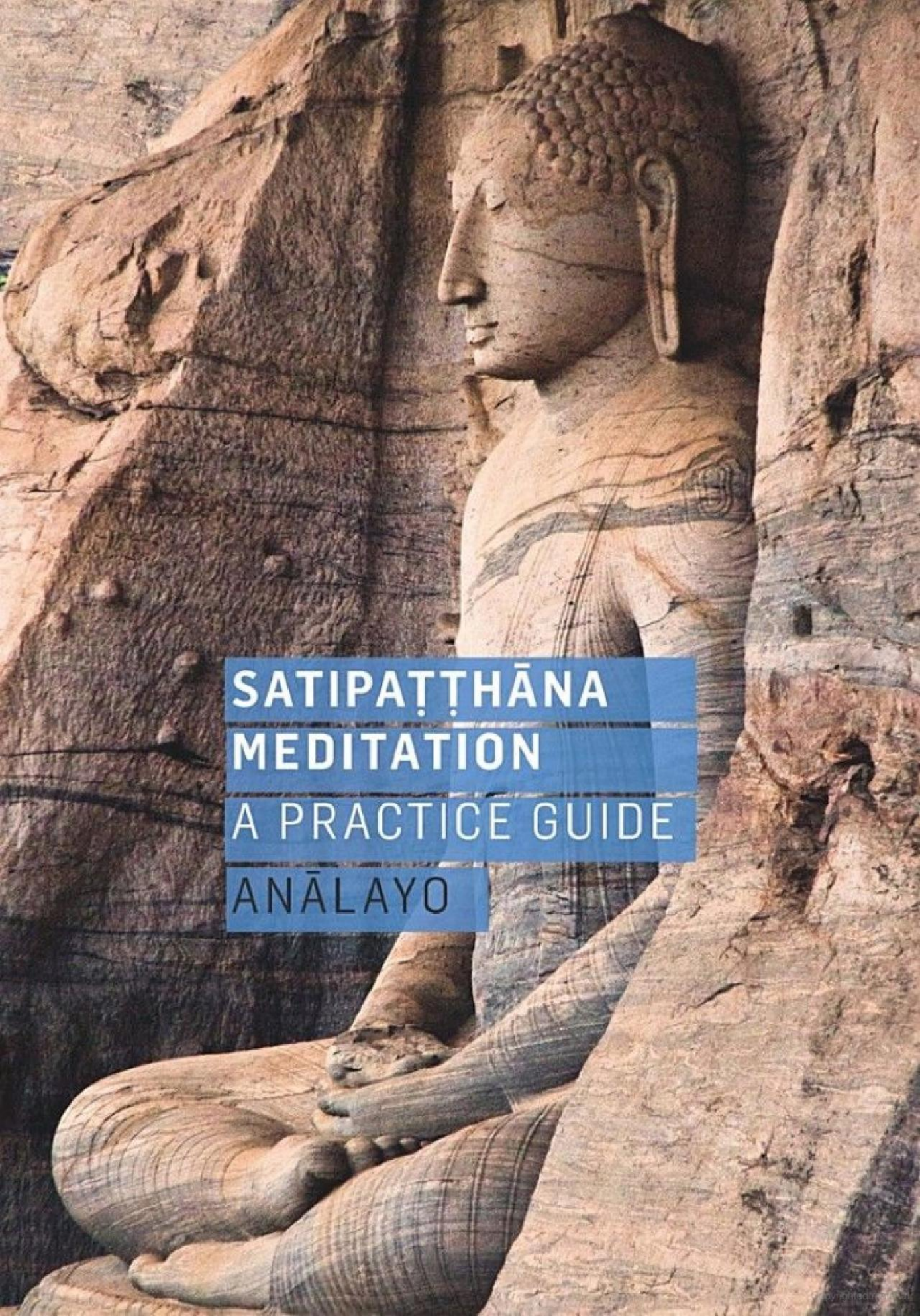

SATIPAṬṬHĀNA MEDITATION

A PRACTICE GUIDE

ANĀLAYO

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1962 in Germany, Bhikkhu Anālayo was ordained in 1995 in Sri Lanka, and completed a PhD on the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, in 2000 – published in 2003 by Windhorse Publications under the title *Satipaṭṭhāna, The Direct Path to Realization*.

Anālayo is a professor of Buddhist Studies; his main research area is early Buddhism and in particular the topics of the Chinese *Āgama*s, meditation, and women in Buddhism. Besides his academic pursuits, he regularly teaches meditation. He presently resides at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Massachusetts, where he spends most of his time in silent retreat.

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I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Bhikkhu Katukurunde Ñāṇananda (1940–2018) in gratitude for guidance and inspiration in exploring deep passages among the early discourses from a practice-related perspective.

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FOREWORD BY JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN

Bhikkhu Anālayo's first book, *Satipaṭṭhāna, The Direct Path to Realization*, was a seminal work, bridging the divide between rigorous scholarship and meditative understanding and practice. Following in the tradition of great scholar-practitioners, Anālayo illuminated the profound details of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, which inspired my own interest in further exploring this pivotal discourse. Meeting Anālayo in person, and later teaching a retreat with him at the Insight Meditation Society, confirmed my initial enthusiasm for what he was offering to Western Dharma practitioners. His remarkable breadth of knowledge and depth of practice have elucidated with great clarity the liberation teachings of the Buddha.

In this current volume, *Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation: A Practice Guide*, Anālayo moves from a more scholarly approach to an eminently pragmatic discussion of how to put these teachings into practice. Although his comparative study of both the Pāli and the Chinese versions of the text informs this work, it is the clear expression of a graduated path of practice that makes it so compellingly helpful. Anālayo has developed a simple and straightforward map of practice instructions encompassing all four *satipaṭṭhāna*s – the body, feelings, mind, and dharmas (the hindrances and awakening factors) – that build upon one another in a coherent and comprehensive path leading to the final goal.

One of the great joys of reading this book is Anālayo's creativity in presenting the teachings of early Buddhism in a way that emphasizes their practical application. To name just a few of the very many examples of this, in the opening chapter there is a clear explanation of what mindfulness actually is, its relation both to memory and to concepts, the feminine nature of its open receptivity and soft alertness (the Pāli word *sati* is feminine), and the fundamental importance of embodied awareness. Given the current widespread popularity of mindfulness, exploring the nuances of what the term means offers us the possibility of greater depth in its cultivation.

There are also detailed descriptions of various death contemplations that give a vivid immediacy to these practices. Anālayo comments that "if I were asked to recommend just one single meditation practice, I would probably opt for recollection of death. This is because of its transformative power."

And in discussing mindfulness of feelings, he does not simply suggest noticing whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, but understanding "the way feelings impact the mind". In like manner, Anālayo proceeds through mindfulness of mind and of dharmas, detailing ways of practice that illuminate the conditioned, impermanent nature of all aspects of our experience. These insights culminate in a simple but profound progression from seclusion (from the hindrances) and dispassion through cessation and letting go, leading directly to Nibbāna, the highest peace.

An unusual aspect of Anālayo's work is the combination of precision and openness, highlighting the specificity of particular practices and, at the same time, recognizing that there are many different meditative techniques and approaches. Anālayo continually reminds us to test all the suggestions and to see what works best for each one of us, so that we may all, in the words of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, "dwell independently without clinging to anything in the world".

Joseph Goldstein

When based on virtue and established in virtue you thus cultivate these four *satipaṭṭhāna*s, then you can expect growth in wholesome states to come to you, be it day or night, and no decline (SN 47.15).

INTRODUCTION

This is my third book on the topic of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation. The first book, *Satipaṭṭhāna, The Direct Path to Realization* (2003), was an attempt to survey and collect relevant material for an understanding of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. It could be compared to building the foundation for the construction of a house. At that time I tried to gain a better understanding of various details. However, in one way or another, I was still missing the overall picture. It was, after all, just a foundation.

The second book, *Perspectives on Satipaṭṭhāna* (2013), published ten years later, built on that foundation. It could be compared to the walls of the house. By studying the Chinese parallels to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, I was able to identify those contemplations that form the common core of this discourse in its various versions. This enabled me to get a better sense of the overall picture of what *satipaṭṭhāna* is all about.

