardinal features of the modern theory of mindfulness is that it starts with a purely receptive, unbiased moment of awareness that naturally occurs in all cognition. This is what gives mindfulness its objectivity and authority as a guide to truth: its ability to see things as they really are. The practice of mindfulness then extends that moment of receptivity so that it can provide a more solid foundation for objective knowledge of events in the present.

In the words of one writer, "Right Mindfulness starts at the beginning. In employing the method of Bare Attention, it goes back to the seed state of things. Applied to the activity of mind this means: observation reverts to the very first phase of the process of perception when mind is in a purely receptive state, and when attention is restricted to a bare noticing of the object. That phase is of a very short and hardly perceptible duration, and, as we have said, it furnishes a superficial, incomplete and often faulty picture of the object.… It is the task of the next perceptual phase to correct and to supplement that first impression, but this is not always done. Often the first impression is taken for granted, and even new distortions, characteristic of the more complex mental functions of the second stage, are added.

"Here starts the work of Bare Attention, being a deliberate cultivation and strengthening of that first receptive state of mind, giving it a longer chance to fulfil its important task in the process of cognition. Bare Attention proves the thoroughness of its procedure by cleansing and preparing the ground carefully for all subsequent mental processes."

According to another writer, "When you first become aware of something,

there is a fleeting instant of pure awareness just before you conceptualize the thing, before you identify it. That is a state of awareness. Ordinarily, this state is short-lived.… That flowing, soft-focused moment of pure awareness is mindfulness.… You experience a softly flowing moment of pure experience that is interlocked with the rest of reality, not separate from it.… It is the purpose of Vipassanā meditation to train us to prolong that moment of awareness."

The picture of cognition offered in both of these statements is primarily passive: The mind's first encounter with sense data is passive and receptive. In most cases, this state of pure receptivity is momentary and fleeting. The mind's emotional reactions may then interfere, denying it the time needed to form a clear or accurate impression of the data presented to the senses. However, any inaccurate impression picked up in that moment is not due to any distortion in its receptivity. It's simply not allowed enough time to form a complete picture of the data it receives. If that receptive moment is allowed enough time, it will pick up an accurate image of whatever is present. The deliberate practice of mindfulness simply lengthens the receptivity of that initial moment.

There are two main problems with this theory. To begin with, even if we were to accept the idea that such a pure, unadulterated moment of sensory receptivity actually exists, how can it be deliberately extended without turning it into something else? In other words, how can the motivation behind that act of extending that moment not color it and distort its pure objectivity? Won't the addition of motivation or intention immediately change the mind from its purely receptive state? For instance, if the motivation is to be non-reactive, that immediately turns the ensuing mental state into one of equanimity. This is no longer attention pure and simple, but attention with an agenda. If, on the other hand the motivation is to appreciate sensory contact more fully—to savor the taste of a raisin or the act of drinking tea—that creates a different mental state entirely: either contentment with what little you have, or the bittersweet attachment of tasting the fullness of life's small pleasures before having to let them go.

Now, both equanimity and contentment have their place in training the mind, but neither of them is mindfulness. And they have their limitations. As we have already noted, MN 101 states that equanimity may be enough to induce dispassion for some causes of stress, but not for all. And although an equanimous state of mind is more likely to see things clearly than an impassioned state (see Chapter Six), MN 106 points out that it's possible to feel passion for the peace of equanimity, and so be blinded by it.

Similarly, although the Buddha in many of his discourses (e.g., AN 4:28) praised contentment with your physical surroundings, he also noted in AN 2:5 that lack of contentment with the skillful qualities in his mind was a crucial factor leading to his awakening. He had to be discontent with lower attainments to push his practice all the way to the higher attainment of total release. This means that, in the case both of equanimity and of contentment, there needs to be a separate mental function to remember to observe when these mental states are skillful and when they are not. Especially with contentment, the type of appreciation aimed at deriving as much intensity from sensory impressions as possible before they pass away can easily veer off the path into the extreme of sensual indulgence.

So there are practical drawbacks with the idea of trying to extend a moment of pure receptivity into equanimity or appreciation as an on-going state of mind. In either event, the simple fact of wanting to extend a moment of pure receptivity immediately distorts any objectivity that such a moment might entail.

The same problem applies even if the motivation for wanting to extend the initial moment of pure receptivity inherent in all sensory contact is to see things as they are, for that simply begs the question: for what purpose? Is the knowledge a goal in and of itself, or should something be done with it? In either case, there is a view behind the motivation, and a desire behind the view, both of which would color any awareness that would result from the effort to extend that initial moment.

But even if we were to grant the possibility that the motivation for wanting to extend the moment of pure receptivity inherent in all sensory contact could be relatively pure, we run into the second problem with any theory of this sort: the simple question of whether such a moment of pure receptivity as a common stage of sensation actually exists. As we noted in the preceding chapter, dependent co-arising gives a long list of factors that color awareness prior to sensory contact—both in the process of causing suffering and stress, and in the process of following the path. Many modern psychological studies give their own account of how the mind is primarily an active agent, driven by its own agendas in seeking out and creating the impression of sensory contacts that are not there, while being totally oblivious to those that are. A meditation method that assumes a moment of pure receptivity and focuses attention primarily on distortions that the mind creates *after* that moment, pushes into the dark all the most important factors prior to contact that lead to stress.

In addition to the problems presented by the modern theory of what

mindfulness *is,* there are also the problems surrounding the modern theory of what it can *do.* Just as the Buddha cites a large number of functions that the practice of right mindfulness can accomplish, modern theorists give a similarly long list of functions that mindfulness, as a purely receptive state of mind, can perform. Among the items in the modern list: Mindfulness frees the mind from its preconceptions; it distinguishes the good from the bad; it keeps different wholesome states of mind in balance, working together in harmony; it reminds us of what we are supposed to be doing; it sees things as they really are, prior to concepts, as not separate from the mind; and it penetrates to the true nature of all phenomena as inconstant, stressful, and not-self.

Given the complex, active nature of right mindfulness as depicted by the Buddha, there is little difficulty in understanding how it could perform the list of functions he assigns to it. But in the case of the more passive nature of mindfulness as depicted in its modern definition, the question arises: How can a non-interfering, non-judgmental state of mind do all the functions assigned it by modern theorists, particularly when some of these functions seem to involve passing judgment? Modern theories offer two explanations.

The first is that the mere presence of non-judgmental receptivity creates a space that allows skillful qualities to develop and unskillful ones to fall away of their own accord. One writer adopts the Canon's analogy of the gatekeeper to illustrate this principle, saying that "[J]ust as the presence of the gatekeeper prevents those not entitled from entering the town so too the presence of well-established sati prevents the arising of unwholesome associations and reactions at the sense doors." In other words, the gatekeeper doesn't have to be wise or experienced. He just has to sit there. The enemy, on seeing him, will know enough to stay away.

This explanation implies that the path factors of right effort and right concentration are unnecessary, and in some cases detrimental to the path, for their purposeful activity would interfere with the skillful effects of pure receptivity. This is one of the reasons why so much of the modern literature on mindfulness is devoted to making a clear distinction between mindfulness and concentration, and arguing that the four jhānas—the standard definition of right concentration—are not a necessary part of the path. Other modern accounts depict right effort and right mindfulness as two distinct paths.

However, the notion that the qualities of the mind, when simply observed, will naturally tend toward the skillful ignores the Buddha's observation that the mind will feel dispassion for some causes of stress simply by observing

them, but not for all. Many of the most tenacious causes require serious exertion and conscious fabrication.

Some theorists argue that the power of pure receptivity is in line with the Buddha's understanding of mindfulness by citing this passage from DN 22:

> "Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, not clinging to anything in the world." *— DN 22*

This, the argument goes, is a synopsis of how mindfulness is to be practiced—just to the extent of knowledge and remembrance, allowing skillful and unskillful qualities to sort themselves out as they arise. However, as the "or" at the beginning of the passage suggests, this is simply one alternative way in which mindfulness can be practiced. As we will see in Chapter Eight, this passage follows on standard descriptions of two other, more basic alternatives: the establishings of mindfulness and the development of the establishings of mindfulness. As we have already noted in Chapter Two, those two stages involve conscious effort in developing and abandoning. Only when they have been completed is the mind ready for the equipoise described in this passage. So the argument based on interpreting this passage as a synopsis encompassing the entirety of mindfulness practice cannot stand.

At the same time, some theorists explain the power of pure receptivity by maintaining that as long as the mind doesn't react to sensory data, no fabrications are created. In other words, non-reactivity is an unfabricated state—or, in the words of a popular modern teaching, "A moment of mindfulness is a moment of nibbāna." This, however, misses the fact that non-reactivity—whether termed "mindfulness" or "equanimity"—is something willed through intention. To assume that either mindfulness or equanimity is unfabricated prevents the mind from seeing how it's actually fabricating these qualities in the present moment. This would simply continue the sort of ignorance that lies at the root of suffering and stress. At the same time, this assumption erases any distinction between the path and the goal—a confusion that would effectively prevent any level of awakening from happening.

Other theorists, rather than trying to explain the multiple effects of bare attention, simply state that mindfulness is mysterious. Given that the purpose of insight is to penetrate the functioning of fabrication, this explanation offers no insight at all.

So none of the theories offered for the idea that pure receptivity, on its

own, can perform the functions of the path provide a satisfactory explanation for why they should be adopted. Because their approach places severe limitations on the range of strategies that can be used to induce dispassion, there is no practical reason for adopting them, either.

The second explanation for how mindfulness—as a non-interfering, non-judgmental state of mind—can perform multiple functions on the path is that mindfulness itself does not perform these functions. Instead, it provides an objective basis of clear knowing on which the other factors of the path can perform their separate functions.

This explanation bears some resemblance to the canonical explanation of mindfulness, the difference being that it attributes to mindfulness a role similar to that allotted by the canonical explanation to alertness: knowing what's going on in the mind, knowing what you're doing, and allowing for other factors of the path to function effectively. However, this theory is still burdened with the two main difficulties we noted above concerning the idea of bare attention: first, the question of whether a non-interfering, non-judgmental mind state can still be regarded as non-interfering and non-judgmental in the presence of the interference and judgments needed for such path factors as right view, right effort, or right concentration; second, the question of whether such a purely receptive mind state actually exists.

Some theorists combine both these modern explanations, arriving at a strategy similar to the one described in MN 101: using non-reactive awareness to deal with some causes of stress, and more active factors to deal with others. For this reason, there would seem to be little practical difference between this combined theory and the canonical explanation. The only difference would appear to be semantic, simply a matter of moving the terms around.

But semantic issues can have practical consequences. If mindfulness is defined as alertness, there is no term in the satipaṭṭhāna formula to account for the role of memory in the practice. Even if we were to accept the modern contention that mindfulness training is aimed only at one dimension of time —the present—it's hard to see how training in mindfulness would not need to encompass the other two dimensions of time as well: the future for motivation, and the past for guidance. Remembering what to do and why you're doing it is an important part of sticking with any practice.

This point is illustrated, ironically, by a comment made by a teacher who holds to the definition of mindfulness as awareness of the present: that mindfulness is easy; it's remembering to be mindful that's hard. It would be strange if the Buddha did not account for one of the hardest parts of

mindfulness practice in his instructions. To leave the role of memory unstated is to leave it unclear in the mind of the practitioner, driven underground where it becomes hidden from honest inquiry.

Perhaps it's to compensate for this deficiency that some modern theorists go one step further to combine the modern explanations with the canonical explanation into a single theory. In one version of this combined theory, mindfulness functions both as memory and as bare awareness, although bare awareness as a broad, open state of mind is its overarching function: "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 equanimous receptivity, combined with an alert, broad, and open state of mind.… Sati is not really defined as memory, but as that which facilitates and enables memory.… Based on the nuance of 'breadth of mind', *sati* can be understood to represent the ability to simultaneously maintain in one's mind the various elements and facets of a particular situation. This can be applied to both the faculty of memory and to awareness of the present moment."

This explanation, however, rather than clarifying the processes at work on the path, actually creates more confusion. It conflates within one word a set of functions that the Buddha allots to three: mindfulness, attention, and alertness. And it's still burdened with the two main difficulties shared by all theories based on the idea of bare attention: first, the question of whether a purely receptive, non-interfering mind state can still be regarded as receptive and non-interfering if it's functioning together with a more purposeful activity; second, the question of whether such a mind state actually exists.

In contrast, the canonical description, taken on its own terms, has the advantage of not being burdened by the conceptual difficulties of the modern definition of mindfulness. It doesn't have to explain the possibility of purely receptive awareness. Instead of pointing attention away from the role of memory, desire, and fabrication in preconditioning sensory contact, it points straight at that role, allowing for greater insight. At the same time, it uses that role to a skillful end: employing memory, desire, and fabrication to put a genuine end to suffering and stress. Instead of encompassing many different functions under one word, it employs a precise, detailed vocabulary that aids in a precise command of the various factors that need to be combined and harmonized along the path.

More importantly, because it explains meditation in the same terms that the Canon uses to explain the process of dependent co-arising, and because this process is supposed to be discovered in the course of meditation, the

canonical description is an aid to liberating insight. It shows how the activity of meditation itself provides examples of the mental activities that need to be understood to put an end to suffering and stress. This is surely one of the most basic requirements for any theory that sets out to clarify how meditation works.

But above all, the canonical description is fully in keeping with the Buddha's stated focus for his teaching. Instead of trying to provide an objective description of all reality, he focused on only two things: stress and the ending of stress (SN 22:86). Instead of denying the purposeful nature of all experience—or searching for a purely passive awareness, receptive to scientific or objective Truth—he took up the purposeful nature of experience, already aimed at happiness, and harnessed it to the purpose of finding a true happiness, a true end to stress. The difference in these two approaches may be subtle, but it's important. Mindfulness, as defined in the Canon, helps to accomplish the Buddha's purpose not only by keeping it in mind, but also by remembering what to do and what not to do, and how to see things in order to actually bring that purpose about. At the same time, mindfulness as memory helps to keep in mind the standards by which the results of the practice are to be assessed in a truly reliable way.

These are some of the reasons—both conceptual and practical—why the modern explanations of mindfulness are actually inferior to the explanation given in the Canon, and why they should be put aside when looking at what the Canon has to say.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

Mindfulness of Reading

The two discourses in the Pāli Canon that provide the most extended treatment of the practice of satipaṭṭhāna are DN 22, the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Great Establishings of Mindfulness Discourse), and MN 118, the Ānāpānasati Sutta (The Mindfulness of In-&-Out Breathing Discourse). Because these two discourses offer so much information, they are worth reading and analyzing in detail.

Of the two, DN 22 provides the longer discussion of the establishings of mindfulness in and of themselves. However, it gives only a sketchy treatment of how the establishings of mindfulness fit into the rest of the path. MN 118 provides a more complete picture of the larger context: giving the Canon's most precise explanation of a meditation practice covering all four establishings, and showing how the four establishings fit into the larger frame of the practice, leading first to the seven factors for awakening and, through them, to the goal of clear knowing and release. Because this larger context provides a better sense of the role and purpose of satipaṭṭhāna, we will discuss MN 118 first, here in Part Two, and DN 22 in Part Three.

There's an irony here, though, in that even though these two discourses provide more detail and a larger context than any other canonical discourses dealing with mindfulness, they still leave out a lot, both in terms of larger context and in terms of finer details. For instance, in terms of context, neither provides a definition of mindfulness; neither gives a full picture of how the practice of satipaṭṭhāna works together with the other seven factors of the noble eightfold path. In terms of detail, MN 118 lists sixteen steps in mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, but many of those steps require extra explanation as to what, in practice, they entail. At the same time, it gives no explicit indication of whether the sixteen steps have to be practiced in the order in which they are listed. DN 22 names various types of feelings and mind states that can be noticed in the course of developing feelings and mind as frames of reference, but it doesn't describe what to do with them. In fact, it

gives almost no explicit attention to the role of ardency in the establishing of mindfulness at all. In other words, it leaves unexplained an important part of the satipaṭṭhāna formula. For this extra information, we need to look elsewhere.

One of the most fruitful places to look for that missing context and guidance is in the other canonical discourses. Some of the information to be found in those discourses we have already covered in Chapters One and Two. Here is a good place to review a few of the most salient points, as they will determine how we approach the act of reading and interpreting both MN 118 and DN 22. The major points are these:

1) Mindfulness is primarily the ability to remember, to hold something in mind.

2) Right mindfulness is a complex process called the establishing of mindfulness, in which you undertake the practice of remaining focused on a particular frame of reference in and of itself—body in and of itself, feelings in and of themselves, mind in and of itself, or mental qualities in and of themselves—ardent, alert, and mindful, subduing greed and distress with reference to the world. Of the three qualities applied to this process, mindfulness remembers from the past what should be done; alertness notices what is happening—and what you are doing—in the present; ardency generates the desire to deal skillfully with the raw material from which present experience can be formed, so as to lead to wellbeing both in the present and on into the future. Without this desire, right mindfulness would not be established.

3) There are two primary descriptions of how right mindfulness relates to the other factors of the noble eightfold path:

(a) In one, right mindfulness follows on right effort and leads to right concentration. There is actually some overlap between right mindfulness and these other two factors. Ardency in right mindfulness is equivalent to the desire motivating right effort, and the act of subduing greed and distress with reference to the world falls under two of the duties of right effort: preventing unskillful mental qualities from arising, and abandoning any unskillful qualities that have already arisen. As for right concentration, the four establishings of mindfulness are the themes of right concentration; the successful practice of the establishing of mindfulness in line with the satipaṭṭhāna formula is identical to the first jhāna; when further refined, the development of the establishing of mindfulness is a concentration practice that can lead through all the jhānas.

(b) In the second description of how right mindfulness relates to the other factors of the noble eightfold path, right mindfulness is one of a set of three factors that circles around the abandoning of wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood, and the development of the five right versions of these factors in their place. The set of three circling factors are: right view, right mindfulness, and right effort. The duty of right view in this set is to recognize the right from the wrong factor; the duty of right mindfulness is to keep in mind the need to abandon the wrong factor and develop the right, along with any knowledge gained from listening or from experience as to how this is to be done; and the duty of right effort is to generate desire and uphold your intent to follow the dictates of right view and right mindfulness.

This description covers the first seven factors of the path; MN 117 states that these seven factors then act as supports for right concentration.

It's important to note that these two descriptions are not mutually exclusive. In other words, they are not based on two separate, alternate definitions of right mindfulness. This is because right mindfulness as described in MN 117 comes under the fourth frame of reference described in the standard formula for the establishing of mindfulness: mental qualities (of the right and wrong path factors) in and of themselves. This means that the two descriptions can be combined to expand on each other.

When we do that, we see that the relationship between right mindfulness and right effort is reciprocal: Just as right effort tries to engender and maintain right mindfulness in the first description of the path, right mindfulness informs right effort in the second one. In this way they work together to lead seamlessly to right concentration.

4) The establishing of mindfulness has a second stage, called the development of the establishing of mindfulness. In this stage, you remain focused on the phenomenon of origination, passing away, or origination-and-passing-away with regard to any of the four frames of reference. Because the term "origination" here means causation, this requires your active, ardent participation in developing skillful states of mind and abandoning unskillful ones so that you can see precisely which factors are causally interrelated and which ones are not. The proactive nature of this exercise is confirmed by the fact that the development of the establishings of mindfulness is accomplished by

actively developing all eight factors of the noble path, including right concentration.

This means that there is a reciprocal relationship between right mindfulness and right concentration, just as there is between right mindfulness and right effort. Confirmation of this fact is contained in the standard description of the four jhānas, in which mindfulness becomes pure only in the fourth jhāna.

5) The practice of right mindfulness doesn't end with the attainment of jhāna. Through its connection with right view, it builds on jhāna in a way that leads to dispassion for all fabricated phenomena, opening to an experience of the deathless, free from fabrication of every sort.

These five points have a strong bearing on how MN 118 and DN 22 should be read, showing what information to look for in them and how that information is best understood and put into use:

1) Because mindfulness is an activity of memory, MN 118 and DN 22 are concerned with things a meditator should hold in mind when engaging in the practice. On one level, there is nothing strange here: All the discourses in the Pāli Canon are meant to be read in this way. In a standard description of how the act of listening to the Dhamma—which, at present, would include reading the Dhamma—fits into the practice, the first step after hearing the Dhamma is to remember it. The other steps listed in the description give helpful insights into how this memory is best used.

> "When, on observing that the monk is purified with regard to qualities based on greed… aversion… delusion, one places conviction in him. With the arising of conviction, one visits him & grows close to him. Growing close to him, one lends ear. Lending ear, one hears the Dhamma. Hearing the Dhamma, one remembers it. Remembering it, one penetrates the meaning of those dhammas. Penetrating the meaning, he comes to an agreement through pondering those dhammas. There being an agreement through pondering those dhammas, desire arises. With the arising of desire, one becomes willing. Willing, one compares. Comparing, one makes an exertion. Exerting oneself, one both realizes the ultimate meaning of the truth with one's body and sees by penetrating it with discernment." *— MN 95*

This description shows that the first steps in approaching the Dhamma are to find someone of trustworthy character and to spend time with that person. These steps serve as a reminder that the modern act of reading a text gives

only a shallow impression of what can be learned from personal contact with an experienced meditator. In the initial pattern, you would spend time with the teacher, first to gauge his reliability, then to pick up his habits. Only in the context of a relationship of trust does the act of listening to the Dhamma yield its full benefits.

Once you have listened to the Dhamma and remembered it, you think it over and come to an understanding that encourages you to practice: First you analyze the teaching on its own to penetrate its meaning, then you ponder and compare it with other Dhamma teachings to see that it agrees with what you already know. According to DN 16 and DN 29, this is the stage at which you learn to identify what counts as genuine Dhamma and what doesn't. Only if the teachings new to you agree with what you already know with certainty should you accept them as genuine.

This agreement is what gives rise to a desire and willingness to practice, for you can see that the Dhamma makes sense. The desire here, as we have already noted, is what allows the path to happen. Based on this desire and willingness, you "compare," which apparently means (a) that you compare your own behavior in body, speech, and mind to the standards set forth in the teaching; and (b) that you compare the differences in the various aspects of your behavior to see which sort of behavior is skillful and which sort is not. (On this point, see Chapter Six in *Skill in Questions,* and the passage on analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening in SN 46:51, below.) Then you exert yourself to abandon unskillful behavior and develop skillful behavior to the point where you have a direct experience of the truth toward which the teaching is aimed.

The role of listening to and thinking about the Dhamma portrayed in this description covers the first three factors for awakening: mindfulness (remembering), analysis of qualities (penetrating, pondering, and comparing), and persistence (desire, willingness, and exertion). In this way, even the act of remembering a discourse and trying to put its teachings into practice gives a rudimentary first-hand experience of the connection between mindfulness and the factors for awakening—a fact noted in SN 46:3. As MN 118 states, this connection is then brought to culmination in the actual practice of mindfulness of breathing.

The implications of these points for the act of reading MN 118 and DN 22 are clear. You should try to understand both what each text means on its own and how it fits into the rest of the Dhamma. This should then give rise to a desire and willingness to compare your own practice with what the text says, to see how its instructions can give you guidance in becoming more

skillful in your own practice. For this reason, as we look at these two discourses in the following chapters, we will pay attention not only to what they say, but also to how they fit in with—and are amplified by—other relevant passages from the Canon.

2) Although all the discourses are meant to be remembered and applied in practice, the particular nature of the establishing of mindfulness shows what sort of practical guidance we should look for in MN 118 and DN 22. Especially relevant here are the two qualities that accompany mindfulness in the act of keeping a particular frame of reference in mind: alertness and ardency. We will expect these discourses to give advice on (a) what to be alert for in the present, and (b) what efforts to make in light of the ardent desire to shape the present and future in a skillful direction. We'll find that these discourses provide frames of reference for distinguishing which phenomena and distinctions among phenomena are skillful to pay attention to. This, in fact, is where they provide their most detailed information. We'll also find, though, that they are less than consistent in providing detailed instructions as to the duties of ardency in light of these frames of reference, and to the task of subduing greed and distress with reference to the world. These are areas where we will have to look to other discourses to fill in the missing instructions.

3) The fact that right mindfulness plays the role of remembering to abandon the wrong version and to develop the right version of every path-factor confirms that we should look to these discourses for guidance in how to use mindfulness in proactively shaping experience into a path, rather than simply passively taking note of things arising and passing away. Because right mindfulness is so intimately connected with right view, we can use the duties that right view assigns to each of the noble truths as guides for how to understand this proactive role when looking for information from other discourses in cases where MN 118 and DN 22 provide little or no explicit guidance.

4) Because right mindfulness and right concentration are so intimately related, we'll pay special attention to the ways in which the establishing of mindfulness is illuminated by the Buddha's instructions elsewhere in the Canon on the practice of jhāna.

5) We will also look at the role played by right mindfulness in building on the practice of jhāna to develop the dispassion leading to a direct experience of total release. MN 95 describes this aspect of the practice as "realizing the truth with one's body and penetrating it with discernment." These two ways of describing the experience of total release parallel a distinction made in

AN 9:43–45: To touch the truth with one's body is to master any of the levels of jhāna in such a way as to experience any of the psychic abilities to which they open (see AN 5:28). (Apparently this description relates to the way in which the increased sensitivity to the body obtained in jhāna allows some people to use the body as a means to access information on the psychic level.) To penetrate with discernment is to master any of the jhānas without that added experience, but to understand the fabrication of that jhāna thoroughly in a way that leads to dispassion. In either case, full release requires the act of penetrating with discernment; and as AN 9:44 shows, penetrating with discernment, even without "touching with the body," is sufficient for release. Because this discernment is the crucial factor in gaining release, we will focus primary attention on the way mindfulness plays a role in giving rise to it.

Looking at all five of these points in light of dependent co-arising, we can see that the ideal reading of MN 118 and DN 22 is one that takes the ignorance that causes fabrication to lead to suffering and replaces it with knowledge in terms of the four noble truths. This knowledge in turn motivates the reader to master the skills dictated by the duties appropriate to each of the four noble truths, which take bodily, verbal, and mental fabrication—the breath; directed thought and evaluation; feeling and perception—and turn them into the path to total release. These points relate to the three aspects of right view that right mindfulness must keep in mind: the right framework for viewing experience, the motivation for adopting that framework, and knowledge of the duties and skills prescribed by that framework. A mindful reading of these discourses is one that keeps these points in mind while reading. It also takes any lessons learned from the act of reading in this way and keeps them in mind while training the mind to master those skills. That is the approach to reading MN 118 and DN 22 that will be encouraged in the following chapters.

CHAPTER SIX

The Structure of Breath Meditation

The central focus of MN 118 is the description of the sixteen steps in mindfulness of breathing. These steps are the most precise meditation instructions in the discourses, and they appear at many spots throughout the Canon.

Listed in the origin story to the third rule in the monastic code (Pārājika 3), they are the only meditation instructions given in the Vinaya, the section of the Canon devoted to monastic discipline. This shows that they were considered indispensible guidance for those monks who might memorize only the Vinaya in the course of their monastic career.

In the discourses, the sixteen steps appear in many contexts. MN 62, for instance, lists them after a long set of other, preparatory, meditation exercises: contemplating the properties of earth, water, fire, wind, and space as not-self so as to develop dispassion for them; developing an attitude of imperturbability modeled on the imperturbability of earth, water, fire, and wind, so as not to be disturbed by pleasant or unpleasant sensations; developing the sublime attitudes of good will, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity to abandon ill will, harmfulness, resentment, and aversion; contemplating the unattractiveness of the body to overcome lust; and developing the perception of inconstancy to overcome the conceit, "I am." These preparatory exercises equip the mind with tools for dealing with any unskillful thoughts that might come up in the course of breath meditation. In particular, they're useful skills for gladdening, steadying, and releasing the mind—trainings described in steps 10, 11, and 12 of the sixteen, a point to which we will return in the next chapter.

AN 10:60 lists the sixteen steps as the last of ten perceptions, preceded by: the perception of inconstancy, the perception of not-self, the perception of unattractiveness, the perception of drawbacks, the perception of abandoning, the perception of dispassion, the perception of cessation, the perception of distaste for every world, and the perception of the undesirability of all fabrications. Again, these nine perceptions are useful tools in steps 10, 11, and 12 of breath meditation, and we will consider them further in the next chapter as well. The fact that the sixteen steps are classed as a "perception"

(saññā) here shows that the term "perception" is not limited to memory of the past, and reflects the fact that the sixteen steps are related to the practice of concentration, inasmuch as the levels of jhāna up through the dimension of nothingness are termed "perception attainments" (AN 9:36).

The Saṁyutta Nikāya devotes an entire saṁyutta, or chapter, to breath meditation. In eight of its discourses, the sixteen steps are simply listed—sometimes with the rewards that come from practicing them, all the way to total release—but without relating them to other meditative practices. Other discourses in this saṁyutta, however, do mention some of the meditative practices that can accompany the sixteen steps. SN 54:2 lists the sixteen steps in conjunction with the seven factors for awakening; SN 54:8 states that they lead to all nine of the concentration attainments. SN 54:10 begins with the sixteen steps and relates them to the four establishings of mindfulness; four discourses—SN 54:13–16—relate the sixteen steps, through the four establishings, to the seven factors for awakening, and through them to clear knowing and release. This last depiction shows that breath meditation is not just a preliminary practice. It can lead all the way to the goal of the path.

As we have already noted, this is the structure of the way breath meditation is depicted in MN 118. And it's important to note at the outset that this structure covers all three aspects of right view that right mindfulness must keep in mind: It provides a framework for understanding the practice of breath meditation. It provides, in the sixteen steps, instructions in the duties that follow from that framework. And it provides motivation for following the framework. In fact, the discussion of how the sixteen steps completes the practice of the establishings of mindfulness and the seven factors for awakening, culminating in clear knowing and release, is—in and of itself—an explanation of the motivation for practicing those steps. This fact is indicated by the statement introducing the structure of the discourse: "Mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, of great benefit." The remainder of the discourse can be read as an explanation of what those fruits and benefits are, and why they are enough to make you want to master the sixteen steps as skills.

