



SAMMĀSATI /

AN EXPOSITION OF

# RIGHT MINDFULNESS

PHRA DEBVEDI  
(Prayudh Payutto)

*Translated by*  
DHAMMA-VIJAYA

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*Translated from Thai by*  
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Buddhadhamma Foundation

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## PREFACE

The present book, in its original Thai version, is a part of a large volume entitled "Buddhadhamma", occupying 21 out of 1.145 pages (approx. a 55th) of the whole work. The "Buddhadhamma" is divided into two main parts, namely, Part I on the Middle Teaching expounding the knowledge of nature and the natural law, and Part II on the Middle Way dealing with the Buddhist practice which consists in the application of that knowledge to the creation of the Noble Life. The Middle Way or the practice as described in Part II is defined as the Noble Eightfold Path. Of the eight factors of the Noble Path, *Sammāsati* or Right Mindfulness is the seventh one. It is this seventh factor of the Noble Eightfold Path that is the subject matter of the present translation. as evidenced in its title, *Sammāsati: An Exposition of Right Mindfulness*.

The Thai version of *Sammisari* was published separately as a booklet by the Dhamma Study-and-Practice Group towards the end of B.E. 2528 (1985 C.E.). "Dhamma-Vijaya", the present translator, read the original Thai version. He found it interesting and helpful to the practitioner of Buddhism, and took upon himself the task of translating it into English. It is, consequently, through the effort of *Dhamma-Vijaya* that this English version of the *Sammisari* has come into being.

Not only encouraging the translation of the work into English, Khun Panita Angchandrpen has but also been enthusiastically urging the publication of the translation and has intently overseen the book through the printing process. It is through her zealous and active goodwill that this English version has come to appear in the present book form.

In place of a compositor, Phra Maha Insorn Cintāpañño Duangkid has relentlessly managed to get through the whole task of word processing. His increasing mastery of Desktop Publishing on a microprocessor has rendered the production of the book labour-saving, time-saving and money-saving.

My thanks go to all whose names are above-mentioned for their generous help in bringing about this publication and to Khun Panya Vijnthanasarn for the design of the cover.

Phra Debvedi (Prayudh Payutto)

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# SAMMASATI

## An Exposition of Right Mindfulness

In the Noble Eightfold Path, the practice leading to the complete cessation of Unsatisfactoriness, *Sammāsati* is counted as the second factor of the *Samādhi* Section, the 'Higher Mental Training'. The usual definition of *sammāsati* given in the Discourses is as follows:

"Bhikkhus. What is *sammāsati*? This is called *sammāsati*, namely, *that* a bhikkhu in this *Dhamma Vinaya*:

1. Contemplates the body in the body with effort. *sampajañña* and *sati*, eradicating covetousness and distress with regard to the world;<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Whatever is of a nature to dissolve (*paloka*), Ānanda, this is called the world in the Discipline of the Noble. Now what is of a nature to dissolve? The eye. Ānanda...visible objects...visual consciousness...visual contact ...the ear...sounds...mind contact. and whatever arises conditioned by mind contact, felt as pleasant or painful or neutral—hat is of a nature to "dissolve". (Translator)

2. Contemplates feeling in feelings with effort, *sampajañña* and *sari*, eradicating covetousness and distress with regard to the world;
3. Contemplates the mind in the mind with effort, *sarnpajariria* and *sati*, eradicating covetousness and distress with regard to the world;
4. Contemplates *dhamrnas'* in *dhammas* with effort, *sampajañña* and *sati*, eradicating covetousness and distress with regard to the world."<sup>2</sup>

Another definition, which appears in the Abhidhamma texts, is as follows:

"What is *sammāsati*? *Sati* means to bear in mind or bring to mind. *Sari* is the state of recollecting, the state of remembering, the state of non-fading, the state of non-forgetting. *Sari* means the *sari* that is a Spiritual Faculty, the *sati* that is a Spiritual Power, *Sammāsati*, the *Sati* that is an Enlightenment Factor, that which is a Path Factor and that which is related to the Path. This is what is called *sammāsati*."<sup>3</sup>

*Sammāsati*, as defined in the Discourses, is a synonym for the principles of Dhamma known as the Four *Satipaṭṭhāna*. The four elements of this group have the abbreviated names of:

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<sup>1</sup> All mental and physical phenomena

<sup>2</sup> Dīgha Nikāya, Mahāvagga, Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta, § 402

<sup>3</sup> Vibhaṅgha 182:587

1. *Kāyānupassanā* (contemplation or mindfulness of the body);
2. *Vedaninupassanā* (contemplation or mindfulness of feelings);
3. *Cittānupassanā* (contemplation or mindfulness of mind);
4. *Dhammānupassanā* (contemplation or mindfulness of *dhammas*).

Before investigating the meaning of *sammisati* in terms of the Four *Satipaṭṭhāna*, it would seem appropriate to make a few general points on the subject of *sati* to serve as a basic foundation for our study.

## Sati as Appamāda

*sari* is most simply rendered as 'recollection', but such a translation may convey the idea that it is simply an aspect of memory. While memory is certainly a valid element of *sati*'s function, it does not do full justice to the essential meaning of the term. For to speak in the negative vein, apart from its meaning of 'non-forgetting' (the direct counterpart of the positive term 'recollection'), *sati* also refers to 'non-carelessness', 'non-distraction', 'non-fuzziness and confusion'. These negatively expressed meanings of *sati* point to the positive qualities of care, circumspection, alertness to one's duties and the condition of being constantly present in the awareness of the various things which come into contact with one and responding to them appropriately.

Particularly when speaking of ethical conduct, the functioning of *sati* is often compared to that of a gatekeeper, whose job is to keep his eyes on the people passing in and out, regulating affairs by permitting entrance and egress to those for whom it is proper and forbidding it to those for whom it is not. Thus *sati* is of major importance in the field of ethics. It oversees us in the performance of our duties and guards and restrains us by preventing our taking foolish pleasure in the bad and by preventing badness from sneaking into the mind. Put in simple terms, *sari* reminds us to do good and to give no ground to the bad.

Buddhadhamma strongly emphasizes the importance of *sari* at every level of ethical conduct. Conducting one's life or one's Dhamma practice constantly governed by *sari* is called '*appamida*', or heedfulness. *Appamāda* is of central importance to progress in a system of ethics, and is usually defined as non-separation from *sari*. This may be expanded on as implying constant care and circumspection, not allowing oneself to stumble into harmful ways: not allowing oneself to miss any opportunity for betterment: a clear awareness of what things need to be done and what left undone: continual attention to and appreciation of one's duties; non-negligence; and performing one's daily tasks with sincerity and with unbending effort towards improvement. It may be said that *appamāda* is the Buddhist sense of responsibility.

From the point of view of its significance, *appamāda* is classified as an 'internal factor', as is *yoniso-manasikāra* (skilful reflection), and forms a pair with its external counterpart, *kalyāṇamittatā* (association with good and noble friends). The Buddha's words describing the

significance of *appamāda* sometimes overlap those describing that of *yoniso-manasikāra*, for these two *dhammas* are of equal importance, though differing in application. *Yoniso-manasikāra* is a member of the *Paññā* Section; it is a tool to be used. *Appamāda*, on the other hand, is a member of the *Samādhi* Section: it is that which governs the use of the tool of *yoniso-manasikāra*, urges its employment and constantly inspires one to further progress.

The importance and extent of the application of *appamāda* at various levels of practice of ethical conduct may be seen from the Buddha's own words in the following examples:

"O Bhikkhus. The footprints of all land-bound creatures fit within the footprint of the elephant: the elephant's footprint is said to be the supreme footprint in terms of size. Similarly all skilful *dhammas* have heedfulness *as* their base, converge within the bounds of heedfulness. Heedfulness may be said to be supreme amongst those *dhammas*!"<sup>1</sup>

"I see no other *dhamma* which is as much a cause for the arising of as-yet unarisen skilful *dhammas* and the decline of already arisen unskilful *dhammas* as heedfulness. When one is heedful, as-yet unarisen skilful *dhammas* will inevitably arise and unskilful

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<sup>1</sup> Saṃyutta Nikāya, Mahāvāraṅga, § 253

*dhammas* that have already arisen will inevitably decline."]