With the present book I return to the Pāli version of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. My exploration is entirely dedicated to the actual practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, informed by the previously gathered details and overall picture as it emerges from a study of relevant material in the early discourses. In terms of my simile of the house, what I now present is the roof of the house – its pinnacle. Of the three books, the present one is also the one most directly aimed at practitioners. I am dispensing with footnotes entirely, as well as with references to studies by others. I use in-line quotation to refer to relevant passages from the Pāli discourses and to my own works by way of date of publication and page to enable readers to follow up particular points of interest. To facilitate tracing the relevant passage from a Pāli discourse, a list of quotes at the end of the book gives cross-references to the relevant page in the standard English translations. For marking supplementations in quotes from my own translation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, I employ italics, similar to the procedure I adopted in other recent publications (Anālayo 2016 and 2017c). In translated passages I replace references to a *bhikkhu* with

"one", in order to make it clear that the instructions are not meant for male monastics only.

My overall concern in the following pages is to provide suggestions and inspiration for actual meditation practice. The book comes with audio files that offer meditation instructions, which can be freely downloaded from the publisher's website at https://www.windhorsepublications.com/satipatthana-meditation-audio/. For each of the seven contemplations covered in this book there are audio recordings with guided meditation instructions that build on each other gradually.

I would recommend using the book and recordings to develop the practice step by step. This could be done, for example, over a period of seven weeks. In the early discourses the number seven functions as a symbol of a complete cycle of time. In preparation for this cycle of self-training, I recommend reading the first two chapters. Following such preparation, perhaps each week it would be possible to find time to study one of the chapters on the seven main contemplations, and during the ensuing days of the week cultivate its actual practice. In this way, alongside whatever other responsibilities we might have, it would be possible to complete a course of self-training within a period of seven weeks.

Following such a course of training, we might then continue letting the practice of all four *satipaṭṭhāna*s become more and more an integral part of our life. The basic pattern of mindfulness practice remains throughout: being in the present, knowing what is happening, and proceeding accordingly.

I

MINDFULNESS

An indispensable foundation for any *satipaṭṭhāna* practice is a clear understanding of what mindfulness actually is. Here I think it is first of all important to acknowledge that there are various notions of mindfulness. Diverse understandings of this quality can be found not only among several Buddhist traditions, but also among those involved with its clinical employment. Each of these understandings has its own value and significance (Anālayo 2017a: 26). In what follows, I will present my own understanding of one of these constructs of mindfulness, namely the way *sati* is described and reflected in the early Buddhist discourses. Throughout this book, I use "mindfulness" and "awareness" as interchangeable translations for *sati*.

MINDFULNESS AND MEMORY

The standard definition of mindfulness in the discourses brings in the topic of memory (Anālayo 2003: 46ff, 2013: 30ff, and 2018b). It states that one who is mindful is able to remember what has been done or said long ago. At first sight this can give the impression that mindfulness should be equated with memory. However, closer reflection shows that such an equation does not work. The problem is that distractions during meditation practice often involve some memory of the past. It is a common experience to sit down with the firm intention to be mindful, only to find that sooner or later the mind has wandered off into some past event. The arising of such episodic memories is clearly a case of loss of mindfulness, even though it involves remembering something that has been done or said long ago.

Mindfulness can also be lost when we imagine something taking place in

the future. Although this does not involve remembering what has been done or said long ago, daydreaming about the future still concerns aspects of memory, such as working memory and semantic memory. The experience of such distractions during meditation makes it clear that mindfulness cannot just be a form of memory (Anālayo 2017a: 26ff).

Once it has become clear that such a simple equation does not work, another explanation has to be found for appreciating the relationship between mindfulness and memory. My suggestion here is to understand that relationship as implying that the presence of mindfulness enhances and strengthens memory. Full awareness of the present moment will make it easier to recall later what has happened. Moreover, if the receptive stance of mindfulness is established at the time of recalling, it will be easier to access the required information in the mind. In this way mindfulness can be understood to facilitate the taking in of information to be recalled as well as the subsequent successful recollection of that information.

The need to understand mindfulness and memory as two closely interrelated qualities that at the same time are not identical with each other is of consequence for actual practice. Perhaps the most crucial aspect of mindfulness practice is to stay in the present moment. This is what really counts and why it is so important to distinguish clearly between mindfulness and memory. *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation is not about remembering something from the past, but about being fully in the present moment.

This vital distinction can to some degree be lost sight of with the understanding of mindfulness in the Theravāda commentarial tradition. The commentaries consider mindfulness to be a mental quality that is invariably wholesome. The discourses, however, clearly recognize that there can be wrong types of mindfulness, *micchā sati* (Anālayo 2003: 52 and 2013: 179). These could hardly be considered wholesome. Yet, a discourse in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta* presents the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s as a heap of what is wholesome (SN 47.5; Anālayo 2013: 179). In other words, mindfulness itself is not necessarily wholesome. But when mindfulness is cultivated in the form of the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s, then such practice does indeed become something definitely wholesome.

A problem with the commentarial understanding, according to which mindfulness itself is invariably wholesome, is that contemplation of an unwholesome state of mind becomes retrospective. This is because, according to the commentarial understanding, wholesome and

unwholesome qualities cannot exist simultaneously in the same state of mind. Therefore it becomes impossible for a type of mindfulness that by definition is wholesome to coexist with an unwholesome mental condition such as lust or anger.

This does not reflect what emerges from the early discourses. The instructions on *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation describe being aware of lust or anger, for example, or of any of the five hindrances at the time when they are present in the mind. From this viewpoint, mindfulness can indeed remain established when an unwholesome mental condition is present. In fact it is precisely when unwholesomeness manifests that mindfulness needs to be present. The wholesome repercussions of *satipaṭṭhāna* thus do not imply that certain mental conditions are excluded from being potential objects of direct observation with mindfulness in the present moment. Instead, the point is only that such contemplation has wholesome repercussions. Such an understanding helps to preserve a key aspect of the early Buddhist conception of mindfulness, which is to be fully aware of what is happening right now.

The type of mindful presence to be cultivated in this way is similar to how we would try to be alert and attentive when something takes place that we later have to remember. When walking a path for the first time with the help of a guide, for example, knowing that the next time we will have to find our way on our own, we will make an effort to notice and clearly remember which turns to take. It is this same effort or "diligence" (my preferred translation for *ātāpī*) that we can bring to anything that happens. Regardless of whether we expect to need to remember later what we did, the task is invariably to be fully present, fully there, and fully aware.

I will come back to the significance of the memory connotation for an appreciation of mindfulness in Chapter 9 on the awakening factors (see below here).

CULTIVATING MINDFULNESS

Another aspect of the early Buddhist conception of *sati* is that mindfulness is a mental quality that we have to bring into being. Mindfulness has to be established; it is not just a quality that is present anyway in any type of experience (Anālayo 2017a: 27f). This marks the difference between mindfulness and consciousness. Consciousness, as one of the five

aggregates, is a continuously present process of knowing. This does not mean that consciousness is permanent. It only means that the changing flow of moments of being conscious is continuously present. Without this flow of knowing, we would not be experiencing.

Whether we are mindful of a meditation object or caught up in a dream or fantasy, the flow of consciousness is always there. The same does not apply to mindfulness. In fact the notion that there is a constantly present form of awareness which needs to be recognized and which equals the liberated mind does not square with the early Buddhist understanding of mindfulness (or of consciousness). Apparently the outcome of a complex development with a starting point in a discourse that contrasts the luminous mind to its adventitious defilements (AN 1.6.1; Anālayo 2017b), the resultant notion runs counter to the recurrent emphasis on impermanence in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, found in the part of the discourse I like to refer to as the "refrain".

Although mindfulness requires cultivation, being a quality that needs to be established, such cultivation is not a forceful matter. Here it can be useful to take into consideration that the word *sati* in the Pāli language is feminine. My suggestion would be to relate to *sati*, to mindfulness, as a feminine quality. In this way, *sati* can be understood as receptively assimilating with the potential of giving birth to new perspectives.

Right away from the moment of waking up in the morning our good friend *sati* can already be there, as if waiting for us. She is ready to accompany us throughout the rest of the day, encouraging us to stay receptive and open, soft and understanding. She never gets upset when we happen to forget about her. As soon as we remember her, she is right there to be with us again.

Visualizing the practice in terms of a coming back to the presence of a good friend helps to avoid mistaking *sati* for a forceful type of hyper-attentiveness that requires strained effort in order to be maintained. Instead, being in her presence carries the flavours of an open receptivity and a soft alertness to whatever is taking place.