The structure of MN 118 also provides an implicit answer to one of the primary questions concerning the practical application of the sixteen steps: the question of the order in which they should be practiced. The discourses that give the steps simply as a list, without relating them to the four establishings of mindfulness, seem to suggest that they should be practiced consecutively from one to sixteen. However, if you refer back to the section of Chapter Two where the steps are set out in bold type and read them

carefully, you will notice that they don't follow a clear linear sequence. The steps in the third tetrad appear especially out of sequence. Step 10, for instance—gladdening the mind—would appear to cover the same ground as steps 5 and 6, breathing in and out sensitive to rapture and pleasure. Step 11—steadying the mind—would appear to be presupposed at the very least by steps 4 through 8, which deal with calming bodily and mental fabrication. Step 12—releasing the mind—would appear on the surface to be the goal of all the steps that follow it in the last tetrad.

The best way to resolve this question is to look at the sixteen steps in the context provided by MN 118, for even though the discourse does not give an explicit answer to the question, its structure does provide an implicit one.

As we noted in Chapter Two, MN 118 states that each of the tetrads corresponds to one of the establishings of mindfulness. It explains the correspondence between the tetrads and the establishings with these statements:

> *The first tetrad:* **"I tell you, monks, that this—the in-&-out breath—is classed as a body among bodies…"**
>
> *The second tetrad:* **"I tell you, monks, that this—careful attention to in-&-out breaths—is classed as a feeling among feelings…"**
>
> *The third tetrad:* **"I don't say that there is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing in one of lapsed mindfulness and no alertness…"**
>
> *The fourth tetrad:* **"He who sees with discernment the abandoning of greed & distress is one who watches carefully with equanimity…"**

At first glance, these explanations seem to raise more questions than they answer. To begin with, none of them makes specific reference to any of the steps in the four tetrads. Instead of citing the obvious references to body, feeling, and mind in the first three tetrads, the first three explanations give reasons that could apply to any stage in any form of breath-mindfulness. The fourth explanation is even more generic, and could apply to any form of meditation in which greed and distress are abandoned. In addition, the second explanation is especially counter-intuitive, in that it cites attention—which is normally classed under the aggregate of fabrication—as a feeling.

However, instead of seeing the generic quality of these explanations as a problem, we can understand it as providing an important insight. In the first three explanations, the object of meditation—the breath—is the same. This means in practice that keeping track of feelings and mind states in and of themselves does not mean abandoning the breath for another meditation object. After all, feelings and mind states are present in the sheer act of

remaining focused on the breath. When you shift your frame of reference from body to feelings or to mind, you simply become more alert to a different aspect or dimension of what you're already doing. In fact, it's hard to imagine that any ability to stick successfully with the breath would *not* require developing sensitivity to the feelings and mind states involved in maintaining sustained attention. MN 118 simply offers you the choice of focusing your interest on whichever aspect seems most fruitful at any particular time.

Similarly with the fourth explanation: The abandoning of greed and distress indicates the successful performance of an aspect of the standard description of the establishing of mindfulness: subduing greed and distress with reference to the world. This, too, is a necessary part of breath meditation. Only when you can successfully abandon this sort of greed and distress—even if only temporarily—can you stay focused on the breath for any length of time. The act of subduing this greed and distress may require either equanimity or the exertion of fabrication, as we noted in Chapter Two, but when the greed and distress are successfully abandoned, you can simply look on them with equanimity.

So here, too, the discourse is offering you a choice as to where to focus your attention while you stay with the breath. If you want, even at the most basic stage of actually staying focused on the breath, you can note the presence of equanimity—which is one of the seven factors for awakening, which in turn is one of the themes of remaining focused on mental qualities in and of themselves—as the aspect of the process you want to observe. You see that skillful qualities such as equanimity can be made to arise in areas where they may not have functioned before. This provides both encouragement on the path and practical insight into the processes of cause and effect within the mind.

As for the question of why careful attention to in-and-out breaths would be classed as a type of feeling in the second explanation, remember that SN 22:79 describes the role of fabrication as an element in the actual experience of every aggregate, including feeling. The second explanation here implicitly focuses on this fact, noting that by paying attention to the breath, you actualize the experience of feelings connected to the breath that would otherwise remain only potential. In other words, the act of attention is part and parcel of the feeling it fabricates. This explanation also offers an important practical insight: The best way to maintain the sense of pleasure coming from careful attention to the breath is to keep attending to the breath. If you switch your focus totally to the pleasure, the pleasure will lose its

foundation and soon dissolve away.

In these ways, the four explanations offer some important insights into understanding the sixteen steps. In particular, they show that the sixteen steps don't necessarily follow a straight linear sequence. Instead, each tetrad can serve as an object of focus simultaneously with any of the other tetrads. As you practice breath meditation, you can remain focused on the second, third, or fourth tetrad while continuing to remain focused on the breath.

For example, there are times when you find it most helpful to focus on how the breath is giving rise to feelings of rapture and pleasure; to the way these feelings (as mental fabrications, along with the perceptions you're employing around the breath) are influencing the mind; and to how you can calm that influence. This would be an example of focusing on the second tetrad while simultaneously remaining focused on the first. At other times, you'll find it more useful to see which ways the mind is in or out of balance —too sluggish, for instance, or too scattered—and then use the breath to bring it more into balance. This would be an example of focusing on the third tetrad while still focused on the first. And at other times, you will want to observe how you can develop the dispassion that will enable you to let go of any external preoccupations that threaten to pull you away from the breath. This would turn attention to the fourth tetrad while staying focused on the first.

The possibility of combining tetrads in this way is confirmed by noting how the Buddha's four explanations can be mapped against the standard formula for the first establishing of mindfulness: "One remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world." The reference to the breath as a "body among bodies" in the first explanation corresponds to the phrase "body in & of itself" in the formula. The reference to careful attention in the second explanation relates to the practice of remaining focused described in the formula. The reference to mindfulness and alertness in the third explanation is an obvious reference to two of the qualities that, according to the formula, are brought to the act of remaining focused on the body in and of itself: being alert and mindful. And the reference to abandoning greed and distress in the fourth explanation is a direct reference to the act of subduing greed and distress with reference to the world, which also is an aspect of the third mental quality brought to the act of remaining focused on the body in and of itself: ardency.

In other words, the Buddha is showing how the activity of the first establishing of mindfulness—and this establishing, like all the establishings,

is basically an activity—contains aspects of all four establishings, any of which can be taken as a frame of reference. The practical implication here, as we have noted, is that the shift in focus from one frame of reference to another doesn't require you to switch to a new meditation practice. It simply turns attention to another aspect of what you're already doing. This is like mastering a new piece on the piano. Once you've got the notes down and it's time to listen to how your playing sounds, you don't stop playing to listen more clearly. You keep on playing, again and again, while you listen to the nuances of your touch and phrasing, and to the overall thoughts and emotions you're conveying. This is what allows you both to develop more skill and to discover new things in the music.

Because these four establishings are the themes of right concentration, and because the mindfulness of breathing developed by the sixteen steps is termed a type of concentration (SN 54:7–12), we would thus expect the four tetrads to offer four different perspectives on the single process of how right concentration develops. And when we compare each of the tetrads with the descriptions of the stages of concentration, we find that they actually do correspond. This correspondence plays out both on the macro level—each tetrad corresponds, in its own way, to the overall map of the levels of right concentration—and on the micro level: Each gives specific directions on what to do each time you sit down to develop right concentration.

First, on the macro level: The first tetrad—discerning the breath as long or short, sensitizing yourself to the entire body, and calming bodily fabrication (the in-and-out breathing)—describes the progress of breath meditation up through the fourth jhāna. You start by maintaining focus on the breath and then, as you enter the first jhāna, develop a full-body awareness (DN 2). The breath grows progressively more refined and calm as you move through the jhānas until you reach the fourth, at which stage in-and-out breathing stops (SN 36:11).

The second tetrad—being sensitive to rapture, sensitive to pleasure, sensitive to mental fabrication (perception and feeling), and calming mental fabrication—describes the progress from the early stages of meditation up through the cessation of perception and feeling. Rapture is present in the first two jhānas; pleasure, in the first three. Perception plays a role in all the meditative attainments up through the dimension of nothingness (AN 9:36); as you go through these levels, the underlying perception grows more refined (MN 121). Similarly with feelings: From the rapture and pleasure of the first two jhānas, feelings grow more refined through the equanimous pleasure of the third, and then to the pure equanimity of the fourth, which

forms a foundation for the next four formless attainments (MN 140). Finally, the total calming of perception and feeling occurs with the cessation of perception and feeling, the ninth attainment.

The question arises, if verbal fabrication ceases with the second jhāna, and the breath with the fourth jhāna, how can any of the sixteen steps apply to those attainments or to any of the higher levels of concentration? After all, all of the steps are done in conjunction with breathing, and steps 3 through 16 employ verbal fabrication in the act of training. The answer is that even though these forms of fabrication are not present in the higher levels of concentration, the mind will sometimes have to make a deliberate choice when moving from one attainment to the next (MN 121; AN 9:34; AN 9:41). This will require a moment of reflection in which you step back from your full focus before plunging in again. AN 5:28 illustrates this process with the image of a person standing watching a person sitting down, or a person sitting watching a person lying down. Verbal and bodily fabrication will resume during those moments of choice, which means that any of the sixteen steps could also be applied during those moments.

The third tetrad—becoming sensitive to the mind, gladdening it, steadying it, and releasing it—covers all the stages of training the mind. Gladdening the mind begins with the preliminary practices of practicing generosity, observing the precepts, and abandoning the hindrances, practices that give rise to a sense of wellbeing and joy that can induce the mind to settle down in concentration. The gladdening grows more refined as the mind progresses through the first three jhānas, experiencing rapture and pleasure. It culminates in the joy that accompanies the attainment of the goal (MN 137). Steadying the mind is also a process of progressive refinement up through the cessation of perception and feeling. Although each level of jhāna and each formless attainment grows increasingly steady as you go up the series, only the levels beginning with the fourth jhāna are said to be imperturbable (MN 106). Likewise, releasing the mind is a progressive process: You release the mind at least temporarily from the affliction of attending to perceptions of sensuality on entering the first jhāna, from the affliction of attending to perceptions of directed thought on entering the second jhāna, and so on up through the cessation of perception and feeling. Finally, release becomes total on reaching unbinding (AN 9:34).

The fourth tetrad—remaining focused on inconstancy, dispassion, cessation, and relinquishing—is, like releasing the mind, a process that develops through progressive levels of refinement while mastering concentration, and then goes beyond refinement with the attainment of total

unbinding. When you're trying to master concentration, you direct these contemplations to any object that would distract you from your theme. In other words, you focus these contemplations on anything that would provoke greed and distress with reference to the world outside of your concentration, seeing the distraction as composed of events *(dhammas)* that are inherently unworthy of attachment. In this way, you wean the mind from the distraction.

When concentration is fully mastered, you then turn these same contemplations onto the world of becoming created around the concentration itself. You see that it, too, is composed of dhammas that are inconstant—even though the inconstancy is very subtle—and from that insight you develop dispassion for the process of continuing to fabricate anything at all, even the most refined states of concentration. This dispassion puts an end to the passion that fuels fabrication, thus leading to cessation. At that point, everything—even passion for the deathless—is relinquished, and total unbinding occurs (AN 9:36).

In this way, each of the tetrads provides its own perspective on the overall development of right concentration on the macro level.

As for the micro level, we will discuss some of the practical issues surrounding each of the four tetrads in the next chapter. Here we will look at their role in giving rise to the seven factors for awakening, to show why MN 118 singles this topic out for attention.

The seven factors for awakening *(sambojjhaṅga)* constitute one of the seven sets of dhammas included in the wings to awakening *(bodhi-pakkhiya-dhamma),* the Buddha's own list of his most important teachings (DN 16; DN 29; Ud 5:5). The seven sets overlap in many ways, and in some cases they differ primarily in the order in which they list the qualities needed to attain awakening. For instance, the five faculties and five strengths describe how concentration leads to discernment. The seven factors for awakening, on the other hand—like the noble eightfold path—describe how discernment leads to concentration. In other words, they describe the development of concentration in which insight plays a leading role. In this way they are congruent with the sixteen steps, for as we have noted, the sixteen steps show how to develop tranquility and insight in tandem when bringing the mind to concentration by focusing on how to understand and master the processes of fabrication.

This congruence appears in the overall pattern of the seven factors for awakening, which parallels the pattern of each of the four tetrads. The general pattern is one of observing and understanding the processes of

fabrication so as to bring them to calm. In detail, the pattern is this: The factors for awakening are listed in an order where each factor builds on the ones before it: mindfulness, analysis of qualities (according to MN 117, this is the discernment factor, equivalent to noble right view), persistence, rapture, calm, concentration, and equanimity. MN 118 explains the natural progression from one factor to the next in this way, with mindfulness as a factor of awakening building on any of the four establishings of mindfulness:

> *Mindfulness:* **"On whatever occasion the monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world, on that occasion his mindfulness is steady & without lapse…" [Similarly with feelings in & of themselves, mind in & of itself, and mental qualities in & of themselves.]**
>
> *Analysis of qualities:* **"Remaining mindful in this way, he examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality [any of the qualities or events present in the process of trying to establish mindfulness] with discernment…"**
>
> *Persistence:* **"In one who examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, persistence is aroused unflaggingly…"**
>
> *Rapture:* **"In one whose persistence is aroused, a rapture not of the flesh arises…"**
>
> *Calm:* **"For one enraptured at heart, the body grows calm and the mind grows calm…"**
>
> *Concentration:* **"For one who is at ease—his body calmed—the mind becomes concentrated…"**
>
> *Equanimity:* **"He carefully watches the mind thus concentrated with equanimity…"**

The pattern of this progression—beginning with three factors equivalent to right mindfulness, right view, and right effort—recalls the description of the noble eightfold path in MN 117, in which these three path factors circle around the development of other path factors in leading to right concentration. The only difference is that in MN 117 the discernment factor precedes mindfulness, whereas here the establishing of mindfulness comes first.

This pattern is also related to the three qualities fostered in the establishing of mindfulness: ardency, mindfulness, and alertness. Starting

with the qualities of mindfulness and alertness used to establish mindfulness in the first factor of awakening, you further develop mindfulness and alertness when you remember to analyze phenomena as they occur in terms of cause and effect, skillful and unskillful (SN 46:51) in the second factor of awakening. Then, in the third factor of awakening, you exert persistence (which here is equivalent to ardency) to develop the skillful and abandon the unskillful in such a way as to lead first to rapture, then to calm, concentration, and equanimity.

The inclusion of the factor of analysis of qualities in this process means that the first three factors for awakening add the quality of discernment to the three qualities fostered in the establishing of mindfulness. This addition parallels the way in which the sixteen steps implicitly encourage you to develop discernment and insight by looking for the role of fabrication with regard to body and mind, seeing how cause and effect operate in the process of fabricating skillful and unskillful states. It also, as noted above, parallels the way in which MN 117 describes the interaction of right view, right mindfulness, and right effort in fostering right concentration.

Building on this combination of ardency, alertness, mindfulness, and discernment, the remaining four factors for awakening begin with an active state—rapture—that provides the nourishment needed to keep the increased steadiness and calm of the mind from growing torpid and unhealthy. This rapture is then followed by the calming factors of calm, concentration, and equanimity.

This is the same pattern that operates explicitly or implicitly in each of the four tetrads. You sensitize yourself to a particular phenomenon—in terms of body, feelings, mind, or mental qualities—through mindful alertness, learning through experimentation and manipulation to understand that phenomenon in terms of fabrication and to analyze it in terms of cause and effect. Then you skillfully manipulate the causes of that fabrication so as to bring it to calm.

For instance, with the first tetrad: Steps 1 and 2, discerning long and short breathing, are a basic exercise in developing mindfulness and alertness, with the rudimentary amount of discernment needed to discern when the breathing is long or short. Step 3, breathing in and out sensitive to the entire body, raises the level of ardency as this is the first step in which you are said to "train" yourself. This step also raises the level of alertness, in that the range of your alert awareness is now consciously spread continuously to the entire body. This step is implicitly intended to bring about a realization of how the breath has an impact on the body, raising or lowering its level of energy, for

in step 4 you are told to calm that impact by calming the breath (MN 44). Even though this step makes no explicit mention of inducing rapture, the progression of the seven factors states clearly that an important step in bringing the body to calm is first to induce a rapture "not of the flesh": in other words, a state of rapture based on either the first or second jhāna (SN 36:31). As we have already seen from the map of the stages of concentration, the calming of bodily fabrication can lead all the way to the fourth jhāna, one of whose factors is equanimity not of the flesh. This would be equivalent to the seventh factor of awakening.

The second tetrad starts with two steps—5 and 6—that provide exercise in developing alertness: learning how to breathe in a way that allows you to be sensitive to rapture and pleasure. Step 5 is the first of the sixteen that explicitly refers to raising the energy of your practice before calming it down. Both of these steps, however, also implicitly require an element of discernment based on manipulation, for unless you learn to foster the causes for rapture and pleasure you won't be able to maintain them continually as you pay attention to the breath. In step 7, the element of discernment becomes explicit, as you notice how feelings and perceptions—such as the perceptions by which you label feelings, and the perceptions that enable you to stay with the breath—have an impact on the mind. In step 8, you try to calm this impact by finding progressively more refined feelings—such as equanimity—and more refined perceptions to calm the mind.

The third tetrad is closely related to the second, in that it shares the task of calming the mind, but here the focus begins with the mind itself. Step 9 is an exercise in mindful alertness, as you try to stay observant of the state of the mind. Step 10, like step 5, is an exercise in raising the energy level of the mind by gladdening it (SN 46:51 suggests that this be done only when the mind is sluggish); whereas steps 11 and 12 move more in the direction of calming it through making it steadier and releasing it from anything that afflicts it—such as the affliction of sensuality that would keep it from getting into jhāna, or any of the factors in the lower levels of jhāna that would keep it from attaining the higher ones (AN 9:34).

The fourth tetrad is also an exercise in calming the mind. On the beginning level of developing concentration, this tetrad is focused primarily on abandoning the hindrances to concentration. Step 13, remaining focused on inconstancy, combines an alertness practice with a discernment practice, as you try to see ways in which each of the hindrances and their objects are inconstant and thus incapable of providing any reliable pleasure or happiness. As AN 7:46 points out, the perception of inconstancy leads

naturally to the perception of stress and not-self, both of which lead naturally to dispassion. In other words, you see that a happiness based on anything inconstant is inherently stressful, and thus not worthy of claiming as "me" or "mine." The resulting dispassion is the theme of step 14. When dispassion for the hindrances and their objects becomes well developed, steps 15 and 16—remaining focused on cessation and relinquishment—also follow naturally, as the hindrances cease through lack of passion for the process of fabrication that would keep them going, after which you can relinquish even the contemplations needed to bring them to cessation. With that, the agitation caused both by those hindrances and by their abandoning is replaced with equanimity. This is the first level of how the mind is calmed by the exercises in this last tetrad.

On a more advanced level, when concentration is fully developed, the same process is applied to the concentration itself. You focus on the inconstancy of the fabricated aggregates present in any of the jhānas in a way that leads to dispassion for all fabrications. When dispassion is total, the act of fabrication ceases and even the path factors of discernment and concentration can be relinquished. This is how the exercises in this last tetrad bring the mind to the radical calm of total release.

As MN 118 points out, any one of these tetrads can help bring the seven factors for awakening to the culmination of their development. The parallels in the pattern for each tetrad and for the seven factors help to explain why this is so.

However, as we have had frequent occasion to notice, the four tetrads are not radically separate. They cover four aspects of a single process. It's hard to imagine how anyone could master mindfulness of breathing without making use of all four tetrads, as you need to keep reading the state of your concentration. When you see that it needs improvement, you decide to focus on whichever of these four aspects is most in need of attention. The ability to read your mind in this way would come both under step 9 in the sixteen steps—breathing in and out sensitive to the mind—and under the first two factors for awakening: mindfulness and analysis of qualities. If the mind needs to be fed a particular type of feeling, that would bring in the second tetrad; and this, often, will require the help of steps 3 and 4 in the first tetrad. If the mind is harassed by distractions, that would require bringing in the other steps of the third tetrad and all four steps of the fourth. In this way, even though your main focus of concentration may be the breath, there is no way you can avoid bringing all four tetrads—and all four establishings of mindfulness—to bear on the process of developing right concentration in line

with the seven factors for awakening.

Of course, as MN 118 points out, the sixteen steps don't stop there, for the seven factors for awakening, when fully developed, bring about the ultimate goal of clear knowing and release—*release* here meaning the total release of unbinding, and not just the temporary release of concentration. As the discourse shows, this requires augmenting the seven factors with three qualities—seclusion, dispassion, and cessation—so that they result in letting go. Here again, the sixteen steps are involved. "Seclusion" is a reference to the mental seclusion beginning with the first jhāna, which requires the development of all four tetrads. The remaining terms are direct references to the steps in the fourth tetrad—"letting go" being synonymous with relinquishment—as the themes of inconstancy, stress, and not-self are focused on the fabrication of concentration itself, enabling the mind to develop the dispassion that leads to the total cessation of all fabrications, and from there to the total release that comes from totally letting go.

This last stage of the practice is described in several passages in the discourses. We have already noted, in Chapter Three, one of the primary relevant passages—in AN 9:36—and will have occasion to discuss it further below. Here are two other similar passages showing how this sort of analysis can be applied to any level of jhāna—while you are in the jhāna—up through the dimension of nothingness. With higher levels, it can be applied only after withdrawing from them. To save space, we will cite only the descriptions of how this analysis is applied to the first jhāna:

> "There was the case where Sāriputta—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—entered & remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. Whatever qualities *[dhammas]* there are in the first jhāna—directed thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, singleness of mind, contact, feeling, perception, intention, consciousness, desire, decision, persistence, mindfulness, equanimity, & attention—he ferreted them out one after another. Known to him they arose, known to him they became established, known to him they subsided. He discerned, 'So this is how these qualities, not having been, come into play. Having been, they vanish.' He remained unattracted & unrepelled with regard to those qualities, independent, detached, released, dissociated, with an awareness rid of barriers. He discerned that 'There is a further escape,' and pursuing it he confirmed that 'There is.'"
>
> *— MN 111*

> Ven. Ānanda: "There is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the first jhāna.… He notices that 'This first jhāna is fabricated & willed.' He discerns, 'Whatever is fabricated & willed is inconstant & subject to cessation.' Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight and through the total wasting away of the five lower fetters—he is due to arise spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world." *— MN 52*

In each case, the act of seeing the jhāna as a willed, fabricated activity—rather than a manifestation, say, of a metaphysical or cosmic substrate—is what allows for the dispassion that leads to letting go. Because the mind's entrapment was due to its own clinging, and not to any restriction enforced from outside, the act of letting go is what effects full release.

The standard analogy here is of the way in which a fire goes out. That, in fact, is what *unbinding (nibbāna)* means. According to the physics taught at the time of the Buddha, the property of fire exists in a calm, latent state to a greater or lesser degree in all objects. When "provoked" *(kuppa)* it seizes and clings to its fuel. It goes out—literally, it was said to be "released" *(mutta)*—when it lets go of its clinging to the fuel. For this reason, the agitated flames of a burning fire were viewed as an ideal image for the way in which the mind suffers from the agitation of clinging to the aggregates (Iti 93). The act of a fire's going out was equally ideal as an image for the peace and calm that come when the mind gains release through letting go.

This, then, is the general structure of how mindfulness of breathing progresses to freedom from suffering and stress. The four tetrads deal with four aspects of the act of establishing mindfulness to bring the mind to concentration: both on the macro level, corresponding to the standard maps of how concentration progresses to awakening, and on the micro level, giving instructions on what to do when you sit down to develop right concentration.

The first three tetrads—dealing with body, feelings, and mind—cover aspects of the practice that play a role in keeping the mind focused on the breath: *body* covering the object of the focus, *feeling* being the feelings engendered by continued attention to the breath, and *mind* covering the qualities of mind—mindfulness and alertness—brought to the activity of remaining focused, along with the mind states strengthened by maintaining focus.

The fourth tetrad—dealing with mental qualities—plays a role at one

remove from the activity of keeping focused on the breath. In the beginning stages, it hovers around the process of staying focused, fending off any distractions that would disturb the focus. It does this by viewing those distractions as *dhammas*—mere events or actions—in a way that induces dispassion for them. At more advanced stages, it observes the process of staying focused from the same standpoint with the purpose of developing dispassion for that process, thus leading to total release.

So instead of being a linear guide to meditation, the four tetrads deal with processes of breath meditation that occur simultaneously, offering you the choice of where to focus attention so as to develop both tranquility and insight while fostering stronger states of concentration. In other words, when focused on the breath, you can see how feelings and mind states—along with the mental qualities involved in keeping distractions at bay—are functioning or malfunctioning. This allows you to direct your efforts toward correcting any lack or imbalance. When concentration is fully mastered, you can use the same fourfold perspective to develop the dispassion needed for cessation and total letting go.

The structure of this practice is important to keep in mind because it gives perspective both on how to handle the four tetrads in practice—the topic of the next chapter—and on the practice of the four establishings in general: the topic of the chapters after that.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Fleshing out the Four Tetrads

Although the four tetrads constitute the Buddha's most extensive instructions on what to do when you sit down to meditate, they are still very terse. As one writer has commented, they are more like a telegram than a full text. This should come as no surprise, for—as we noted in the Introduction—these instructions were never meant to stand on their own. They were embedded in a canon of texts memorized by a community of practitioners who would use them simply as memory aids, both for teachers and for students. This means that they had to be long enough to convey the most important points—such as the fact that breath meditation is a proactive process designed to give insight into the processes of fabrication—but short enough to be easily memorized.

They also had to indicate, through inclusion, which aspects of the practice held true across the board; and, through silence and exclusion, which aspects allowed for variations from case to case. If everything were mentioned, the sheer volume of instructions would have been unwieldy, making it difficult to sort out which instructions were meant for everyone, and which for specific cases. So the terseness of the instructions, instead of being a shortcoming, is actually one of their strengths.

As we have seen from the preceding chapters, a great deal of practical, nuts-and-bolts advice can be unpacked from the tetrads when you look at them carefully, but even when unpacked they still leave many gaps. To get the most out of these memory aids, you have to fill these gaps in.

There are two places to look for information that will help you do this: within the Canon and outside it.

Within the Canon you can find this sort of information in three ways. The first is to look at how the tetrads provide perspective on one another. As we noted in the preceding chapter, they deal with four aspects of a single process—using the breath as a focal point for remaining focused on the body in and of itself – ardent, alert, and mindful – while subduing greed and distress with reference to the world—but the connection among the tetrads goes deeper than that.

This is because of the role of perceptions and feelings as mental

fabrications. On the one hand, the bodily fabrication provided by the breath is sure to produce feelings; the feelings, then, can be used to manipulate states of mind. Similarly, perceptions are needed to stay focused on the breath—some dealing directly with the breath, others focused more on inducing the mental quality of dispassion for any distractions that would pull you away from the breath. These, too, will have an impact on states of mind, and on the function MN 118 assigns to the fourth tetrad. This means that when you encounter a problem in putting any of the tetrads into practice, you can often find a solution by looking at related steps in another tetrad. We have already given some indication in the preceding chapter of how this can be done, and we will draw additional connections among the tetrads below.

The second way to flesh out the tetrads with material from within the Canon is to draw from other discourses in the Canon that provide insight into how to use the four frames of reference when developing breath meditation as a basis for tranquility and insight—both as means to concentration and as activities for using concentration to develop discernment.

The third way is to look to other passages in the Canon for alternative themes of meditation that will help in dealing with issues in these four frames of reference. In other words, when you can't get the mind to accomplish any of the trainings contained in the sixteen steps by working within these frameworks, you look for help from other, subsidiary themes of meditation. The Buddha's general instructions on how and when to do this come in SN 47:10. Because there is some controversy over how to understand this discourse, it's worth looking at in detail:

> "Ānanda, if a monk or nun remains with mind well-established in the four establishings of mindfulness, he/she may be expected to perceive grand, successive distinctions.
>
> "There is the case of a monk who remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on the body in & of itself, a fever based on the body arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, delight arises within him. In one who feels delight, rapture arises. In one whose mind is enraptured, the body grows calm. His body calm, he feels pleasure. As he feels pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, 'I have

attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw [my mind from the inspiring theme].' He withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns, 'I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.'

"And further, he remains focused on feelings… mind… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, a fever based on mental qualities arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, delight arises within him. In one who feels delight, rapture arises. In one whose mind is enraptured, the body grows calm. His body calm, he is sensitive to pleasure. As he feels pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, 'I have attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw.' He withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns, 'I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.'

"This, Ānanda, is development based on directing. And what is development based on not directing? A monk, when not directing his mind to external things, discerns, 'My mind is not directed to external things. It is unconstricted *[asaṅkhitta]* front & back—released & undirected. And then, I remain focused on the body in & of itself. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.'

"When not directing his mind to external things, he discerns, 'My mind is not directed to external things. It is unconstricted front & back—released & undirected. And then, I remain focused on feelings… mind… mental qualities in & of themselves. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.'

"This, Ānanda, is development based on not directing.

"Now, Ānanda, I have taught you development based on directing and development based on not directing. What a teacher should do out of compassion for his disciples, seeking their welfare, that I have done for you. Over there are [places to sit at] the roots of trees. Over there are empty dwellings. Practice jhāna, Ānanda. Do not be heedless. Do not be remorseful in the future. That is our instruction to you all." *— SN 47:10*

The main controversy over this passage concerns how to understand the distinction between directing and not-directing the mind. One interpretation

argues that directing the mind refers to jhāna practice; and not-directing the mind, to mindfulness practice: the former inducing a narrow range of awareness; the latter, a broader one. If you came to this passage with the idea that jhāna and the establishing of mindfulness are two radically different practices, you could find a few passages in this discourse that would seem to support that interpretation. The passage on directing the mind contains references to rapture, pleasure, concentration, directed thought, and evaluation, all of which are normally associated with jhāna, whereas the passage on not-directing the mind describes the mind as being unconstricted and released when developing any of the establishings of mindfulness.