"I see no other *dhamma* that is so conducive to supreme benefit..."<sup>2</sup>

"I see no other *dhamma* that is so conducive to the stability, the non-degeneration, the non-disappearance of the True Dhamma as **heedfulness**."<sup>3</sup>

"Looking at it as an 'internal factor' I see no other *dhamma* so conducive to supreme benefit as **heedfulness**."<sup>4</sup>

Even the *Pacchimavācā*, the last instructions given by the Buddha before he entered *Parinibbāna*, concerned *appamāda*:

"All conditioned things are subject to decay.  
Strive on with **heedfulness**."<sup>5</sup>

"Just as the light of dawn precedes the sunrise and is its harbinger; so the perfection of heedfulness leads to and is the harbinger of the Noble Eightfold Path...The single *dhamma* which is of most assistance in the

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<sup>1</sup> Aṅguttara Nikāya, Book of the Ones, § 60

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., § 84

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., § 16

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., § 100

<sup>5</sup> Dīgha Nikāya, Mahāvagga, § 143

arising of the Noble Eightfold Path is the perfection of heedfulness...I see no other kind of *dhamma* which has such power to cause the as-yet unarisen Noble Eightfold Path to arise, and the Noble Eightfold Path which has arisen to come to maturity and completion. A bhikkhu who is heedful may expect to develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path."<sup>1</sup>

"O Bhikkhus, you should apply *appamāda* in four areas:

Abandon unwholesome actions. Cultivate good actions. Neglect neither. Abandon unwholesome speech. Cultivate good speech. Neglect neither. Abandon unwholesome thoughts. Cultivate good thoughts. Neglect neither. Abandon wrong views. Cultivate Right View. Neglect neither. When a bhikkhu has abandoned unwholesome actions, cultivated good actions..abandoned wrong views and cultivated Right View, he will feel no apprehension or fear regarding his coming death."<sup>2</sup>

"O Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu should look after his mind with *sari* by being heedful of four matters, namely by **determining** that:

'My mind will not attach to those *dhammas* which encourage attachment;

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<sup>1</sup> Saṃyutta Nikāya, Mahāvāravagga, § 135; 144; 153; 162-171; 180; 245-262

<sup>2</sup> Aṅguttara Nikāya, **Book of the Fours**, § 116

My mind will not be averse to those dhammas which encourage aversion;

My mind will not be deluded by those dhammas which encourage delusion;

My mind will not be intoxicated by those dhammas which encourage intoxication.'

When a bhikkhu's mind, through absence of lust, does not attach to those dhammas which encourage attachment, is not averse...is not deluded...is not intoxicated, he will be without dread or perturbation, fear or horror, and will feel no need to believe in anything, even the words of a sage."

"Question: 'Is there any **single**dhamma which provides both sorts of benefit, both present and immediate benefit and future or higher benefit?'

"Answer: 'Yes, there is.'

"Question: 'What is that dhamma?'

"Answer: 'That dhamma is **heedfulness**.'"<sup>2</sup>

"O King, that Dhamma which has been well expounded by me is for those with good and noble

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<sup>1</sup> **Ibid.**, § 117

<sup>2</sup> *Anguttara Nikāya, Book of the Sixes*, § 324; *Saṃyutta Nikāya, sagāthavagga*, §378

friends,' good and noble companions, good and noble people as associates. It is not for those with foolish immoral friends, foolish immoral companions, foolish immoral people as associates...The possession of good and noble friends is equal to the whole of the holy life.

"Therefore, O King, you should resolve thus, 'I will be one who has good and noble friends, good and noble companions, good and noble people as associates.' The monarch who thus possesses good and noble friends should conduct his life in reliance upon the principle of non-neglect of skilful *dhammas*.

"When the King is heedful, conducts his life relying on heedfulness, then the Inner Circle, the Nobles of the Court...;the Royal Guard...right down to the townsfolk and villagers will all think, 'His Majesty the King is a heedful person, he conducts his life relying on heedfulness. We also will be heedful people, we also will live relying on heedfulness.

"O King, if you are a heedful person and conduct your life in reliance upon heedfulness you will be cared for and protected. The Inner Circle will receive care and protection..everything right down to the houses and barns of your subjects will receive care and protection."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A good and noble friend or *kalyāṇamitta* is said to have the following seven qualities: He inspires love, respect and emulation; he is a counsellor and a patient listener; he is able to deliver deep discourses or to treat profound subjects; he never leads one in harmful or useless pursuits.

Āṅguttara Nikiya, Book of the Sevens, § 33 (Translator)

<sup>2</sup> Samyutta Nikāya, Sagāthavagga, § 381-384

## The Social Value of Sati

In the following quotation from the *Sedaka Sutta*, the Buddha's words describing the value of *sati* bring out well the closeness, in practical terms, of its nature and value to that of *appamāda*. The passage helps to further clarify our understanding of both of these *dharmas*, and, at the same time, to demonstrate the Buddhist attitude towards life in its social dimension. It testifies that Buddhadharmma sees the internal life of the individual as intimately related to the external life of society and holds that values in the two realms are inseparably connected, that they correspond, and are, in fact, identical:

"O Bhikkhus. Once upon a time, a bamboo-acrobat set up his pole and called to his pupil, saying, 'Come, my lad, climb the pole and stand on my shoulders', and the pupil did as he was bidden. Then the bamboo-acrobat said to his pupil, 'Now, my lad, you look after me well and I'll look after you. By watching and protecting each other in this way, we will show off our skills, get a good fee and come down safe from the bamboo pole.'

"At these words, the pupil said to the acrobat, 'Master, it can't be done like that. You look after yourself, Master, and I will look after myself. If we both watch and protect ourselves then we will be able to show off our skills, get a good fee, and come down safe from the bamboo pole.'

"The Blessed One said, 'That was the correct way of practice in that case. In the same way as the pupil spoke to his master, Bhikkhus, when thinking, 'I will

protect myself you must practise *satipaṭṭhāna* (be mindful) and when thinking, 'I will protect others' you must also practise *satipaṭṭhāna*.

"O Bhikkhus, protecting oneself, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself. And how does one, in protecting oneself, protect others? By earnest practice, cultivation and development (of *satipaṭṭhāna*). In this way, by protecting oneself, **one** protects others. And how does one, in protecting others, protect oneself? By forbearance, by non-violence, by possessing a heart of *mettā* and compassion. In this way, by protecting others, one protects oneself.

"I shall protect myself,' with this intention, Bhikkhus, *satipaṭṭhāna* should be practised.

"I shall protect others,' with this intention, Bhikkhus, *satipaṭṭhāna* should be practised.

"Protecting oneself, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Saṃyutta Nikāya, Mahāvāraṇasutta, § 758-762

# The Role of Sati in the Process of Wisdom-Development

or

## the Eradication of Defilements

'*Appamāda*', or heedfulness, refers to the uninterrupted presence of *sati* in one's life and the constant use of *it* in one's daily tasks. *Appamāda* makes one careful and prudent; it prevents one from falling, through error, into bad or harmful ways. It restrains; it reminds one not to become fascinated by enjoyable things and mindlessly indulge in them. It urges one not to become complacent. and stimulates one to make earnest efforts to continually push on. It makes one constantly conscious of one's duties, by providing a clear awareness of what needs to be done and what does not, what has been done already and what remains to be done. It helps one to perform one's various tasks with circumspection and precision. Thus, as has been stated before, *appamāda* is of major significance in a system of ethics.

**At** any rate, it may be seen that *appamāda* has a wide-ranging ethical significance in regard to one's general conduct in life. It is called for in increasing degrees from the stage of keeping precepts right up to that

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'wisdom' (*paññā*) is used in Buddhism to refer specifically to penetrative knowledge of the characteristics of conditioned existence. viz., impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and impersonality. It ranges from a mere conceptual knowledge to that which, arising in a clear, still mind (*bhāvanāmaya paññā*), can utterly destroy defilements. (Translator)

of *samādhī*. It infuses these activities at every level in association with a large number of other *dharmas*, particularly *vāyāma* (effort), with which it is combined at all times. Looked at, however, solely in terms of the mind during the process of wisdom-development (the use of wisdom to cleanse the mind), *appamāda* becomes that which gives devoted support and encouragement from without. At this level, attention is confined to the workings of the mind, and finely discriminates between the various phenomena present in a moment-by-moment analysis. It is at this stage that *sati* clearly fulfills its true function and plays the prominent role implied by its name.