MINDFULNESS AND CONCEPTS

Once established in this way, mindfulness can coexist with the employment of concepts. In fact the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, whose function is precisely to foster the establishing of mindfulness, clearly encourage the

wise use of concepts. At times the discourse presents these concepts in quotation marks, making it clear that some form of mental verbalization is meant. I understand this to refer to the input provided by the quality of clearly knowing, *sampajañña*, in relation to what has become evident through well-established mindfulness.

The forward thrust of *satipaṭṭhāna* towards liberation does not require keeping the mind free from concepts. The main task is to cultivate a free mind even in the presence of concepts. The path to such freedom is based on the skilful use of certain concepts, namely those that trigger insight. In other words, our attitude towards concepts and thoughts is best informed by the distinction between unwholesome and wholesome types. Although we need to beware of confusing actual practice with just thinking about the practice, wholesome thoughts and concepts can serve as a tool for progress, and in the form of clearly knowing are an integral dimension of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation.

The input provided by *sampajañña*, clearly knowing, could be illustrated with the example of yeast, due to which the dough of mindfulness practice can grow into the bread of liberating insight. Without yeast, the dough will result only in flatbread. Yeast on its own, however, will not be nourishing at all. It is when the cultivation of mindfulness comes in combination with the right amount of the yeast of clearly knowing that the tasty and nourishing bread of insight will result.

Regarding the role of concepts, it also needs to be kept in mind that a distinction between concepts and ultimate realities is not found in the early Buddhist discourses. For those who practise according to the methodology of the Theravāda commentarial tradition, this distinction is of considerable importance and has its practical benefits. However, for the type of practice that I present here, it would be helpful to set aside this mode of thinking.

In the early discourses, tranquillity and insight are not distinguished according to whether our meditation object is a concept or (what is considered to be) an ultimate reality. In fact tranquillity and insight are not even set apart as separate meditation practices. Instead, they are complementary qualities of meditative cultivation (Anālayo 2017a: 88ff and 173f). Some practices can emphasize one or the other of these two, and with still others tranquillity and insight can be cultivated in conjunction. The only ultimate reality recognized in early Buddhism is Nibbāna. This is the one experience where concepts indeed do not have a place. For the path leading

up to this culmination point in the experience of Nibbāna, however, concepts are useful tools.

The need for concepts is also to some degree implicit in a passage in the *Mahānidāna-sutta*, which describes experience as involving a relationship of reciprocal conditioning between consciousness and name-and-form (DN 15; Anālayo 2015: 107f). Here "name" stands for those mental activities responsible for conceptual designation and "form" for the experience of matter by way of resistance. Both together are known by consciousness. From the viewpoint of early Buddhist epistemology, insight into matter cannot take place without name, without at least a minimal input of concept. Only dead matter impinging on dead matter will be free from concepts. But for us to cultivate insight into the true nature of material phenomena, some form of contact by way of designation is required.

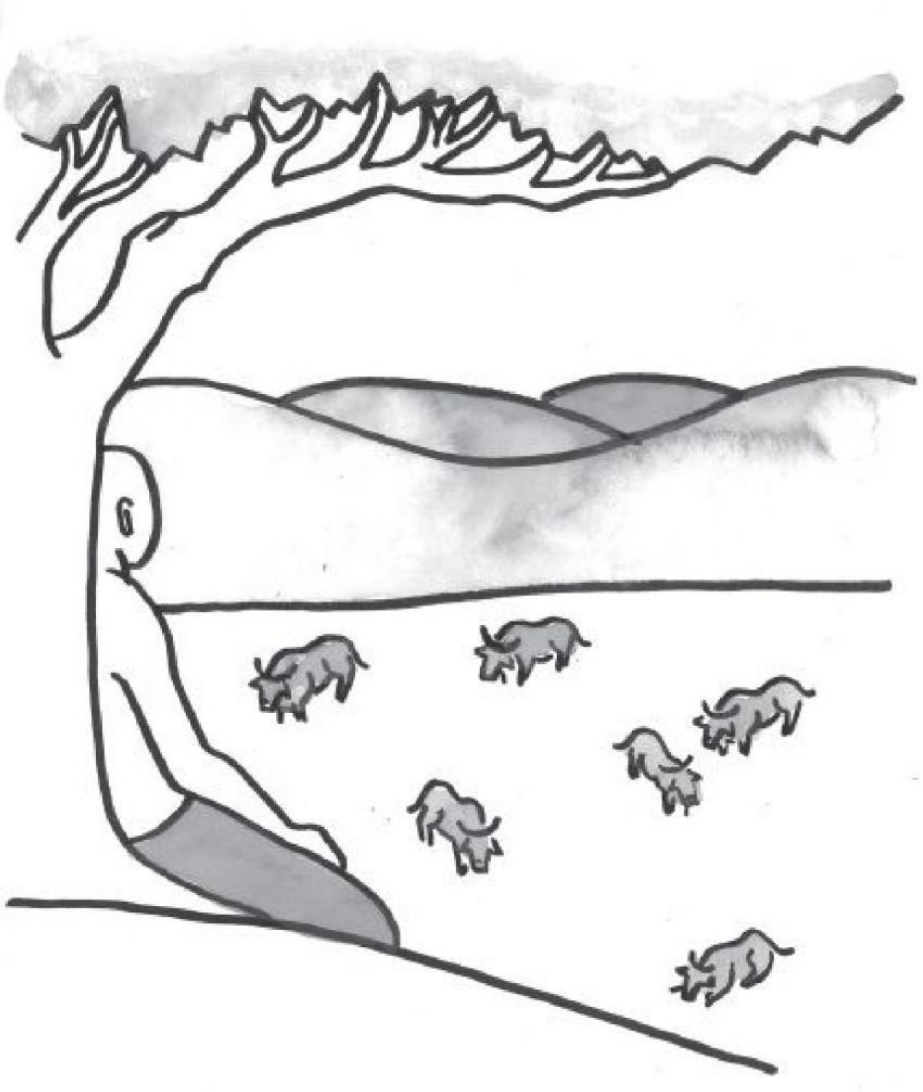
In the case of contemplation of the body as the first *satipaṭṭhāna*, for example, the task is not to break through to an ultimately true experience of the body that leaves behind all concepts. Instead, the task is to see through deluding concepts with the help of wise concepts. This takes place by cultivating clearly knowing in conjunction with mindfulness. In short, not only can early Buddhist mindfulness coexist with the use of concepts, *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation even has to employ concepts in order to lead to liberation.

MINDFULNESS AND RECEPTIVITY

Another significant aspect of mindfulness is what I like to refer to as breadth of mind. With breadth of mind I mean an open-minded and broadly receptive attitude. This type of open receptivity can be illustrated with the help of the cowherd simile found in the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* (MN 19). This simile describes a cowherd in ancient India in two situations. In the first situation the crops are ripe. The cowherd has to watch over the cows with close vigilance to prevent them from straying into and feasting on the ripe crops.

Once the crops have been harvested, however, the cowherd can relax and just observe the cows from a distance. All he has to do is to be aware that "there are the cows." For this distant watching the simile uses the term *sati* (Anālayo 2003: 53 and 2014a: 87). I picture the cowherd sitting relaxed at the root of a tree and watching the cows grazing in various places. All he has to

do is just be aware of them from an uninvolved distance.



Needless to say, the cowherd will not get awakened by just being aware of the cows. More than just being mindful is required for that. This is precisely where clearly knowing, *sampajañña*, comes in to plant the seeds of wisdom in the fertile soil of mindful observation. In terms of my earlier simile, without the yeast of clearly knowing, the dough of mindfulness practice will result only in flatbread. The wise input provided by clearly knowing marks the difference from the cowherd's mindfulness. Although the cowherd lacks the crucial wisdom part, observing the cows from a distance is nevertheless a good illustration of the receptivity and breadth of mind that I consider to be an important dimension of mindfulness.

The cowherd simile is not alone in conveying this sense. Another relevant discourse is the *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*, which relates a narrow state of mind to being without mindfulness of the body. However, a state of mind that is broad, even boundless, comes with mindfulness of the body established (Mn 38; Anālayo 2014a: 87 and 2017a: 40). Here the presence of mindfulness of the body clearly relates to a broad state of mind.