However, *unconstricted* doesn't mean a broad range of awareness. According to SN 51:20, *constricted* simply means slothful or drowsy. So *unconstricted* means free of sloth and drowsiness. And when you remember that the Buddha did not draw a radical distinction between mindfulness and jhāna—as we have noted, the four establishings are the themes of jhāna (MN 44) and are themselves counted as a type of concentration (AN 8:63, [Thai: AN 8:70])—then you can see that this discourse is addressing a different issue entirely. Instead of drawing a distinction between mindfulness and concentration, it's giving advice on how to use mindfulness to bring the mind to right concentration in different situations. In some cases, mindfulness employs the four frames of reference; in others, it employs other themes.

When the mind doesn't respond properly to any of the four establishings of mindfulness—when, while focusing on any of the four frames of reference, it feels feverish, sluggish, or scattered—then you can follow the instructions for directing it. You call to mind a subsidiary theme that will gladden it or chasten it and allow it to settle down. When it's firmly settled, you can drop any thinking connected with the subsidiary theme, and this will bring the mind to a state of mindful ease equivalent to the second jhāna, free from directed thought and evaluation.

On other occasions, when the mind settles down easily—when it drops thoughts about external preoccupations and at the same time isn't slothful or drowsy—then you follow the instructions for non-directing the mind. You simply note that it's released from distraction and drowsiness, and it will naturally settle into the activities of any one of the establishings of mindfulness. This in turn will provide a theme for the practice of jhāna.

In this way SN 47:10 gives general instructions on how to deal with the mind both when it is amenable to settling down with any of the four frames of reference and when it is not. The instructions in this discourse parallel the

observation in MN 101, that there are times when problems in the mind respond to simple on-looking equanimity, and other times when they require conscious fabrication. In this case, the mind requires more conscious fabrication when it has trouble settling down with the four frames of reference. SN 47:10 provides no specific guidance on which subsidiary themes to use when that is the case; for that, we have to look to other discourses. That is a third way of looking within the Canon for help in filling in the gaps in the four tetrads.

There are also three ways of looking for information from outside the Canon to fill in these gaps. The first is to ask for advice from living people who are proficient in breath meditation. The Canon itself encourages this approach in AN 4:94, which advises you to approach a person skilled in insight and tranquility and to ask for instructions on how to develop those qualities in your own mind. Similarly, AN 9:36 recommends asking those who are skilled in attaining and emerging from both the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception and the cessation of perception and feeling for instruction in how to attain and emerge from those dimensions. The same principle applies here.

The second way to look outside the Canon for information that will fill in the gaps in the four tetrads is to experiment on your own. The Canon implicitly advises this method in passages where it makes distinctions without explaining them. We have already encountered a passage of this sort in MN 101, quoted in Chapter Two, dealing with the question of whether the causes of stress are to be abandoned through exertion or equanimity. Here's another passage of a similar sort:

> "And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *rapture* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture as a factor for awakening once it has arisen? There are qualities that act as a foothold for rapture as a factor for awakening. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen rapture as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture as a factor for awakening once it has arisen." *— SN 46:51*

This passage is fairly opaque. It gives no indication of what the qualities acting as a foothold for rapture as a factor for awakening might be. But the opacity can be seen as serving a purpose, in that it forces you to look to your own experience, or for advice from others, to discover what those qualities are. This would provide useful exercise in developing your own powers of ingenuity and discernment.

The third way to look outside the Canon for information that will fill in the gaps in the four tetrads is to consult books dealing with these topics. Normally this would include the commentarial literature—such as the Visuddhimagga (Path of Purity) or the commentaries and sub-commentaries on the various sections of the Canon—but in the case of breath meditation, this literature diverges widely from what the Canon has to say. Beginning with step 3 in the breath meditation instructions, it tries to force the practice of breath meditation into the mold of kasiṇa practice, a practice rarely mentioned in the Canon but which had become paradigmatic by the time the Visuddhimagga was compiled. Because of the divergence from the Canon in this area, I have not chosen to draw on this literature in this book.

Although this book falls under this third general category, the main focus of this chapter will be on the three ways of looking *within* the Canon for advice on how to flesh out the four tetrads: drawing on insights from other tetrads, drawing on passages from other discourses that give advice on how to use the four frames of reference as themes in developing tranquility and insight, and drawing on passages that give advice on how to use other themes to accomplish the trainings contained in the sixteen steps.

However, it's important to bear in mind that the actual practice of breath meditation will require you to look outside the Canon for guidance as well. The Canon was never meant to function on its own as a guide to the practice. Instead, it takes for granted a living community of practitioners who can provide apprenticeship in the practice of meditation. This is why MN 95 lists the qualities to look for in reliable teachers: that they be free of the sort of greed, aversion, and delusion that would cause them to claim knowledge they don't have or to tell you to do things that would harm you. At the same time, MN 80 lists the qualities you need to look for in yourself: that you be observant and honest. So when, in the course of this chapter, we encounter steps that are difficult to flesh out simply on the basis of the Canon, you will know where else to look—both within yourself and without—to fill in the gaps.

MN 118 introduces the sixteen steps with a brief preamble:

> **"There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and establishing mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out."**

With the exception of one word, this preamble is self-explanatory. The one word is *parimukhaṁ,* translated here as "to the fore." The Abhidhamma, when

commenting on this passage, gives an etymological interpretation of this word, saying that *parimukha* means "around the mouth" (*pari* = around; *mukha* = mouth or face). In other words, when focused on the breath, you should focus on the area around the mouth. However, the Vinaya (Cv.V.27.4) contains a prohibition against dressing the hair of the *parimukha.* Because the same passage also contains a separate prohibition against dressing the beard around the mouth as a goatee, the Commentary interprets *parimukha* in this case as meaning "on the chest." Obviously, then, the word has several meanings, and the question is whether it should be understood literally as meaning a particular section of the body, or more idiomatically as bringing something to the forefront.

Evidence for this latter interpretation comes from passages in the Canon where monks focusing on topics of meditation aside from the breath are nevertheless described as having established mindfulness *parimukhaṁ.* For example, in Ud 7:8, Ven. MahāKaccāyana establishes mindfulness *parimukhaṁ* when engaged in mindfulness immersed in the body; in MN 62, Ven. Rāhula establishes mindfulness *parimukhaṁ* when contemplating the theme of not-self with regard to the five aggregates. Because it makes no sense to say that a person contemplating either of these topics should focus awareness exclusively on one part of the body to the exclusion of others—and because, in step 3 of the first tetrad in breath meditation, the awareness will become whole-body anyway—it makes more sense to interpret the phrase, "mindfulness established *parimukhaṁ*" as an idiom for bringing mindfulness to the fore. In other words, you bring the topic you plan to keep in mind up to the forefront of your awareness.

> *The first tetrad:* **"[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' [3] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' [4] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'"**

Because steps 1 and 2 are not described as "trainings," we can infer that in the beginning stages of familiarizing yourself with the breath you don't consciously try to adjust it. You simply try to discern variations in the breath.

The same principle would appear to apply to questions of whether the breath is fast or slow, shallow or deep, heavy or light.

However, steps 3 and 4 are described as trainings, and there are several reasons for assuming that you would consciously try to adjust the breath in these steps. With step 4 this principle is obvious: You're trying to calm the effect of the breath on the felt sense of the body. As for step 3, there are two reasons for assuming a similar principle at work. But before we look at those reasons, we have to discuss what the instructions in step 3 actually say, for there is a controversy as to what they mean by "entire body."

The commentaries—molding the practice of breath meditation into the pattern of kasiṇa practice, in which the mind has to become focused exclusively on a single point—insist that "body" here means the breath, and that the "entire body" means the entire length of the breath, felt at one spot in the body, such as the tip of the nose or the upper lip.

This interpretation, however, is unlikely for several reasons. The first is that the commentaries' interpretation of step 3 makes it redundant with steps 1 and 2. It's hard to understand how you could know whether the breath is long or short in those steps without being aware of the full length of the breath.

The second reason is that step 3 is immediately followed by step 4, which —without further explanation—refers to the breath as "bodily fabrication." If the Buddha were using two different terms to refer to the breath in such close proximity—"body" in step 3, and "bodily fabrication" in step 4—he would have been careful to signal that he was redefining his terms (as he does in a later part of the discourse, when explaining that the first four steps in breath meditation correspond to the practice of focusing on the body in and of itself as a frame of reference). But here he doesn't.

The third reason is that the similes for the jhānas, which are attained through the sixteen steps, repeatedly mention a full-body awareness. If the mind were forced exclusively into a single point, it wouldn't be able to spread feelings of rapture or pleasure throughout the entire body in the first three jhānas, or to fill the body with a clear bright awareness in the fourth.

One response to this last argument is that the word "body" in the similes for jhāna doesn't mean the physical body, because a person in jhāna has to be oblivious to the physical body. Instead, "body" is meant metaphorically as a term for the "body" of the mind.

Putting aside the question of why someone with the Buddha's teaching skills would use terms in such a potentially confusing way in his basic meditation instructions, we can simply note that in MN 119 he gives the

similes for the jhānas immediately after his discussion of six ways of focusing on the physical body. As in the case of steps 3 and 4 in breath meditation, if he had meant "body" to mean "physical body" in one context, and "mind body" in the discussion immediately following it, he would have signaled that he was redefining his terms. But again he doesn't.

So unless we want to assume that the Buddha was careless or devious in his meditation instructions, it seems best to interpret "body" as meaning "physical body" in all of these contexts, and to interpret "entire body" in step 3 as referring to the entire physical body as sensed from within.

Although step 3 doesn't say to adjust the breath as part of being sensitive to the entire body, there are—as we noted above—two reasons to assume that some manipulation of the breath is involved. To begin with, step 3 as a prelude to step 4 is aimed at sensitizing yourself to the way the breath fabricates your sense of the body as felt from within. To gain this sort of sensitivity, you have to adjust the breath to see what impact that has on the various properties of the body as sensed from within.

MN 140 lists these properties as five: the properties of earth, water, fire, wind, and space.

> "What is the internal earth property? Anything internal, within oneself, that's hard, solid, & sustained [by craving]: head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, muscle, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, feces, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's hard, solid, & sustained: This is called the internal earth property.
> …
> "And what is the water property? The water property may be either internal or external. What is the internal water property? Anything internal, belonging to oneself, that's water, watery, & sustained: bile, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's water, watery, & sustained: This is called the internal water property.…
> "And what is the fire property? The fire property may be either internal or external. What is the internal fire property? Anything internal, belonging to oneself, that's fire, fiery, & sustained: that by which [the body] is warmed, aged, & consumed with fever; and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed, & savored gets properly digested; or anything else internal, within oneself, that's fire, fiery, & sustained: This is called the internal fire property.…

> "And what is the wind property? The wind property may be either internal or external. What is the internal wind property? Anything internal, belonging to oneself, that's wind, windy, & sustained: up-going winds, down-going winds, winds in the stomach, winds in the intestines, winds that course through the body, in-&-out breathing, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's wind, windy, & sustained: This is called the internal wind property.…
>
> "And what is the space property? The space property may be either internal or external. What is the internal space property? Anything internal, belonging to oneself, that's space, spatial, & sustained: the holes of the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the [passage] whereby what is eaten, drunk, consumed, & tasted gets swallowed, and where it collects, and whereby it is excreted from below, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's space, spatial, & sustained: This is called the internal space property." *— MN 140*

According to MN 28, three of these properties—water, fire, and wind—have the potential to become "provoked" *(kuppa).* In other words, when stimulated, they can become quite volatile. So when you explore the ways in which the in-and-out breath fabricates the inner sense of the body, these are the three properties most directly responsive to influences from the breath. With regard to the water property, this could mean breathing in such a way as to raise or lower the blood pressure, for example, or to change the flow of the blood through different parts of the body: away from an area feeling excess pressure (as when you have a headache) or toward an area that has been injured and needs the extra nourishment that a healthy blood flow would provide. With regard to the fire property, this could mean breathing in such a way as to feel warmer when the weather is cold, or cooler when it's hot. With regard to the wind property, this could mean breathing in ways that would regulate the flow of the energy already coursing through the different parts of the body.

The act of regulating the energy flow in the body connects directly with the second reason mentioned above for assuming that step 3 would involve adjusting the in-and-out breath. The standard similes for the first three jhānas (MN 119, cited above in Chapter One) state that you allow the sense of pleasure and/or rapture arising from those states of concentration to permeate throughout the body. This step is greatly facilitated if you know how to adjust the in-and-out breath so that the energy flow in the body allows for rapture and pleasure to spread in this way.

For these reasons, it seems best to interpret step 3 as including not only

the ability to be sensitive to the entire body throughout the in-and-out breath—to prepare you for the full-body awareness developed in jhāna—but also the ability to consciously adjust the breath in a way that allows you to do two things: to spread pleasure and rapture throughout the body in the first three jhānas, and to develop a more general sensitivity to how the breath is the primary bodily fabrication in its effect on the other properties of the body. Of course, this adjustment has to be developed as a skill. If you apply too much pressure or are too heavy-handed in your efforts to adjust the properties of the body, it will give rise to the "fevers" mentioned in SN 47:10. That will require you to step back from the breath and turn the mind to another theme for a while until you feel calmed enough to return to the breath.

The same point applies to step 4. If you apply too much force to calm the breath, it will play havoc with the properties of the body. The body will be starved of breath energy, and again a "bodily fever" will result. At the same time, it's important to remember—in line with MN 118's explanation of the relationship between rapture and calm as factors for awakening—that one of the most effective ways of calming bodily fabrication is first to breathe in a way that induces a sense of rapture to energize the body and mind. Otherwise, the act of calming bodily fabrication will have a stultifying effect, leading to one of the other problems mentioned in SN 47:10: a sluggishness or constriction in your awareness.

> *The second tetrad:* **"[5] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.' [6] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.' [7] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.' [8] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.'"**

Steps 5 and 6 are a necessary part of training the mind, for they strengthen the mind in two ways. First, they provide a pleasant abiding in the present moment that allows the mind to withstand, at least temporarily, the types of pleasure and pain that would otherwise divert it from the path.

> "When a disciple of the noble ones enters & remains in seclusion & rapture, there are five possibilities that do not exist at that time: The pain & distress dependent on sensuality do not exist at that time. The

> pleasure & joy dependent on sensuality do not exist at that time. The pain & distress dependent on what is unskillful do not exist at that time. The pleasure & joy dependent on what is unskillful do not exist at that time. The pain & distress dependent on what is skillful [see the discussion of pain not of the flesh in Chapter Nine] do not exist at that time." *— AN 5:176*

Second, the rapture and pleasure provided by jhāna give discernment the support it needs to overcome sensuality entirely.

> "Even though a disciple of the noble ones has clearly seen as it has come to be with right discernment that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, still—if he has not attained a rapture & pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful qualities, or something more peaceful than that—he can be tempted by sensuality. But when he has clearly seen as it has come to be with right discernment that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, and he has attained a rapture & pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful qualities, or something more peaceful than that, he cannot be tempted by sensuality." *— MN 14*

AN 7:63, in its simile of the frontier fortress, compares the various levels of jhāna to food for the soldiers of right effort and for the gatekeeper of right mindfulness. Only if the mind can experience a pleasure and rapture not of the flesh—in other words, not connected with sensuality—will it have the nourishment it needs to keep itself protected.

In step 5, the Pāli word for "rapture" *(pīti)* is related to the verb *pivati,* to drink. Several passages in the discourses describe rapture as the food of the Radiant devas, inhabitants of a brahmā world into which meditators can be reborn through mastery of the second jhāna (DN 1; Dhp 200; AN 4:123). "Rapture" thus carries connotations of refreshment and rejuvenation. In the standard similes for the four jhānas, rapture is symbolized by movement: the movement of water through the bathman's ball of bathing powder in the simile for the first jhāna, and the natural movement of spring water throughout the lake in the simile for the second. Only in the third jhāna, where rapture is absent, does the water of the lake fall still.

Rapture can be felt both mentally and physically, a fact indicated by two passages from the discourses. The description of the seven factors for awakening in MN 118 speaks of the meditator who has attained rapture as a factor of awakening as being "enraptured in *heart.*" The standard similes for

the jhānas speak of the *body* as being permeated, pervaded, suffused, and filled with rapture when you are in the first and second jhānas.

However, rapture is not a feeling. In other words, in and of itself it is neither pleasant nor painful. Instead, it is more a quality of energy. None of the discourses describe the ways in which rapture may manifest, but later writings indicate that it can take many forms, some very gentle, others very intense: a thrill running through the body, or a wave washing over it. Some people find the resulting feeling of fullness pleasant; others find it threatening. This is largely a matter of perception. A sensation that one person perceives as quenching a thirst, another may perceive as akin to drowning. This fact in itself is an excellent indication of why perception is listed as a factor fabricating the mind, and why experience in dealing with rapture gives insight into how to handle perception skillfully in steps 7 and 8.

The fact that the sensations accompanying rapture can become unpleasant explains why the third jhāna—where rapture fades—is a more pleasant abiding than the second, and why the step of breath meditation aimed at pleasure is listed after the step aimed at rapture.

Training in rapture relates to several other steps of breathing meditation as well. Because rapture can be either physical or mental, some of the ways of inducing it will relate to how you adjust the breath in steps 3 and 4; others will relate to exercises in step 10: gladdening the mind. The highest level of rapture—what SN 36:31 calls "rapture more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh"—is the rapture felt by an arahant when reflecting on the fact that his/her mind is totally free from passion, aversion, and delusion. This would result from the successful completion of steps 12 through 16.

Sukha—the word translated as "pleasure" in step 6—is the opposite of *dukkha* (stress, suffering), and like *dukkha* it has a wide range of meanings. These include pleasure, ease, bliss, wellbeing, and happiness. In general, *sukha* can cover both physical pleasure and mental pleasure, although there are cases, such as in the third jhāna, where the mind is equanimous while sensing pleasure with the body. In cases like this, *sukha* is reserved for the physical pleasure, whereas mental pleasure is allotted a separate word: joy *(somanassa).*

In the standard similes for the jhānas, pleasure is represented by water: the water being kneaded into the ball of bath powder in the simile for the first jhāna, the water of the cool spring filling the lake in the simile for the second, and the cool water permeating the submerged lotuses in the simile for the third. Only in the fourth jhāna, where pleasure is totally replaced by

equanimity, does water disappear from the simile.

Because pleasure, like rapture, can be either physical or mental or both—and because there is such a thing as "pleasure more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh," the pleasure felt by the arahant reflecting on the release of his/her mind—the observations made above concerning how the steps in the other tetrads of breath meditation can be used to induce rapture apply to pleasure as well: physically, steps 3 and 4; mentally, step 10; and for the arahant, steps 12–16.

Step 7 builds naturally on steps 5 and 6 because only when you have gained experience in inducing states of rapture and pleasure, and in observing the role of perception in conjunction with these states, can you see clearly the way their presence and absence can fabricate the state of your mind. This will enable you, in step 8, to calm the impact of these feelings and perceptions as seems appropriate. In other words, after inducing pleasure and rapture in the first two jhānas, you abandon the rapture in the second, and the mental pleasure in the third, leading ultimately to the sense of non-affliction that comes with the equanimity of the fourth jhāna, which MN 13 describes as the highest allure of feelings. This equanimity then forms the basis for the formless attainments (MN 140).

The calming of mental fabrication, as the mind goes through the jhānas, echoes MN 118's description of the relationship between rapture and calm as factors for awakening: Unless the mind is already too energized, you have to make sure that it is energized before calming it. Otherwise it will grow sluggish and constricted.

There is an apparent contradiction in how some of the discourses describe the calming of feeling as you go through the third jhāna to the fourth. On the one hand, as we just noted, the third jhāna is marked by a state of physical pleasure and mental equanimity; the fourth jhāna is described as purity of equanimity, with neither pleasure nor pain. On the other hand, AN 9:34 describes the act of attending to perceptions of equanimity as an affliction experienced in the third jhāna that is abandoned in the fourth.

> "[He]… enters & remains in the fourth jhāna… If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *equanimity*, that is an affliction for him." *— AN 9:34*

The question is, if perceptions of equanimity are a disturbance in the fourth jhāna, why is the fourth jhāna described as a state of equanimity? This apparent contradiction can be resolved, however, by noting that the disturbance is not the equanimity itself, or even the mental labels about

equanimity, but the act of attending to those labels. The equanimity present in the third jhāna is something that distinguishes it from the second jhāna, which is why it is an object of note on that level. In the fourth jhāna, however, equanimity is no longer an object of note, so there is no interest in attending to perceptions about it.

This, of course, connects directly to the role of perception as a mental fabrication in steps 7 and 8. Several discourses provide more detailed information on the role of perception in fabricating calm for the mind.

To begin with, AN 3:102 provides a general framework for understanding which perceptions need to be calmed in order to bring the mind to concentration, and then from lower levels of concentration to higher ones:

> "When he [the meditator] is rid of [the gross impurities of misconduct in body, speech, and mind], there remain in him the moderate impurities: thoughts of sensuality, ill will, & harmfulness. These he abandons, destroys, dispels, wipes out of existence. When he is rid of them, there remain in him the fine impurities: thoughts of his caste, thoughts of his home district, thoughts related to not wanting to be despised. These he abandons, destroys, dispels, wipes out of existence.
>
> "When he is rid of them, there remain only thoughts of the Dhamma. His concentration is neither peaceful nor exquisite, has not yet attained calm or unification, and is kept in place by the fabrication of forceful restraint. But there comes a time when his mind grows steady inwardly, settles down, grows unified & concentrated. His concentration is peaceful & exquisite, has attained calm & unification, and is no longer kept in place by the fabrication of forceful restraint."
>
> *— AN 3:102*

In other words, before you can bring the mind to concentration, you have to cleanse it of two sorts of perceptions: those related to sensuality, ill will, and harm on the one hand, and those related to your relationships with human society on the other. Then, once the mind has attained a lower stage of concentration, you have to further adjust your perceptions so that your concentration can grow more steady and unified, providing a more refined sense of wellbeing.

Other discourses focus more on specific steps within this framework. MN 78, for instance, focuses on how the role of perception in right resolve leads from the grosser mind states associated with sensuality to the more refined pleasure of the first jhāna.

> "And what are unskillful resolves? Being resolved on sensuality, on ill will, on harmfulness. These are called unskillful resolves. What is the cause of unskillful resolves? Their cause, too, has been stated, and they are said to be perception-caused. Which perception?—for perception has many modes & permutations. Any sensuality-perception, ill will-perception, or harmfulness-perception: That is the cause of unskillful resolves. Now where do unskillful resolves cease without trace? Their cessation, too, has been stated: There is the case where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is where unskillful resolves cease without trace.
>
> "And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves? There is the case where a monk generates desire… for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the… development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves." *— MN 78*

In other words, you use perceptions that induce desire for skillful states to undercut unskillful perceptions. One way of undercutting the perceptions leading to wrong resolve is to cultivate perceptions that highlight the drawbacks of sensuality. MN 54 provides a useful list of similes to help generate perceptions of this sort:

> "Suppose a dog, overcome with weakness & hunger, were to come across a slaughterhouse, and there a dexterous butcher or butcher's apprentice were to fling him a chain of bones—thoroughly scraped, without any meat, smeared with blood. What do you think? Would the dog, gnawing on that chain of bones—thoroughly scraped, without any meat, smeared with blood—appease its weakness & hunger?"
>
> "No, lord. And why is that? Because the chain of bones is thoroughly scraped, without any meat, & smeared with blood. The dog would get nothing but its share of weariness & vexation."
>
> "In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: 'The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a chain of bones, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.' …

"Now suppose a vulture, a kite, or a hawk, seizing a lump of meat, were to take off, and other vultures, kites, or hawks—following right after it—were to tear at it with their beaks & pull at it with their claws. What do you think? If that vulture, kite, or hawk were not quickly to drop that lump of meat, would it meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: 'The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a lump of meat, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.' …

"Now suppose a man were to come against the wind, carrying a burning grass torch. What do you think? If he were not quickly to drop that grass torch, would he burn his hand or his arm or some other part of his body, so that he would meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: 'The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a grass torch, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.' …

"Now suppose there were a pit of glowing embers, deeper than a man's height, full of embers that were neither flaming nor smoking, and a man were to come along—loving life, hating death, loving pleasure, abhorring pain—and two strong men, grabbing him with their arms, were to drag him to the pit of embers. What do you think? Wouldn't the man twist his body this way & that?"

"Yes, lord. And why is that? Because he would realize, 'If I fall into this pit of glowing embers, I will meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain.'"

"In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: 'The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a pit of glowing embers, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.' …

"Now suppose a man, when dreaming, were to see delightful parks, delightful forests, delightful stretches of land, & delightful lakes, and on awakening were to see nothing. In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: 'The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a dream, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.' …

"Now suppose a man having borrowed some goods—a manly carriage, fine jewels, & ear ornaments—were to go into the market preceded & surrounded by his borrowed goods, and people seeing him would say, 'How wealthy this man is, for this is how the wealthy enjoy their possessions,' but the actual owners, wherever they might see him, would strip him then & there of what is theirs. What do you think? Would the man justifiably be upset?"

"No, lord. And why is that? Because the owners are stripping him of what is theirs."

"In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: 'The Blessed One has compared sensuality to borrowed goods, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.' …

"Now suppose that, not far from a village or town, there were a dense forest grove, and there in the grove was a tree with delicious fruit, abundant fruit, but with no fruit fallen to the ground. A man would come along, desiring fruit, looking for fruit, searching for fruit. Plunging into the forest grove, he would see the tree… and the thought would occur to him, 'This is a tree with delicious fruit, abundant fruit, and there is no fruit fallen to the ground, but I know how to climb a tree. Why don't I climb the tree, eat what I like, and fill my clothes with the fruit?' So, having climbed the tree, he would eat what he liked and fill his clothes with the fruit. Then a second man would come along, desiring fruit, looking for fruit, searching for fruit and carrying a sharp ax. Plunging into the forest grove, he would see the tree… and the thought would occur to him, 'This is a tree with delicious fruit, abundant fruit, and there is no fruit fallen to the ground, and I don't know how to climb a tree. Why don't I chop down this tree at the root, eat what I like, and fill my clothes with the fruit?' So he would chop the tree at the root. What do you think? If the first man who climbed the tree didn't quickly come down, wouldn't the falling tree crush his hand or foot or some other part of his body, so that he would meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: 'The Blessed One has compared sensuality to the fruits of a tree, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.'" *— MN 54*

However, MN 78 does not stop with the role of perception in supporting skillful resolves. It also shows how perception—in this case, the perception

of whatever theme leads the mind to the second jhāna—can be used in moving beyond even the subtle disturbance of thinking associated with right resolve.

> "And what are skillful resolves? Being resolved on renunciation [freedom from sensuality], on non-ill will, on harmlessness. These are called skillful resolves. What is the cause of skillful resolves? Their cause, too, has been stated, and they are said to be perception-caused. Which perception?—for perception has many modes & permutations. Any renunciation-perception, non-ill-will-perception, or harmlessness-perception: That is the cause of skillful resolves. Now where do skillful resolves cease without trace? Their cessation, too, has been stated: There is the case where a monk, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. This is where skillful resolves cease without trace.
>
> "And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves? There is the case where a monk generates desire… for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the… development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves." *— MN 78*

This is one of the ways in which calming the mental fabrication caused by perception stops even the activity of right resolve, leading to a steadier state of concentration.

As for the question of how to overcome perceptions related to human society when trying to attain concentration, MN 121 recommends first focusing on the perception of "wilderness" and observing how it is empty of the disturbances that come with perceptions of "village" or "human being." (This perception is easiest, of course, if you actually go into the wilderness, but can also be developed in areas that you don't normally think of as wilderness, for even large cities have their wilderness aspect as well.) Once you have taken pleasure, found satisfaction, settled, and indulged in the stillness that comes with the perception of wilderness, you notice if any disturbance remains. You see that there is, caused by the perception of "wilderness" itself. After all, in the wilderness there are dangers (AN 5:77).

So, to abandon that disturbance, you direct the mind to a more refined perception that can act as a basis of concentration. When you have taken pleasure, found satisfaction, settled, and indulged in that perception, you observe it to see first how it is empty of the disturbances that were dependent on the perceptions it has now abandoned, and then to see if there are still any disturbances present in your state of concentration.

In this way, the discourse describes the progression through the stages of concentration as a step-by-step process of increasing emptiness from disturbance. With each level, you note that you have abandoned some of the disturbances present on lower levels of concentration, but that there is still a modicum of disturbance coming from the perception that keeps you connected to the dimension forming the theme of that level of concentration. Dropping that perception, you attend to a more refined perception, and so on up the levels of concentration until you can drop all perceptions and attain total release.

Although the discourse uses the earth property, rather than the breath, as the initial theme of concentration, its recommendations for using earth as a theme of meditation can be applied to the breath by extrapolation. And its discussion of the formless attainments would apply directly to these stages when approached through breath meditation.

> "And further, Ānanda, the monk—not attending to the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space, not attending to the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness—attends to the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of nothingness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its perception of the dimension of nothingness.
>
> "He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space are not present. Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of nothingness.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of nothingness.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted

in meaning, & pure.