An understanding of the essential meaning of *sati* may be gained by contemplating its function on those occasions when its role is clearly distinguishable from that of other *dharmas*, most notably in the practice called *satipaṭṭhāna*. On such occasions the function of *sati* may be summarized as follows:

The primary feature of the working of *sati* is that it prevents the mind from drifting. It does not allow mental states to pass by unheeded. It prevents the mind from becoming agitated and restless. It is attentive, as if keeping its eyes on each impression that passes into consciousness and then bearing down on it. When one wishes to concentrate on a particular object, it maintains one's attention fixedly upon it, not allowing the object to drift away or disappear. By means of *sati*, one keeps placing the mind on the object, or recollecting it, not allowing oneself to let it slip from the mind. There is a simile likening it to a pillar, because it is firmly embedded in its object, or to a gate-keeper, because it watches over

the various sense-doors through which sense-data pass, inspecting all that enters. The proximate cause for the arising of *sati* is a firm and clear perception of the object, or any of the different sorts of *satipaṭṭhāna* that will be spoken of below.

Looking at it from the point of view of ethics, one will discern both negative and positive aspects of the functioning of *sati*. Negatively, *sati* is a guardian. It restrains the mind from agitation, protects one from error, and prevents one from stumbling into undesirable mental states or situations. It allows no opportunity for unwholesomeness to enter the mind and prevents the misuse of thought.

On the positive side, *sati* is the controller and inspector of the stream of sense-consciousness, mentality and all one's actions, ensuring that they all lie within desired parameters. It keeps the mind harnessed to its chosen object. It is thus the tool for laying hold of or clasp onto an object, and its action is rather like placing the object in front of the mind for consideration.

In the Buddhist path of practice, there is great emphasis on the importance of *sari*, as evidenced in the Buddha's saying that *sati* is required (i.e. should be employed) in every situation. *Sari* is also compared to salt, which must be used in every curry, and to a prime minister, who must be involved in every branch of government. *Sari* may either restrain the mind or support and sustain it, depending on the needs of the situation.]

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<sup>1</sup> EM. IV 49

When considering in **toto** the features of sari's functioning as mentioned above, one will see the benefits aimed at in training in *sati* to be as follows:

1. The maintenance of the mind in a required condition by the monitoring of the cognitive process and the stream of thought, accepting only that which is conducive to it and barring all that which is not and thus, by channelling and stilling the thought-stream, facilitating the attainment of *samidhi*;
2. The enabling of the body and mind to dwell in a state which might be called 'self-sufficient' by virtue of the sense of spaciousness, relaxation and well-being intrinsic to it regardless of external circumstances—a state wherein one is prepared to face any experience that might occur and to deal effectively with all of one's affairs;
3. The ability, in the state of *samidhi*, to guide the cognitive process and the stream of thought and to alter or expand the fields of their activities in various dimensions;
4. The ability to take hold of a meditation object and, as it were, to lay it down in front of the mind so that subsequent investigation by the wisdom-faculty may proceed with optimum clarity as a basis on which wisdom can be developed and brought to perfection;
5. The purification of all volitional actions of body, speech and mind and liberation from compul-

sive indulgence in defilement and subjugation to craving and clinging. and the informing (in combination with *sampajañña*) of one's actions with wisdom. an entirely purified logic.

The fourth and fifth benefits listed here are the goals of an advanced stage of development, and may be obtained only through a specially prescribed method of practice that, according to our definition of *sammāsati*, is the Four *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

## Satipaṭṭhāna as Sammāsati

'*Satipaṭṭhāna*' is sometimes translated as 'the Foundations of Mindfulness' and sometimes as 'the Establishing of (i.e. governance by) Mindfulness'. Technically, it is the method of practice that makes use of *sari* most fruitfully, as indicated in the Buddha's words in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*:

"This is the one way, O Bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the passing beyond sorrow and lamentation, for the cessation of pain and distress, for the attainment of the Supramundane Path, for the realization of *Nibbāna*, namely, the Four *Satipaṭṭhāna*."<sup>1</sup>

The development of *satipaṭṭhāna* is a very popular method of Dhamma-practice and is highly praised and revered. It is considered to incorporate both *samatha*

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<sup>1</sup> Dīgha Nikāya. Mahāvagga. § 273; Majjhima Nikāya, Mūlapaṇṇāsaka. § 131; Vibhaṅga. § 431-464

(calm) and *vipassanā* (insight) cultivation. The wayfarer may choose either to develop *samatha* until the attainment of absorption before developing *vipassanā* based on the Four *Satipaṭṭhāna* as a way of reaching his goal, or he may develop *satipaṭṭhāna-vipassanā* in dependence on only an initial level of *samādhi*, the minimum that is sufficient for his purposes.

*Vipassanā* is an important principle of Buddhist practice which, though widely known, is also widely misunderstood, and is thus a matter deserving some clarification. The following basic outline of *satipaṭṭhāna* will help to provide a better understanding of the meaning of *vipassanā*, from its essential nature to its field of actions and its variations, as well as the extent to which its application is possible in daily life and what the benefits of such application may be. However, there is no intention to make a thorough study of *vipassanā* here. The aim is merely to convey as much of an understanding of it as can be obtained from looking at the essential features

In brief, the main elements of *satipaṭṭhāna* are as follows:

1. *Kāyānupassanā*, contemplation or mindfulness of the body:
  - (a) *Ānāpānasati*, going to a secluded place, sitting cross-legged and focusing *sati* on one's inhalations and exhalations:
  - (b) *Iriyāpatha*. Focusing on posture, clearly perceiving the present mode of disposition of

the body, whether standing, walking, sitting, or lying down:

- (c) *Sampajañña*. maintaining clear comprehension in every kind of action and movement, e.g., moving forward, looking around, stretching out the arm, dressing, chewing, eating, drinking, urinating, excreting, waking up, going to sleep, speaking and keeping silent;
  - (d) *Paṭikūlamanasikāra*. contemplating one's body, from the top of the head to the soles of the feet, as a repository of a large number of unattractive constituents;
  - (e) *Dhātumanasikāra*. contemplating one's body by considering it separated into its four constituent elements;
  - (f) *Navasīvathikā*. looking at corpses in nine different stages of decay, from one newly dead to one reduced to crumbling bones, and, in each case, applying what is seen to oneself, reflecting that one's own body must meet a similar fate;
2. *Vedanānupassanā*. mindfulness of feeling, i.e. when a feeling of pleasure, pain, or indifference arises, whether associated with sensual desires or unassociated with them, one has a clear perception of it in its actuality at the moment of occurrence;
  3. *Cittānupassanā*. mindfulness of mind, i.e. how the mind is at a given moment—for instance,

whether sensual desire is present in it or not, whether aversion is present in it or not, whether it is agitated or concentrated, liberated or still fettered, etc., one has a clear perception of the underlying state of mind, in its actuality in the present moment;

#### 4. *Dhammānupassanā*, mindfulness of dhammas;

- (a) *Nīvaraṇa*<sup>1</sup> (hindrance), clear perception. in that moment, of whether any of the Five Hindrances is present in the mind or not. the way in which as-yet unarisen hindrances arise, how hindrances already arisen may be abandoned, and how hindrances already abandoned may be prevented from re-arising;
- (b) *Khandha* (aggregate), comprehension of the nature of each *khandho*. how it arises and how it ceases;
- (c) *Āyatana* (sense-base), clear perception of each of the internal and external sense-bases and of the fetters that arise dependent on them. how those already arisen may be abandoned and how those already abandoned may be prevented from re-arising.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Nīvaraṇas* (hindrances to the working of the mind, are five-fold. namely: *Kāmachanda* (sensual desire), *Byāpāda* (ill-will), *thīnamiddha* (sloth and torpor), *uddhaccakukkucca* (agitation and anxiety), and *vicikicchā* (sceptical doubt).