The importance of this breadth of mind lies in the comprehensiveness of vision that results from such an open-minded attitude. This is somewhat like taking a picture with a wide-angle lens. Such wide-angle openness allows mental space for differences to exist side by side. The resultant mental spaciousness stands in contrast to the narrow-mindedness of being firmly convinced that our particular view or understanding is the only right one. This does not mean that we are no longer entitled to have an opinion. It does mean, however, that our personal opinions are seen for what they are: just opinions, which may or may not be correct. We learn to allow space for diversity to unfold without suppression or negativity.

With a bit of mindful observation, we can in fact easily notice how spacious and allowing the mind can be when we are open to differences and variety, and how narrow and cramped the mind can become when we are self-righteous and judgemental. Becoming aware of this difference can serve as a good signpost for noticing when the mind shifts from open-mindedness to closing down.

Combining an open-minded attitude with being fully in the present moment requires some form of an anchor. It is a common experience that mindfulness is lost and the mind succumbs to some sort of distraction or fantasy. The challenge here is to find an anchor that supports the continuity of mindfulness without losing the qualities of open-mindedness and receptivity. In other words, the anchor should be established without introducing too strong a focus and without too much of an interfering and controlling attitude.

In my personal experience, I have found the most helpful tool to meet this challenge to be the type of mindfulness mentioned in the *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*: mindfulness of the body. In simple terms, mindfulness of the body means a form of mindfulness that in one way or another relates to aspects of the body or to the body as a whole. Needless to say, both modes are interrelated. Becoming aware of parts of the body strengthens whole-body awareness, just as awareness of the whole body

easily leads over to awareness of its different parts. Given the need to avoid too strong a focus, however, the mode of mindfulness of the body that recommends itself for serving as an anchor is awareness of the whole physical body.

MINDFULNESS OF BODILY POSTURES

Mindfulness of the whole body can be related to two contemplations in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, which describe being aware of the bodily postures and clearly knowing bodily activities (MN 10). The instructions for the first of these two are as follows:

> When walking, one knows: "I am walking"; or when standing, one knows: "I am standing"; or when sitting, one knows: "I am sitting"; or when lying down, one knows: "I am lying down"; or, however the body is disposed, one knows it accordingly.

The passage is not about performing any of these postures in a special way, such as doing slow-motion walking meditation, but just about knowing the postures of the body as they occur naturally. To my mind this conveys the sense of a continuity of awareness of the body combined with clearly knowing its posture. It is something natural and without artificiality; in fact the naturalness helps to avoid going into autopilot mode. This can easily happen when we train ourselves to do something invariably in a particular manner. Natural walking is also what I would recommend for walking meditation by way of just resting in whole-body awareness during the walking process. When walking, we just walk with our whole being.

The ability to know if the body is in one of these four postures relies on what clinical psychology calls proprioceptive awareness. The term "proprioception" refers to the ability to sense the position of the body and its movements. Even with closed eyes we are able to know the position of our body through this type of ability. It is a felt sense of physical presence. This felt physical presence provides an easily available sense of "here", and mindfulness itself keeps us in the "now". In this way mindfulness of the body can combine spatial and temporal dimensions that facilitate our being fully in the here and now.

During normal daily life this felt sense of physical presence is usually not noticed. It quickly comes to the forefront of attention, however, when bodily

balance is lost. Meditative cultivation of this felt sense of physical presence can take place by being aware of the body in any posture. This requires allowing this natural ability of proprioceptive awareness to become a recognized aspect of our experience. In this way neither is it ignored, as usually, nor does it take up the whole field of attention, as is the case when a loss of bodily balance occurs. Such meditative cultivation is not a forceful grabbing hold of the body, but rather a resting in the presence of the whole body. The phrase I tend to use to introduce the flavour of this practice is: "We are aware of the body in the sitting posture and we let the mind rest on the body just as the body rests on the cushion."

Properly cultivated, such mindfulness of the body results in a sense of being firmly grounded in the body; it is an embodied awareness. Such embodied awareness does not need to interfere with other tasks and activities. Instead, it can accompany them. To accomplish this takes training. The natural tendency of the mind is either to focus or to ignore. Proprioceptive awareness can be employed to cultivate a middle path between these two extremes.

Cultivating this middle path comes about by way of a gradual approach, rather than through mere force of the will. Once the centring and balancing potential of mindfulness of the body has become a matter of personal experience, it becomes easier to return to the body even amidst the most challenging situations. The body is always there, wherefore turning mindfulness towards it can serve almost like a portable meditation device, ready at hand in any situation. All it takes is to become aware of some part of the body and from that entry door to allow mindfulness to encompass the whole body, enabling the mind to rest in that encompassing awareness as its reference point. This in itself simple act of turning with awareness to the presence of the body can transform the most boring types of situation into opportunities for practice. Caught up in a traffic jam, sitting in the doctor's waiting room, standing in a long queue at passport control, any such setting can be transformed by embodied mindfulness. Such is the power of this middle path between exclusive focus and distraction.

Advantages of cultivating this middle path are stability and continuity of mindfulness. It enables bridging the gap between formal meditation during a retreat or sitting period and everyday activities. This is decisive. For meditation practice to flourish truly, formal sitting and everyday life have to evolve into an integrated whole, each supporting the other. This can be

achieved by finding a way of maintaining the presence of mindfulness, regardless of what needs to be done.

When outer circumstances make continuity of mindfulness difficult, it can be helpful to use a phrase from the part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* I call the "refrain". The relevant part reads: "mindfulness is established that 'there is the body'." Just bringing to mind this phrase: "there is the body" (or its Pāli equivalent, *atthi kāyo*) can help to re-establish mindfulness of the body and to support its continuity. The same type of phrase can also be used for the domains of the other *satipaṭṭhāna*s. If the situation at hand gives rise to prominent feelings, for example, the mental phrase to be used could be: "there is feeling", *atthi vedanā*.

A good way to get a practical sense of what it means to cultivate such an embodied awareness would be taking a walk in a forest. Walking in the forest, can we just walk in the forest? Is it possible to be fully with the present moment of walking? For the time being, can we leave behind all our concerns and duties, our roles and identities, as well as the ever-active mental commentator within? When walking in the forest, can we just know that we are walking? Based on the resultant rootedness in the act of walking, can we allow the mind to be wide open and receptive to the beauty of nature around us?

Establishing continuity of awareness in the four postures builds the foundation for the next exercise described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, which is clearly knowing in relation to various bodily activities. In this context, clearly knowing refers to a general sense of appropriateness and propriety. The same quality also occurs in the part of the discourse that I like to call the "definition". In that context, clearly knowing seems to have a more specific purpose, which I understand to be in particular to serve as a reminder of the changing nature of all aspects of experience. In terms of my earlier simile, the clearly knowing mentioned in the definition is the yeast required for the bread of insight.

MINDFULNESS OF BODILY ACTIVITIES

The instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* for the type of clearly knowing that is relevant to various bodily activities proceed as follows:

> When going forward and returning one acts clearly knowing; when looking ahead and looking away one acts clearly knowing; when flexing and extending [the

limbs] one acts clearly knowing; when wearing the outer robe and [other] robes and [carrying] the bowl one acts clearly knowing; when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting one acts clearly knowing; when defecating and urinating one acts clearly knowing; when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent one acts clearly knowing.

Aspects of this description relate in particular to the lifestyle of a monastic. But by understanding robes to be representative of clothing in general and the bowl to stand in place of any tool to be used, the description can be related to lay practice as well. Clearly knowing (*sampajañña*) has its foundation in the presence of mindfulness. It is only when we are aware of what we are doing that we can do it clearly knowing. The activities described are going somewhere and looking at something, moving our limbs in one way or another, wearing our clothes, eating and drinking, defecating and urinating, going to sleep and waking up, even talking and being silent. Clearly the exercise is meant to embrace all possible kinds of situation. In other words, any situation or activity can in principle become food for mindfulness and clearly knowing.

When turning around to look at something, the Buddha is described as turning around with his whole body, similar to an elephant. This exemplifies wholehearted dedication to an action. Can we eat with our whole body? Can we obey the calls of nature with our whole body? Bringing this fullness of being into any activity has considerable potential. It makes us become more alive. We learn to cultivate the subtle joy of being fully in the present moment through such embodied mindfulness.