"And further, Ānanda, the monk—not attending to the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, not attending to the perception of the dimension of nothingness—attends to the singleness based on the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception." *— MN 121*

What the Buddha is clearly recommending here is a direct observation of how perception fabricates the level of stress in the mind, and how it can be used to calm that stress. Instead of simply replacing one perception with another, you examine how the more refined perception actually helps to empty the mind of disturbance. This approach leads to a greater insight into the process of fabrication. At the same time, it gives practice in applying the four noble truths to the processes of concentration. It looks for the stress—here called "disturbance" *(daratha)*—present in each level, then it looks for the cause of stress present within the factors of concentration itself, after which it looks for ways to alleviate the stress caused by the mind's own activities.

By viewing the state of concentration as a fabrication in this way, you avoid the sort of attachment that could come from viewing the dimensions reached in concentration as metaphysical principles. For instance, when arriving at the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness—which AN 10:29 identifies as the highest non-dual totality—you don't perceive it as a true self or a non-dual ground of being underlying the self and the world. Instead, you look for the stress caused by fabrication present in the experience of that dimension so that you can drop the perception causing that stress. As MN 121 shows, when you follow this process to ever-higher levels of refinement, you ultimately arrive at something greater than any metaphysical principle: total release from all suffering and stress.

The third tetrad: **"[9] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.' [10] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in gladdening the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out gladdening the mind.' [11] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in steadying the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out steadying the mind. [12] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in releasing the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out releasing the mind.'"**

Step 9 is an exercise in sensitizing yourself to the state of your mind as you try—successfully or not—to focus it on the breath. The ability to observe the mind in this way is helpful in three ways. As you start out, it enables you to figure out what needs to be changed to bring the mind into right concentration. Once the mind has reached a level of right concentration, it helps you to figure out how to stay settled there. And ultimately—as indicated by the passage from MN 111 cited in Chapter Six—when concentration has been mastered, it allows you to observe the fabrications at work in right concentration so that you can find the escape from them.

AN 5:28 provides a useful analogy for this step:

> "Just as if one person were to reflect on another, or a standing person were to reflect on a sitting person, or a sitting person were to reflect on a person lying down; in the same way, monks, the monk has his theme of reflection well in hand, well attended to, well-pondered, well-tuned [well-penetrated] by means of discernment." *— AN 5:28*

When you can step back from the mind in concentration—without destroying the concentration—you can observe what it is already doing well and what it needs to do to make further progress.

The remaining three steps in this tetrad are exercises in consciously making the state of your mind more skillful in response to what you have observed in step 9. Step 10 is concerned primarily with motivating and energizing the mind; step 11 with making it more solid and unified. As we noted in the preceding chapter, "release" in step 12 can cover anything from temporary release from unskillful states, through the gradations of release experienced when going from a lower to a higher stage of concentration, all the way to total release from suffering and stress.

In some cases, steps 10–12 overlap. For instance, when you gladden the mind by breathing in a way that fosters rapture and pleasure (steps 5 and 6), that also has the effect of steadying the mind while at the same time releasing it from sensuality and other unskillful qualities. When you use a subsidiary theme in line with the instructions in SN 47:10 to bring the mind to a better mood, that can have a similar three-way effect. In other cases, steps 10 and 11 balance each other out: Step 10 can pertain to instances where you want to give the mind more energy; step 11, to those where you want to calm the energy down.

There are two major strategies for training the mind in these steps. The first is to stay focused on the breath, using the other tetrads or other techniques related to the four frames of reference to accomplish the aim of

each training. The other strategy is to follow the advice of SN 47:10 in looking for themes outside of the four frames to provide subsidiary help.

In terms of the first strategy, we have already noted that it's possible to use steps 5 and 6 in accomplishing steps 10–12. Step 8, calming feeling and perception, can also help with the same steps. Step 3, being sensitive to the entire body, can in some cases help steady the mind in step 11 by giving it a broad grounding. Some people, however, find the larger frame of awareness too distracting when first focusing on the breath, in which case it's better, for the time being, to keep the range of awareness more restricted.

The strategies for taking the mind through the various levels of jhāna can also help accomplish the steps in this tetrad. For example, we have already noted the passages where—once you have succeeded in remaining focused on the body (breath) in and of itself—you are directed to stay with the body but not think thoughts concerned with the body (MN 125). This gladdens, steadies, and releases the mind by taking it from the first to the second jhāna. Similarly, if you have been using a subsidiary theme to steady the mind, the act of bringing the mind back to the breath or to any of the other frames of reference helps release it from the need to keep directing attention toward that theme. This can also bring you to the second jhāna.

The same principle applies to the act of taking the mind through the various levels of jhāna and the formless attainments—gladdening it in the first three jhānas; and calming, steadying, and releasing it from increasingly subtle levels of affliction as you go through the entire sequence.

> Ven. Sāriputta: "There is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the first jhāna… If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *sensuality,* that is an affliction for him. Just as pain would arise in a healthy person for his affliction, in the same way, the attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality that beset the monk is an affliction for him. Now, the Blessed One has said that whatever is an affliction is stress. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how unbinding is pleasant.
>
> "And further, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the second jhāna… If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *directed thought,* that is an affliction for him.…
>
> "[He]… enters & remains in the third jhāna… If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *rapture,* that is an affliction for him.…
>
> "[He]… enters & remains in the fourth jhāna… If, as he remains there,

he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *equanimity,* that is an affliction for him.…

"[He]… enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *form,* that is an affliction for him.…

"[He]… enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *the dimension of the infinitude of space,* that is an affliction for him.…

"[He]… enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness,* that is an affliction for him.…

"[He]… enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *the dimension of nothingness,* that is an affliction for him.…

"And further, there is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. And, having seen [that] with discernment, his effluents are completely ended." — *AN 9:34*

The steps of observing and adjusting the mind apply not only to the act of moving the mind from one level of jhāna to another, but also to the act of supervising it while it stays in a particular level. We have already noted, in the passage from AN 9:36, how this sort of supervising can lead the meditator all the way to release. The same act of supervision, however, can be used simply to ensure that unskillful mental states such as pride and conceit don't accrete around your attainments.

"And further, a person of no integrity… enters & remains in the first jhāna… He notices, 'I have gained the attainment of the first jhāna, but these other monks have not gained the attainment of the first jhāna.' He exalts himself for the attainment of the first jhāna and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

"But a person of integrity notices, 'The Blessed One has spoken of non-fashioning even with regard to the attainment of the first jhāna, for by whatever means they construe it, it becomes otherwise from that.' [In

other words, whatever the ground on which you might base a state of becoming—a sense of your self and the world you inhabit—by the time that state of becoming has taken shape, the ground has already changed.] So, giving priority to non-fashioning, he neither exalts himself for the attainment of the first jhāna nor disparages others. This is the quality of a person of integrity. [Similarly with the other attainments up through the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.]" *— MN 113*

This would count as a strategy for steadying and releasing the mind.

These are a few of the ways in which the four frames of reference can be used to accomplish the trainings in this tetrad.

As for *the subsidiary themes* that can be helpful in this way, four main groups stand out.

First are the five themes that MN 62 lists as preparatory exercises for breath meditation. Two of these—the contemplations of inconstancy and not-self—will be treated under the fourth tetrad. Here we will simply note MN 137's statement that the perception of inconstancy can lead the mind either to joy or to equanimity. When you're faced with unpleasant experiences, the perception of inconstancy can make them more bearable; when you're faced with pleasant experiences, it can help loosen your tendency to become a slave to them. These are two ways in which this perception can gladden the mind. When the same perception leads to equanimity in either case, that would be an example of using it to steady the mind.

As for the remaining three preparatory exercises listed in MN 62, these are: meditation in tune with the five physical properties, meditation on the unattractiveness of the body, and the development of the four brahmavihāras.

Meditation in tune with the physical properties is an exercise in developing patience, tolerance, and equanimity in the face of painful and pleasant distractions. In each case, you aspire to make the mind non-reactive to agreeable and disagreeable sensory impressions in the same way that the properties of earth, water, wind, fire, and space don't react with disgust when coming into contact with disgusting things.

For instance, earth:

"Rāhula, develop the meditation in tune with earth. For when you are developing the meditation in tune with earth, agreeable & disagreeable

sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when people throw what is clean or unclean on the earth—feces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood—the earth is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing the meditation in tune with earth, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind." *— MN 62*

This is a useful exercise in steadying and releasing the mind. The fact that it's listed as a preliminary exercise to the more proactive steps of breath meditation makes an important point about the role of non-reactivity in the practice. Instead of being a self-sufficient practice, non-reactivity functions as a prerequisite for the steady powers of observation that are needed to fabricate changes in body, speech, and mind in an increasingly skillful and effective way.

Meditation on the unattractiveness of the body is a technique for overcoming lust, pride, and other unskillful attitudes related to the body. It is so basic to the practice that the tradition has developed of teaching it to every new candidate for ordination. Because this theme is useful primarily for inducing dispassion, we will discuss it under the fourth tetrad. Here it's enough to note that this, too, is a practice for steadying and releasing the mind.

The brahmavihāras are exercises in developing attitudes of good will, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity for all beings without limit. A standard description of these exercises is this:

"That disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with good will, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release *[ceto-vimutti]* through good will is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.

"[Similarly with compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity.]"
— SN 42:8

These exercises can both gladden and steady the mind. The reference to the resulting state of mind as an "awareness-release" calls attention to the fact that they fall under step 12 as well. As a set, they free the mind, at least temporarily, from passion (AN 2:30). Each attitude can also be used to release the mind from specific unskillful states. Good will provides an escape from ill will; compassion from harmfulness; and empathetic joy from resentment. MN 62 states that equanimity frees the mind from passion; AN 6:13, that it frees the mind from irritation.

However, even though the brahmavihāras are often described as awareness-releases, they are never described as discernment-releases. This means that, on their own, they cannot release the mind from ignorance (AN 2:30); they are not a sufficient practice for bringing about total release—a point dramatically made in MN 97. There Ven. Sāriputta teaches the brahmavihāras to a dying brahman, Dhanañjānin, who upon death is reborn in a brahmā world. Later, when Ven. Sāriputta goes to see the Buddha, the latter chastises him for leading Dhanañjānin to rebirth in an "inferior" brahmā world and not further, to the noble attainments.

A similar point is made by discourses describing the way in which brahmavihāra practice can give rise to the jhānas. The fact that these attitudes can induce strong states of concentration is another way in which they can gladden, steady, and release the mind all at once. However, they differ with regard to the level of jhāna they can induce. AN 4:125, when read in conjunction with AN 4:123, implies that the development of immeasurable good will can lead only to the first jhāna, and that the remaining attitudes developed as immeasurable states can lead, respectively, only to the second, third, and fourth jhānas. This apparently applies to these attitudes when developed on their own, for SN 46:54 states that when they are developed in conjunction with the seven factors for awakening "dependent on seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, and resulting in letting go," then good will can lead as far as the "beautiful," a visionary meditative state, the third of the eight emancipations *(vimokkha*—see Appendix Three). The remaining immeasurable states can lead, respectively, to the first three formless attainments, which are also the fourth, fifth, and sixth of the eight emancipations.

However, the same discourse leaves open the possibility that this combination of the brahmavihāras with the seven factors for awakening can lead to a still higher release, which apparently means any of the stages of awakening. So again, the brahmavihāras are not, as is sometimes said, a self-sufficient practice for awakening. On their own, as aids in step 12, they can

lead to temporary release but not total release. They need the help of the seven factors of awakening to go further than the jhānas.

The second group of subsidiary themes that help with the trainings in the third tetrad consists of the six recollections: recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, virtue, generosity, and the devas. These recollections serve primarily to gladden the mind, although the first three can also release the mind from fear (SN 11:3).

> "[1] There is the case where you recollect the Tathāgata: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed.'
>
> "[2] And further, there is the case where you recollect the Dhamma: 'The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One, to be seen here-&-now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be realized by the observant for themselves.'
>
> "[3] And further, there is the case where you recollect the Saṅgha: 'The Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well… who have practiced straight-forwardly… who have practiced methodically… who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types [of noble disciples] when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples: worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.'
>
> "[4] And further, there is the case where you recollect your own virtues: '(They are) untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, conducive to concentration.'
>
> "[5] And further, there is the case where you recollect your own generosity: 'It is a gain, a great gain for me, that—among people overcome with the stain of possessiveness—I live at home, my awareness cleansed of the stain of possessiveness, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in being magnanimous, responsive to requests, delighting in the distribution of alms.'
>
> "[6] And further, you should recollect the devas: 'There are the devas of the Four Great Kings, the devas of the Thirty-three, the devas of the Hours, the Contented Devas, the devas who delight in creation, the devas who rule over the creations of others, the devas of Brahmā's retinue, the devas beyond them. Whatever *conviction* they were

endowed with that—when falling away from this life—they re-arose there, the same sort of conviction is present in me as well. Whatever *virtue*… Whatever *learning*… Whatever *generosity*… Whatever *discernment* they were endowed with that—when falling away from this life—they re-arose there, the same sort of discernment is present in me as well.'" *— AN 11:12*

As the Buddha notes with regard to anyone who recollects any of these themes:

"One's mind is not overcome with passion, not overcome with aversion, not overcome with delusion. One's mind heads straight, based on [that theme]. And when the mind is headed straight, the disciple of the noble ones gains a sense of the goal, gains a sense of the Dhamma, gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. In one who is glad, rapture arises. In one whose mind is enraptured, the body grows calm. One whose body is calmed senses pleasure. In one sensing pleasure, the mind becomes concentrated.

"Mahānāma, you should develop this recollection of the devas while you are walking, while you are standing, while you are sitting, while you are lying down, while you are busy at work, while you are resting in your home crowded with children." *— AN 11:12*

The third group of subsidiary themes that help with the trainings in the third tetrad is the set of nine perceptions listed in AN 10:60. Because these perceptions deal more directly with issues in the fourth tetrad and DN 22, we will save their discussion for the next section in this chapter and for Chapter Nine. Here, however, it's relevant to note that these perceptions are useful primarily for steadying the mind, although MN 137's statement with regard to the perception of inconstancy can apply to all nine of these perceptions: that they can help gladden the mind as well.

The fourth group of subsidiary themes that help with the trainings in the third tetrad consists of the various exercises surrounding mindfulness of death. These are obviously aimed at steadying the mind by chastening it, and at releasing it from laziness and heedlessness, from attachment to the body, and from the petty concerns of daily life. However, they can also be used to gladden the mind by inspiring a sense of appreciation for every opportunity to practice, and for whatever progress you have already made.

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, "I, too, develop

mindfulness of death.… I think, 'O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.'" — *AN 6:19*

"There is the case where a monk, as day departs and night returns, reflects: 'Many are the [possible] causes of my death. A snake might bite me, a scorpion might sting me, a centipede might bite me. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me. Stumbling, I might fall; my food, digested, might trouble me; my bile might be provoked, my phlegm… piercing wind forces [in the body] might be provoked. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me.'

"Then the monk should investigate: 'Are there any evil, unskillful mental qualities unabandoned by me that would be an obstruction for me were I to die in the night?' If, on reflecting, he realizes that there are evil, unskillful mental qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die in the night, then he should put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head, in the same way the monk should put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

"But if, on reflecting, he realizes that there are no evil, unskillful mental qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die in the night, then for that very reason he should dwell in rapture & gladness, training himself day & night in skillful qualities.

"[Similarly when night departs and day returns.]" — *AN 6:20*

By way of encouragement, the Buddha notes that when mindfulness of death is developed in this way, it gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end. This thought, too, gladdens the mind.

When we reflect on these four groups of subsidiary themes, three points stand out. The first is that, in every case, their practice is a form of mindfulness. Some of them are explicitly termed mindfulness or—its near

equivalent—recollection *(anussati).* Even the practice of immeasurable good will, although its name doesn't include the word "mindfulness," is termed a form of mindfulness in Sn 1:8. This is because the practice of this immeasurable attitude requires constantly keeping it in mind. The same observation applies to the remaining brahmavihāras as well.

The second point is that each subsidiary theme can fulfill more than one training. What's especially striking in this connection is the way in which a theme that might seem dismaying—such as mindfulness of death or the perception of inconstancy—can also be gladdening, depending on how you perceive the relationship of the theme to the particular problem you're facing. This shows the power of perception as a mental fabrication: It can take a potentially negative topic and turn it into a cause for joy.

The third point is that, as a group, these subsidiary themes bear in mind the three parts of right view: the right framework for viewing experience, an understanding of the motivation for adopting the framework, and knowledge of what should be done in light of the framework. The brahmavihāras, for instance, fall under right resolve, which falls within the fourth truth within the framework of the four noble truths. As they are developed—the duty with regard to right resolve—they lead directly to right concentration. The six recollections and mindfulness of death provide motivation for sticking with the path. In this way they perform the duty of right mindfulness in keeping these three aspects of right view in mind. This is why, even though these exercises are subsidiary to breath meditation, they deserve to be classified under the third establishing of mindfulness for their role in developing states of mind that inspire and strengthen right effort, and lead to right concentration.

> *The fourth tetrad:* **"[13] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.' [14] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on dispassion *[literally,* fading].' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.' [15] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on cessation.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on cessation.' [16] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.'"**

When MN 118 relates the four tetrads to the four establishings of

mindfulness, it connects this fourth tetrad to the abandoning of greed and distress. As we noted in the preceding chapter, this activity can apply to the act of abandoning unskillful mind states that threaten to distract you from the theme of your concentration practice, and to help develop dispassion for concentration itself when all other attachments have been abandoned.

However, MN 62 and AN 10:60 suggest that, even before that point, the contemplations associated with step 13 can help prevent misunderstandings that may grow up around the very first stages in the practice of concentration. This suggestion derives from the fact that MN 62 lists the development of the perceptions of inconstancy and not-self among the exercises to be done *before* you start breath meditation. It doesn't give any recommendations for how to develop the perception of inconstancy, but AN 10:60 does:

> "And what is the perception of inconstancy? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: 'Form is inconstant, feeling is inconstant, perception is inconstant, fabrications are inconstant, consciousness is inconstant.' Thus he remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the five aggregates." *— AN 10:60*

MN 62 does, however, note what this perception is meant to accomplish: It helps to uproot the conceit, "I am." Because the total uprooting of this conceit doesn't occur until the attainment of arahantship, the question arises: Why is this contemplation presented as a preliminary exercise? The answer seems to be that it helps to serve as advance warning against perceiving the states of concentration induced by breath meditation as ends in and of themselves. After all, they are composed of aggregates, and aggregates are conditioned phenomena. At the same time, in light of MN 113, the perception of inconstancy with regard to the aggregates serves as warning against developing pride around those states of concentration as well.

A similar principle seems to be at work in MN 62's recommendation of how to develop the perception of not-self prior to breath meditation. Its focus is on applying this perception to form: the body as felt from within. Here the discourse does give detailed instructions on how to follow this exercise. First it defines each of the five properties—earth, water, wind, fire, and space—in the same terms used in MN 140. Then, after each property, it states:

> "And that should be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it

thus as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with [that] property and makes [that] property fade from the mind." *— MN 62*

Because, as we have seen, step 3 in breath meditation involves sensitizing the mind to the effect of the breath on these properties, this exercise would seem to warn against trying to use the breath energy to create a state of perfect physical health. It reminds you that the body is best regarded not as an end in itself but as a tool in the search for a higher happiness. This point, as we will see below, is reinforced by the perceptions of the body's unattractiveness and its drawbacks in leaving you open to the miseries of a wide variety of diseases.

Of course, these same contemplations of inconstancy and not-self can be used to develop dispassion for any topics that may threaten to distract you from the theme of the breath or from any of the establishings of mindfulness built around the breath. This is one of the ways in which, even in the early stages of meditation, the contemplation of inconstancy in step 13 leads naturally to the contemplation of dispassion in step 14.

AN 10:60, in its preface to breath meditation, lists a series of other perceptions that can perform the same function. We have already discussed the first—the perception of inconstancy—so here we will list just the remaining ones, beginning with the perception of not-self, which this discourse applies to the six sense media.

[2] "And what is the perception of not-self? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: 'The eye is not-self; forms are not-self. The ear is not-self; sounds are not-self. The nose is not-self; aromas are not-self. The tongue is not-self; flavors are not-self. The body is not-self; tactile sensations are not-self. The intellect is not-self; ideas are not-self.' Thus he remains focused on not-selfness with regard to the six inner & outer sense media.…

[3] "And what is the perception of unattractiveness? There is the case where a monk reflects on this very body—from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin, filled with all sorts of unclean things: 'In this body there are: head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, muscle, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, oil in the joints, urine.' Thus he remains

focused on unattractiveness with regard to this very body.…

[4] "And what is the perception of drawbacks? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—reflects thus: 'This body has many pains, many drawbacks. In this body many kinds of disease arise, such as: seeing-diseases, hearing-diseases, nose-diseases, tongue-diseases, body-diseases, head-diseases, ear-diseases, mouth-diseases, teeth-diseases, cough, asthma, catarrh, fever, aging, stomach-ache, fainting, dysentery, grippe, cholera, leprosy, boils, ringworm, tuberculosis, epilepsy, skin-diseases, itch, scab, psoriasis, scabies, jaundice, diabetes, hemorrhoids, fistulas, ulcers; diseases arising from bile, from phlegm, from the wind-property, from combinations of bodily humors, from changes in the weather, from uneven care of the body, from attacks, from the result of kamma; cold, heat, hunger, thirst, defecation, urination.' Thus he remains focused on drawbacks with regard to this body.…

[5] "And what is the perception of abandoning? There is the case where a monk doesn't acquiesce to an arisen thought of sensuality. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. He doesn't acquiesce to an arisen thought of ill will. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. He doesn't acquiesce to an arisen thought of harmfulness. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. He doesn't acquiesce to any arisen evil, unskillful mental qualities. He abandons them, destroys them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence.…

[6] "And what is the perception of dispassion? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the ending of craving, dispassion, unbinding.'…

[7] "And what is the perception of cessation? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the ending of craving, cessation, unbinding.'…

[8] "And what is the perception of distaste for every world? There is the case where a monk abandoning any attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions with regard to any world, refrains from them and does not get involved.…

> [9] "And what is the perception of the undesirability of all fabrications? There is the case where a monk feels horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with all fabrications." — *AN 10:60*

The perceptions of inconstancy and not-self act as preliminaries to the subsequent perceptions in the list, for they help you view all ideas of self or world simply as processes of fabrication. Viewing them in this light makes it easier to abandon any attachment to them. In particular, the eighth perception in this list points to the connection between perceptions of self and perceptions of world in the process of becoming. As AN 10:27 and 10:28 point out, to be a being requires nutriment; your sense of the world depends on where you look for and find nutriment. If you can see both your sense of self and your sense of the world as processes that are inherently stressful, then the act of abandoning seems less like a sacrifice of necessary nourishment, and more like the strategy for true happiness that it actually is.

As for the third and fourth perceptions—of the unattractiveness and drawbacks of the body—they also amplify the perceptions of inconstancy and not-self, providing vivid examples of the stress that comes with looking for happiness in things that are unreliable and lie beyond your control. However, these perceptions perform other functions as well. As we have already noted, they help to overcome lust. Sn 1:11 points out that they help overcome pride based on your appearance or race; AN 4:184, that they help overcome fear of death. And as we will see in Chapter Nine, they also provide a foundation for restraint of the senses.

The practice of developing these perceptions prior to the steps of breath meditation is an example of developing insight prior to tranquility. This is one of the ways in which insight helps lead to jhāna (AN 10:71). Learning to perceive things as processes of fabrication prior to taking on the sixteen steps makes it easier to master the steps concerning bodily and mental fabrication.

To perceive the processes of fabrication as being fueled by passion also makes it easier to understand how step 15 follows naturally on step 14. With the cultivation of dispassion, the processes are deprived of their fuel, so they simply disband and cease.

Step 16, focusing on relinquishment, is an essential step in the successful abandoning of any issue that threatens to distract the mind, from the beginning stages on up. You not only have to allow the distraction to cease; you also have to let go of any pride over or attachment to your success in allowing that cessation. This frees you to watch for any unskillful states that might arise immediately after the cessation of a particular distraction. The

same principle also applies in the final stages of the practice, when you have to abandon passion both for the attainment of the deathless (AN 9:36) and for the path that brought you there.

In this way, the steps of this tetrad roughly parallel the duties with regard to the four noble truths. Step 13 deals primarily with comprehending stress so as to give rise to dispassion; step 14 develops dispassion to abandon the cause of stress; step 15 realizes cessation; and step 16 deals with the ultimate duty with regard to the path: When fully developed, it is to be relinquished.

> "Suppose a man were traveling along a path. He would see a great expanse of water, with the near shore dubious & risky, the further shore secure & free from risk, but with neither a ferryboat nor a bridge going from this shore to the other.… Having gathered grass, twigs, branches, & leaves, having bound them together to make a raft, he would cross over to safety on the other shore in dependence on the raft, making an effort with his hands & feet. Having crossed over to the further shore, he might think, 'How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I have crossed over to safety on the further shore. Why don't I, having hoisted it on my head or carrying it on my back, go wherever I like?' What do you think, monks? Would the man, in doing that, be doing what should be done with the raft?"
>
> "No, lord."
>
> "And what should the man do in order to be doing what should be done with the raft? There is the case where the man, having crossed over, would think, 'How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I have crossed over to safety on the further shore. Why don't I, having dragged it on dry land or sunk it in the water, go wherever I like?' In doing this, he would be doing what should be done with the raft.
>
> "In the same way, monks, I have taught the Dhamma compared to a raft, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto. Understanding the Dhamma as taught compared to a raft, you should let go even of Dhammas, to say nothing of non-Dhammas."
>
> — *MN 22*

> "When, having discerned as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks—and the escape from—these five faculties [the faculties of conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment], one is released from lack of

clinging/sustenance, one is called an arahant." *— SN 48:5*

"This, monks, the Tathāgata discerns.… And he discerns what is higher than this. And yet discerning that, he does not grasp at that act of discerning. And as he is not grasping at it, unbinding *[nibbuti]* is experienced right within. Knowing, as they have come to be, the origination, disappearance, allure, & drawbacks of feelings, along with the escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released." *— DN 1*

PART THREE

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Slice of Mindfulness

The Buddha once stated that his comprehension of the four establishings of mindfulness was vast:

> "Sāriputta, suppose that I had four disciples with a 100-year life span, living for 100 years, and endowed with excellent mindfulness, retention, recall, & keenness of discernment. Just as an archer with a good bow—trained, dexterous, & practiced—could easily shoot a light arrow across the shadow of a palmyra tree, they—endowed with that great an extent of mindfulness, that great an extent of retention, that great an extent of recall, & that keenness of discernment—would ask me one question after another on the four establishings of mindfulness. And I, asked again & again, would answer. Answered, they would remember what I had answered, and they wouldn't counter-question me about it a second time more. Aside from eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring, aside from urinating & defecating, aside from relieving sleepiness & weariness, there would be no ending of the Tathāgata's Dhamma teaching, there would be no ending of the Tathāgata's phrasing of Dhamma statements, there would be no ending of the Tathāgata's quick-wittedness (in answering) questions; but those four disciples of mine, with their 100-year life span, living for 100 years, would die with the passing of 100 years." *— MN 12*

Although the main thrust of this passage concerns the extent of the Buddha's knowledge, it also makes an important statement about how vast the topic of right mindfulness is: Even with one hundred years of questioning, you couldn't exhaust it. This point is important to keep in mind as we look carefully at DN 22, for it's the longest of the many discourses contained in the Canon on the topic of right mindfulness. Many readers assume that because it is so long, it must constitute a self-sufficient and comprehensive treatment of the topic—that, aside from a few details, it

contains all you really need to know about the establishings of mindfulness. Yet when we approach it from the background of what we have already learned about the relationship among right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration—and about the role of fabrication in all sensory experience—we can't help but be struck by a curious lack: When mentioning the various categories to look for in the context of the four frames of reference, it says very little about what to *do* with them once they are noticed and discerned. In the terms of the standard satipaṭṭhāna formula, it says very little about the role of ardency in establishing mindfulness.

Now, if you view mindfulness as passive, receptive awareness, this lack is unimportant. The categories listed in the discourse are simply ways of noting experience in an impersonal way, reading no "I" into the process, allowing them to arise and fall as they will. The fact that there are no explicit instructions as to what to do with them—especially in the section on feelings and mind states—is an implicit instruction in and of itself: You shouldn't do anything with them. Just watch them arise and pass away until you develop dispassion for them.

However, this interpretation doesn't fit in with what we have already learned from other discourses in the Canon: that mindfulness is an act of memory, and the establishing of mindfulness is an ardent, proactive process. It also doesn't fit in with the role of right mindfulness in relation to all the factors of the noble eightfold path—and to right effort and right concentration in particular. At the same time, this interpretation ignores the role of fabrication in every feeling and mental aggregate: If you view these things as simply arising for you to observe passively as they pass away of their own accord, you'll miss the hidden role that intention plays in actualizing them from the potentials of your past actions. This will blind you to important areas for the exercise of insight. This interpretation also ignores the need for the exertion of fabrication in developing dispassion for some of the causes of stress and suffering. And of course, if mindfulness were simply a matter of passive receptivity, it's hard to see why its ramifications would take more than 100 years to describe.

At the same time, the passive-receptive interpretation of mindfulness doesn't jibe with many passages in DN 22 itself, for a few parts of this discourse actually do give explicit directions as to what to do in a particular context. For instance, there are the proactive trainings in steps 3 and 4 of breath meditation, which are included under the topic of the body in and of itself as a frame of reference. There are also the perceptions of the unattractive parts of the body and of the future state of the body after death.

Because these are painful practices (AN 4:163), they involve a great deal of effort to maintain (AN 4:14).

In other cases, some of the categories listed under the other frames of reference contain implicit duties. Under the topic of feelings in and of themselves, for example, three of the categories deal with feelings not of the flesh. These are the feelings divorced from sensuality that are experienced in jhāna practice. This means that they can be tasted only through the exertion of right effort.

Similarly with the topic of mind states: Many of the categories of mind states listed under this topic—such as the concentrated mind, the enlarged mind, and the released mind—refer specifically to the practice of right concentration. These too require right effort to attain.