- (d) *Bojjhaṅga* (limbs of enlightenment)<sup>1</sup>. clear perception, in that moment, of whether or not any of the Seven Limbs of Enlightenment is present in one's mind, how those as-yet unarisen may arise and how those already arisen may be developed to fullness:
- (e) *Ariyasacca*. clear and authentic perception of each of the Four Noble Truths.

In the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. at the end of every one of the above clauses, there is an identical refrain:

"The bhikkhu contemplates the body<sup>2</sup> in the body internally (i.e. one's own body). contemplates the body in the body externally (another's body). or contemplates the body in the body both internally and externally. He contemplates arising in the body; he contemplates dissolution in the body; he contemplates both arising and dissolution in the body. He possesses clear mindfulness of the existence of the body, solely to the extent necessary for a bare knowledge of it, sufficient for it to serve as an object of recollection. Thus he lives independently, clinging to nought in the world."

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<sup>1</sup>The *Bojjaṅga* (Limbs of Enlightenment) are: Sati, *dhammavicaya* (investigation of *dhammas*), *virīya* (effort), *pīti* (bliss), *passaddhi* (calm), *samādhī* and *upekkhā* (equanimity).

<sup>2</sup> The word 'body' may be changed to 'feelings', 'mind', or 'dhammas', according to the case.

## The Essence of Satipaṭṭhāna

One may see from the salient points of *satipaṭṭhāna* summarized above that *satipaṭṭhāna* (and this includes *vipassanā*) is not a principle that necessarily demands for its practice either withdrawal from society into seclusion or a fixed time schedule. Consequently, many wise teachers have encouraged its integration into daily life.

In essence, the teaching of *satipaṭṭhāna* informs us that our lives have just four areas which require the watchful eye and governance of *sati*. namely, (1) the body and its behaviour, (2) the various feelings of pleasure and pain, (3) the different states of mind and (4) *dhammas*. Conducting one's life with *sati* guarding over these four points will help to ensure a freedom from danger and suffering and a life of clarity and well-being, culminating in the realization of the ultimate truth.

One may also see from the outline of *satipaṭṭhāna* above that, in practice, *sati* is never employed alone, but always in conjunction with other *dhammas*. One such *dhamma*, which is not specifically mentioned in the text, is *samādhi*, which must be present, at least in a weak form, sufficient for the purpose in hand.<sup>1</sup> The three *dhammas* singled out by name in the definition of *sammā sati* above<sup>2</sup> are:

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<sup>1</sup> This is called *vipassanāsamādhi* and occupies a level between *khaṇika* (momentary)*samādhi* and *upacāra* (close to absorption)*samādhi*.

<sup>2</sup> See page 1.

1. *Ātāpī* (There is effort)  
This refers to *Sammā Vāyāma* (Right Effort), the sixth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, which entails guarding against and abandoning what is unwholesome and creating and maintaining what is wholesome.
2. *Sampajāno* (There is clear comprehension)  
This refers to the wisdom-faculty.
3. *Satimā* (There is mindfulness)

A noteworthy clause is the second, '*Sampajāno*', rendered as 'There is clear comprehension' (*sampajañña*). *Sampajañña* is a *dhmma* which usually appears coupled with *sari*. *Sampajañña* is the wisdom-faculty (*paññā*). Thus the training in *sari* is one element in the process of wisdom development. *Sampajañña* (*paññā*) is the clear and penetrative understanding of the object or action fixed upon by *sari* in regard to its purpose, its nature and the way to proceed in relation to it, free from delusion and misunderstanding.

The subsequent phrase, "...eradicating covetousness and distress with regard to the world...", demonstrates the attitude that results from the possession of *sati-sampajañña* as being one of equanimity and freedom, a state unbound by defilements, whether rooted in attachment or in aversion.

The phrase, shared by every clause, "...he sees arising and dissolution..." points to the contemplative understanding of those things in terms of the Three

Characteristics, resulting in a perception and experience of them as they actually exist. The phrase, "...mindfulness of the existence of the body...", for example, refers to an awareness of the body in its actuality, without clothing it in conceptualizations, interpretations, or attachments, not labelling it as a person or as self, as 'him' or 'her' or 'me' or 'my body'. This attitude is thus one of freedom, independent, in that it is untied to any external condition, and is without any grasping at the things of the world with craving and clinging.

To further elucidate this matter, a few important phrases from the Pali text will here be translated and briefly explained:

1. *Kāye kāyānupassī* (contemplating the body in the body)

This phrase refers to seeing the body simply as a body, or as a meeting place or assembly point for the various organs which are its component parts. It means not seeing the body as being 'him' or 'her' or 'me' or 'this person' or 'that person', nor as belonging to anyone; not seeing a man or a woman. for example, in hair of the head or hair of the body or a face. In other words. one sees directly in accordance with the truth, in agreement with the actual state of the body; what one sees corresponds to what one is looking at, i.e. one looks at a body and sees a body, rather than looking at a body and seeing 'Mr. Smith' or someone hateful or someone attractive. This accords with the saying of the old masters, "One does not

(usually) see what one is looking at. One sees. on the contrary, what one has truly not seen. Not seeing truly. one becomes attached; and, when one is attached to something. there is no liberation."<sup>1</sup>

2. *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā* (There is effort. clear comprehension and mindfulness)

In other words, there is *Sammā Vāyāma* (Right Effort), *Sammā Diṭṭhi* (Right View) and *Sammā Sati* (Right Mindfulness), the three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path which must always be employed in conjunction for the development of every aspect of the Path.<sup>2</sup>

- (a) Effort (*vāyāma*) energizes the mind. It prevents the mind from becoming discour-

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<sup>1</sup> D.N. Commentary. The phrase, 'the body in the body' is glossed in several different ways by the commentators. with an overall emphasis on the aim of the contemplation. One interpretation. for example, takes it as focusing on the body without muddle, attending, in the body, only to the body – not to feelings, mind-states. or dhammas associated with it. Another takes it to mean attending to the smaller parts which comprise the body as a unit, distinguishing the different components and looking at them individually, (continued) until one sees that the whole body is nothing other than a congregation of smaller constituents, that there is nobody there, no 'Mr. A.' or 'Ms. B.'. It thus implies the analysis of a composite unit. the dismantling of a complex structure. and is an endeavour comparable to that of removing all the leaves and the spadix of a banana tree and finding no hean-wood, no essential tree. (The phrases. 'feelings in feelings'. 'mind in mind'. and 'dhammas in dhammas' may be understood in the same way.)

<sup>2</sup> This agrees with the principle enunciated in the *Cattārisaka Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya, Uparipaṇṇāsaka. § 258-278*). As for the equation of *ātāpī* with *sammā vāyāma*, see *Vibhaṅga. § 437-439*

aged or depressed, from dilly-dallying or regressing, and so gives no opportunity for unwholesome *dhammas* to arise. It is a force which urges the mind to press on. and which encourages the growth of the various wholesome *dhammas*.

(b) Clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) is the wisdom-faculty which contemplates and fully comprehends the object brought into focus by *sati* and prevents delusion from arising in regard to it. It correctly understands the way in which the object actually exists.

(c) Mindfulness (*sati*) is that which fixes onto the object. enabling one to keep abreast of it at every moment. not allowing it to slip from the mind or to become unclear or confused.

3. *Vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam* (He destroys covetousness and distress with regard to the world)

When one practises in this way. the mind becomes spacious and bright, and neither desire and attachment nor sorrow and aversion can overwhelm it.

4. *Atthi kāyoti panassa sari paccupaṭṭhitā hoti yāvadeva nāṇamattāya paṭissatimattāya* (He has clear mindfulness of the existence of the body only to the extent that will serve to make it an object of gnosis (*nāṇa*) and recollection)

*Sati* focuses clearly and directly on the truth that the body is merely the body, that no being, person, man, or woman is implied by it. There is perception of the body merely for the sake of the development and enhancement of *sati-sampajañña*, not in order to indulge in fanciful daydreams or senseless proliferations. The same applies in the case of feelings, mind and *dhammas*.