Waking up in the morning, we can start right away by being aware of the whole body. Before getting into any other activity, we take a few moments just to be aware of the body lying in the bed. Getting up then involves the other three postures, where from lying down we proceed to sitting, standing, and then walking. In this way we can begin the day with a check-in on whole-body awareness in all four postures, which will enable us to continue the day with a good grounding in embodied mindfulness. Having established such a foundation, it becomes easier to return to mindfulness throughout the day until the time comes to rest again. At that time we proceed through the same four postures in reverse order: walking to reach the bed, standing by its side, sitting down on it, and eventually lying down. All of this can be done with whole-body awareness, until we fall asleep.

Probably the most challenging of the activities mentioned in the passage

above is talking. I propose to understand talking here to cover any type of communication, including use of email and internet. The mind can get so active and involved in these activities that we easily forget about mindfulness of the body. Yet, to come back to it only requires a moment of turning inward and becoming aware of the body.

Whole-body awareness can in principle remain present in the background of any activity, including even the most heated discussion. Nevertheless, a heated discussion is probably a rather challenging situation and not the best place to get started with this type of practice. It would be preferable to bring mindfulness gradually into daily activities and situations, in order to avoid frustration arising and undermining our dedication to this crucial dimension of the practice. The outside world offers us a testing ground where we can check on and mature the insights gained in formal meditation. We need to avoid creating a rigid division between formal meditation and ordinary activities. But this testing ground in the world outside is better not seen as a sort of exam which we pass or else become an utter failure. Instead, it is preferable to visualize it more as a playground where we can try out different tactics to see what works for us. From this perspective, it simply works better if we approach everyday situations with a relaxed inner smile, considering whatever occurs as a chance for testing out different ways of being with *sati*.

In order to get started, we might just try to be mindful, from time to time (without immediately aiming at uninterrupted continuity), when hearing or reading the communications of others. Hearing or reading are in themselves more passive activities and therefore more easily amenable to being combined with the receptive and non-interfering attitude of *sati*. Grounded in whole-body awareness, we try to remain balanced and aware of what others are expressing. Every moment we are mindful is a gain, as in this way we have taken another step in the right direction. No need to berate ourselves for those moments when mindfulness was lost. Distraction and getting caught up is a natural tendency of the mind, but every single step taken in the other direction will slowly weaken this tendency.

Experimenting for some time with adorning our lives step by step with the beauty of moments of embodied mindfulness will yield plainly evident benefits in our ability to understand and interact better with others. We also become better at distinguishing between what others express and how this comes to be coloured by our own commentary on it, how our biases tend to

interfere even when just hearing or reading. This in turn makes us notice how our own mind wants to react. With the growth of this understanding we in turn feel sufficiently fortified to extend the practice further, by trying to be with mindfulness even when we are actually reacting, be it by writing a message or by saying something. When moving into this more challenging arena of what is yet another dimension of our meditative training, it can be helpful to take a conscious breath that reconnects us with our bodily experience before we begin to write or speak. Hardly noticeable to others, such brief reconnection with a mindful grounding in the body can serve as an inner switch to get our meditative attitude in operation. This meditative attitude can turn any experience, be it at the workplace or at home, into an integral dimension of our progress on the path.

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS OF THE BODY

Gradually cultivating this ability eventually provides a strong anchor; it can offer a powerful grounding to face any type of challenge with *sati*. In a way we are never alone as long as *sati* is with us. Her presence will make sure that we stay balanced and centred, helping us to take in fully the relevant information before reacting and enabling us to keep monitoring how we react, noting any loss of balance along the way.

Whenever we forget about *sati* and get caught up in some sort of distraction, what is required is just a moment of smiling recognition. No need for disappointment or a sense of failure, no need for getting upset with ourselves. A smiling realization that the mind has wandered away is quite adequate. This is natural; this is the tendency of the mind. But here is our good friend, *sati*, right here patiently waiting for us to come and be with her again. And being with her is so pleasant, so calm, so spacious; it is just much more attractive than any kind of thought, reaction, or daydream we could entertain in our mind.

With this type of attitude we learn to practise mindfulness of the body with wisdom, knowing very well that it would not be skilful to get tense with the idea: "I must be mindful of the body without any interruption whatsoever." This could in fact be a reflection of the mistaken belief that we are in full control. From the viewpoint of early Buddhist thought, a key factor in whatever we do is volition or intention. But our volition operates within a wider network of causes and conditions. It can influence things, but

it cannot control them completely.

Applied to the experience of distraction, our responsibility is to set up the intention to be mindful and return to that intention whenever we notice that mindfulness has been lost. With that much we have fulfilled our task. If nevertheless the mind is totally distracted, then that is because of other causes and conditions impacting on the present situation. We are simply not in full control within our own mind. On realizing this, we come to appreciate that the best goal to set ourselves is a harmonious balance between our effort to live in the present moment and the natural resistance to that from the tendencies in our mind and from outer circumstances. Instead of the unreasonable expectation that all such resistance should be annihilated once and for all in order for us to qualify as a "good meditator", we inhabit that harmonious balance, where recognition of the manifestation of any resistance is met with the smiling effort that is just sufficient for gently coming back home to the here and now. In this way, instead of turning the cultivation of mindfulness into a stressful and demanding chore, we see *sati* as a good friend to whom we return, with whom we like to spend as much of our time as possible.

Such returning to mindfulness again and again can become a practical expression of the notion in the discourses that the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s provide a refuge within (SN 47.9 or 47.14; Anālayo 2003: 276 and 2013: xiii and 1n3). Embodied mindfulness cultivated in this way does indeed provide an anchor and a refuge throughout the entire day, right up to the moment we fall asleep. It can be there with us right away again the next morning as we wake up. She is always there with her beautiful qualities of receptivity and acceptance, allowing our mind to be broad and spacious. Firmly grounded in the present moment, we can be aware of anything that happens from the vantage point of resting in whole-body awareness.

The nuance of an anchor or a grounding through mindfulness of the body comes to the fore in a simile that describes six different animals that are bound together (SN 35.206; Anālayo 2003: 123 and 2013: 55f). Each of the six animals struggles to go off in a particular direction. The strongest one pulls the others along until it gets tired and another one takes over. This illustrates the fragmentation of our experience by way of the six sense-doors as long as mindfulness of the body is not established. We keep getting pulled here and there, depending on which sense-door has for a moment gathered the greatest strength to take us along.

Establishing mindfulness of the body is like firmly planting a strong post in the ground. However much the six animals struggle to go off in one direction or another, due to being bound to that strong post they will no longer be able to pull the others along. Sooner or later, they will give up pulling and just sit or lie down beside the post.

This illustrates the power of mindfulness of the body. It enables experiencing what is agreeable and what is disagreeable at any of the six sense-doors without getting pulled along. Such ability is particularly crucial for dealing with everyday-life situations. It can be quite tiring to hold the leashes of the six animals. It is more sensible to establish the firm post of mindfulness of the body to take care of the six animals. In this way we can avoid being worn out by them.

During actual practice we just come back to the sense of bodily presence, to proprioceptive awareness, as soon as we realize that we are getting pulled along. In preparation for challenging situations, we make sure first of all that we are aware of the presence of our body. From the vantage point of embodied mindfulness, we become able to face challenges well. This reflects the protective dimension inherent in the establishing of mindfulness (Anālayo 2013: 24ff).

The centredness that results from this form of practice comes to the fore in another simile. This simile describes a person who has to carry a bowl brimful of oil through a crowd. The crowd is watching a dancing and singing performance by a beautiful girl (SN 47.20; Anālayo 2003: 122 and 2013: 56f). Picturing this simile in the ancient Indian context, I imagine that the person is carrying the bowl of oil on the head and that the members of the crowd are trying their best to get really close to the dancing performance to see it well, perhaps even moving to and fro in time with the music.

The simile further specifies that behind the person carrying the oil is someone with a drawn sword. The swordsman is ready to cut off the carrier's head as soon as even a little bit of oil is spilled. To survive this challenging situation, the carrier has to be very careful not to get distracted.

Mindfulness of the body provides the centredness that it takes to survive even the most dangerous and challenging situation. In line with the image of carrying a bowlful of oil on the head, the sense of bodily centredness can be experimented with by, for example, carrying a thick book around on our head. Fortunately nobody will cut off our head, should the book fall to the ground. Doing an experiment of this type can help to get a sense of the

bodily centredness that to my mind is a relevant nuance of this simile.