And as for the topic of mental qualities, the categories of the five hindrances and the six sense media make clear reference to the abandoning of unskillful mental qualities; the category of the seven factors for awakening makes reference to the act of bringing these skillful mental qualities to the culmination of their development, an achievement that can't be accomplished simply through passive observation. As for the four noble truths, also listed under the topic of mental qualities, we know from the Buddha's first sermon that these four categories carry implicit duties—and there is no reason to assume that these duties don't apply here as well.

DN 22 also makes frequent reference, in a recurring refrain, to the process that SN 47:40 calls the development of the establishing of mindfulness. As we have already noted in Chapter Two, this is a proactive process requiring the development of all eight factors of the noble path.

So even though DN 22 only rarely makes explicit reference to the duties of ardency in the establishing of mindfulness, this should not be read as an implicit instruction to do nothing but passively observe. Instead, a careful reading of the text shows that its implicit message is something else entirely: that we have to look elsewhere for explicit instructions concerning the role of ardency in establishing mindfulness.

Had DN 22 been intended as a comprehensive explanation of right mindfulness, the lack of explicit instruction in this area would have been a clear defect in the discourse. However, the organization of the discourse suggests that that was not its intended role.

We can see this from the questions around which the discourse is structured. The Buddha's standard approach, when giving a talk to a large group of people, was to make a statement about a particular topic, and then to pose questions based on the statement. The body of the talk would then be

presented as a series of answers to the questions. In this format, the questions control the range and depth of material to be covered, thus signaling the Buddha's intention as to what he thinks is useful or feasible to cover in that particular talk. In some talks, the questions cover everything in the introductory statement; in others, only a part. In this second group, the introductory statement sketches out the larger context of the topic, to show how the part covered in detail fits into a larger picture of the path.

DN 22 falls into this second group. The discourse begins with a statement of the full satipaṭṭhāna formula:

> **The Blessed One said: "This is a path going one way only for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness. Which four?**
>
> **"There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings… mind… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world."**

We will discuss this opening statement more fully in Chapter Ten, but here we will simply note that the questions the Buddha bases on this paragraph cover only a small slice of the material it presents:

> **"And how does a monk remain focused on the body in & of itself?"**
>
> **"And how does a monk remain focused on feelings in & of themselves?"**
>
> **"And how does a monk remain focused on the mind in & of itself?"**
>
> **"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves?"**
>
> **"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances?"**
>
> **"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five clinging-aggregates?"**
>
> **"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the sixfold internal & external sense media?"**

"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for awakening?"

"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths?"

In other words, the Buddha limits his attention to only one aspect of the satipaṭṭhāna formula: what it means to remain focused on any of the four frames of reference. No questions are raised about how to be ardent in any of these cases, or about how to subdue greed and distress with reference to the world. No questions are raised about how to use ardency in the stage of the development of the establishing of mindfulness. Nothing is said about an issue that looms large in MN 118: that of whether the last three frames of reference are to be used in the context of remaining focused on the body, or whether they function separately. Instead, attention is focused simply on explaining the range of categories that can fruitfully be kept in mind when directing alertness to any of the four frames.

Given what we know about mindfulness as the faculty of memory, as well as its place among the other factors in the path, we can understand from these facts how DN 22 is meant to be read: not as a guide to passive awareness, or a complete guide to right mindfulness, but as a list of recommended frameworks to keep in mind when trying to develop right mindfulness as a basis for right concentration. As for how to use ardency to shape experience so as to fit into these frameworks, or to deal with phenomena that arise in the context of these frameworks, DN 22 gives only a few implicit hints. Because the Buddha had given explicit instructions on these topics in other discourses, he would have expected his listeners to take the hint to refer to those discourses to fill in the blanks left in this one.

In the next chapter I will focus on the structure of the frameworks provided by DN 22 within the context of the general structure of the discourse as a whole, at the same time drawing on passages from the rest of the Canon to make explicit some of the duties for ardency that are implicit around and within those frameworks. By calling attention to some of the connections between the slice of mindfulness presented in DN 22 and the relevant material in other discourses, I hope to show the practical value of placing this discourse in its larger context and taking it, not as a guide to passive awareness, but as a guide to action. This entails, as the Buddha recommended in MN 95, penetrating its meaning and pondering its agreement with the rest of the Dhamma. The discussion in the next chapter is not intended to be comprehensive—the Buddha's remarks in MN 12, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, rule that out—but I do hope to give a sense

of what can be gained by encompassing a somewhat larger slice of the topic than DN 22, on its own, contains.

CHAPTER NINE

A Structure for Ardency

DN 22 is organized as a "wheel": a style of presentation in which two or more variables are placed against one another, with all their possible permutations listed one by one. The most famous wheel in the Pāli Canon, of course, is the wheel of Dhamma in the Buddha's first sermon (SN 56:11), which is quoted above in Chapter Three. In that wheel, the four noble truths are set against the three levels of knowledge appropriate to each—knowledge of the truth, knowledge of the duty appropriate to the truth, and knowledge that the duty has been completed—with the text listing one by one all twelve of the resulting permutations.

Similarly, in DN 22 the four frames of reference for the act of remaining focused are set against three levels of how to apply ardency in the practice.

First, the establishing of mindfulness:

"There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings… mind… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

Second, the development of the establishing of mindfulness:

"Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. [Similarly with feelings, mind, and mental qualities.]

And third, a level of practice described in the following terms:

"Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' … 'There are feelings' … 'There is mind' … 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world."

DN 22 lists these three levels after every exercise included under the four frames of reference. Many commentators have missed the fact that these three levels are distinct, and instead have described them all as a single practice, with the last level understood to be a summary of the practice as a whole. There are, however, several reasons for viewing the three levels as separate.

The first is the most obvious: They are separated from one another by the word *or*. You do the first *or* the second *or* the third.

A second reason is that SN 47:40 lists the first two stages as separate stages, with the second building on the first. The third stage is obviously more advanced than the other two, for instead of having to subdue greed and distress with reference to the world, a meditator on this level has become independent, not sustained by anything in the world.

A third reason is that many of the exercises mentioned under the first stage are incompatible with the practice described in the third. The first-stage exercises make heavy use of verbal fabrication and concepts of "I" and "me": "I will breathe in experiencing the entire body"; "I am walking"; "I am feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh"; "There is sensual desire present within me"; "Mindfulness as a factor for awakening is present within me"; and so forth. In the third stage, however, these concepts are dropped in favor of the simple observation, "There is a body," and so forth.

In fact, it's possible to see the three stages as moving in a direction of greater depersonalization as they also move toward subtler application of ardency and right effort. The first stage uses concepts of "I" and "mine"; the second, in looking for patterns of origination and passing away in the pursuit of right concentration, begins to drop those concepts; and the third fully abandons concepts of "I" and "mine" as it simply maintains mindfulness to the mere extent of remembrance of the frame of reference, not clinging to anything in any world inside or out.

This pattern parallels the three levels of right view. Mundane right view employs concepts of beings and worlds (MN 117); transcendent right view deals in more impersonal causal connections described in the four noble truths and their attendant duties; and the highest level of right view (SN 12:15) reduces all arising and passing away simply to the level of stress arising and passing away, which has the effect of reducing the four duties of the noble truths to one: comprehension to the point of letting go.

We have already discussed the first two stages of remaining focused on the four frames of reference in Chapter Two. However, it's important to note here that DN 22 expands on the first level in two important ways. The first is

that it presents a large range of alternative exercises and categories for each of the four frames, which we will discuss in detail below. The second is that it introduces the possibility that these alternatives can be practiced internally, externally, or both.

> **"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. [Similarly with the other frames of reference.]"**

There are two ways of interpreting what it means to "remain focused externally." The first is that external focus is a matter of the psychic powers —"knowledge and vision" concerning the bodies and minds of other beings —gained in concentration:

> "There is the case where a monk remains focused internally on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, he becomes rightly concentrated there, and rightly clear. Rightly concentrated there and rightly clear, he gives rise to knowledge & vision externally of the bodies of others. [Similarly with the other frames of reference.]" *— DN 18*

Further evidence that external frames of reference are to be known through psychic powers is that the categories for remaining focused on the mind in the first stage of practice are identical with those listed for the psychic ability to read the minds of others (DN 2; AN 5:28).

The second way of interpreting external focus—and one more pertinent for most meditators—is that it's a matter of using your normal powers of memory and inference to reflect on the fact that what you are experiencing is common to all beings.

> "And further, a disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'I am not the only one subject to death, who has not gone beyond death. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising —all beings are subject to death, have not gone beyond death.' When one often reflects on this, the path takes birth. One sticks with that path, develops it, cultivates it. As one sticks with that path, develops it, & cultivates it, the fetters are abandoned, the obsessions destroyed."
> *— AN 5:57*

Whether you focus externally through psychic power or through inference, the primary purpose in either case would be to develop a sense of saṁvega for the universality of suffering and stress.

The fact that each exercise or list of categories in the first stage of the practice is followed by the statement that it can be used in the second stage as well—the development of the establishing of mindfulness—shows that each can play a role in the development of right concentration. This is an important point to notice, for as we will see, some writers have depicted a few of the exercises, such as the contemplation of the unattractiveness of the body, as alternatives to jhāna. But when we look carefully at how these exercises are described in discourses aside from DN 22, we'll see that they don't have to be interpreted in that way at all.

As for the third stage of practice, this corresponds to the stage of concentration practice in which you remember to apply the principle of non-fashioning to whatever attainment you may have mastered (see the passage from MN 113 in Chapter Seven). In other words, you drop any sense of self around the attainment. In so doing, you are close to full release.

> "There is the case, monks, where a certain contemplative or brahman, with the relinquishing of speculations about the past and the relinquishing of speculations about the future, from being totally not determined on the fetters of sensuality, and from the surmounting of the rapture of seclusion [in the first jhāna], of pleasure not of the flesh [in the first through the third jhāna], & of the feeling of neither pleasure nor pain [in the fourth jhāna], thinks, 'I am at peace, I am unbound, I am without clinging/sustenance!'
>
> "With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns: 'This venerable contemplative or brahman, with the relinquishing of speculations about the past… thinks, "I am at peace, I am unbound, I am without clinging/sustenance!" Yes, he affirms a practice conducive to unbinding. But still he clings, clinging to a speculation about the past or… a speculation about the future… or a fetter of sensuality… or the rapture of seclusion… or a pleasure not of the flesh… or a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. And the fact that he thinks, "I am at peace, I am unbound, I am without clinging/sustenance!": That in itself points to his clinging.'
>
> "With regard to this—fabricated, gross—there is still the cessation of fabrications. Knowing, 'There is that,' seeing the escape from it, the Tathāgata has gone beyond it." *— MN 102*

This third stage, then, can lead directly to total unbinding.

Most of the discussion in DN 22, however, focuses on the first stage of practice. In this context it treats the four frames of reference in order, listing various exercises and categories for analyzing each of the four frames: body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities in and of themselves. As we have already noted, many of these exercises and lists of categories make no explicit mention of how ardency functions with regard to them. To fill in this lack, the following discussion will draw material from other discourses to make more explicit the role of ardency in each case.

A. BODY

The topic of the body in and of itself covers six exercises: (1) the first four steps of breath meditation; (2) the practice of discerning whatever posture the body is in; (3) the practice of making yourself alert in all your physical activities; (4) the analysis of the body into 31 parts; (5) the analysis of the body into the four physical properties in every posture; and (6) the practice of visualizing a corpse in nine stages of decomposition, and reflecting that your body will unavoidably meet with the same fate. MN 119 lists all six of these exercises under the term, "mindfulness immersed in the body" *(kāyagatāsati).*

When discussing *the first exercise,* the four steps of breath meditation, DN 22 adds only two points to what we have already learned from MN 118. First, it adds an analogy for the practice.

> **"Just as a dexterous lathe-turner or lathe-turner's apprentice, when making a long turn, discerns, 'I am making a long turn,' or when making a short turn discerns, 'I am making a short turn'; in the same way the monk, when breathing in long, discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.…'"**

The second point added by DN 22 is that this exercise can be developed in all three stages of the practice. This point is repeated for each of the first five exercises, and for each of the nine stages of decomposition listed in the sixth exercise.

The second and third exercises give practice in continuous alertness throughout the waking day. The second tells you to make a point of discerning the body's posture at all times.

"When walking, the monk discerns, 'I am walking.' When standing, he discerns, 'I am standing.' When sitting, he discerns, 'I am sitting.' When lying down, he discerns, 'I am lying down.' Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it."

The third exercise suggests a more heightened exercise in alertness in that it tells you not just to "discern" but to "make yourself alert" in every activity.

"When going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away… when flexing & extending his limbs… when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe & his bowl… when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring… when urinating & defecating… when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert."

This third exercise is directly helpful in fostering right speech and right action as factors of the path, for only when you are alert to what you are doing can you successfully exercise restraint over your words and deeds. Because the development of the path comes under the fourth frame of reference, this is an example of how exercises in this first frame of reference relate directly to exercises in the other frames of reference.

Of the activities described in the second and third exercises, only two—talking and falling asleep—automatically entail leaving the first jhāna (SN 36:11). This means that they provide an excellent opportunity for strengthening the momentum of your concentration throughout the day, and also for making you more sensitive to when the mind is and is not in a concentrated state. As we will see, this is one of the exercises listed under the third frame of reference. So this is another example of the direct connection between exercises focused on the body and the activities described in the other frames of reference.

The fourth exercise in this first frame of reference is one we have already encountered in Chapter Seven, where the passage from AN 10:60 describes it as the perception of the unattractiveness of the body. As in the case of breath meditation, DN 22 adds an analogy to illustrate the nature of the practice.

"Just as if a sack with openings at both ends were full of various kinds of grain—wheat, rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame seeds, husked rice—and a man with good eyesight, pouring it out, were to reflect, 'This is wheat. This is rice. These are mung beans.

These are kidney beans. These are sesame seeds. This is husked rice,' in the same way, the monk reflects on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of unclean things.…"

There are two controversies surrounding this practice. The first comes from SN 54:9, in which a group of monks who contemplate the unattractiveness of the body become so disgusted with their bodies that some of them commit suicide. The Buddha learns of this and, calling together the survivors from the group, encourages them to take up the sixteen steps of breath meditation to allay and dispel any unskillful states that may arise in the mind "just as when, in the last month of the hot season, a great rain-cloud out of season immediately disperses & allays the dust & dirt that have been stirred up."

Now, people who resist the theme of unattractiveness tend to focus on this passage as proof that the perception of unattractiveness is a dangerous and unhealthy meditation theme. However, the discussion of painful practice in AN 4:163, read in conjunction with AN 4:162, shows that there are strong defilements that will respond only to themes of this sort. AN 4:162 identifies painful practice as pertaining to those who are strongly passionate, aversive, or delusional, and who perpetually experience pain and distress born of these defilements. AN 4:163 describes painful practice—which is apparently the practice appropriate for those of this nature—in these terms:

> "There is the case where a monk remains focused on unattractiveness with regard to the body, percipient of loathsomeness with regard to food, percipient of non-delight with regard to the entire world, (and) focused on inconstancy with regard to all fabrications. The perception of death is well-established within him." *— AN 4:163*

In other words, painful practice is one that focuses on unpleasant themes to bring the unruly mind under control. This means that the theme of the unattractiveness of the body is not to be avoided when needed; simply that it has to be used with discretion, and balanced with the more pleasant practices associated with the breath to keep the mind from going off course.

A second controversy surrounding the practice of focusing on the unattractiveness of the body as a meditation theme comes from a superficial reading of AN 4:163. In contrast to the above description of painful practice, the discourse describes pleasant practice with the standard formula for the four jhānas. Some writers have taken this as proof that there is an alternative

path to awakening that does not involve the jhānas, in that the description of painful practice contains no reference to the jhānas at all. We will discuss this point in detail in Appendix Three, but here we can simply note that, according to the description in AN 4:163, both painful and pleasant practice require all five faculties, including the faculty of concentration, to put an end to the effluents. Because the faculty of concentration is defined with the standard formula for the jhānas (SN 48:10), that means that both sorts of practice need jhāna in order to succeed.

The fifth exercise in this first frame of reference is that of analyzing the body, in whatever posture, as being composed of the four physical properties. In Chapter Seven, we encountered two different ways of contemplating the four properties mentioned in MN 62: as models for patient endurance, and as a way of inducing the perception of not-self. Here the description is much shorter:

> **"Just as a dexterous butcher or butcher's apprentice, having killed a cow, would sit at a crossroads cutting it up into pieces, in the same way the monk contemplates this very body—however it stands, however it is disposed—in terms of properties: 'In this body there is the earth property, the water property, the fire property, & the wind property.'"**

What's distinctive about this description of property-meditation is its emphasis on applying this analysis to the body as it's being experienced in the present, and not in the abstract. However, because we know from MN 62 and other discourses that this contemplation can serve a variety of skillful purposes, we can see that this is obviously a case where the description in DN 22 is not meant to be complete. The discourse simply discusses how to remain focused on the body in this way. How to use ardency in developing the contemplation has to be learned from other sources.

In MN 28, for instance, Ven. Sāriputta shows how the contemplation of the body in terms of properties can be used to develop not only patient endurance and the perception of not-self, but also a sense of urgency and courage in the practice. Taking each property one by one, he first notes that the external instances of the property, even though much vaster than its internal instances in your body, are subject to radical change. So why shouldn't the internal instances be subject to similar changes? This reflection leads to a sense of not-self with regard to the body. For example, this is what Ven. Sāriputta notes with regard to the fire property:

Ven. Sāriputta: "Now there comes a time, friends, when the external fire property is provoked and consumes village, town, city, district, & country; and then, coming to the edge of a green district, the edge of a road, the edge of a rocky district, to the water's edge, or to a lush, well-watered area, goes out from lack of sustenance. There comes a time when people try to make fire using a wing-bone & tendon parings.

"So when even in the external fire property—so vast—inconstancy will be discerned, destructibility will be discerned, a tendency to decay will be discerned, changeability will be discerned, then what of this short-lasting body, sustained by clinging, is 'I' or 'mine' or 'what I am'? It has here only a 'no.'" *— MN 28*

In the next step, Ven. Sāriputta notes that reflecting on the body as composed of properties helps to depersonalize any painful verbal or physical attacks, allowing you to bear that contact with more patient endurance, and stirring the mind to develop heightened persistence, mindfulness, and concentration.

Ven. Sāriputta: "Now if other people insult, malign, exasperate, & harass a monk [who has discerned this], he discerns that 'A painful feeling, born of ear-contact, has arisen within me. And that is dependent, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on contact.' And he sees that contact is inconstant, feeling is inconstant, perception is inconstant, consciousness is inconstant. His mind, with that property as its object/support, leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & released.

"And if other people attack the monk in ways that are undesirable, displeasing, & disagreeable—through contact with fists, contact with stones, contact with sticks, or contact with knives—the monk discerns that 'This body is of such a nature contacts with fists come, contacts with stones come, contacts with sticks come, & contacts with knives come. Now the Blessed One has said, in his exhortation of the simile of the saw, "Monks, even if bandits were to carve you up savagely, limb by limb, with a two-handled saw, he among you who let his heart get angered even at that would not be doing my bidding." [See MN 21.] So my persistence will be aroused & untiring, my mindfulness established & unconfused, my body calm & unaroused, my mind centered & unified. And now let contact with fists come to this body, let contact with stones, with sticks, with knives come to this body, for this is how the Buddha's bidding is done.'" *— MN 28*

Finally, Ven. Sāriputta notes that when you have used the contemplation of the properties to focus on developing skillful qualities of mind, this allows you to focus less on the pain of verbal and physical attacks, and more on your success in doing the Buddha's bidding. If you're unable to develop skillful equanimity, you feel mentally pained over that fact. This gives rise to a sense of heightened urgency in the practice. Once you're successful, you feel joy.

> Ven. Sāriputta: "And if, in the monk recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established, he feels apprehensive at that and gives rise to a sense of urgency: 'It is a loss for me, not a gain; ill-gotten for me, not well-gotten, that when I recollect the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established within me.' Just as when a daughter-in-law, on seeing her father-in-law, feels apprehensive and gives rise to a sense of urgency [to please him], in the same way, if, in the monk recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established, he feels apprehensive at that and gives rise to a sense of urgency: 'It is a loss for me, not a gain; ill-gotten for me, not well-gotten, that when I recollect the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established within me.'
>
> "But if, in the monk recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is established, then he is gratified at that. And even to this extent, friends, the monk has accomplished a great deal." *— MN 28*

As we will see in the next section, these feelings of mental pain and joy regarding your progress on the path are classed as "renunciation-based" feelings or feelings "not of the flesh." As MN 137 notes, these feelings should be developed to free the mind from ordinary "house-based" feelings, such as the typical response of outrage over physical or verbal abuse. What this means is that MN 28 gives practical advice in how to use contemplation of the properties to accomplish the general principle that MN 137 recommends. In this way, this passage from MN 28 also shows how focusing on the body as a frame of reference can connect directly with using feelings as a frame of reference as well.

So the contemplation of the properties is not meant to stop simply with the analysis of the body. As MN 62 and MN 28 show, you have to use ardency in directing your reflections based on this exercise to reap its full

results.

The sixth exercise in this first frame of reference is actually a set of nine—contemplating the body in terms of nine stages of the decomposition of a corpse:

> **a corpse cast away in a charnel ground—one day, two days, three days dead—bloated, livid, & festering;**
>
> **a corpse cast away in a charnel ground, being chewed by crows, being chewed by vultures, being chewed by hawks, being chewed by dogs, being chewed by hyenas, being chewed by various other creatures;**
>
> **a skeleton smeared with flesh & blood, connected with tendons;**
>
> **a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, connected with tendons;**
>
> **a skeleton without flesh or blood, connected with tendons;**
>
> **bones detached from their tendons, scattered in all directions—here a hand bone, there a foot bone, here a shin bone, there a thigh bone, here a hip bone, there a back bone, here a rib, there a chest bone, here a shoulder bone, there a neck bone, here a jaw bone, there a tooth, here a skull;**
>
> **the bones whitened, somewhat like the color of shells;**
>
> **the bones piled up, more than a year old;**
>
> **the bones decomposed into a powder.**

In each case, the meditator—

> **applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.'**

This exercise, like the fourth, is a painful one. It's a variation on recollection of death, which we discussed in Chapter Seven. Here the primary emphasis is on developing a sense of dispassion for the body and the pleasures associated with it. This exercise is also a good antidote for pride and for complacency. But as we also noted in Chapter Seven, it can also develop an appreciation for each moment you are able to practice. In this way, it can also lead to a sense of joy.

What's interesting about this exercise, in comparison with the other five in this first frame of reference, is that it's not focused simply on the present. It takes knowledge derived from the past and applies it to the future in such as

way as to induce dispassion in the present. This highlights the role of mindfulness here as a function of memory: You remember what you have seen of other dead bodies and, extrapolating from them, keep in mind the fact that you're not exempt from the condition they have fallen into.

This reflection is not meant to stop with passive acceptance. It's meant as a spur to the practice. Many verses from the Theragāthā and Therīgāthā make this point in vivid terms:

Ven. Mahākāla:

This swarthy woman
[preparing a corpse for cremation]
    —crow-like, enormous—
breaking a thigh & then the other
    thigh,
breaking an arm & then the other
                arm,
cracking open the head,
    like a pot of curds,
she sits with them heaped up beside her.

Whoever, unknowing,
makes acquisitions
    —the fool—
returns over & over
to suffering & stress.
So, discerning,
don't make acquisitions.
    May I never lie
    with my head cracked open
        again. — *Thag 1:16*

Sister Nandā:

"Sick, putrid, unclean:
look, Nandā, at this physical heap.
Through contemplation of the foul,
develop your mind,
make it one, well-centered.

    As this [your body], so that.
    As that, so this.
It gives off a foul stench,

the delight of fools."
Considering it thus,
untiring, both day & night,
I, with my own discernment
    dissecting it,
        saw.
And as I, heedful,
    examined it aptly,
this body—as it had come to be—
was seen inside & out.

Then was I disenchanted with the body
    & dispassionate within:
Heedful, detached,
    calmed was I.
        Unbound. — *Thig 5:4*

It's by encouraging this sense of urgency and disenchantment that the contemplation of death, as the Buddha said (AN 6:19), leads ultimately to the deathless.

B. FEELINGS

Under the topic of feelings in and of themselves, DN 22 provides two lists for categorizing feelings as they occur. The first list simply covers the three kinds of feelings: painful, pleasant, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant. The second list breaks each of these three into two sub-categories: feelings of the flesh *(āmisa)* and feelings not of the flesh *(nirāmisa),* arriving at six types of feelings in all. Feelings of the flesh are physical or mental feelings connected with sensuality; feelings not of the flesh are physical or mental feelings not connected with sensuality, and instead associated with the practice of jhāna (SN 36:31). In each case, you're told to discern when you're feeling a feeling of whichever type.

"When feeling a painful feeling of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling of the flesh.' When feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh.' When feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh.' When feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling

of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling of the flesh.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh.'"

Aside from stating that this way of viewing feelings can carry through all three stages of the practice, DN 22 has nothing more to say on the topic. This is apparently one reason for the common interpretation that you're not meant to do anything to induce one sort of feeling rather than another. You're simply to watch feelings as they happen to come and go of their own accord. This further has led to the interpretation of *satipaṭṭhāna* as an open receptivity that "avoids the two extremes of suppression and reaction."

However, the teaching on dependent co-arising shows that feelings don't just happen. As MN 101 makes abundantly clear, not all feelings are the results of old kamma. Many are the result of new kamma: what you're doing right now. And as SN 22:79 shows, even the potential for feeling resulting from old kamma has to be actualized by present fabrication. Every feeling is fabricated for the sake of having a feeling. This means that every feeling contains an intentional element. As a meditator you want to understand this intentional aspect of feelings and see this process of fabrication in action, which means that you can't view feelings simply as arising on their own. Otherwise you blind yourself to the insight needed for release.

At the same time, just as feelings don't just happen, they also don't just disappear. In their role as mental fabrications, they have causal consequences, shaping the mind in ways that can be either skillful or unskillful. So you have to trace not only where the feelings come from, but also where they lead.

Our normal reaction to painful feelings, in particular, is a serious problem. When experiencing physical pain, we often compound it by getting upset about it. The Buddha's analogy here is of a person shot by one arrow who then shoots himself with a second arrow. Then we try to escape the pain by pursuing sensual pleasure, for we see no other way to escape (SN 36:6). This is detrimental in two ways: We obsess over the feelings—both painful and pleasant—thus defiling the mind; and we often act in unskillful ways to obtain the pleasures we want, thus creating more bad kamma that will lead to further pain down the road.

The Buddha's solution is to develop an alternative escape from pain in a type of pleasure that doesn't involve sensuality: the pleasure of jhāna (MN 14). The discussion in DN 22 alludes to this fact in its statement that the

practice of remaining focused on feelings in and of themselves can carry into the second stage of practice, the development of the establishing of mindfulness (SN 47:40). This shows that it's meant to function within the context of the factors of the noble eightfold path—meaning further that it must accompany the practice of jhāna.

The mention of feelings not of the flesh is also an implicit statement of this fact. SN 36:31 defines pleasure not of the flesh as the pleasure experienced in the first three jhānas. Similarly, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh is equivalent to the feeling of equanimity not of the flesh experienced in the fourth jhāna (SN 48:38). Now, these feelings don't simply come on their own. They're a product of fabrication. They have to be induced. And as the standard similes for the practice of jhāna show, the feelings of pleasure not of the flesh experienced in the first three jhānas aren't simply induced; they're spread and suffused until they permeate and fill the entire body.

"Painful feeling not of the flesh" is nowhere defined in the Canon, but we can derive from the discourses two possible ways of understanding it. On the one hand, it could be the sense of mental displeasure experienced while engaging in the contemplation of the unattractiveness of the body or the perception of death, which—as we have already noted—are painful ways to awakening (AN 4:163). On the other hand, a passage from MN 44 suggests that a painful feeling not of the flesh would be the distress that accompanies this thought: "O when will I enter & remain in the dimension that the noble ones now enter & remain in?" In other words, it's the feeling of distress you experience when contemplating how much you want to attain the goal and you haven't yet attained it. Another example of this sort of distress would be the reflection from MN 28, quoted above in the discussion of the contemplation of the properties of the body: "It is a loss for me, not a gain; ill-gotten for me, not well-gotten, that when I recollect the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established within me."

Painful feelings of this sort are not to be avoided. In other words, you don't try to abandon your desire for the goal, for without that desire the path wouldn't come together. You try to learn how to use this desire skillfully as motivation to move further along the path, like the tension in a bowstring that provides the arrow with the force needed to fly. Only on reaching the goal can you abandon the painful feelings based on this desire, in favor of the rapture, joy, and equanimity that come once release has been attained.

So regardless of how you define it, painful feeling not of the flesh doesn't

just happen. It, too, is a product of fabrication—a fabrication based on knowledge that forms part of the path.

With this typology of feelings in mind we can look more carefully at the Buddha's recommendations for how to regard feelings as factors in a causal process. To begin with, you look at how your practice induces pleasure, and what effect pleasant practice has on the mind. If the effect isn't negative, the pleasure isn't to be rejected. You don't load yourself down with pain simply to show that you can take it. But if pleasant practice does have a negative effect, the duty of ardency is to replace it with a more painful practice.

> "There is the case where a monk, when not loaded down, does not load himself down with pain, nor does he reject pleasure that accords with the Dhamma, although he is not fixated on that pleasure.…
>
> "And further, a monk notices this: 'When I live according to my pleasure, unskillful qualities increase in me & skillful qualities decline. When I exert myself with stress & pain, though, unskillful qualities decline in me & skillful qualities increase. Why don't I exert myself with stress & pain?' So he exerts himself with stress & pain, and while he is exerting himself with stress & pain, unskillful qualities decline in him, & skillful qualities increase. Then at a later time he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was exerting himself with stress & pain. That is why, at a later time, he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain." *— MN 101*

Conversely, the Buddha's simile of the well-tuned lute (AN 6:55) show that if too much pain in the practice leads to restlessness, your persistence should be eased.