5. *Anissito ca viharati* (And he dwells independently)

His mind is free, not tied to any condition. He does not give his heart away to any thing or person. Speaking technically, he doesn't rely on craving and views as a support: he is unaffected by them. When encountering some experience, for example, he is directly aware of the thing being experienced in its actuality, without resorting to craving and views to colour and embellish it and to lull him into indulgence. In short, he doesn't entrust his powers of thought, his imagination, or his happiness to craving and views.

6. *Na ca kiñci loke upādiyati* (Clinging to nought in the world)

He does not grasp at or attach to anything at all, whether form, feeling, perception, volitional formation, or consciousness as being self or belonging to self.

7. *Ajjhattaṃ vā... bahiddhā vā* (Internally... externally)

Teachers have differed in their explanations of this phrase, but the consensus of opinion in the Commentaries is that 'internal' refers to oneself and 'external' refers to others.<sup>1</sup> Such an interpretation agrees with the *Abhidhamma* texts, which elucidate the meaning of the term clearly, e.g., "And how does a bhikkhu see the mind in the mind externally? Here, when the mind of another person is lustful, he clearly perceives that that is so, etc."<sup>2</sup> Some people might wonder at this point whether it is proper to go prying into the affairs of other people's bodies and minds, and how in fact one could see the truth of them anyway. As for this, we take it quite simply to be that the aim of the training is to use *sati* with all of the things with which we must have dealings, and to perceive in them no more than what is actually there. In our daily lives it is inevitable that we will have to have dealings with other people, and those dealings should be mindful ones. Our perceptions of others should accord with the way they are and be based only on direct personal experience, not exceeding what has been discerned by us in the course of our dealings with them. (If one possesses the gnosis (*ñāṇa*) enabling one to read others' minds, then one's 'knowledge'

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<sup>1</sup> For example: *Dīgha Nikāya Commentary* Vol. II, § 498; *Majjhima Nikāya Commentary* Vol. I, § 385; *Vibhaṅga Commentary*, § 283; 286.

<sup>2</sup> For example: *Vibhaṅga*, § 445-447. It may be noted that there is an exposition of the psychic power that vouchsafes a penetration of the minds of others appearing at *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Sīlakkhandhavagga*, § 135.

should not exceed the bounds of that gnosis. If one does not possess that gnosis, there is no need to be inquisitive). In that way, one will not proliferate and work oneself into a turmoil regarding other people, and give birth to such *dhammas* as greed and aversion. If one doesn't know the mental states of others, or lives alone, it doesn't matter; it is not an essential part of the practice. There is no question of being required to monitor other people's behaviour in order to detect the states of their bodies and minds.

One way of summarizing the above would be to say that the development of *satipaṭṭhāna* entails a dwelling with *sati* and *sampajañña* which ensures that the image of self which the mind of Ignorance creates and fashions can find no gap through which it can insinuate itself into one's thoughts and create problems.

Some scholars in the West have looked at comparisons of *satipaṭṭhāna* with contemporary methods of psychotherapy. In their assessment of the relative merits of the two systems, they have come to the conclusion that *satipaṭṭhāna* provides better results. Moreover, in that it is a method which may feasibly be practised by anyone by himself, and, as its value is not restricted to times of mental abnormality but may normally be employed for good mental health, it is of wider application.<sup>1</sup> However, these views will not be discussed here; instead, there will be a further summary of the prominent features of *satipaṭṭhāna*, this time in terms of contemporary modes of thought.

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<sup>1</sup> See N.P. Jacobson, *Buddhism: The Religion of Analysis*. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press. 1970. pp. 93-123.

## Practice as Process

The constituent factors in this process of practice are two-fold: The passive (that which is focused on, observed, concentrated on, contemplated), and the active (focusing, observation, concentration, contemplation).

The passive constituents are those ordinary, mundane things common to all of us: The body and its movements, thoughts, feelings and so on as they occur (only those existing at the present moment are valid objects of contemplation).

The active constituents of focusing, concentration, observation and contemplation form the basic agents of *satipaṭṭhāna* and are functions of *sati* and *sampajañña*. *Sati* is that which keeps hold of the chosen object. *Sampajañña* is the wisdom-faculty which realizes the nature and purpose of the thing or state being contemplated, as, for example, when focusing one's contemplation on the movements of the body when walking, one has a comprehension of such things as the reason for walking and the intended destination. *Sampajañña* understands the object or the action as it is, without coating it with feelings and so on.

There is a point to be wary of which should be stressed here, concerning a wrong understanding that may lead to misguided and fruitless practice. Some people misconstrue the meaning of the common translation of *sati* as 'recollection' and of *sampajañña* as 'self-awareness'. They establish *sati* on the sense of self and then feel aware of themselves as the agents of the various actions.

'I am doing this; I am doing **that**', their practice thus becoming a creation or strengthening of the concept of self. The mind becomes absorbed on that self-concept and develops a rigidity, or if not, at the very least, it strays from its task, thus spoiling the results of the work being undertaken. One who has formed such a wrong understanding should look at the meaning of *sati* in its sense of 'bearing in mind', maintaining the mind on its object, on the task being **performed**, or in the flow of action. He or she should look at the meaning of *sampajañña* in its sense of clear comprehension of that which *sati* is bearing in mind. In other words, it is not a matter of using *sati* to focus on the sense of self, 'I am doing this, I am doing **that**'; it implies bearing the task itself in mind, rather than the 'performer' of the task. *Sati* should pay attention to the action being **performed** or to the state that is presently occurring to the extent that there is no room to think of oneself, or the 'actor'. The heart must abide with the action until the **feeling** of 'I' or agency is made redundant.

The essential feature of focused contemplation lies in the accurate, undistorted perception of its object, i.e. looking, seeing and understanding what that object is, its characteristics and the effects of its presence. It entails facing up to, acknowledging, considering and understanding. Bare attention is maintained on the object at every moment, without reacting to it in any way; without evaluation, criticism, or judgement of it as being good or bad, right or wrong, etc. There is no interpretation of the object in the light of one's emotions, prejudices or attachments as being agreeable or disagreeable, pleasant or unpleasant. One merely understands the way that thing,

that state, that aspect is, without supplementing one's perception of it with such thoughts as 'mine', 'his', 'me', 'her', 'Mr. A.', 'Ms. B.', etc. To take the example of contemplation of the feelings in one's heart: at the moment that a painful feeling arises, one knows that a painful feeling is arising, the way in which it has come about, and the way in which it is presently dissipating. In the contemplation of mental phenomena, as for example when anxiety or depression occurs in the mind. one lays hold of that anxiety or depression and contemplates how it has come about and how it has developed. At a time when anger arises, and, on becoming the object of awareness, subsides, then one takes up that past anger as an object of contemplation and considers its benefits and ill effects, the cause for its arising and the way in which it disappears. It can become enjoyable to study, reflect on and analyse one's suffering! When it is purely suffering that is presently arising and passing away, and is not 'my suffering' or 'I am suffering', then that suffering is robbed of all its power to harm the one who contemplates it. Whatever form of goodness or unwholesomeness appears or is present in the mind. one faces up to it. without any effort at avoidance. One cognizes it and pays attention to it as it is, from the moment of its occurrence until it meets its natural end, and then switches attention to something else. It is similar to watching actors perform a play, or to being a bystander at some event. It is an attitude that is comparable to that of a doctor performing an autopsy, or that of a scientist observing the subject of his study, rather than that of a judge listening to evidence in a trial. It is an objective rather than a subjective approach.

An important characteristic of the state that is informed at all times by *sari-sampajñña* is that of dwelling in the present moment. *Sati* is mindful at each moment of what is arising, what is happening, or what one is doing and does not allow the mind to wander off. There is no attachment to, or lingering on, any past experience, and no floating off into the future in search of things that have not yet happened or do not yet exist. There is no straying back into the past or forward into the future. If some unresolved matter from the past or some future obligation is to be considered, then *sati* lays hold of the relevant details, and the wisdom-faculty reflects on them in a purposeful way, so that every matter becomes a present object of mind. There is no aimless or superfluous drifting into past or future. Dwelling in the present moment means freedom from subjection to craving. The mind not seduced or motivated by selfish desire exists with a wisdom which liberates it from the various expressions of *dukkha*, such as grief and regret, agitation, anxiety and depression, and gives rise to an awareness that is accompanied by spaciousness, clarity and ease.