A key aspect of the potential of mindfulness of the body is the providing of a type of anchoring that ensures the continuity of mindfulness without introducing too strong a focus. This is the advantage of whole-body awareness over a form of mindfulness that takes a narrower object, which can easily result in too strong a focus and thereby in losing awareness of the overall situation.

A simile in the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* explains the relationship between wholesome states leading to knowledge and mindfulness of the body (MN 119; Anālayo 2013: 60). This relationship is similar to that between various rivers and the ocean. The ocean includes all of them. The same inclusiveness comes about through mindfulness of the body.

Imagine standing on a beach and looking out over the ocean. It is so vast and wide. In a similar way, mindfulness of the body can function as a wide-open container for the various rivers of our activities. It can do so by providing a central reference point and support, without interfering with the activity we are engaged in. It also helps to string together whatever we do into a continuous practice, when all our activities take place in the company of our good friend, mindfulness of the body. Her presence is the one taste that can come to pervade all our practice and activities. The ocean has a single taste, which is the taste of salt (AN 8.19; Anālayo 2013: 251). Similarly, continuous establishing of mindfulness of the body can lead to all of our experiences acquiring a single taste, the taste of progress to liberation.

Another simile compares mindfulness to a capable charioteer (SN 45.4; Anālayo 2013: 37). Just like a good driver, we learn to steer the vehicle of our activities through any kind of traffic without running into an accident. The *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* illustrates the ability to avoid such an accident, which would be equivalent to falling into the hands of Māra, with several similes (MN 119; Anālayo 2003: 123 and 2013: 60). These similes depict a fire that is easily made with dry wood, water that is easily poured into an empty pot, and a stone that, on being thrown, easily enters a mound of wet clay. Similarly, Māra will easily get an opportunity to overpower those who have not cultivated mindfulness of the body by setting them on fire as if they were dry wood, filling them up like an empty pot, and throwing something at them that gets in.

When mindfulness of the body has been cultivated, however, Māra no longer gains such an opportunity. Being with mindfulness of the body

compares to wet wood that will not burn, to a full pot that will not take any more liquid, and to a solid door panel at which a light ball is thrown without having any effect.

These images bring out how mindfulness of the body can serve as a form of protection. When we are rooted in whole-body awareness, sensually alluring objects do not easily set the mind on fire. Embodied awareness can yield a sense of inner contentment as a source of joy, and being filled with such joy we will not be like an empty pot that takes in anything that comes along just to get filled up. Whatever others may throw at us will just bounce off, instead of entering.

The practice of mindfulness of the body is the hub of the type of practice that I will be presenting in the following pages. This is where we start, where we continue, and where we conclude: maintaining a somatic anchor in the here and now through embodied awareness, which serves as a support for a widely open and receptive mental attitude. Our awareness is fully with the present moment, as if it were of supreme importance to us to be able to remember it. With mindfulness we stay widely open and receptive to whatever manifests at any of the six sense-doors. We are rooted and grounded in the felt physical reality of the whole body. This serves as a container for all our practices, similar to the ocean. Such is the beauty and potential of mindfulness of the body.

SUMMARY

Mindfulness is not a given of any experience, but much rather requires intentional cultivation. During such cultivation, mindfulness can coexist with the use of concepts; in fact the input provided through the wise use of concepts is of crucial importance for *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation. In actual *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, mindfulness is concerned with what is present, not with recollecting matters of the past. The memory connotation of *sati* can be taken to convey the sense that the openly receptive stance of mindfulness should be such that we would later be able to recall easily what happened. In order to provide an anchor for an attitude of open-minded receptivity, mindfulness of the whole body recommends itself.

II

SATIPAṬṬHĀNA

In the introduction I briefly mentioned that, in spite of the amount of detail that I had been able to gather in the course of my research published as *Satipaṭṭhāna, The Direct Path to Realization*, I still felt I was somehow missing the overall picture. The different exercises found under the heading of contemplation of the body and contemplation of dharmas in particular seemed somewhat too complex as a whole for me to get a clear sense of the thrust of these two *satipaṭṭhāna*s.

FOUR *SATIPAṬṬHĀNA*S

Yet another stumbling block for me was that all four *satipaṭṭhāna*s are combined into a single unified practice in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* (MN 118; Anālayo 2003: 133ff, 2013: 227ff, and forthcoming b). Based on the breath, which in itself is a bodily phenomenon, a continuous and seamless progression of meditation leads from one *satipaṭṭhāna* to the next.

I was unable to see how a similar progression could be achieved in actual practice based on the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. Surveying the contemplations listed in the discourse, it was not evident to me how they could be developed as a seamless form of practice that mirrors the continuity evident in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta*. In a way it seemed to me only natural that at present *satipaṭṭhāna* tends to be taught based on selecting one or perhaps two *satipaṭṭhāna*s, but not by covering all four.

Yet, the four right efforts, for example, corresponding to factor six of the noble eightfold path, clearly build on and complement each other. The same holds for the four absorptions, listed regularly in descriptions of right concentration as factor eight of the same path. I was unable to envisage how

the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s as factor seven of this path could similarly be practised as building on and complementing each other.

Could there be a way of bringing all four *satipaṭṭhāna*s together into a unified continuous mode of practice? Would it not be possible to develop a seamless continuity with each *satipaṭṭhāna* building on the next, complementing one another? Is there at the same time a simple mode of practice that can be carried into any situation? Such questions were very much on my mind.

The solution came to me through a detailed study of the Chinese parallels. This is the topic of my second book, *Perspectives on Satipaṭṭhāna*. In principle the discourses found in the Chinese *Āgama*s have just as much of a claim as the Pāli discourses to being an authentic record of the teachings of the Buddha and his disciples (leaving aside translation errors). Placing the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* side by side with its two Chinese parallels enabled me to discover the common ground between them and the differences.

Although the next chapters will be based on the Pāli version, the comparative perspective that I gained from studying the Chinese parallels informs my approach. Since the present book is predominantly meant as a guide for meditation practice, I will not mention all of the variations in the parallels. The relevant information in this respect can be found in my other publications, to which I will be referring in the course of my discussion.

Perhaps at this point it might also be good to mention that the undertaking of such comparison with parallel versions does not mean that what is not found in all versions should just be rejected. It is more like positioning different pieces before our eyes, placing them either towards the front or more towards the back. In other words, those exercises that are common to the parallel versions can be in the foreground and allowed to become more prominent as expressions of a particular *satipaṭṭhāna*. Other exercises not found in all versions simply stand somewhat more in the background.

CONTEMPLATION OF THE BODY

Based on such positioning, three exercises emerge as the common ground of body contemplation. These are contemplation of the anatomical parts, of the elements, and of a corpse in decay. I understand these three to stand for the cultivation of insight into three dimensions of the nature of the body. The

first deconstructs projections of beauty and sexual attractiveness onto the body (be it our own or that of others). The second reveals the empty nature of material existence as manifest in the body (as well as outside of it). The third drives home the mortality of the body (be it our own or that of others).

An alternative approach to the third contemplation could be to take the stages of decay of a corpse to highlight the body's inherent lack of beauty. Since this topic has already been covered by contemplation of the anatomy, and in view of the importance of facing our own death, however, my own approach to this exercise is to cultivate it as a pointer to mortality.

With the three contemplations of the anatomical parts, of the elements, and of a corpse in decay, the first *satipaṭṭhāna* clearly becomes a way of cultivating insight into the nature of the body. In other words, the task here is not so much using the body to cultivate mindfulness, but rather using *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation to cultivate a lessening of attachment to the body.

The basic thrust of contemplation of the body also emerges from a discourse in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta*, which recommends that *satipaṭṭhāna* should be taught to beginners who have just ordained (SN 47.4; Anālayo 2003: 271 and 2013: 159). In the case of the first *satipaṭṭhāna*, beginners should practise in such a way that they understand the body as it really is (*yathābhūta*). Those more advanced in the training continue the same practice for the sake of a penetrative understanding (*pariññā*) of the body. Fully awakened ones still cultivate contemplation of the body; they do so being free from any attachment to it. Needless to say, the continuous relevance of contemplation from the beginner's cultivation all the way up to an arahant's freedom of attachment applies similarly to the other three *satipaṭṭhāna*s. In the case of the body, then, from a practical perspective the task is indeed to understand it as it really is. Such understanding becomes increasingly more penetrative in such a way that it results in gradually eroding all attachments to the body.