Here it's important to note that the Buddha encourages painful practice not for the sake of burning away old kamma. In fact, in an extended discussion in MN 101, he ridicules the idea that painful feelings could have this effect at all. Instead, he encourages you to follow a painful practice, when necessary, to abandon unskillful qualities as they manifest in the present, and to give rise to skillful mental qualities in their stead.

A second way of viewing feelings as factors in a causal process is connected with the active production of feelings not of the flesh. In addition to providing an alternative escape from ordinary pain, the act of developing feelings not of the flesh allows you to gain insight into the process of fabrication that gives rise to feelings, and into the obsessions ordinarily

produced by feelings of the flesh. These insights help lead to release from those obsessions.

> Visākha: "But what is to be abandoned with regard to pleasant feeling? What is to be abandoned with regard to painful feeling? What is to be abandoned with regard to neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling?"
>
> Sister Dhammadinnā: "Passion-obsession is to be abandoned with regard to pleasant feeling. Resistance-obsession is to be abandoned with regard to painful feeling. Ignorance-obsession is to be abandoned with regard to neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling."
>
> Visākha: "Is passion-obsession to be abandoned with regard to all pleasant feeling? Is resistance-obsession to be abandoned with regard to all painful feeling? Is ignorance-obsession to be abandoned with regard to all neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling?"
>
> Sister Dhammadinnā: "No.… There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With that he abandons passion. No passion-obsession gets obsessed there. There is the case where a monk considers, 'O when will I enter & remain in the dimension that those who are noble now enter & remain in?' And as he thus nurses this yearning for the unexcelled liberations, there arises within him sorrow based on that yearning. With that he abandons resistance. No resistance-obsession gets obsessed there. There is the case where a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joy & distress—enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. With that he abandons ignorance. No ignorance-obsession gets obsessed there." *— MN 44*

This shows why feelings of the flesh are not simply to be accepted as they come. If you want to gain insight and release, you have to replace them with feelings not of the flesh to see what obsessions underlie them.

MN 137 makes a similar point in a discussion of mental feelings: joy, grief, and equanimity. It defines these feelings in somewhat different terms from the classification given in DN 22, focusing on the attitude, skillful or unskillful, that produces them. Ordinary "house-based" attitudes regard sensory pleasure as an acquisition or gain, and sensory pain as a loss. More skillful attitudes—based on renunciation—try to see the inconstancy of all

things experienced through the senses. This can lead to renunciation-based grief: "O when will I enter & remain in the dimension that the noble ones now enter & remain in?" This is the same sentiment we just encountered as one of the possible meanings of painful feelings not of the flesh. However, when the perception of inconstancy has a deeper effect on the mind, it can lead to refined feelings of renunciation-based joy and renunciation-based equanimity.

Despite the difference in terms—"house-based" and "renunciation-based," rather than "of the flesh" and "not of the flesh"—the recommendations in MN 137 for gaining escape from house-based grief parallel those in MN 44 for gaining escape from pain of the flesh. Instead of replacing house-based grief with house-based pleasure, you first replace it with renunciation-based grief. You then take that grief as motivation to develop the joy that comes from insight, and then replace that joy with the more peaceful equanimity also coming from insight. So again, the sort of pain that leads to beneficial results is not to be avoided on the path. It's to be actively cultivated until it yields skillful pleasure and equanimity.

MN 137 then gives instructions on how to progress from ordinary equanimity to equanimity not of the flesh—by developing the formless attainments based on the equanimity found in the fourth jhāna—and then beyond that to the non-fashioning of any sense of self around even the highest levels of equanimity. This leads the practice of remaining focused on feelings in and of themselves from the first through the second to the third level of mindfulness practice.

We have already discussed these instructions in detail in Chapter Two. Here we can simply note how they relate to the fact that DN 22 includes feelings not of the flesh in its discussion of this frame of reference: By inducing equanimity not of the flesh, you're in a position to see any subtle unskillful mental states, such as the fashioning of a refined sense of self, that can develop around feelings—much more clearly than when simply experiencing feelings of the flesh. Only when you see these subtle states can you abandon them. Only when you abandon them can you gain release. This is why feelings not of the flesh have to be purposely developed as an essential part of the path.

C. MIND

DN 22's treatment of mind is similar to its treatment of feelings. It simply gives a list of mental states for you to discern when they are present. In this

case, however, the states are listed in pairs. With one exception, each pair consists of an unskillful state and its skillful counterpart. As for the exception —a constricted mind and a scattered mind—both members of the pair are unskillful; they're paired because they represent two extremes between which you have to find a middle way to bring the mind to concentration.

There are eight pairs in all:

a mind with passion / a mind without passion

a mind with aversion / a mind without aversion

a mind with delusion / a mind without delusion

a constricted mind / a scattered mind

an enlarged mind / an unenlarged mind

a surpassed mind / an unsurpassed mind

a concentrated mind / an unconcentrated mind

a released mind / an unreleased mind

An example of the formula repeated for each pair is:

> **"When the mind is released, he discerns, 'The mind is released.' When the mind is not released, he discerns, 'The mind is not released.'"**

Some of the terms in these pairs need to be defined. SN 51:20 identifies a "constricted" mind as one accompanied by sloth and drowsiness; a "scattered" mind as one stirred up by pleasing sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. The term "enlarged" is used, together with "immeasurable / unlimited," in the standard description of the awareness generated in the practice of the brahmavihāras (SN 42:8). According to Ven. Anuruddha in MN 127, however, an enlarged mind is not immeasurable. Its range of awareness is larger than the body but still measurable, ranging in distance from the shade of a tree to the earth bounded by the ocean. A "surpassed" mind is apparently one that has been surpassed either in your own experience or when compared to the experience of those whose awakening is unsurpassed.

These pairs are not mutually exclusive. An unconcentrated mind, for instance, could be scattered with passion, aversion, and delusion all at once. A concentrated mind would also count as enlarged, and—depending on context—either surpassed or unsurpassed, released or unreleased. In other words, it might be unsurpassed in the context of your own experience, but

surpassed by the mind of someone further along on the path. Similarly, a mind in the first jhāna would be released from sensuality, but unreleased from directed thought and evaluation, and so on.

The progression in the list of possible mind states exhibits a feature similar to the progression in the list of feelings. The first three pairs deal with issues pertinent to the mind in all activities; the last five, with issues pertinent to the practice of concentration. In getting the mind to settle down, the first issue to keep in mind is to avoid the extremes of sloth and sensuality. Then you remember to enlarge your awareness and to make the effort to surpass any preliminary level of concentration so that you can bring it to the stillness of full concentration and release.

The implicit message here, as in the case of feelings, is that you are not simply to watch passively as any of these sixteen mind states arise willy-nilly. Instead, you use these pairs of contemplations to keep in mind the issues relevant to bringing the mind to concentration. This point is implicitly supported by the fact that, as with all the exercises and categories in DN 22, the act of keeping these categories in mind is meant to lead to the second stage of practice, where the establishing of mindfulness is developed through cultivating all eight factors of the noble path, including right concentration.

When we look outside DN 22, we find a wealth of explicit encouragement to bring the mind to balance and to replace unskillful mental states with skillful ones. We have already seen one example in Chapter One, in the passage used to define ardency and compunction (Iti 110). Here are two more:

> "There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, 'This desire of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly constricted nor outwardly scattered.' …
>
> "And how is desire overly sluggish? Whatever desire is accompanied by laziness, conjoined with laziness: This is called overly sluggish desire.
>
> "And how is desire overly active? Whatever desire is accompanied by restlessness, conjoined with restlessness: This is called overly active desire.
>
> "And how is desire inwardly constricted? Whatever desire is accompanied by sloth & drowsiness, conjoined with sloth & drowsiness: This is called inwardly constricted desire.

"And how is desire outwardly scattered? Whatever desire is stirred up by the five strands of sensuality, outwardly dispersed & dissipated, this is called outwardly scattered desire.

"[Similarly with the other bases of power: concentration founded on persistence, on intent, and discrimination.]" *— SN 51:20*

"And what are the effluents to be abandoned by destroying? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, doesn't acquiesce to an arisen thought of sensuality. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence.

"Reflecting appropriately, he doesn't acquiesce to an arisen thought of ill will. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence.

"Reflecting appropriately, he doesn't acquiesce to an arisen thought of harmfulness. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence.

"Reflecting appropriately, he doesn't acquiesce to any arisen evil, unskillful qualities. He abandons them, destroys them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence. The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to destroy these things do not arise for him when he destroys them. These are called the effluents to be abandoned by destroying." *— MN 2*

Often this principle is stated as a matter of great urgency, in which one of the roles of mindfulness is to keep this urgency in mind and to stay narrowly focused on it.

"And how is a monk skilled in reading his own mind? Imagine a young woman—or man—fond of adornment, examining the image of her own face in a bright, clean mirror or bowl of clear water: If she saw any dirt or blemish there, she would try to remove it. If she saw no dirt or blemish there, she would be pleased, her resolves fulfilled: 'How fortunate I am! How clean I am!' In the same way, a monk's self-examination is very productive in terms of skillful qualities [if he conducts it in this way]: 'Do I usually remain covetous or not? With thoughts of ill will or not? Overcome by sloth & drowsiness or not? Restless or not? Uncertain or gone beyond uncertainty? Angry or not? With soiled thoughts or unsoiled thoughts? With my body aroused or unaroused? Lazy or with persistence aroused? Unconcentrated or

concentrated?'

"If, on examination, a monk knows, 'I usually remain covetous, with thoughts of ill will, overcome by sloth & drowsiness, restless, uncertain, angry, with soiled thoughts, with my body aroused, lazy, or unconcentrated,' then he should put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head; in the same way, the monk should put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

"But if, on examination, a monk knows, 'I usually remain uncovetous, without thoughts of ill will, free of sloth & drowsiness, not restless, gone beyond uncertainty, not angry, with unsoiled thoughts, with my body unaroused, with persistence aroused, & concentrated,' then his duty is to make an effort in establishing ['tuning'] those very same skillful qualities to a higher degree for the ending of the effluents."

— AN 10:51

So the eight pairs of mind states listed under this frame of reference are not simply a catalog of states that might happen to present themselves randomly to passive awareness. They're categories of mind states to keep in mind as you ardently engage in the fabrications needed to bring the mind to concentration and, further, to the ending of the effluents.

D. MENTAL QUALITIES

Under the topic of the fourth frame of reference, DN 22 lists five sets of categories to keep in mind: the five hindrances, the five clinging-aggregates, the sixfold sense media, the seven factors for awakening, and the four noble truths. As we have already noted, the four noble truths and their duties form the overarching framework for understanding how right mindfulness should function. The remaining sets of categories fall under these truths and the duties appropriate to them. The hindrances, as a cause of stress, are to be abandoned. The clinging-aggregates, as the primary example of the truth of stress, are to be comprehended to the point of dispassion. As for the sixfold sense-media, the discussion in DN 22 focuses on the fetters that arise in dependence on these media—fetters that as a cause of stress should be

abandoned. The seven factors for awakening, as aspects of the path, are to be developed.

What this means is that these categories are intended as frameworks to keep in mind to guide your ardency in trying to fulfill the duties of the four noble truths. DN 22 gives no indication of when a particular framework might be more useful than another, but a few observations might be helpful here. The sixfold sense-media form the framework for the practice of restraint of the senses. The five hindrances and seven factors for awakening are most often treated as guides for what to abandon and what to develop when bringing the mind to concentration. The five clinging-aggregates are a useful framework for inducing dispassion in two circumstances: when you want to analyze any phenomena that would pull you out of concentration into greed and distress with reference to the world; and when you want to develop dispassion for the world of becoming created by the concentration itself. The four noble truths provide an overarching framework for the practice as a whole. As we noted, the description of right mindfulness in MN 117—in which mindfulness circles around the first five factors of the path to bring about right concentration—would count as an application of this framework. It also illustrates how this framework arches over the others in providing guidance in how to bring mindfulness to bear on every part of the path.

It would be impossible to list all the ways in which these frameworks can be put to use. The following discussion is meant simply to provide a few suggestions for further inquiry.

The five hindrances are obstacles to concentration. They are: sensual desire, ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty. The discussion of these hindrances under this fourth frame of reference lists five things to notice with regard to each hindrance: when it is present; when it is absent; how it arises; how—once arisen—it is abandoned; and how there will be no future arising of it once it has been abandoned. This last point refers to the stage of the practice when that particular hindrance is gone for good. If we identify the hindrances simply as hindrances to concentration, this stage would be stream entry in the case of uncertainty, and non-return in every other case, for non-return is the level of awakening where concentration is fully mastered (AN 3:85 [Thai: 3:87]). If we identify the hindrances with the deeper and subtler fetters that share their names, then uncertainty would be overcome with stream entry; sensuality and ill will with non-return; and restlessness with arahantship (MN 118; AN 10:13).

In either interpretation, this framework can be used all the way from the

beginning stages of concentration practice to the transcendent attainments.

The formula for each hindrance follows a standard pattern. Here is the formula for sensual desire:

> **"There is the case where, there being sensual desire present within, a monk discerns, 'There is sensual desire present within me.' Or, there being no sensual desire present within, he discerns, 'There is no sensual desire present within me.' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen sensual desire. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of sensual desire once it has arisen. And he discerns how there is no further appearance in the future of sensual desire that has been abandoned."**

SN 46:51 gives an overall account of how to use appropriate attention to starve the hindrances.

> "Now, what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *sensual desire,* or for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen? There is the theme of unattractiveness. To foster appropriate attention to it: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen sensual desire, or for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen.
>
> "And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *ill will,* or for the growth & increase of ill will once it has arisen? There is the release of the mind [through good will, compassion, empathetic joy, or equanimity]. To foster appropriate attention to that: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen ill will, or for the growth & increase of ill will once it has arisen.
>
> "And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *sloth & drowsiness,* or for the growth & increase of sloth & drowsiness once it has arisen? There is the potential for effort, the potential for exertion, the potential for striving. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen sloth & drowsiness, or for the growth & increase of sloth & drowsiness once it has arisen.
>
> "And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *restlessness & anxiety,* or for the growth & increase of restlessness & anxiety once it has arisen? There is stillness of awareness. To foster appropriate attention to that: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen restlessness & anxiety, or for the growth & increase of restlessness & anxiety once it has arisen.

"And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *uncertainty*, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen uncertainty, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen." *— SN 46:51*

Many discourses give further instructions for bringing appropriate attention to the potentials that starve specific hindrances. Here are some instructions for dealing with drowsiness:

Once the Blessed One was living among the Bhaggas in the Deer Park at Bhesakaḷā Grove, near Crocodile Haunt. At that time Ven. MahāMoggallāna [prior to his awakening] sat nodding near the village of Kallavālaputta, in Magadha. The Blessed One saw this with his purified divine eye, surpassing the human, and as soon as he saw this —just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—disappeared from the Deer Park… appeared right in front of Ven. MahāMoggallāna, and sat down on a prepared seat. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to Ven. MahāMoggallāna, "Are you nodding, Moggallāna? Are you nodding?"

"Yes, lord."

"Well then, Moggallāna, whatever perception you have in mind when drowsiness descends on you, don't attend to that perception, don't pursue it. It's possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then recall to your awareness the Dhamma as you have heard & memorized it, re-examine it & ponder it over in your mind.…

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then repeat aloud in detail the Dhamma as you have heard & memorized it. It's possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then pull both you earlobes and rub your limbs with your hands.…

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then get up from your seat and, after washing your eyes out with water, look around in all directions and upward to the major stars & constellations.

…

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then attend to the perception of light, resolve on the perception of daytime, [dwelling] by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, develop a brightened mind.…

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then—percipient of what lies in front & behind—set a distance to meditate walking back & forth, your senses inwardly immersed, your mind not straying outwards.…

"But if by doing this you don't shake off your drowsiness, then—reclining on your right side—take up the lion's posture, one foot placed on top of the other, mindful, alert, with your mind set on getting up. As soon as you wake up, get up quickly, with the thought, 'I won't stay indulging in the pleasure of lying down, the pleasure of reclining, the pleasure of drowsiness.'

"That, Moggallāna, is how should you train yourself." *— AN 7:58*

The five clinging-aggregates form the summary definition of stress under the first noble truth. They are: the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, and the consciousness clinging-aggregate. The term "aggregate" *(khandha)* can also mean "group" or "mass." Some authors have defined the aggregates as the constituent parts of what makes a person, but this is a mistake, for the Buddha said explicitly that they are not to be seen as "what I am" (SN 22:59). Instead, they are better defined as the elements of experience that form the raw material from which we create a sense of self (SN 22:2): what the Buddha calls "I-making" and "my-making." Without clinging, these aggregates are neutral. With clinging, they're stressful (SN 22:48).

SN 22:79 defines the individual aggregates, not with nouns, but with verbs, indicating that all of them—including form (physical phenomenon; the body as felt from within)—are best regarded as activities.

"And why do you call it 'form' *[rūpa]?* Because it is afflicted *[ruppati],* thus it is called 'form.' Afflicted with what? With cold & heat & hunger & thirst, with the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles.…

"And why do you call it 'feeling'? Because it feels, thus it is called 'feeling.' What does it feel? It feels pleasure, it feels pain, it feels neither pleasure nor pain.…

"And why do you call it 'perception'? Because it perceives, thus it is called 'perception.' What does it perceive? It perceives blue, it perceives

yellow, it perceives red, it perceives white.…

"And why do you call them 'fabrications'? Because they fabricate fabricated things, thus they are called 'fabrications.' What do they fabricate as a fabricated thing? For the sake of form-ness, they fabricate form as a fabricated thing. For the sake of feeling-ness, they fabricate feeling as a fabricated thing. For the sake of perception-hood… For the sake of fabrication-hood… For the sake of consciousness-hood, they fabricate consciousness as a fabricated thing.…

"And why do you call it 'consciousness'? Because it cognizes, thus it is called consciousness. What does it cognize? It cognizes sour, it cognizes bitter, it cognizes pungent, it cognizes sweet, it cognizes alkaline, it cognizes non-alkaline, it cognizes salty, it cognizes unsalty." *— SN 22:79*

On the surface, this passage doesn't draw an obvious distinction between the aggregates of perception and consciousness. However, there may be some significance in the fact that consciousness is illustrated with an example from the more passive sense of taste, and perception with an example from the more active sense of sight. Consciousness is somewhat more passive than perception in that its main duty is to register the presence of a phenomenon at the senses; perception is more active in labeling it and giving it a meaning (MN 18).

The Canon contains many instructions for how to comprehend the clinging-aggregates to the point of dispassion. DN 22 recommends which aspects of the clinging-aggregates should be kept in mind when doing this:

"There is the case where a monk (discerns): 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling… Such is perception… Such are fabrications… Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.'"

In other words, you look for what the aggregates are, how they are caused, and how they disappear. The word "such" in this formula seems to indicate a direct observation of these aggregates as they are happening. SN 22:5 connects this level of direct observation to the practice of concentration:

"Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be?

"The origination & disappearance of form… of feeling… of

perception… of fabrications… of consciousness.

"And what is the origination of form… of feeling… of perception… of fabrications… of consciousness? There is the case where one relishes, welcomes, & remains fastened. To what? One relishes form, welcomes it, & remains fastened to it. While one is relishing form, welcoming it, & remaining fastened to it, delight arises. Any delight in form is clinging. With that clinging as a condition there is becoming. With becoming as a condition there is birth. With birth as a condition then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all come into play. Thus is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress. [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

"And what is the disappearance of form… of feeling… of perception… of fabrications… of consciousness? There is the case where one does not relish, welcome or remain fastened. To what? One does not relish form, welcome it, or remain fastened to it. While one is not relishing form, welcoming it, or remaining fastened to it, one's delight in form ceases. From the cessation of that delight, clinging ceases. From the cessation of clinging, becoming ceases. From the cessation of becoming, birth ceases. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Thus is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress. [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]" *— SN 22:5*

As Ven. Sāriputta notes in SN 22:85, when a meditator analyzes experience into aggregates in this way, he/she will develop a sense of dispassion for them, seeing them as inconstant, stressful, not-self, fabricated, and murderous. The ability to analyze distractions to concentration in this way would help strengthen the concentration by inducing disenchantment with any possible distraction. And as we have already seen in Chapter Three, in the passage from AN 9:36, this analysis can then be turned on the concentration itself, after it is mastered, to bring about total release.

The sixfold sense-media are the six senses (counting the mind as the sixth) and their respective objects. The senses themselves are called "internal"; their objects, "external." As DN 22 points out, the framework to keep in mind here consists not only of the senses, but also of the issue of how fetters arise in relationship to the senses.

Here the word "fetter" apparently doesn't denote the standard list of ten fetters, for several discourses—including SN 35:191–192—connect the sixfold

sense-media particularly with the arising of the fetters of desire and passion.

> Ven. Sāriputta: "Suppose that a black ox and a white ox were joined with a single collar or yoke. If someone were to say, 'The black ox is the fetter of the white ox, the white ox is the fetter of the black'—speaking this way, would he be speaking rightly?"
>
> Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "No, my friend. The black ox is not the fetter of the white ox, nor is the white ox the fetter of the black. The single collar or yoke by which they are joined: That is the fetter there."
>
> Ven. Sāriputta: "In the same way, the eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye. Whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there. The ear is not the fetter of sounds.… The nose is not the fetter of aromas.… The tongue is not the fetter of flavors.… The body is not the fetter of tactile sensations.… The intellect is not the fetter of ideas, nor are ideas the fetter of the intellect. Whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there." *— SN 35:191*

The formula in DN 22 for each of the sense media parallels that for each of the five hindrances. You look for: when the fetter related to that sense is present; when it is absent; how it arises; how—once arisen—it is abandoned; and how there will be no future arising of it once it has been abandoned. And again, as with the hindrances, this last point refers to the stage of the practice when that fetter is gone for good, which means that this framework can be used all the way from the beginning stages of the practice to the attainment of arahantship, where the subtlest passions—for the form and formless phenomena experienced in the four jhānas and the five formless attainments—are abandoned once and for all.

Here is the formula for eye and forms:

> **"There is the case where he discerns the eye, he discerns forms, he discerns the fetter that arises dependent on both. He discerns how there is the arising of an unarisen fetter. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of a fetter once it has arisen. And he discerns how there is no further appearance in the future of a fetter that has been abandoned."**

The formula doesn't indicate a particular context for practicing this frame of reference, but when we compare it to other passages in the discourses, it seems to fit best with the practice of restraint of the senses. The discourses

contain many descriptions of this practice. The most interesting, from the point of view of the establishing of mindfulness, are those describing this practice as best based on mindfulness immersed in the body.

In Chapter One we have already encountered the simile from SN 47:20, in which mindfulness immersed in the body is depicted as the bowl of oil that a man has to stay focused on while exercising extreme restraint of the senses so that his head doesn't get cut off. Because, as MN 119 notes, "mindfulness immersed in the body" covers any of the six exercises mentioned under the first frame of reference, this would count as at least one instance in which you would be sensitive to the categories in the fourth frame of reference while staying focused on the exercises listed under the first.

Another passage makes the connection between these two exercises even more explicit:

> "And what is lack of restraint? There is the case where a monk, seeing a form with the eye, is obsessed with pleasing forms, is repelled by unpleasing forms, and remains with body-mindfulness unestablished, with limited awareness. He doesn't discern, as it has come to be, the awareness-release, the discernment-release where any evil, unskillful mental qualities that have arisen utterly cease without remainder. [Similarly with the other sense media: ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.]
>
> "Just as if a person, catching six animals of different ranges, of different habitats, were to bind them with a strong rope. Catching a snake, he would bind it with a strong rope. Catching a crocodile… a bird… a dog… a hyena… a monkey, he would bind it with a strong rope. Binding them all with a strong rope, and tying a knot in the middle, he would set chase to them.
>
> "Then those six animals, of different ranges, of different habitats, would each pull toward its own range & habitat. The snake would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the anthill.' The crocodile would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the water.' The bird would pull, thinking, 'I'll fly up into the air.' The dog would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the village.' The hyena would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the charnel ground.' The monkey would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the forest.' And when these six animals became internally exhausted, they would submit, they would surrender, they would come under the sway of whichever among them was the strongest. In the same way, when a monk whose mindfulness immersed in the body is undeveloped & unpursued, the eye pulls

toward pleasing forms, while unpleasing forms are repellent. The ear pulls toward pleasing sounds.… The nose pulls toward pleasing aromas.… The tongue pulls toward pleasing flavors.… The body pulls toward pleasing tactile sensations.… The intellect pulls toward pleasing ideas, while unpleasing ideas are repellent. This, monks, is lack of restraint.

"And what is restraint? There is the case where a monk, seeing a form with the eye, is not obsessed with pleasing forms, is not repelled by unpleasing forms, and remains with body-mindfulness established, with immeasurable awareness. He discerns, as it has come to be, the awareness-release, the discernment-release where all evil, unskillful mental qualities that have arisen utterly cease without remainder. [Similarly with the other sense media.]

"Just as if a person, catching six animals of different ranges, of different habitats, were to bind them with a strong rope… and tether them to a strong post or stake.

"Then those six animals, of different ranges, of different habitats, would each pull toward its own range & habitat.… And when these six animals became internally exhausted, they would stand, sit, or lie down right there next to the post or stake. In the same way, when a monk whose mindfulness immersed in the body is developed & pursued, the eye doesn't pull toward pleasing forms, and unpleasing forms are not repellent. The ear doesn't pull toward pleasing sounds… the nose doesn't pull toward pleasing aromas… the tongue doesn't pull toward pleasing tastes… the body doesn't pull toward pleasing tactile sensations… the intellect doesn't pull toward pleasing ideas, and unpleasing ideas are not repellent. This, monks, is restraint.

"The 'strong post or stake' is a term for mindfulness immersed in the body." *— SN 35:206*

As we will see at the end of this chapter, when we discuss the relationships among the various frames of reference, there is every reason to believe that the pattern we observed in MN 118—that the last three frames of reference can be practiced while paying attention to the first—applies in DN 22 as well. The fact that restraint of the senses is best based on mindfulness immersed in the body—the stake or post that keeps it from running away—is an explicit illustration of this point.

The seven factors for awakening have already been discussed in Chapter Six. DN 22's main contribution to this topic is the formula it supplies for each

factor. Because these factors are often presented as the skillful converse of the five hindrances, it's not surprising that the formula here is the converse of that for the five hindrances. You notice when the factor is present, when it is absent, how to give rise to it; and how—once it is arisen—there is the culmination of its development. For example:

> **"There is the case where, there being mindfulness as a factor for awakening present within, he discerns, 'Mindfulness as a factor for awakening is present within me.' Or, there being no mindfulness as a factor for awakening present within, he discerns, 'Mindfulness as a factor for awakening is not present within me.' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen mindfulness as a factor for awakening. And he discerns how there is the culmination of the development of mindfulness as a factor for awakening once it has arisen."**

Because the last point in this formula refers to the full development of the path, this frame of reference can be applied all the way from the beginning stages of concentration practice up to the threshold of awakening where the path reaches a point of culmination.

Just as SN 46:51 provides instructions for using appropriate attention to starve the hindrances, it also provides similar instructions for feeding the factors for awakening.

> "Now, what is the food for the arising of unarisen *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of mindfulness… once it has arisen? There are qualities that act as a foothold for mindfulness as a factor for awakening. [According to SN 47:16, these are well-purified virtue & views made straight; according to MN 118, they would include the qualities fostered by the sixteen steps of breath meditation.] To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen mindfulness as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of mindfulness… once it has arisen.
>
> "And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities… once it has arisen? There are qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities… once

it has arisen.

"And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *persistence* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of persistence… once it has arisen? There is the potential for effort, the potential for exertion, the potential for striving. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen persistence as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of persistence… once it has arisen.

"And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *rapture* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture… once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for rapture as a factor for awakening. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen rapture as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture… once it has arisen.

"And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *calm* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of calm… once it has arisen? There is physical calm & there is mental calm. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen calm as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of calm… once it has arisen.

"And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *concentration* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of concentration… once it has arisen? There are themes for calm, themes for non-distraction [these are the four establishings of mindfulness]. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen concentration as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of concentration… once it has arisen.

"And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *equanimity* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of equanimity… once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for equanimity as a factor for awakening. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen equanimity as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of equanimity… once it has arisen." — *SN 46:51*

Notice the way in which the feeding of some of the factors for awakening is identical to the starving of some of the hindrances. The act of feeding analysis of qualities is identical with the starving of uncertainty; the feeding of persistence is identical with the starving of sloth and drowsiness. The

feeding of calm and concentration is nearly identical with the starving of restlessness and anxiety. This overlap is apparently one of the reasons why the seven factors are often presented as the converse of the hindrances.

As we have already noted with regard to rapture at the beginning of Chapter Seven, some of the instructions for feeding the factors for awakening in this passage are fairly opaque. These instructions are best read as a reminder that you have to learn how to observe from your own internal investigation and experience what the potentials for the factors for awakening might be, and to keep those observations in mind to develop them further.

The four noble truths are presented in DN 22 in great detail. When we compare the discussion here to the standard discussion of the four noble truths given in other discourses, two features stand out. The first is that terms left undefined in the standard formula for the first noble truth are here defined with many examples.

Even more important for the practice, though, is the second distinctive feature here: a long list under the second and third noble truths, showing where to focus attention to see craving arising and where to abandon it so that it will cease. As the list shows, the spots where craving arises are the same spots where you can develop the dispassion needed to abandon it. The list of spots is long, but it can be summarized as follows:

the external sense media;

the internal sense media;

consciousness at the sense media;

contact at the sense media;

feeling born of that contact;

perception of the external sense media;

intention for the external sense media;

craving for the external sense media;

thought directed at the external sense media;

evaluation of the external sense media.