### The Fruits of Practice

Purity: When *sari* is fixed exclusively on the object on which one desires to focus and *sampajñña* comprehends that thing in its true light, then the stream of consciousness and thought will be naturally maintained in purity, for there will be no room for the various defilements to arise. When examining and analysing phenomena simply as they are, without appending emotions and conceptualizations based on subjective prejudices and preferences, then there will be no clinging.

It is a method of eradicating existing cankers (*āsava*)<sup>1</sup> and protecting the mind from the occurrence of those that are as-yet unarisen.

**Freedom:** The pure state of mind spoken of above will also be blessed with freedom, being unperturbed by the various sense-impressions which impinge upon it, through utilizing every one of them as material for objective study. When sense-data is not interpreted in line with the dictates of the cankers, it exerts no subjective influence over the one who experiences it. That person's behaviour will be liberated from the defilements that act as unconscious drives or motivations. This is what is referred to in the text as 'dwelling independently (i.e. not being the servant of craving and views) and clinging to nought in the world'.

**Wisdom:** In the train of such a mental process, the wisdom-faculty will function with maximum effectiveness. The absence of obfuscation or diversion by emotions, proclivities and prejudices ensures a perception of things as they actually exist, an authentic awareness.

**Liberation from *dukkha*:** When the mind dwells in a state of wakefulness, understanding things in their actuality and able to maintain such a vision, those positive and negative inclinations in relation to things which are unfounded on a purified logic will be unable to arise. Thus there will be an absence of states rooted in covetousness (*abhijjhā*) or in distress (*domanassa*), and freedom from the various expressions of anxiety. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Three *āsavas* are usually given in the Discourses, those of sensuality, becoming and ignorance. Occasionally a fourth, that of **views**, is added. Destruction of the *āsavas* is a synonym for complete enlightenment. (Translator)

the state of mind which is called 'released'. It is experienced as a light spaciousness, relaxation, serenity and independence.

In fact, all of the fruits of practice mentioned above are different, related aspects of a single whole. To summarize in terms of Dependent Origination<sup>1</sup> and the Three Characteristics: At first, human beings are ignorant of the fact that the self they cling to is ultimately non-existent, that it is merely a flux, consisting of a great number of interrelated material and immaterial phenomena, constantly arising and degenerating in accordance with complex causal and conditioning processes. When one is unaware of this truth, one clings to the feelings, thoughts, desires, habits, attitudes, beliefs, opinions and sense-consciousnesses that arise at each moment as being one's self and feels that that one's self is continually changing: 'I was that; now I am this, I felt that way. and now I feel this way,' etc. In perceiving an 'I' as a subject who has likes and dislikes, one is simply being deceived by such things as thoughts and feelings. This deluded condition of the mind is the source of wrong thinking. As a consequence of it, one's thoughts, feelings and actions are all held in subjection to the exigencies of whatever is being clung to as self at the moment. In coming to practise according to the principles of *satipaṭṭhāna*, every kind of material and immaterial phenomenon contained within the mental continuum is seen to be arising and ceasing in accordance with its nature. When analysing the various constituents of this flux by segregating them in terms of content or

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<sup>1</sup> "The doctrine of the conditionality of all physical and psychological phenomena"  
Nyanatiloka. *Buddhist Dictionary*

temporal sequence, and thus perceiving a continuity of change, the process-nature of our existence, one is no longer deceived into clinging onto anything as being one's self, and phenomena lose their power to coerce.

If this insight attains an optimum profundity and clarity, there is realization of the state of liberation. It establishes the mind in a new mode of being, as a light, bright stream, free of inner knots, proclivities and attachments. It is the birth of a new personality. To put it another way, it is the state of perfect mental health, comparable to a body which is said to be in perfect health when, in the absence of any disturbing illness, all of its organs function smoothly at their full, normal capacity. In this simile, the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is viewed as a method of eradicating the various malignancies of the mind, eliminating all those things which form knots and obstructions to its smooth working. *Satipaṭṭhāna* creates a spaciousness in the mind. One becomes ready to conduct one's life, to face up to and deal with everything in one's world with resolution and good cheer.

This matter may be summarized with the following words of the Buddha:

"**O Bhikkhus**, there are two kinds of disease: Physical disease and spiritual disease (literally 'mental disease'). Those beings who may assert that they have been without physical disease for a whole year are to be found in the world. Those people who may assert that they have been without physical disease for two years ...three years...four years...five years...ten years... twenty years...thirty years...forty years...fifty years... a hundred years are to be found. But hard to find in

this world are those beings who may assert that they have been free from spiritual disease, even for a single moment, apart from those in whom the cankers have been destroyed."<sup>1</sup>

"Venerable *Sāriputta*: 'Extremely clear are your features today, householder, your countenance is radiant. Surely you have been listening to a Dhamma talk from the Blessed One.'

"The Householder *Nakulapitā*: 'Venerable Sir, how could it be otherwise? I have just been sprinkled with the nectar of a Dhamma discourse by the Blessed One.'

"Venerable *Sāriputta*: 'With what kind of Dhamma discourse did the Blessed One sprinkle nectar upon you?'

"The Householder *Nakulapitā*: 'Venerable Sir, I entered the presence of the Blessed One, paid my respects to him, and having sat down in an appropriate place I spoke to the Blessed One thus, 'Lord, I am at the end of my life, I am a broken-down old man, I am far gone in years, my body is beset by illnesses and is in constant pain. Moreover, I am one who has seldom had the opportunity to behold the gladdening sight of the Lord and the Sangha. May the Lord, out of compassion, give me a teaching that will conduce to my long-lasting benefit and happiness.'

"The Buddha: 'That is correct, Householder, it is so. This body is inevitably beset by illness, just as an egg is surrounded by a shell. For one carrying this body about, who but a fool could claim to be free from illness, even for a moment. Therefore, Householder,

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<sup>1</sup> *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, **Book** of the Fours. § 157

you should train yourself thus, 'Even though my body is beset by illness, my mind will not be.' Venerable Sir, this was the Dhamma discourse with which the Lord Buddha sprinkled nectar upon me.'<sup>1</sup>

## For What Reason Is the *Sati* Which Keeps Abreast of the Present Moment an Important Foundation of *Vipassanā*?

Our most ordinary, mundane activity, one that is going on constantly in our daily lives, is the cognition of sense-impressions through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. Sense-consciousness is always accompanied by a feeling-either of pleasure and ease, of pain and discomfort, or else of indifference. In the presence of feeling, a reaction takes place in the mind; if pleasure and ease are evoked by an object, there is liking and attachment. If pain and discomfort are evoked, there will be dislike and aversion. When there is liking of something, there arises the desire to experience more of it, to repeat the enjoyment, to obtain or possess. When there is dislike of something, there arises the desire to escape from it, to rid oneself of it or destroy it. This process is continuing all the time, both on subtle levels which tend to remain unobserved, and, on occasion, with an intensity which is plainly recognizable and which inflicts clearly discernible and lasting effects on the mind. Whenever the

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<sup>1</sup> Samyutta Nikāya, Khandhavāraṅga, § 2

process displays this intensity, or is so strikingly evident, it will usually induce long and involved mental proliferations, and, if the matter finds no resolution in the heart, it will then intrude into the whole range of one's speech and actions. Thus people's lives, their roles in the world and the ways in which they relate to each other all issue principally from this incessant flow of mental phenomena which is present in every moment of our existence.

Heedlessly abandoning the mind to the conditioned process described above, i.e. liking and attaching to feelings of sensual pleasure and comfort, or disliking and resisting feelings of sensual pain and discomfort, will serve to thwart and impede the development of wisdom. One will be prevented from seeing things as they are and accurately perceiving the true nature of their existence.

Thus the following impediments to wisdom may **be** seen:

*The mind falls **into** the power of liking and disliking and **is** held fast by it.* The mind's vision is obscured by that like or dislike and inclines away from an accurate perception of the actual nature of phenomena.