This is not to say that using the body to cultivate mindfulness has no importance. On the contrary, this is an essential dimension of practice. In fact exercises like mindfulness of the four postures and clearly knowing bodily activities have a remarkable potential. Much of what I said in the previous chapter is precisely about this potential. But, in order to cultivate *satipaṭṭhāna* in such a way that it becomes the direct path to liberation, the type of insight that can be developed with these three contemplations of the body offers a major contribution.

CONTEMPLATION OF DHARMAS

The situation with contemplation of dharmas also shows substantial differences (with contemplation of feelings and the mind the parallels are fairly close to each other). Strictly speaking, what remains as the common core of this contemplation in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its two Chinese discourse parallels is the cultivation of the awakening factors. I add to this also contemplation of the hindrances, as this is found in two versions and at least referred to in the third. In fact, cultivation of the awakening factors requires having first of all recognized and then overcome the hindrances, at any rate their gross manifestations.

The impression that emerges from foregrounding the awakening factors, together with the hindrances, is that contemplation of dharmas is about monitoring the mental qualities that obstruct and those that lead forward on the path to liberation. In other words, contemplation of dharmas is about the type of mind in which awakening can (or cannot) take place.

This perspective helped me to build a bridge to contemplation of dharmas in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta*, where the task is to cultivate insight perspectives alongside awareness of the changing nature of the breath. These insight perspectives are to contemplate impermanence, dispassion, cessation, and letting go. Cultivation of the awakening factors in such a way that they will fulfil their awakening potential similarly requires proceeding through the themes of dispassion and cessation, culminating in letting go. In this way, reading side by side the sections on contemplation of dharmas in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* points to those mental qualities and insight topics that are particularly helpful for the realization of Nibbāna.

SEVEN CONTEMPLATIONS

This understanding of the basic thrust of each *satipaṭṭhāna* has helped me to resolve the questions I had. The remainder of this book is dedicated to depicting how in actual meditation a seamless continuity in the practice of all four *satipaṭṭhāna*s can be achieved. This takes place by progressing through these seven topics:

- anatomy,
- elements,
- death,

- feelings,
- mind,
- hindrances,
- awakening (factors).

The first three cover contemplation of the body, the fourth and fifth correspond to contemplation of feelings and of the mind respectively, and the last two are modes of contemplation of dharmas.

The perspective afforded in this way by comparative study has a precedent in the Theravāda Abhidharma. The *Vibhaṅga* in fact presents an even shorter version of *satipaṭṭhāna*. This includes only the anatomical parts for contemplation of the body and just the hindrances and the awakening factors for contemplation of dharmas (Vibh 193; Anālayo 2003: 121 and 240 and 2013: 53 and 175).

I would like to stress again that leaving out some of the exercises mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and instead focusing on those that are common to all versions does not imply any form of devaluation. The purpose is simply to allow a focus on what seems most essential. In fact the mode of practice I will be presenting in this book also covers central aspects and themes of the exercises that are not explicitly included.

One practice not included concerns the four steps of mindfulness of breathing that in the whole scheme of sixteen steps in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* correspond to contemplation of the body. In relation to contemplation of the corpse, the instructions I present incorporate awareness of the process of breathing as a reminder of mortality. In this way, directing mindfulness to the breath is still part of contemplation of the body in the form I am presenting it here, even though it does not feature as an exercise on its own and does not involve the sixteen steps.

The same implicit inclusion holds for contemplation of bodily postures and clearly knowing bodily activities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the gist of these two exercises naturally emerges due to the central importance given to mindfulness of the whole body in the mode of practice I describe here.

Similar to the three contemplations of the body that are not explicitly included, three contemplations of dharmas from the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* are also not in the above list of seven topics. One of these concerns directing mindfulness to the impermanent nature of the five aggregates. Such

awareness nevertheless builds up naturally with my instructions for the first three *satipaṭṭhāna*s. With contemplation of the mind, these instructions culminate in a comprehensive meditative experience of the impermanent nature of all aspects of experience, encompassing body, feeling, perceptions, thoughts, and mental states. The net result of such practice is fairly similar to contemplation of the arising and passing away of the five aggregates described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*.

The main mode of practice I recommend adopting after having worked through the specific exercises is open awareness of whatever happens at any sense-door, based on remaining grounded in whole-body mindfulness. This fulfils central elements of contemplation of the six sense-spheres as described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, which is concerned in particular with drawing attention to the fettering force of sense experience.

The four noble truths, although not taken up explicitly, underlie the approach to the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s I present. I will come back to this topic in the conclusion (see below here), as appreciating this correlation requires familiarity with the details of the implementation of the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s I present in the chapters between the present and the last.

MINDFULNESS IN DAILY LIFE

The progression through the seven practices that I take up explicitly converges on an element of simplicity: mindfulness of the whole body. I visualize the practice I present in the ensuing pages as a wheel, which I will be referring to as "the wheel of practice". This wheel has seven spokes, which are the seven *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations: the three bodily spokes of contemplating the anatomical parts, the elements, and a corpse in decay, followed by one spoke each for the contemplations of feelings, mental states, the hindrances, and the awakening factors. The hub of this wheel is mindfulness of the body.

Mindfulness of the body as the hub of the wheel is the entry door into a simple mode of practice that can be undertaken in any situation. Whatever we may be doing, the *body* is there. Becoming aware of the body in the way I recommend here is to sense the body, to *feel* it. Being aware of that felt sense of bodily presence takes place in a *mental state* of awareness of the present moment. Every moment of cultivating this practice and relating it in some way to insight is yet another step forward on the path to liberation,

reflecting the main thrust of the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*.

In short, in any situation we can simply touch down on some aspect of the body, thereby coming back to the presence of the body. Feeling it and being aware of the mind that knows the felt presence of the body can be considered as establishing the three-dimensionality of the first three *satipaṭṭhāna*s in daily life. The fourth dimension, which is to relate the whole situation to progress to liberation, comes through the awareness that whatever happens is a changing process, it is impermanent.

Time is in a way our conceptualization of change. Past, present, and future are what has changed, what is changing, and what will change. Measuring time in units, however useful it may be, can at times come with an underlying nuance of attempting to control change. Yet, in the end, we invariably find that change is outside of our control. In this way, we end up being controlled by our own conceptualizations of time. Time becomes what we never seem to get enough of. Always under time pressure, always under stress, we keep having "no time". Simply becoming aware of change, of the process character of all our experience, helps to counter this tendency. It undermines our unconscious attempt to control change and it frees us from taking time too seriously. This makes us less vulnerable to time-related stress.

Combining central aspects of all four *satipaṭṭhāna*s into a single and simple mode of practice facilitates maintaining continuity between detailed *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations, usually undertaken during formal meditation, and everyday situations. Basic awareness of these four domains of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation in daily life can, according to the situation and our personal needs, lead on to a closer look at any of these four. *Feeling* the body can lead on to exploring other feelings, if this seems appropriate. A *mental state* of present-moment awareness offers an easy entry door into recognizing the condition of our own mind, should this be relevant. The orientation towards awakening as the central driving force of contemplation of dharmas, encapsulated in being aware of change, can lead to relating what takes place to the teachings in one way or another.

The cultivation of whole-body awareness can combine with occasional focus. An example could be listening to a whole orchestra performing music. Within that performance, a solo has its place. Still, the music of the soloist stands out against the background of the silence of the other instruments. The very same performance by this musician would be different if the other

members of the orchestra were not present. That sense of suspense, waiting for the other members of the orchestra to join, would no longer be there.

Similarly, within the framework of the vast and open receptivity of mindfulness that is grounded in the body, focusing on a single aspect has its place. The only requirement is that this focus should remain grounded within a comprehensive awareness of the whole situation, instead of standing in contrast to it. There is no need for the other members of the orchestra to leave the stage when the soloist performs. In fact it is their very silent presence that enhances the performance of the soloist. In the same way, there is no need for whole-body awareness to be abandoned as soon as we decide to focus on one particular aspect of experience. With practice, it will become increasingly easy for us to focus without losing the overall picture.

THE DEFINITION AND THE REFRAIN

According to a part of the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* that I like to refer to as the "definition", practising each of the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s requires bringing into being the following four qualities:

- diligence,
- clearly knowing,
- mindfulness,
- freedom from desires and discontent (literally: covetousness and sadness) with regard to the world.