All of these spots are factors or sub-factors in dependent co-arising. The first five are the immediate predecessors of craving in the standard sequence of conditions. Craving, of course, is craving itself. Feeling occurs both prior to contact, as a sub-factor of both fabrication and name-and-form, and after contact, as a factor on its own. The remaining factors occur prior to contact:

perception, directed thought, and evaluation as sub-factors of fabrication; and intention as a sub-factor of name-and-form.

The message of this list is that craving can be abandoned at any of these spots. This list is thus an illustration of the principle set out in MN 9 and Sn 3:12: that knowledge in terms of the four noble truths can be applied at any spot in the causal sequence to bring it to an end.

The inclusion of directed thought and evaluation in this list also draws attention to the point discussed in AN 9:36, that dispassion for the aggregates can be developed by observing them in their role as constituent factors of jhāna. In fact, if we take craving as identical to desire—as the Buddha does in SN 42:11—then all of the factors of this list can be found in the list of constituent factors that Ven. Sāriputta discerns while practicing jhāna in MN 111: *directed thought*, *evaluation*, rapture, *pleasure*, singleness of mind, *contact*, *feeling*, *perception*, *intention*, *consciousness*, *desire*, decision, persistence, mindfulness, *equanimity* (under *feeling*), & attention.

What's distinctive about the discussion in DN 22 is that it relates all of these factors and sub-factors to the six sense media, i.e., the "world" as defined in SN 35:82. To focus attention right at these factors means to regard them as events, in and of themselves, and not in terms of whatever sense of world might be created out of them. Because the worlds of becoming created by the practice of jhāna—and detected at the sixth sense, the intellect—would come under the word, *world*, this approach can be used to examine craving at contact not only at the normal sensory level, but also at the level of the mind in right concentration, when you're in contact with the factors of jhāna.

To see these factors and sub-factors as events—divorced from any meaning that they might have in relation to any world, simply arising and passing away in line with the conditions of ignorance and fabrication—helps to instill a sense of dispassion for them. This dispassion undercuts the tendency for craving to arise right at these events—which means that this frame of reference is especially useful in subduing greed and distress both for the world outside one's concentration, and ultimately for the practice of concentration itself. In this, it parallels the steps of the fourth tetrad in MN 118, in which the contemplation of inconstancy leads ultimately to the contemplation of relinquishment of all fabricated phenomena, including the path.

E. FOUR IN ONE

DN 22 doesn't describe the practical relationship among these four frames of reference. This is in line with the limited range of questions framing the discourse: They focus simply on what it means to keep a particular framework in mind, without explicitly treating the other questions surrounding that framework within the standard satipaṭṭhāna formula. To get some idea of the relationship among these frames of reference, we have to look to other discourses.

In particular, it's useful to look to MN 118 for insight into this area. Three points from that discourse are worth investigating to see how they might apply here.

1) The first frame of reference forms the foundation for the other three. In other words, you can practice focusing on feelings, mind states, or mental qualities while being mindful and alert to the body in and of itself.

2) The fourth frame of reference is useful primarily for keeping unskillful mental states at bay. In other words, it frames attention in a way that's helpful for subduing greed and distress with reference to the world outside the focus of your concentration, and ultimately to the world of becoming induced by the concentration itself.

3) The practice of establishing mindfulness on any of the four frames of reference can bring the seven factors for awakening to the culmination of their development; and, through that culmination, lead to clear knowing and release.

When we compare these points from MN 118 to what we've observed in DN 22, we find that there are good reasons for seeing the same relations functioning here. This isn't necessarily the only way to understand the relationships among the four frames of reference in establishing mindfulness, but it is a good place to start in developing an understanding that both penetrates the content of DN 22 and ponders its meaning in its context within the rest of the Canon: the type of penetrating and pondering the Buddha recommends in MN 95 as prerequisites to the practice.

1) With regard to the first point, there are at least three reasons to believe that you can practice the last three frames of reference while staying focused on any of the exercises listed in the first. The first reason is that the observations made in MN 118 relating the sixteen steps to the four establishings of mindfulness apply here as well: the various ways of focusing on the body all come under the topic of "body"; attention to the body would count as the intentional element contained in feeling; mindfulness of the

body requires steady mindfulness and alertness; and the abandoning of greed and distress would be accompanied by the mental quality of equanimity, which is the last factor for awakening.

As we noted in Chapter Six, the formula for establishing mindfulness on the body in and of itself —"One remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world"—implicitly involves feelings, mind states, and mental qualities. The act of remaining focused on the body fabricates feelings; alertness and mindfulness are mind states; and the act of subduing greed and distress with reference to the world involves mental qualities. This means that establishing mindfulness on the first frame of reference provides a good opportunity to view the other three frames in action in a way that sees their causal interactions, while at the same time providing a "post or stake" to help keep those interactions from wandering off into distraction.

The second reason for viewing the act of establishing mindfulness on the body in and of itself as a foundation for the other three establishings of mindfulness is that DN 22 gives specific mindfulness exercises only under the first frame of reference; the remaining frames simply list categories of events to discern as they occur. Again, as SN 35:206 notes, the exercise of staying with the body as a frame of reference provides an excellent grounding—a strong stake or post—to keep the mind from getting pulled away by any meanings attributed to feelings or by the content of mental states. Mindfulness of the body keeps your focus firmly grounded in a spot where feelings, mind states, and mental qualities can be observed simply as actions or events without reference to meaning or content.

At the same time, the exercises in the first frame of reference provide an ideal opportunity for giving rise to the skillful feelings, mind states, and mental qualities that are implicitly favored in the lists provided for the last three frames of reference. We have already noted, in our discussion of the exercises under the first frame of reference, how specific exercises focused on the body also relate to the other frames of reference. For example, the practice of developing alertness to all the body's activities provides a foundation for developing right speech and right action, factors of the path listed under the fourth frame of reference. The same exercise strengthens concentrated states of mind, which are listed under the third. The contemplation of the elements helps to foster feelings not of the flesh, which are listed under the second.

These interrelationships connect directly to the third reason for viewing the act of establishing mindfulness on the body in and of itself as a

foundation for the other three establishings of mindfulness: The practice of right concentration necessarily involves all four frames of reference. As we have seen, all the exercises and categories that DN 22 lists under the four frames relate explicitly or implicitly to the practice of concentration. Even the categories of feelings and mind states—which at first glance seem simply to encourage a passive registering of whatever arises—turn out, when viewed in the larger context of the discourses, to be categories of events useful to keep in mind when bringing the mind to concentration. When you concentrate on the body, you have to deal with feelings, mind states, and mental qualities in a way that helps strengthen your focus, for they are all present right there. For concentration to be truly unified, all four frames have to work together. Otherwise, they pull your focus apart.

So, for these three reasons, it seems best to view the last three frames of reference as guides to fruitful ways of directing ardency when you focus on any of the exercises in the first.

2) As for the second point—that the sets of categories listed in DN 22 under the fourth frame of reference are useful primarily for subduing greed and distress with reference to the world—this point applies directly to four of the five sets: the five hindrances, the five clinging-aggregates, the sixfold sense media, and the four noble truths. The discussion under the hindrances explicitly deals with points to keep in mind when dealing with unskillful mental qualities, as does the discussion of the fetters associated with the sixfold sense media. The five clinging-aggregates, as we have seen, are a useful framework for undercutting passion. And as we have seen under the discussion of the four noble truths, DN 22 focuses special attention on the spots where craving arises in conjunction with the sixfold sense media, and where dispassion can be developed to abandon it.

In all these cases, these frameworks are useful for undercutting passion not only when the mind is surrounded with unskillful mental qualities that threaten to derail its concentration, but also when it has reached the stage where it's ready to go beyond attachment to its mastery of concentration so as to reach total release.

As for the seven factors for awakening, these deal more directly with qualities to develop around the focus of concentration, and less on qualities to subdue or abandon. However, two of its factors—the analysis of qualities, with its focus on the distinction between skillful and unskillful qualities; and persistence, in its effort to abandon unskillful qualities—are directly relevant to the process of subduing. And the list as a whole helps indirectly in subduing greed and distress in two ways: (1) The simple act of developing

skillful qualities and finding joy in them, in and of itself, helps to induce dispassion for unskillful qualities. (2) As MN 118 points out, the seven factors for awakening, when combined with heightened concentration and heightened insight—dependent on seclusion, on dispassion, on cessation, resulting in letting go—lead to clear knowing and total release. This is the ultimate abandoning of any possible greed and distress.

This is why the discussion of all these frameworks in DN 22 seems to parallel the role of the fourth tetrad in breath meditation in subduing greed and distress with reference to the world.

3) As for the third point—that each of the four establishings of mindfulness can lead to the cultivation of the seven factors for awakening and, through them, to clear knowing and release: We have noted many times that all four establishings of mindfulness have to be used together in the development of right concentration. Still, individual meditators will find that the emphasis of their focus will shift from one frame of reference to another in this process, and may find one frame more fruitful than others. Their practice will thus be dominated by that frame. But regardless of the frame, the pattern is always the same. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the "wheel" format of DN 22 makes the practical point that every exercise listed in the discourse can be developed through three levels: the establishing of mindfulness; the development of the establishing of mindfulness; and the equipoise of non-fashioning, where mindfulness is impersonal, independent of anything in the world. The first two levels entail the cultivation of right concentration based on right view, right effort, and right mindfulness, the same progression of factors found in the seven factors for awakening. The final stage of non-fashioning, independent of anything in the world, adds the elements of seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, resulting in letting go (MN 118) that enable the seven factors to lead to clear knowing and release.

This means that any of the frames of reference listed in DN 22 can be used to develop the seven factors for awakening and can lead, through them, all the way to the goal of ending suffering and stress.

So even though DN 22 doesn't explicitly describe the relations among the four frames of reference, or their relation to the seven factors for awakening, we can apply the framework provided by MN 118 to gain insight into how these qualities can be coordinated to provide a guide to ardency from the beginning to the end of the path to total unbinding.

CHAPTER TEN

Why

The Buddha begins and ends DN 22 by reminding his listeners of the reasons for practicing the establishings of mindfulness. In both his opening and closing statements, he describes this practice as a path going one way only to a desirable goal.

> **"This is a path going one way only *[ekāyana magga]* for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness."**

As a preface to his closing statements, the Buddha adds that this path is relatively short—depending, of course, on the ardency with which it is pursued.

> **"Now, if anyone would develop these four establishings of mindfulness in this way for seven years, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.**
>
> **"Let alone seven years. If anyone would develop these four establishings of mindfulness in this way for six years… five… four… three… two years… one year… seven months… six months… five… four… three… two months… one month… half a month, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.**
>
> **"Let alone half a month. If anyone would develop these four establishings of mindfulness in this way for seven days, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."**

We noted in Chapter One that an important aspect of right view lies in understanding the right motivation for following the path, and that one of the duties of right mindfulness is to keep this right motivation in mind. So

it's fitting that the Buddha would begin and end his discussion of *what* constitutes the practice of keeping a correct frame of reference in mind with a reminder of *why* the frame is correct: It helps take you directly to freedom.

The directness of the path is indicated not only by the speed with which it can potentially reach the goal, but also by the Pāli term *ekāyana magga.*

The term *ekāyana* can be read as a compound of *eka* (one) with either *ayana* (going; way) or *āyana* (producing; approaching; way). For many decades this term was mistranslated as "the only way," but more recently, translators—beginning with Ven. Ñāṇamoli—have noted that the phrase *ekāyana magga* appears in a series of similes in MN 12 where it reveals its idiomatic sense. In each of the similes, the Buddha describes his knowledge of the destination of an individual on a particular path of practice. He sees that the way the individual conducts himself will lead inevitably to a particular destination. He then compares his knowledge to that of a person seeing an individual following an ekāyana magga to a particular destination and knowing that the individual will have to end up there for sure. For the similes to work, *ekāyana magga* requires the sense, not of an only way, but of a way that goes to only one destination. In other words, an ekāyana magga is a path that doesn't fork—one that, as long as you follow it, takes you to a single, inevitable goal.

Of the similes in MN 12, one deals with an ekāyana magga to unbinding—which, of course, would apply to the practice of right mindfulness:

> "Suppose that there were a lotus pond with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water; with restful banks, refreshing; and not far from it was a dense forest grove. A man—scorched with heat, overcome by heat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty—would come along a path going one way only *[ekāyana magga]* directed to that lotus pond. A man with good eyes, on seeing him, would say, 'The way this individual has practiced, the way he conducts himself, and the path he has entered are such that he will come to that lotus pond.' Then at a later time he would see him—having plunged into the lotus pond, having bathed & drunk & relieved all his disturbance, exhaustion, & fever, and having come back out—sitting or lying down in the forest grove, experiencing feelings that are exclusively pleasant.
>
> "In the same way, Sāriputta, there is the case where—having thus encompassed awareness with awareness—I know of a certain individual: 'The way this individual has practiced, the way he conducts himself, and the path he has entered are such that he will, through the ending of the effluents, enter & remain in the effluent-free awareness-

> release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here-&-now.' Then at a later time I see him, through the ending of the effluents—having entered & remaining in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here-&-now—experiencing feelings that are exclusively pleasant." *— MN 12*

This is the sense in which the four establishings of mindfulness are a path going one way only.

Some people have asked why the Buddha would apply this epithet specifically to the four establishings of mindfulness when he doesn't use it to honor any other factor in the noble eightfold path? He doesn't even use it to describe the path as a whole. What's so special about right mindfulness?

One theory is that the Buddha wanted to distinguish right mindfulness from the forked paths of jhāna or the brahmavihāras, which can go either all the way to awakening or just to a pleasant rebirth. However, as we have seen, the Buddha made no sharp distinction between the establishing of mindfulness and the jhāna of right concentration. In fact, he described the two factors as intimately intertwined.

A more likely interpretation relates to the role the Buddha identified for right mindfulness as the supervisor of the path. Its ability to keep in mind the framework provided by right view—along with the duties appropriate to that framework and the motivation for following them—is what keeps the fabrications of the practice going in the right direction each step of the way. Together with right view and right effort, right mindfulness circles around each factor of the noble eightfold path, pointing them all straight to right concentration. It also circles around right concentration, reminding you of how and why to use it as a basis for developing the discernment leading to a happiness totally unfabricated and free. Even those who have fully attained that freedom find right mindfulness to be a pleasant abiding in the here-and-now.

That's why it's special.

APPENDIX ONE

MAJJHIMA NIKĀYA 118

The Ānāpānasati Sutta

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Sāvatthī in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother, together with many well-known elder disciples—Ven. Sāriputta, Ven. MahāMoggallāna, Ven. MahāKassapa, Ven. MahāKaccāyana, Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita, Ven. MahāKappina, Ven. MahāCunda, Ven. Revata, Ven. Ānanda, and other well-known elder disciples. On that occasion the elder monks were teaching & instructing. Some elder monks were teaching & instructing ten monks, some were teaching & instructing twenty monks, some were teaching & instructing thirty monks, some were teaching & instructing forty monks. The new monks, being taught & instructed by the elder monks, were discerning grand, successive distinctions.

Now on that occasion—the uposatha day of the fifteenth, the full-moon night of the Pavāraṇā ceremony—the Blessed One was seated in the open air surrounded by the community of monks. Surveying the silent community of monks, he addressed them:

"Monks, I am content with this practice. I am content at heart with this practice. So arouse even more intense persistence for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. I will remain right here at Sāvatthī (for another month) through the 'White Water-lily' Month, the fourth month of the rains."

The monks in the countryside heard, "The Blessed One, they say, will remain right there at Sāvatthī through the White Water-lily Month, the fourth month of the rains." So they left for Sāvatthī to see the Blessed One.

Then the elder monks taught & instructed the new monks even more intensely. Some elder monks were teaching & instructing ten monks, some were teaching & instructing twenty monks, some were teaching & instructing thirty monks, some were teaching & instructing forty monks. The new monks, being taught & instructed by the elder monks, were discerning grand, successive distinctions.

Now on that occasion—the uposatha day of the fifteenth, the full-moon night of the White Water-lily Month, the fourth month of the rains—the Blessed One was seated in the open air surrounded by the community of monks. Surveying the silent community of monks, he addressed them:

"Monks, this assembly is free from idle chatter, devoid of idle chatter, and is established on pure heartwood: such is this community of monks, such is this assembly. The sort of assembly that is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect, an incomparable field of merit for the world: such is this community of monks, such is this assembly. The sort of assembly to which a small gift, when given, becomes great, and a great gift greater: such is this community of monks, such is this assembly. The sort of assembly that is rare to see in the world: such is this community of monks, such is this assembly—the sort of assembly that it would be worth traveling for leagues, taking along provisions, in order to see.

"In this community of monks there are monks who are arahants, whose effluents are ended, who have reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, laid to waste the fetter of becoming, and who are released through right gnosis: Such are the monks in this community of monks.

"In this community of monks there are monks who, with the wasting away of the five lower fetters, are due to arise spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, destined never again to return from that world: Such are the monks in this community of monks.

"In this community of monks there are monks who, with the wasting away of (the first) three fetters, and with the attenuation of passion, aversion, & delusion, are once-returners, who—on returning only once more to this world—will make an ending to stress: such are the monks in this community of monks.

"In this community of monks there are monks who, with the wasting away of (the first) three fetters, are stream-enterers, steadfast, never again destined for states of woe, headed for self-awakening: Such are the monks in this community of monks.

"In this community of monks there are monks who remain devoted to the development of the four establishings of mindfulness… the four right exertions… the four bases of power… the five faculties… the five strengths… the seven factors for awakening… the noble eightfold path: Such are the monks in this community of monks.

"In this community of monks there are monks who remain devoted to the development of good will… compassion… empathetic joy… equanimity…

(the perception of the) foulness (of the body)… the perception of inconstancy: Such are the monks in this community of monks.

"In this community of monks there are monks who remain devoted to mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

"Mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, of great benefit. Mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, brings the four establishings of mindfulness to their culmination. The four establishings of mindfulness, when developed & pursued, bring the seven factors for awakening to their culmination. The seven factors for awakening, when developed & pursued, bring clear knowing & release to their culmination.

A. MINDFULNESS OF IN-&-OUT BREATHING

"Now how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, of great benefit?

"There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

"[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' [3] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' [4] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

"[5] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.' [6] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.' [7] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.' [8] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.'

"[9] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.' [10] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in gladdening the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out gladdening the mind.' [11] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in steadying the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out steadying the mind.' [12] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in releasing the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will

breathe out releasing the mind.'

"[13] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.' [14] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on dispassion *[literally,* fading].' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.' [15] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on cessation.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on cessation.' [16] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.'

"This is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, of great benefit.

B. THE FOUR ESTABLISHINGS OF MINDFULNESS

"And how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to bring the four establishings of mindfulness to their culmination?

"[1] On whatever occasion a monk breathing in long discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, discerns, 'I am breathing out long'; or breathing in short, discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, discerns, 'I am breathing out short'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in… &… out sensitive to the entire body'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&… out calming bodily fabrication': On that occasion the monk remains focused on the *body* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, monks, that this—the in-&-out breath—is classed as a body among bodies, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful —subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

"[2] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&… out sensitive to rapture'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&…out sensitive to pleasure'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&…out sensitive to mental fabrication'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&…out calming mental fabrication': On that occasion the monk remains focused on *feelings* in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, monks, that this—careful attention to in-&-out breaths—is classed as a feeling among feelings, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

"[3] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&… out sensitive to the mind'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&…out gladdening the mind'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&…out steadying

the mind'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&…out releasing the mind': On that occasion the monk remains focused on the *mind* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I don't say that there is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing in one of lapsed mindfulness and no alertness, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

"[4] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&… out focusing on inconstancy'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&…out focusing on dispassion'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&…out focusing on cessation'; trains himself, 'I will breathe in…&…out focusing on relinquishment': On that occasion the monk remains focused on *mental qualities* in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He who sees with discernment the abandoning of greed & distress is one who watches carefully with equanimity, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

"This is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to bring the four establishings of mindfulness to their culmination.

C. THE SEVEN FACTORS FOR AWAKENING

"And how are the four establishings of mindfulness developed & pursued so as to bring the seven factors for awakening to their culmination?

"[1] On whatever occasion the monk remains focused on the *body* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world, on that occasion his mindfulness is steady & without lapse. When his mindfulness is steady & without lapse, then *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

"[2] Remaining mindful in this way, he examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality with discernment. When he remains mindful in this way, examining, analyzing, & coming to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, then *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

"[3] In one who examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, persistence is aroused unflaggingly. When persistence is aroused unflaggingly in one who examines, analyzes, & comes

to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, then *persistence* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

"[4] In one whose persistence is aroused, a rapture not of the flesh arises. When a rapture not of the flesh arises in one whose persistence is aroused, then *rapture* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

"[5] For one enraptured at heart, the body grows calm and the mind grows calm. When the body & mind of a monk enraptured at heart grow calm, then *calm* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

"[6] For one who is at ease—his body calmed—the mind becomes concentrated. When the mind of one who is at ease—his body calmed—becomes concentrated, then *concentration* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

"[7] He carefully watches the mind thus concentrated with equanimity. When he carefully watches the mind thus concentrated with equanimity, *equanimity* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

[Similarly with the other three establishings of mindfulness: feelings, mind, & mental qualities.]

"This is how the four establishings of mindfulness are developed & pursued so as to bring the seven factors for awakening to their culmination.

D. CLEAR KNOWING & RELEASE

"And how are the seven factors for awakening developed & pursued so as to bring clear knowing & release to their culmination? There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening… *persistence* as a factor for awakening… *rapture* as a factor for awakening… *calm* as a factor for awakening… *concentration* as a factor for awakening… *equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment.

"This is how the seven factors for awakening are developed & pursued so as to bring clear knowing & release to their culmination."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the

Blessed One's words.

APPENDIX TWO

DIGHA NIKAYA 22

The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in the Kuru country. Now there is a town of the Kurus called Kammāsadhamma. There the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Monks."

"Lord," the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: "This is a path going one way only to the purification of beings, to the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, to the disappearance of pain & distress, to the attainment of the right method, & to the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness. Which four?

"There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings… mind… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

A. BODY

"And how does a monk remain focused on the body in & of itself?

"[1] There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect and setting mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

"Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.' Just as a dexterous

lathe-turner or lathe-turner's apprentice, when making a long turn, discerns, 'I am making a long turn,' or when making a short turn discerns, 'I am making a short turn'; in the same way the monk, when breathing in long, discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' … He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"[2] And further, when walking, the monk discerns, 'I am walking.' When standing, he discerns, 'I am standing.' When sitting, he discerns, 'I am sitting.' When lying down, he discerns, 'I am lying down.' Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it.

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"[3] And further, when going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away… when flexing & extending his limbs… when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe & his bowl… when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring… when urinating & defecating… when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert.

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard

to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"[4] And further… just as if a sack with openings at both ends were full of various kinds of grain—wheat, rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame seeds, husked rice—and a man with good eyesight, pouring it out, were to reflect, 'This is wheat. This is rice. These are mung beans. These are kidney beans. These are sesame seeds. This is husked rice,' in the same way, the monk reflects on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of unclean things: 'In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, muscle, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"[5] And further… just as a dexterous butcher or butcher's apprentice, having killed a cow, would sit at a crossroads cutting it up into pieces, the monk reflects on this very body—however it stands, however it is disposed—in terms of properties: 'In this body there is the earth property, the water property, the fire property, & the wind property.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"[6] And further, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground—one day, two days, three days dead—bloated, livid, & festering, he applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"Or again, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground, being chewed by crows, being chewed by vultures, being chewed by hawks, being chewed by dogs, being chewed by hyenas, being chewed by various other creatures… a skeleton smeared with flesh & blood, connected with tendons… a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, connected with tendons… a skeleton without flesh or blood, connected with tendons… bones detached from their tendons, scattered in all directions—here a hand bone, there a foot bone, here a shin bone, there a thigh bone, here a hip bone, there a back bone, here a rib, there a chest bone, here a shoulder bone, there a neck bone, here a jaw bone, there a tooth, here a skull… the bones whitened, somewhat like the color of shells… the bones piled up, more than a year old… the bones decomposed into a powder: He applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

B. FEELINGS

"And how does a monk remain focused on feelings in & of themselves?

There is the case where a monk, when feeling a painful feeling, discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling.' When feeling a pleasant feeling, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.'

"When feeling a painful feeling of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling of the flesh.' When feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh.' When feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh.' When feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling of the flesh.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on feelings in & of themselves, or externally on feelings in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on feelings in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to feelings, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to feelings, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to feelings. Or his mindfulness that 'There are feelings' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on feelings in & of themselves.

C. MIND

"And how does a monk remain focused on the mind in & of itself? There is the case where a monk, when the mind has passion, discerns, 'The mind has passion.' When the mind is without passion, he discerns, 'The mind is without passion.' When the mind has aversion, he discerns, 'The mind has aversion.' When the mind is without aversion, he discerns, 'The mind is without aversion.' When the mind has delusion, he discerns, 'The mind has delusion.' When the mind is without delusion, he discerns, 'The mind is without delusion.'

"When the mind is constricted, he discerns, 'The mind is constricted.' When the mind is scattered, he discerns, 'The mind is scattered.' When the mind is enlarged, he discerns, 'The mind is enlarged.' When the mind is not enlarged, he discerns that the mind is not enlarged. When the mind is surpassed, he discerns, 'The mind is surpassed.' When the mind is unsurpassed, he discerns, 'The mind is unsurpassed.' When the mind is

concentrated, he discerns, 'The mind is concentrated.' When the mind is not concentrated, he discerns, 'The mind is not concentrated.' When the mind is released, he discerns, 'The mind is released.' When the mind is not released, he discerns, 'The mind is not released.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the mind in & of itself, or externally on the mind in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the mind in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the mind, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the mind, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the mind. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a mind' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the mind in & of itself.

D. MENTAL QUALITIES

"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves?

"[1] There is the case where a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the *five hindrances.* And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances? There is the case where, there being sensual desire present within, a monk discerns, 'There is sensual desire present within me.' Or, there being no sensual desire present within, he discerns, 'There is no sensual desire present within me.' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen sensual desire. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of sensual desire once it has arisen. And he discerns how there is no further appearance in the future of sensual desire that has been abandoned. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining hindrances: ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.]

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the

five hindrances.

"[2] And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the *five clinging-aggregates.* And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five clinging-aggregates? There is the case where a monk (discerns): 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling… Such is perception… Such are fabrications… Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five clinging-aggregates.

"[3] And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the *sixfold internal & external sense media.* And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the sixfold internal & external sense media? There is the case where he discerns the eye, he discerns forms, he discerns the fetter that arises dependent on both. He discerns how there is the arising of an unarisen fetter. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of a fetter once it has arisen. And he discerns how there is no further appearance in the future of a fetter that has been abandoned. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining sense media: ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.]

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the

sixfold internal & external sense media.

"[4] And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the *seven factors for awakening.* And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for awakening? There is the case where, there being mindfulness as a factor for awakening present within, he discerns, 'Mindfulness as a factor for awakening is present within me.' Or, there being no mindfulness as a factor for awakening present within, he discerns, 'Mindfulness as a factor for awakening is not present within me.' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen mindfulness as a factor for awakening. And he discerns how there is the culmination of the development of mindfulness as a factor for awakening once it has arisen. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining factors for awakening: analysis of qualities, persistence, rapture, serenity, concentration, & equanimity.]

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for awakening.

"[5] And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the *four noble truths.* And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths? There is the case where he discerns, as it has come to be, that 'This is stress…This is the origination of stress…This is the cessation of stress…This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.'

"[a] Now what is the noble truth of stress? Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful; separation from the loved is stressful; not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

"And what is *birth?* Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of (sense) media of the various beings in this or that group of beings: This is called birth.

"And what is *aging?* Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings: This is called aging.

"And what is *death?* Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption of the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings: This is called death.

"And what is *sorrow?* Whatever sorrow, sorrowing, sadness, inward sorrow, inward sadness of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing: This is called sorrow.

"And what is *lamentation?* Whatever crying, grieving, lamenting, weeping, wailing, lamentation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing: This is called lamentation.

"And what is *pain?* Whatever is experienced as bodily pain, bodily discomfort, pain or discomfort born of bodily contact: This is called pain.

"And what is *distress?* Whatever is experienced as mental pain, mental discomfort, pain or discomfort born of mental contact: This is called distress.

"And what is *despair?* Whatever despair, despondency, desperation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing: This is called despair.

"And what is the stress of *association with the unbeloved?* There is the case where undesirable, unpleasing, unattractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations occur to one; or one has connection, contact, relationship, interaction with those who wish one ill, who wish for one's harm, who wish for one's discomfort, who wish one no security from the yoke. This is called the stress of association with the unbeloved.

"And what is the stress of *separation from the loved?* There is the case where desirable, pleasing, attractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations do not occur to one; or one has no connection, no contact, no relationship, no interaction with those who wish one well, who wish for one's benefit, who wish for one's comfort, who wish one security from the yoke, nor with one's mother, father, brother, sister, friends, companions, or relatives. This is called the stress of separation from the loved.

"And what is the stress of *not getting what is wanted?* In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted. In beings subject to aging… illness… death… sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, the wish arises, 'O, may we

not be subject to aging… illness… death… sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and may aging… illness… death… sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted.

"And what are the *five clinging-aggregates* that, in short, are stressful? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: These are called the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful.

"This is called the noble truth of stress.

"[b] And what is the noble truth of the origination of stress? The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., sensuality-craving, becoming-craving, and non-becoming-craving.