*The mind falls into the past or the future.* Having cognized an object and aroused liking or disliking towards it, the mind will stick to or oppose the particular part, point, or aspect of that object which calls forth that like or dislike. It will take up an image of that aspect as if implying the whole, feed it and proliferate on it until the overall truth of the matter is almost completely obscured. This dwelling on one particular aspect of a phenomenon

due to like or dislike, then grasping onto the concept or mental image of it appearing in one's mind, is a slip into the past. The ensuing mental proliferations regarding that image are a drift into the future. One's knowledge and understanding of an object thus in fact becomes based on the image of that partial aspect of it which attracts one's like or dislike, or else on a more developed image fashioned from the original one by the imagination. Thus there is no perception of the object as it actually exists in its entirety in the present moment.

*The mind falls into the power of mental conditioning*, which interprets the meaning of what is sensed or experienced in the light of one's personal history or accumulated habits, e.g. by the values, attitudes and opinions which one clings to and upholds. The mind is thus said to fall into a conditioned state, unable to look with equanimity at the bare experience itself.

*The mind integrates the conditioned image of experience into subsequent proliferations*, thus quickening the accretion of habitual patterns of reaction.

The characteristics of mind mentioned above do not pertain only to the coarse and shallow matters of one's daily life and general affairs. The emphasis in the teachings is on their manifestation at the subtle and profound level of the mental continuum. It is through their presence that ordinary, unenlightened beings are led to see things as stable and substantially real, to perceive inherent beauty or ugliness in them, to attach to conventional truths and to be unable to see phenomena in their true light, as temporal expressions of a causal flux. People accumulate habits and conditioned tendencies to misperceive existence almost from the day they are born,

and go twenty or thirty years. forty or fifty years, even longer than that, without ever training themselves to break the circuit of wrong thinking. Consequently, effecting a remedy is not easy. At the very moment that one becomes conscious of an object. before one has had time to steady oneself to check the process. the mind has already switched into an habitual response. Thus the remedy in this case is not simply a matter of breaking a circuit and abrogating the conditioned process, but also necessitates a curbing of the habitual tendency and disposition of the mind to flow strongly along fixed channels. It is *sari* which is vital here, both initially as a sort of ground-breaker, and subsequently as the element around which the other factors gather. The objectives of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice are, therefore, through maintenance of *sati* in the present moment and always seeing things in their bare actuality. the breaking of the circuit of deluded thought. the destruction of the unwholesome causal process. and the gradual alleviation of the old conditioning, with the simultaneous creation of new dispositions in the mind.

The mind which has *sati* helping to maintain it in the present moment will possess characteristics which are the complete antitheses of those shown by the mind caught in the flow of unwholesome dhammas.

Liking and aversion will have no opportunity to arise in it, because their presence is dependent on the mind seizing on a particular point or aspect of a matter and, through lingering on it, slipping back into the past. Liking and aversion exist only in association with a falling away from the present moment. A consequence of bare mindfulness of the presently existing state is the prevention of a dropping into the past or a floating off

into the future. In the presence of sati there is also no exacerbation or strengthening of previously accumulated wrong habits.

When one is unceasingly mindful of every phenomenon arising in the present moment, one is bound to perceive certain character traits in oneself which are unpleasant or which one would ordinarily consider unacceptable. With *sari*, one can acknowledge and face up to these qualities as they are, without seeking to avoid them and without any self-deception. One is thus able to cleanse them from the mind and to solve the problems which lie within oneself.

The mind with constant sati is one which possesses the qualities of purity, radiance, spaciousness, joy and freedom. It is an unstricted and untarnished mind.

All things are established and exist according to natural laws. Figuratively speaking, the truth is revealing itself at all times, but we shut ourselves off from it; or, if we don't, we either perceive only a distorted image of it or we deceive ourselves as to its nature altogether. The cause of that concealment, distortion and deception is immersion in the conditioned stream of unwholesome *dhammas* detailed above. Once that false step has been taken, then the old, false conditioning is even more inclined to drag one into error, thus leaving virtually no hope at all of seeing the truth. In that humanity has been steadily accumulating these habits for an immeasurably long time, the practice to remedy them and to create new dispositions in the mind is also likely to require a long time.

Whenever *sari* keeps up with the change in things and works constantly, without interruptions and in an assured fashion; when one doesn't put up a barrier to the truth, or distort the images one perceives: when one is free from the power of conditioning and habit; then one is prepared to see things in their actuality and to understand the truth.

On reaching this stage, if the other faculties (particularly the wisdom-faculty) are mature and well-primed, they will join forces with *sati*. or else rely on it to facilitate their full functioning and so bring about *nāṇa-dassana*, the authentic vision of phenomena which is the goal of *vipassani*. However, to bring the faculties to the maturity demanded for such work, one has to rely on a progressive training which must include, at first, study and investigation of the teachings. Study and logical thought are then of definite assistance in the birth of the clear vision of truth.

*Sari* is not itself *vipassani*: *vipassanā* is wisdom (*paññā*) or the use of wisdom. However, wisdom derives its opportunity to work with maximum facility from dependence on *sati*'s direction and support. Thus the training in *sati* is of major importance to *vipassani*. One trains in *sari* in order to be able to fully utilize the wisdom-faculty. To train in *sari* is to simultaneously train in wisdom.

When speaking of *sati* on the practical rather than academic level, one includes in its meaning that of the wisdom with which it is conjoined, and the strength and continuity attained by *sati* is derived from the cooperation

of the two.<sup>1</sup> The *paññā* which works together with *sati* in general tasks tends to bear the characteristic called *sampajirīa* or clear comprehension. On this level, *paññā* still appears mainly as a contributory factor in practice, cooperating and liasing with *sati*. In speech and conversation, for example, one tends to rely principally on *sati*. However, when it comes to more subtle levels of investigation, prominence shifts to *paññā*, and *sati* is relegated to a role rather like that of a servant. The *paññā* which functions on this level is, for example, the *dhamma-vicaya* of the Seven Limbs of Enlightenment. But whether it is *sampajañña* or *dhammavicaya*. or *paññā* by any of its other designations, if it works to produce a clear knowledge and understanding of things in direct accordance with the true nature of their existence so as to liberate the mind. then it is all *vipassanā*.<sup>2</sup>

*Sati* performs an important task in both *samatha* and *vipassanā* and a comparison between the differing roles it plays in each may help to further clarify the matters dealt with above. In *samatha*, *sati* fastens *the* mind onto its object, or holds the object in the mind, simply in

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<sup>1</sup> *Sati* conjoined with *paññā* is strong, lacking *paññā* is weak; see Majjhima Nikāya Commentary, Vol.III. § 28; Vibhanpa Commentary. § 406  
There is no *paññā* without *sati*: Paramatthamañjusā Mahāṭīkā, vol. I. § 302  
One lacking in *sati* will have no effective contemplation, e.g. Dīgha Nikāya Commentary, Vol. II, § 474; Saṃyutta Nikāya Commentary, Vol. III, § 270  
Speaking of *sati* alone, implying *paññā*: Aṅguttara Nikāya Commentary, Vol. III, § 127, glossing Aṅguttara Nikāya, Book of the Sixes, § 300, and the general explanations of the term 'satokārī' as in Khuddaka Nikāya, Paṭisambhidāmagga, § 389, quoted in the Visuddhimagga, Chapter 2, § 58

<sup>2</sup> See Vibhaṅga, § 612

order to enable the mind to concentrate unswervingly on the object and to grasp it firmly, to be motionlessly tranquil and free of distraction and agitation. When the mind is thus firmly and unswervingly centered on that object to the extent that it becomes uninterruptedly one with it, that state is called *samādhi* and signals the achievement of *samarha*.

In *vipassanā*, *sati* focuses on the object and fastens it to the mind, or maintains the mind on the object in a similar way. However, in this case, the aim is to use the mind as a place to lay the object down for examination and contemplation by the wisdom-faculty. One takes hold of the object in order to let *paññā* investigate and analyse it, using the firm and stable mind as one's laboratory. The practice of *samatha* is like tying a wild young bull to a post with a rope. All it can do is circle around the post to which it is bound until, eventually, when its wildness has abated, it lies down meekly at the foot of the post. Here, the mind may be compared to the wild young bull, the meditation object to the post and *sati* to the rope. The practice of *Vipassanā* may be compared to fixing a specimen onto a surface in order to allow a subsequent examination to proceed smoothly and with precision. Here, the means used to pin down the specimen may be compared to *sati*, the specimen to the meditation object, the surface to the stabilized mind and the examination to *paññā*.