The quality of *mindfulness* in the mode of practice I present here is in particular mindfulness grounded in proprioceptive awareness of the body. A primary aspect of *diligence* is in my understanding the effort to meet the present moment in its internal and external dimensions with sustained interest. The quality of *clearly knowing* comes to the forefront through acknowledging the changing nature of the present moment. This nourishes the seeds of insight into impermanence, which build the foundation for insight into *dukkha* and not-self. Such insight is precisely what enables us to become increasingly *free from desires and discontent with regard to the world*.

The relevance of impermanence for each and every *satipaṭṭhāna* emerges from another part of the instructions, which I like to call the "refrain". In the case of body contemplation, this proceeds as follows (MN 10):

> In regard to the body one abides contemplating the body internally, or in regard to the body one abides contemplating the body externally, or in regard to the body one abides contemplating the body internally and externally.
>
> Or one abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or one abides contemplating the nature of arising and passing away in the body.
>
> Or mindfulness that "there is a body" is established in one just for the sake of bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness.
>
> And one abides independently, not clinging to anything in the world.

The following four domains of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice emerge:

- contemplate internally, externally, and both,

- contemplate the nature of arising, passing away, and both,
- establish mindfulness just to know and be mindful,
- dwell independently, without clinging to anything.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

The implications of the reference to internal and external practice are not immediately obvious. Various interpretations have been proposed (Anālayo 2003: 94–102). What remains certain is that this part of the refrain points to the need to be comprehensive in our cultivation of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

The interpretation that, to my mind, makes the most sense from a practical viewpoint is to take "external" as referring to others. Our own body is made up of anatomical parts and elements, and after death will go through the stages of decay of a corpse. The same holds for the bodies of others. We react to certain experiences with pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings (the last is more literally "not-painful-not-pleasant", *adukkhamasukha*), and so do others. We experience certain mental states, including the hindrances and awakening factors, and so do others.

Although to be able to sense directly the feelings and mental states of others would require telepathic powers, at least a basic degree of recognition can be achieved through external observation (DN 18; Anālayo 2003: 96f and 2013: 17f). It is possible for us to understand from the facial expression, bodily posture, and tone of voice if another person is experiencing pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings. It is similarly possible, through reliance on such external observation, to have an idea of what is most likely going on in the mind of another.

Here sustained cultivation of awareness of the whole body has an additional benefit to offer. A natural result of the increased attention given to our own bodily posture and activities is that those of others also receive more than average attention. This in turn makes us more easily become aware of what others communicate on the bodily level. At times this can be a better guide to assessing what is happening for them on the feeling and mental level than what they say. In this way, the practice of mindfulness of the body can become a helpful tool for better understanding and interacting with others.

Adopting the proposed interpretation of the qualification "external" as referring to others would imply understanding any contemplated

phenomenon from the viewpoint of its internal and external manifestations. By shifting from internal to external we increasingly learn to broaden our perspective from seeing only our own subjective viewpoint to taking into account the viewpoints of others. When interpersonal conflicts arise, we learn to be aware not only of our needs, of what we would like to happen and where we feel we have been wronged, but also of how the situation appears to others. What are their needs? In what ways do they feel they have been wronged? What would they like to happen? More and more we learn to understand the many ways in which others are impacted by what we do and say. In this way, formal meditation and mindfulness in daily life seamlessly merge, building on the embodied presence of mindfulness. Mindfulness of the body forms a backdrop for anything that happens, building a bridge between sitting practice and various activities.

External contemplation of this type would be more relevant for everyday life and less a matter of formal sitting meditation. Even a Buddhist monastic living in seclusion will have to go out daily to collect alms food and join the monastic community every fortnight for the recital of the code of rules (Anālayo 2017a: 37f). Thus occasions for such external contemplation manifest naturally, even more so for the average lay practitioner in the modern world.

The external dimension in the cultivation of mindfulness makes an important contribution to the growth of insight. In the end, what counts is the degree to which any insight leads to actual transformation. For this to happen, insights gained during formal meditation need to be applied in daily life. They should be put to the test when facing the vicissitudes and challenges that occur outside of the seclusion of formal meditation and retreat. Such putting to the test will enable discerning the true value of any insight and ensure that it becomes so ingrained within, through repeated application, that it indeed effects substantial and lasting transformation.

Another aspect of the distinction between internal and external *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation is to reinforce a relationship drawn in the previous chapter between mindfulness and breadth of mind. It is precisely the wide-angle vision cultivated in this way that naturally leads to contemplating any particular phenomenon from both perspectives combined: internally and externally. Taking the case of anger as an example: how does it feel when I get angry? How will others feel when they get angry? How do I feel when others get angry at me? How will others feel when I get angry at them?

Only when we take into account these complementary perspectives do we really understand how painful anger is. Since the external dimension of the manifestation of anger will most likely show up outside of formal sitting meditation, another point from the last chapter comes up again here. This is the pressing need to develop a form of practice that enables bringing the qualities of mindful observation into daily life. For *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, daily activities and interactions are crucial training grounds.

Nevertheless, the instructions mention first the "internal" and then the "external". This gives the impression that familiarity with the contemplated phenomenon is first of all to be established in relation to ourselves, before contemplating the same in its external dimension. In other words, the pressing need to bring mindfulness into daily life should not become an excuse for neglecting formal sitting. First of all we establish some degree of expertise within, then we are ready to move out into the world. Having moved out into the world, we return again to the meditation seat to deepen our practice further, and so on.

A simile that can be taken to illustrate the progression from the internal to the external dimensions of mindfulness practice describes the cooperation of two acrobats (SN 47.19; Anālayo 2003: 276, 2013: 244ff, and 2017a: 13ff). The two acrobats need to take care to establish first of all their own balance. Based on such internal balance, they are able to take care of the other and perform well. Similarly, internal practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* builds the indispensable foundation for being able to remain established in *satipaṭṭhāna* when dealing with others. In this way, facing the outside world will naturally lead to increasing degrees of patience and kindness, precisely through the foundation laid in mindfulness practice.

Although proceeding from the internal to the external offers a meaningful progression, this does not imply that it is in principle impossible to proceed from the external to the internal. A case known to me personally illustrates this. A woman had a severely handicapped baby, which among other problems was blind and deaf. Taking care of her child for many years, she learned to pay very close attention to whatever the child seemed to experience on the bodily, feeling, and mental level. When she subsequently came to sit a course on *satipaṭṭhāna*, she immediately felt she was in familiar terrain. Her child had in a way already taught her about the first three *satipaṭṭhāna*s. Having already developed familiarity with the external dimension of mindfulness practice, it was easy for her to explore the internal

dimension as well as to broaden the perspective by bringing in the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*.

The formulation of this first part of the refrain comes with a doubling of the reference to the body: in regard to the body, we abide contemplating the body. The same holds for the other three *satipaṭṭhāna*s. A similar doubling is also found in relation to the individual contemplations to which I will turn in subsequent chapters. I understand this doubling to imply that, out of the whole range of bodily phenomena, particular instances are selected for closer observation. In this way the refrain, as well as the individual exercises, share a concern with specific aspects. To return to my earlier example, anger is one particular mental state. To understand this state requires clear recognition of the presence or absence of anger and of its manifestations internally and externally.

The relationship between the individual *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations and mindfulness of the body in daily life can be illustrated with the example of a lotus flower. When the sun shines the petals open and the whole beauty of the flower and its fragrance manifests. This represents the experience and depth of practice in formal meditation when working with the individual contemplations to explore the internal dimension of *satipaṭṭhāna*. At other times the petals close and we still see the outer parts of the petal but no longer smell the fragrance. This stands for mindfulness in everyday life, which affords us an opportunity to explore the external dimension of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Whether opened or closed, it remains the same flower. Similarly, the internal and external complement each other. At the same time, there is a difference between directly experiencing something within and observing it externally. Likewise, when the petals close, the whole beauty of the lotus is now more within. Only when the petals open do we fully experience the fragrance of the lotus, which represents the distinct flavour of direct experience within.

As practice progresses, the distinction between internal and external dissolves and we contemplate "internally and externally". This serves to clarify that the distinction between "internal" and "external" modes of practice is not meant to encourage the construction of a sharp dichotomy, the creation of two watertight compartments unrelated to each other. Instead, the internal borders on the external and vice versa; the two terms simply refer to parts of what is after all a continuum of experience. In practical terms, to stay with my earlier example, with practice undertaken