"And where does this craving, when arising, arise? And where, when dwelling, does it dwell? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the world: that is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

"And what is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

"The ear.… The nose.… The tongue.… The body.… The intellect.…

"Forms.… Sounds.… Aromas.… Tastes.… Tactile sensations.… Ideas.…

"Eye-consciousness.… Ear-consciousness.… Nose-consciousness.… Tongue-consciousness.… Body-consciousness.… Intellect-consciousness.…

"Eye-contact.… Ear-contact.… Nose-contact.… Tongue-contact.… Body-contact.… Intellect-contact.…

"Feeling born of eye-contact.… Feeling born of ear-contact.… Feeling born of nose-contact.… Feeling born of tongue-contact.… Feeling born of body-contact.… Feeling born of intellect-contact.…

"Perception of forms.… Perception of sounds.… Perception of aromas.… Perception of tastes.… Perception of tactile sensations.… Perception of ideas. …

"Intention for forms.… Intention for sounds.… Intention for aromas.… Intention for tastes.… Intention for tactile sensations.… Intention for ideas.…

"Craving for forms.… Craving for sounds.… Craving for aromas.… Craving for tastes.… Craving for tactile sensations.… Craving for ideas.…

“Thought directed at forms.… Thought directed at sounds.… Thought directed at aromas.… Thought directed at tastes.… Thought directed at tactile sensations.… Thought directed at ideas.…

“Evaluation of forms.… Evaluation of sounds.… Evaluation of aromas.… Evaluation of tastes.… Evaluation of tactile sensations.… Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

“This is called the noble truth of the origination of stress.

“[c] And what is the noble truth of the cessation of stress? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

“And where, when being abandoned, is this craving abandoned? And where, when ceasing, does it cease? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the world: that is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

“And what is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

“The ear.… The nose.… The tongue.… The body.… The intellect.…

“Forms.… Sounds.… Aromas.… Tastes.… Tactile sensations.… Ideas.…

“Eye-consciousness.… Ear-consciousness.… Nose-consciousness.… Tongue-consciousness.… Body-consciousness.… Intellect-consciousness.…

“Eye-contact.… Ear-contact.… Nose-contact.… Tongue-contact.… Body-contact.… Intellect-contact.…

“Feeling born of eye-contact.… Feeling born of ear-contact.… Feeling born of nose-contact.… Feeling born of tongue-contact.… Feeling born of body-contact.… Feeling born of intellect-contact.…

“Perception of forms.… Perception of sounds.… Perception of aromas.… Perception of tastes.… Perception of tactile sensations.… Perception of ideas. …

“Intention for forms.… Intention for sounds.… Intention for aromas.… Intention for tastes.… Intention for tactile sensations.… Intention for ideas.…

“Craving for forms.… Craving for sounds.… Craving for aromas.… Craving for tastes.… Craving for tactile sensations.… Craving for ideas.…

“Thought directed at forms.… Thought directed at sounds.… Thought directed at aromas.… Thought directed at tastes.… Thought directed at tactile sensations.… Thought directed at ideas.…

"Evaluation of forms.… Evaluation of sounds.… Evaluation of aromas.… Evaluation of tastes.… Evaluation of tactile sensations.… Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

"This is called the noble truth of the cessation of stress.

"[d] And what is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress? Just this very noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"And what is right view? Knowledge in terms of stress, knowledge in terms of the origination of stress, knowledge in terms of the cessation of stress, knowledge in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view.

"And what is right resolve? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for non-ill will, resolve for harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

"And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.

"And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, from stealing, & from sexual misconduct: This is called right action.

"And what is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood. This is called right livelihood.

"And what is right effort? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This is called right effort.

"And what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves… the mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves —ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness.

"And what is right concentration? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied

by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joy & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration.

"This is called the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths.

E. CONCLUSION

"Now, if anyone would develop these four establishings of mindfulness in this way for seven years, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.

"Let alone seven years. If anyone would develop these four establishings of mindfulness in this way for six years… five… four… three… two years… one year… seven months… six months… five… four… three… two months… one month… half a month, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.

"Let alone half a month. If anyone would develop these four establishings of mindfulness in this way for seven days, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.

"'This is a path going one way only to the purification of beings, to the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, to the disappearance of pain & distress, to the attainment of the right method, & to the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness.' Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

APPENDIX THREE

Jhāna & Right Concentration

Among the cardinal tenets of the modern interpretation of mindfulness are these: that mindfulness practice is radically different from jhāna practice, that jhāna is not necessary for awakening, and that the modicum of concentration attained through mindfulness-as-bare-awareness practices is enough to qualify as right concentration. However, these tenets fly in the face of the standard definition of the noble eightfold path, which defines right concentration as the four jhānas (SN 45:8; DN 22; MN 141). So to justify the modern view, many writers have argued that the Pali discourses contain passages indicating that right concentration doesn't necessarily mean jhāna, or that jhāna isn't always necessary for awakening. Because this is such an important point, it's worth examining these passages carefully, to see if they actually support the arguments based on them.

Before doing this, though, we should note that the texts record the Buddha as providing clear standards for how to evaluate statements made about his teachings. In DN 29 he presents a list of teachings to be taken as standard—the wings to awakening *(bodhi-pakkhiya-dhamma)*—among which are the factors of the noble eightfold path, including right concentration. He goes on to say that if anyone claims to quote him on the topic of the Dhamma, that person's words should be measured against the standard. Anything that conflicts with the wings to awakening—either in expression or interpretation—should be recognized as wrong.

This means that if a passage in the discourses can be shown necessarily to conflict with these teachings, it must have been included in the discourses by mistake, for it's not in line with the Dhamma. So in this sense, the efforts to find passages deviating from the standard definition of right concentration are self-defeating. Any passage that proves the modern argument would, by the standards in DN 29, not count as Dhamma and so would not count as authoritative. It would have to be put aside.

However, when we examine the passages cited for the purpose of justifying the modern view, we find that they don't actually conflict with the

standard definition of right concentration, and so don't need to be put aside. What needs to be put aside is the modern interpretation forced on them.

The arguments supporting the modern interpretation fall into three main sorts: those based on the defining characteristics of an awakened person, those based on alternative definitions of right concentration, and those based on redefining the word "right" in right concentration.

I.A. A discourse frequently cited by arguments of the first sort is SN 12:70, which concerns a group of monks who are arahants "released through discernment." Another monk, Ven. Susīma—who has ordained with the purpose of stealing the Dhamma from the monastic Saṅgha to take it to his sectarian friends so that they can claim it as their own—questions these arahants as to their attainments. Running down the list of the psychic powers that can sometimes result from jhāna practice, he asks them if they have attained any of the powers, and they repeatedly reply, "No, friend." Then the conversation continues as follows:

> Ven. Susīma: "Then, having known thus, having seen thus, do you dwell touching with your body the peaceful emancipations, the formless states beyond form?"
>
> The monks: "No, friend."
>
> "So just now, friends, didn't you make that declaration [of arahantship] without having attained any of these Dhammas?"
>
> "We're released through discernment, friend Susīma." *— SN 12:70*

Some modern writers have cited this passage as proof that the arahants in question hadn't practiced the jhānas and yet had still gained awakening. This would imply that jhāna is not a necessary part of the path. However, the "peaceful liberations, the formless states beyond form" are not the four jhānas. Instead, they are the formless attainments that can be developed based on the equanimity developed in the fourth jhāna (see the quotation from MN 140 in Chapter One). The fact that the arahants in this discourse hadn't reached these attainments in no way proves that they reached arahantship without attaining the jhānas. In fact, the definition of "released through discernment" given in AN 9:43–45 states explicitly that arahants released through discernment can have attained any of the jhānas or formless attainments up through the cessation of perception and feeling, simply that they have not "touched with the body" any of the other subsidiary attainments—such as clairvoyance—that can open from those levels of concentration.

> Ven. Udāyin: "'Released through discernment, released through discernment,' it is said. To what extent is one described by the Blessed One as released through discernment?"
>
> Ven. Ānanda: "There is the case, my friend, where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. And he knows it through discernment. It's to this extent that one is described by the Blessed One as released through discernment, though with a sequel.
>
> "And further, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna… the third jhāna… the fourth jhāna… the dimension of the infinitude of space… the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness… the dimension of nothingness… the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. And he knows it through discernment. It's to this extent that one is described by the Blessed One as released through discernment, though with a sequel.
>
> "And further, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. And as he sees with discernment, the effluents go to their total end. And he knows it through discernment. It's to this extent that one is described by the Blessed One as released through discernment without a sequel." *— AN 9:44*

So SN 12:70, particularly when read in the context of AN 9:43–45, doesn't support the argument that jhāna isn't necessary for awakening.

This fact has been pointed out several times by several authors. In response, a more recent version of the argument asserts that the compilers of SN 12:70 *wanted* to state that release through discernment doesn't involve the jhānas, but for some reason backed off from saying what they actually wanted to say. Of course, this argument takes the discussion away from the quest for Dhamma and into the realm of idle speculation. Even if we could divine the compilers' hidden agenda, and that agenda actually did deviate from the standard teaching on the necessity of jhāna, that would automatically disqualify the discourse from being taken as authoritative. So again, this new version of the argument is self-defeating as a guide to the Dhamma. However, it does raise one important Dhamma question that has to be taken seriously.

The question relates to the ensuing scene in SN 12:70. After questioning the arahants, Susīma goes to see the Buddha to report what he has heard. The

Buddha validates the arahants' statements and then gives Susīma a standard questionnaire on the aggregates, and whether they are constant, pleasant, or deserve to be called "self." After Susīma gives the correct answers, the Buddha then quizzes him about whether he sees the connections among the factors of dependent co-arising, and Susīma answers that he does. This, in the standard idiom of the Canon, indicates that Susīma has attained at least stream entry, the first level of awakening, probably as a result of being exposed to the questionnaire on the aggregates. Now, the argument states, Susīma would have had no opportunity during this conversation to develop any of the jhānas. Thus the hidden purpose of including the conversation in the discourse was to show that awakening can occur without jhāna.

However, there is nothing in the definition of jhāna to indicate that it cannot be developed while listening to a Dhamma talk. As AN 10:71 points out, insight can lead to jhāna, and so it's possible that—if other conditions are right—the insight gained while listening to the Dhamma could induce a state of jhāna in the listener while the talk was occurring. In fact, the questionnaire on the aggregates that the Buddha uses with Susīma is one that he and his disciples used with great success in bringing about immediate awakening among their listeners, some of whom prior to hearing the questionnaire suffered from severe wrong view (MN 109, SN 22:59, SN 22:83, SN 22:85). As MN 111 and AN 9:36 show, the five aggregates are directly observable in the first jhāna, so a person in that level of concentration would be in an ideal position to observe the aggregates while being questioned on them.

Sometimes it's argued that a person in jhāna is "incapable of speech" or cannot hear sounds, but neither of these assertions is supported by the Canon. SN 36:11 does state that speech grows still when one is in the first jhāna, but this doesn't mean that a person in the first jhāna is incapable of speech, just as the stilling of in-and-out breathing in the fourth jhāna doesn't mean that one is incapable of breathing. The stilling of speech in the first jhāna simply means that, for the duration of the time one is speaking, the level of stillness in one's mind would not count as the first jhāna. In other words, a person in the first jhāna would be leaving the first jhāna when starting to speak, but could immediately return to the first jhāna as soon as he/she stops speaking.

As for the assertion that a person in jhāna cannot hear sounds, this point is clearly disproven by an incident in the Vinita-vatthu, or Precedents, listed in the discussion of Pārājika 4 in the Vinaya. There, Ven. Moggallāna states that he can hear sounds when entering the formless attainments. A group of

monks object to his statement, convinced that he is making a false claim—which would be a violation of the rule—so they report his statement to the Buddha. The Buddha's reply: Moggallāna's experience of those attainments was not pure; however, that impurity was not enough to make the statement false. He actually was experiencing the formless attainments.

Now, given that Moggallāna was an arahant at the time of this incident, then even though his attainment of the formless attainments was not completely pure, it was pure enough. And although this passage doesn't specify whether the ability to hear sounds in any of the four jhānas would make those jhānas impure, it clearly implies that the ability to hear sounds while in the first jhāna would not disqualify it from being jhāna.

So the fact that Ven. Susīma could attain the first level of awakening while listening to the Dhamma is no proof that he did not enter at least the first jhāna while listening to the Buddha's questionnaire. And so it's hard to find any trace of hidden motive in the presentation of SN 12:70. The discourse does not explicitly or implicitly support the idea that jhāna is unnecessary for awakening.

I.B. Another passage cited to prove that one can be an arahant without having attained jhāna is in AN 4:87. Here, the Buddha lists four types of contemplatives, two of them being the "white-lotus contemplative" and the "red-lotus contemplative."

> "And which individual is the white-lotus contemplative? There is the case, monks, where a monk—through the ending of the effluents—has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now. But he does not also remain touching with his body the eight emancipations *[vimokkha].* This is how an individual is a white-lotus contemplative.
>
> "And which individual is the red-lotus contemplative? There is the case, monks, where a monk—through the ending of the effluents—has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now. And he remains touching with his body the eight emancipations. This is how an individual is a red-lotus contemplative." *— AN 4:87*

The argument here is that the eight emancipations, while not identical to the four jhānas and the formless attainments, are nevertheless equivalent to

them. This would mean that "white-lotus" arahants are those who have attained none of the jhānas, whereas "red-lotus" arahants are those who have mastered all the jhānas.

Now it is true that the last five of the eight emancipations are identical with the four formless attainments plus the cessation of perception and feeling. From this it could be argued that the first three emancipations are simply another name for the four jhānas, in which case the "white-lotus" arahants would have to be devoid of jhāna. But there are two reasons for not accepting this argument.

The first reason comes from the description of the three emancipations themselves:

> "Possessed of form, one sees forms. This is the first emancipation.
>
> "Not percipient of form internally, one sees forms externally. This is the second emancipation.
>
> "One is intent only on the beautiful. This is the third emancipation."
> *— DN 15*

These are not descriptions of the four jhānas, for they contain no mention of the jhāna factors. Their emphasis is on what one *sees*, which means that they are types of meditative visionary experiences. The mere fact that they can lead to the formless attainments does not make them equivalent to the jhānas. They simply provide an alternative route to the formless attainments. In fact, the existence of this alternative route may explain why the Buddha, prior to his awakening, was able to reach the formless attainments when studying under Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, without at the same time passing through the four jhānas. So to say that an arahant doesn't touch these emancipations with his/her body doesn't mean that he/she has not attained any of the four jhānas.

The second reason for not accepting the argument that an arahant who has not mastered the eight emancipations must be devoid of jhāna is a parallel passage in DN 15, which describes two types of arahants. One is the arahant released both ways, whose definition is identical with that of the "red-lotus" contemplative. The second type, who does not touch the eight emancipations, is called the arahant "released through discernment." This would correspond to the "white-lotus" contemplative. But look at what this arahant knows:

> "There are beings with diversity of body and diversity of perception, such as human beings, some devas, and some beings in the lower

realms. This is the first station of consciousness.

"There are beings with diversity of body and singularity of perception, such as the devas of the Brahmā hosts generated by the first [jhāna] and [some] beings in the four realms of deprivation. This is the second station of consciousness.

"There are beings with singularity of body and diversity of perception, such as the Radiant Devas. This is the third station of consciousness.

"There are beings with singularity of body and singularity of perception, such as the Beautifully Lustrous Devas. This is the fourth station of consciousness.

"There are beings who, with the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not attending to perceptions of diversity, (perceiving,) 'infinite space,' arrive at the dimension of the infinitude of space. This is the fifth station of consciousness.

"There are beings who, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) 'infinite consciousness,' arrive at the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. This is the sixth station of consciousness.

"There are beings who, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) 'There is nothing,' arrive at the dimension of nothingness. This is the seventh station of consciousness.

"The dimension of non-percipient beings and, second, the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. [These are the two dimensions.]

"Now, as for the first station of consciousness—beings with diversity of body and diversity of perception, such as human beings, some devas, and some beings in the lower realms: If one discerns that (station of consciousness), discerns its origination, discerns its disappearance, discerns its allure, discerns its drawbacks, discerns the escape from it, would it be proper, by means of that (discernment) to take delight there?"

"No, lord."

[Similarly with each of the remaining stations of consciousness and two dimensions.]

"Ānanda, when knowing, as they have come to be, the origination, disappearance, allure, drawbacks of—and escape from—these seven

> stations of consciousness and two dimensions, a monk is released through lack of clinging, he is said to be a monk released through discernment." *— DN 15*

According to AN 4:123, the third station of consciousness is attained through the second jhāna; the fourth station of consciousness, through the third. So to have knowledge of these stations would require at least a modicum of jhāna. For this reason, we cannot accept the idea that a "white-lotus" contemplative has to be an arahant without jhāna.

I.C. A subset of the first set of arguments against the necessity of jhāna on the path contains arguments affirming that jhāna is necessary for arahantship, but denying that it's necessary for stream entry, the first level of awakening. The prime example of this type of argument is based on a passage in AN 3:87, which describes a stream-enterer as one who is "wholly accomplished in virtue, moderately accomplished in concentration, and moderately accomplished in discernment." Only with non-return, the discourse states, does one become "wholly accomplished in concentration." In support of the idea that this means that the stream-enterer has not attained jhāna, the argument points to many of the lists in the discourses describing the virtues and accomplishments of the stream-enterer, none of which state that he/she is accomplished in jhāna (see, for instance, SN 55:32; SN 55:33; and AN 10:92).

However, this argument ignores two passages in the Canon stating clearly that right concentration is a part of the path to stream entry: MN 117 and SN 55:5. In fact, MN 117 places jhāna at the heart of the stream-enterer's path. The statement that concentration is mastered only on the level of non-return must be interpreted in light of the distinction between mastery and attainment. A stream-enterer may have attained jhāna without mastering it, just as he/she has gained some discernment into dependent co-arising (AN 10:92) without fully mastering that topic. The discernment developed in the process of gaining full mastery over the practice of jhāna will then lead him/her to the level of non-return.

So none of the passages cited to prove that jhāna is not a necessary part of an awakened person's attainments actually support the arguments based on them.

As for the second set of arguments, which try to prove that the Canon contains alternative definitions of right concentration that don't involve jhāna, three of the passages cited by these arguments are worthy of note:

II.A. The first is a definition of right concentration that appears in DN 18 and MN 117. In those discourses, noble right concentration is defined as "any singleness of mind equipped with these seven factors—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, & right mindfulness." This, the argument goes, shows that there is another form of concentration aside from jhāna that would qualify as right concentration, inasmuch as the jhāna factors are not mentioned in the definition.

This argument, however, misses two points. The first is that this definition differs in no way from the opening part of the definition of the first jhāna: "There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna." The "unskillful qualities" in this passage are identified by SN 45:22 as "wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration." And of course, sensuality is renounced through right resolve. In fact, MN 78 indicates a direct connection between right resolve and jhāna, stating that the first jhāna is where all unskillful resolves cease without trace. This means that any concentration truly endowed with right resolve would have to be at least the first jhāna.

The second point is that MN 117 itself confirms the connection between right resolve and jhāna, in that it defines noble right resolve as: "the thinking, directed thinking, resolve, mental fixity, mental transfixion, focused awareness, & verbal fabrications [directed thought and evaluation] in one developing the noble path." The reference in this passage to factors of the first jhāna means that noble right resolve is itself part of the first jhāna.

So there is nothing in the definition of right concentration offered in DN 18 and MN 117 to indicate that it would be anything other than jhāna.

II.B. Another passage said to offer an alternative definition of right concentration not involving jhāna appears in MN 149. There a meditator is described as knowing and seeing the processes of the six senses as they have come to be, after which:

> "For him—uninfatuated, unattached, unconfused, remaining focused on their drawbacks—the five clinging-aggregates head toward future diminution. The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—is abandoned by him. His bodily disturbances & mental disturbances are abandoned. His bodily torments & mental torments are abandoned. His bodily distresses & mental distresses are abandoned. He is sensitive both to ease of body & ease of awareness.

> "Any view belonging to one who has come to be like this is his right view. Any resolve, his right resolve. Any effort, his right effort. Any mindfulness, his right mindfulness. Any concentration, his right concentration: just as earlier his actions, speech, & livelihood were already well-purified. Thus for him, having thus developed the noble eightfold path, the four establishings of mindfulness go to the culmination of their development. The four right exertions… the four bases of power… the five faculties… the five strengths… the seven factors for awakening go to the culmination of their development. [And] for him these two qualities occur in tandem: calm & insight."
> — *MN 149*

Some writers have maintained that this passage constitutes an alternative definition of right concentration, based on a pure insight practice into the nature of the six senses, with no mention of jhāna. However, the passage itself says that it's an instance of insight developed in tandem with calm. Now, the Buddha often told the monks, "Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be" (SN 22:5; SN 35:96; SN 56:1). In fact, in SN 35:96, the "things" to be discerned as they have come to be are the processes of the six senses.

> "Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be? He discerns as it has come to be that 'the eye is inconstant.' He discerns as it has come to be that 'forms are inconstant.' He discerns as it has come to be that 'eye-consciousness is inconstant.' He discerns as it has come to be that 'contact at the eye is inconstant.' He discerns as it has come to be that, 'Whatever arises in dependence on this contact at the eye—experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—that too is inconstant.' [Similarly with the remaining senses.]" — *SN 35:96*

This indicates that the practice described in MN 149 would best be *based on* the practice of right concentration, so that the mind would be in an ideal position to see things actually as they have come to be. So there is nothing here to indicate that it would be a "pure insight" practice, or that the concentration on which it is based would be anything but jhāna.

II.C. A third passage sometimes cited to prove that a form of meditation different from the four jhānas would qualify as right concentration appears in AN 4:163. This discourse describes four types of practice: painful practice with slow intuition, painful practice with quick intuition, pleasant practice

with slow intuition, and pleasant practice with quick intuition. In making the distinction between painful and pleasant practice, it defines painful practice in these terms:

> "There is the case where a monk remains focused on unattractiveness with regard to the body. Percipient of loathsomeness with regard to food & non-delight with regard to the entire world, he remains focused on inconstancy with regard to all fabrications. The perception of death is well-established within him." *— AN 4:163*

In contrast, pleasant practice is described with the standard formula for the four jhānas. Some writers have taken this as proof that there is an alternative path to awakening that does not involve the jhānas, in that the description of painful practice contains no reference to the jhānas at all.

This reading, however, misses the way in which AN 4:163 describes how painful practice and pleasant practice can yield either slow or quick intuition. Here's how it explains why either form of practice might yield slow intuition:

> "One dwells in dependence on these five strengths of a learner—strength of conviction, strength of shame, strength of compunction, strength of persistence, & strength of discernment—but one's five faculties—the faculty of conviction… persistence… mindfulness… concentration… discernment—appear weakly. Because of their weakness, one attains only slowly the immediacy [the concentration of unmediated knowing—see Sn 2:1] that leads to the ending of the effluents." *— AN 4:163*

Practice yielding quick intuition differs in that the five faculties appear intensely. Now, in both cases, the faculty of concentration—which is defined with the standard formula for the jhānas (SN 48:10)—has to be present for the ending of the effluents. Because this is true both for painful practice and for pleasant practice, both sorts of practice, whether slow or quick, need jhāna in order to succeed.

So none of the passages cited to prove that the Canon recognizes forms of right concentration that do not include jhāna actually support the arguments based on them.

III. As for the third set of arguments, which offer a different definition for the word "right" *(sammā)* in right concentration: These try to make the point that "right" has to be understood in such a way that alternative types of concentration would not necessarily be wrong. One example can serve to

illustrate the entire set.

The PTS Dictionary states that *sammā* is related to two Sanskrit words: *samyak,* which means "right"; and *samīś,* which can mean "connected; in one." Based on this etymology, it has been argued as follows: "[T]he qualification *sammā,* 'right'… literally means 'togetherness', or 'to be connected in one'. Thus to speak of the four absorptions or of unification of the mind as 'right' concentration does not simply mean that these are 'right' and all else is 'wrong', but points to the need to incorporate the development of concentration into the noble eightfold path."

This argument, however, neglects two glaring points. The first is that etymology is an unreliable guide to what a word means in context. English contains plenty of examples where a word's etymology would be a misleading guide to its meaning—think of "conscience" and "terrific"—and Pāli contains many more. To understand what *sammā* means in Pāli, we have to look at how it's actually used in the texts. And we find that when *sammā* is used to describe the factors of the path, its opposite is never "apart" or "not included" or "not connected." Its opposite is always *micchā,* which unequivocally means, "wrong" (MN 117; MN 126; AN 10:108).

The second point is that if this argument were to be valid for right concentration, it would also have to be valid for every other factor of the path. To speak of "right view" would not be a matter of saying that one view was right or another wrong; it would simply point to the need to incorporate views of some sort on the path; "right action" would indicate the need to incorporate actions of some sort on the path—and so on for the other factors. In this way, the path would become meaningless, for any type of view, resolve, etc., would qualify as the path.

So there is no reason for anyone who looks to the Pāli Canon for guidance to regard arguments of this third sort as convincing or helpful.

Four discourses attributed to the Buddha (AN 7:29–32) list the activities and mental attributes that a monk should respect if he is not to fall away from the practice. The lists in the four discourses differ in some of their details, but all four include the need to have respect for concentration. This is in addition to another member in each list—respect for training—which by implication also includes concentration, in that concentration is one of the three trainings (AN 3:85). In this way, these discourses highlight respect for concentration as deserving special attention. Perhaps the Buddha foresaw that, with jhāna being the most difficult part of the path, it would be the most likely to be discredited with the passage of time. It's a shame that so many

teachers and practitioners in the modern world have fallen into this trap in their enthusiasm to promote their own views on mindfulness and insight. Anyone serious about reaping the full benefits of the practice would be well advised to remember that the Buddha saw right mindfulness, insight, tranquility, and jhāna as mutually reinforcing. Respect for all of these qualities is a necessary attitude in following the path to the end of suffering and stress.

> "If a monk would wish, 'May I—with the ending of effluents—remain in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for myself right in the here-&-now,' then he should be one who brings the precepts to perfection, who is committed to inner tranquility of awareness, who does not neglect jhāna, who is endowed with insight, and who frequents empty dwellings." *— AN 10:71*

Glossary

Abhidhamma: The third division of the Pāli Canon, composed of texts that elaborate on lists of terms and categories drawn from the discourses.

Āmisa: Literally, "flesh"; "bait"; "lure." Used to describe objects of sensual enjoyment and the feelings of pleasure, pain, and neither pleasure nor pain that arise in the quest for sensual enjoyment. Its opposite is *nirāmisa* —not of the flesh—which describes the feelings developed around jhāna and the pursuit of release from suffering and stress.

Arahant: A "worthy one" or "pure one." A person whose mind is free of defilement and thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

Āsava: Effluent; fermentation. Four qualities—sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance—that "flow out" of the mind and create the flood *(ogha)* of the round of death & rebirth.

Brahmā: A deva inhabiting the higher heavenly realms of form or formlessness.

Brahman: A member of the priestly caste, which claimed to be the highest caste in India, based on birth. In a specifically Buddhist usage, "brahman" can also mean an arahant, conveying the point that excellence is based not on birth or race, but on the qualities attained in the mind.

Brahmavihāra: Literally, "brahmā-dwelling." Attitudes of unlimited good will, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity.

Deva (devatā): Literally, "shining one." A being on the subtle levels of sensuality, form, or formlessness, living either in terrestrial or heavenly realms.

Dhamma: (1) Event, action; (2) a phenomenon in and of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) nibbāna (although there are passages describing nibbāna as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: *Dharma.*

Gandhabba: A member of the lowest level of celestial devas.

Gotama: The Buddha's clan name.

Iddhipāda: Base of success, base of (meditative) power. One of the sets of Dhammas the Buddha included in the list of his most basic teachings. There are four in all, and the standard formula describing them is this: "There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on *desire* & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on *persistence*… concentration founded on *intent*… concentration founded on *discrimination* & the fabrications of exertion." *(SN 51:15)*

Jhāna: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion.

Kamma: (1) Intentional action; (2) the results of intentional actions. Sanskrit form: *Karma.*

Kasiṇa: Totality. A meditative practice in which one stares at an object with the purpose of fixing a one-pointed image of it in one's consciousness and then manipulating the image to make it fill the totality of one's awareness.

Khandha: Aggregate; physical and mental phenomena as they are directly experienced; the raw material for a sense of self: *rūpa*—physical form; *vedanā*—feelings of pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain; *saññā*—perception, mental label; *saṅkhāra*—fabrication, thought construct; and *viññāṇa*—sensory consciousness, the act of taking note of sense data and ideas as they occur. Sanskrit form: *Skandha.*

Māra: The personification of temptation and all forces, within and without, that create obstacles to release from the round of death and rebirth.

Nibbāna: Literally, the "unbinding" of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. Sanskrit form: *Nirvāṇa.*

Nimitta: Theme; sign. According to MN 44, the four establishings of mindfulness are the themes of right concentration.

Pāli: The language of the oldest extant Canon of the Buddha's teachings.

Pavāraṇā: Invitation. A monastic ceremony marking the end of the rains retreat on the full moon in October. During the ceremony, each monk invites his fellow monks to accuse him of any offenses they may have

suspected him of having committed. As happens in MN 118, this ceremony can be delayed for up to one lunar month.

Saṁvega: Dismay over the pointlessness of the sufferings of life as ordinarily lived.

Saṅgha: On the conventional *(sammāti)* level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns; on the ideal *(ariya)* level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream entry.

Sutta: Discourse. Sanskrit form: *Sūtra.*

Tathāgata: Literally, one who has "become authentic *(tatha-āgata)*" or who is "truly gone *(tathā-gata)."* An epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

Upādāna: The act of clinging to something to take sustenance from it. The activities that, when clung to, constitute suffering are the five *khandhas.* The clinging itself takes four forms: to sensuality, to habits & practices, to views, and to theories about the self.

Uposatha: Observance day, coinciding with the full moon, new moon, and half moons. Lay Buddhists often observe the eight precepts on this day. Monks recite the Pāṭimokkha, the monastic code, on the full moon and new moon uposathas.

Vinaya: The monastic discipline, whose rules and traditions comprise six volumes in printed text.

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