The preceding remarks have covered the significant differences between *samatha* and *vipassanā*, but a few minor observations remain to be made. One such

observation is that, in *samatha*, one's aim is to pacify the mind; thus when *sati* is employed to focus on an object, it will firmly fasten onto it with the sole aim of producing a firm and unswerving concentration on that object, preventing even the slightest separation, until eventually the mind dwells completely and unwaveringly on the 'sign' or mental image of the meditation object. Thus *samarha* involves fixing on an object which is merely a perception created in the mind by the meditator.

In *vipassanā*, on the other hand, the aim is towards knowledge and understanding of the way things are. Consequently, *sari* focuses only on truly existent phenomena, in order for *paññā* to fully and clearly comprehend the nature of their existence. It attends to the way things are, right from the moment of their nascence through their gradual decline to their final disintegration. It demands an awareness of every kind of sense-impression which impinges on consciousness so that *paññā* can comprehend each one in its actuality. Thus the object in focus is not a fixed one, and to ensure an accurate and authentic comprehension, *sati* must be mindful of the changing nature at every moment, to prevent the mind from lingering on any one object or aspect of an object.

Another minor point of difference to be observed is that, in *samatha*. *sati* focuses on an object that is either fixed or else moves repetitiously within fixed boundaries. In *vipassanā*, *sati* can focus on an object that is moving or changing in any way. In *samatha*. one selects a certain defined object as a skilful means to facilitate the pacification and stabilization of the mind. In *vipassanā*, one may focus on any object without restrictions; whatever appears in the mind and lends itself to

contemplation, whatever permits the vision of truth, is valid. In fact, all may be subsumed under the headings of body, feelings, mind and *dhammas* or else *nāma-rūpa* (mind and body).

Another important element of the general principles of practice, and examination of which helps to further clarify those special characteristics which distinguish *vipassani* from *samatha*, is *yoniso-manasikira* (skilful reflection). *Yoniso-manasikāra* is a mental factor that assists in the birth of wisdom, and is consequently of great importance in *vipassani*. In the practice of *samatha*, although it may be a useful support on many occasions, it is of lesser significance and, on some occasions, may be redundant, ordinary consideration being sufficient. To expand on this point, in the development of *samatha*, if all goes smoothly and results are duly experienced, there is no need to make use of *yoniso-manasikira*. However, on those occasions when the mind refuses its attention to the object, resists all restraints and insists on agitation, or else in those meditation themes, e.g. *mettā*, which require a certain measure of reflective thought, one may need a skilful means to guide the mind. In such a case, one requires the assistance of *yoniso-manasikira*, intelligent use of the thought-process, to lead the mind on the correct path towards its goal. An example would be knowing how to reflect so as to arrest anger and cause its replacement by *mettā*.

On the *samatha* side of practice, the *yoniso-manasikāra* which may be required is solely of the kind that induces wholesome *dhammas*; there is no need to call upon the kind that activates the clear seeing of the true nature of things. In *vipassani*, *yoniso-manasikāra* is a

singularly important step on the path to wisdom and is thus an essential principle of *Dhamma*. *Yoniso-manasikara* directly precedes wisdom; it is that which paves the way for wisdom, or opens up a space in which wisdom can mature.<sup>1</sup> Its characteristics and workings are so similar to those of *paññā* that, when speaking of them, there often tends to be a looseness in expression, referring by name to only one and in fact meaning both, thus causing students difficulties in distinguishing between them.

*Yoniso-manasikara* acts as a link between *sati* and *paññā*. It is that which guides the stream of thought in such a way that wisdom is able to get down to work and achieve results. To put it another way, it is that which provides wisdom with its method; it is the skilful means employed in the efficacious use of wisdom. Students of *Dhamma* tend to become confused because, in general

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<sup>1</sup> Here one should note the differing results, in relation to *paññā*, of *saddhā* (reasoned conviction) and *yoniso-manasikāra*. *Saddhā* is like digging a fixed channel for thought to flow along. *Yoniso-manasikāra* is like cutting the path for *paññā* which is at each moment most conducive to its fruitful progress.

In Buddhism, the son of *saddhā* which is encouraged is that which can link up with *paññā*, i.e. that which offers an opportunity to *yoniso-manasikāra* to perform its function. To illustrate this point, one example of the *saddhā* of the 'fixed channel' variety is the theist's belief that everything which happens is the will of God. Such a faith brings critical thought to a halt. A Buddhist, on the other hand, has conviction in the truth of those of the Buddha's teachings which he has not yet directly verified for himself, but his faith leads him on. For example, his conviction in the Buddha's teaching that all things exist in accordance with causes and conditions encourages him, when undergoing an experience, to try to find out what causes and conditions are prevailing at that time.

parlance, the term '*yoniso-manasikāra*' is used to refer both to the proposal of the means or method of thought (which is its true meaning), and also to the subsequent employment of *paññā* in line with that method. Thus, as it is commonly used, the term implies both reflection and wisdom, in other words, 'wise reflection'.

This ambiguity may also occur when speaking of the practical expressions of *paññā*. For instance, when using the term '*dhamrnavicaya*' (the discrimination of *dhammas*). one is usually left to work out for oneself that *dhammavicaya* denotes the employment of the wisdom-faculty to discriminate between *dhammas* using one of the methods provided by *yoniso-manasikāra*.

To demonstrate the process involved as a sequence of events, one could say that when *sati* brings an object to mind and lays it down in full view of the mind, *yoniso-manasikāra*, as it were, picks it up and manipulates it in such a way that *paññā* may scrutinize it and then deal with it effectively. *Yoniso-manasikāra* fixes on the aspects amenable to the workings of *paññā* and determines the course that it should take. *Paññā* proceeds accordingly, and if *yoniso-manasikāra* has done the ground-work well, its efforts will bear fruit. *Sati* is present at every stage of this process for, whenever *yoniso-manasikāra* is functioning, *sati* is always present. It is supported by, and in turn, supports, *yoniso-manasikāra* in *vipassanā*.

A comparison may be made to someone in a rowing boat out on a choppy river, picking flowers or water greens. Firstly, that person ties up the boat or anchors it in such a way that it will remain stationary at

the spot where the plants grow. Then with one hand he grasps hold of the stems, gathers them together and exposes them as conveniently as possible for harvesting. With the other hand, using the tool he has prepared for the job, he cuts them off. *Sati* may be compared to the anchor which stabilized the boat, enabling the man to remain within reach of the plants. The boat, held stationary at a given spot, may be compared to the mind. The hand which grasps the plant stems and holds them in a convenient way is like *yoniso-manasikāra*. The other hand, using a sharp tool to cut off the stems, is like *paññā*.

A thorough knowledge of *sammāsati*, the seventh factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, thus entails an examination of its characteristics and variations, its effects, its benefits, its relationship to other *dharmas*, and the role it plays in the practice leading to ultimate cessation of *dukkha*. Such an understanding of *sammāsati* is of inestimable value to the practising Buddhist.

"This is the one way, O Bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the passing beyond sorrow and lamentation, for the cessation of pain and distress, namely, the Four *Satipatṭhāna*."

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Buddhadhamma Foundation

Buddhadhamma strongly emphasizes the importance of *sati* at every level of ethical conduct. Conducting one's life or one's Dhamma practice constantly governed by *sati* is called '*appamāda*', or heedfulness. *Appamāda* is of central importance to progress in a system of ethics, and is usually defined as non-separation from *sati*. This may be expanded on as implying constant care and circumspection, not allowing oneself to stumble into harmful ways; not allowing oneself to miss any opportunity for betterment; a clear awareness of what things need to be done and what left undone; continual attention to and appreciation of one's duties; non-negligence; and performing one's daily tasks with sincerity and with unbending effort towards improvement. . . .

"All conditioned things are subject to decay.  
Strive on with heedfulness."