

Excerpt from

The Middle Length
Discourses of the Buddha
(Majjhima Nikaya)
translated by Bhikkhu
Nanamoli and Bhikkhu
Bodhi

(C) Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995, 2001. Reprinted from *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya* with permission of Wisdom Publications, 199 Elm Street, Somerville, MA 02144 U.S.A., www.wisdompubs.org

10 *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*

The Foundations of Mindfulness

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD.¹³³ On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Kuru country where there was a town of the Kurus named Kammāsadhamma.¹³⁴ There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: “Bhikkhus.”—“Venerable sir,” they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. “Bhikkhus, this is the direct path¹³⁵ for the purification of beings [56], for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of Nibbāna—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.¹³⁶

3. “What are the four? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu¹³⁷ abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.¹³⁸ He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.¹³⁹

(CONTEMPLATION OF THE BODY)

(1. *Mindfulness of Breathing*)

4. “And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating the body as a body? Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes

out. Breathing in long, he understands: 'I breathe in long'; or breathing out long, he understands: 'I breathe out long.' Breathing in short, he understands: 'I breathe in short'; or breathing out short, he understands: 'I breathe out short.'¹⁴⁰ He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body'; he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body.'¹⁴¹ He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in tranquillising the bodily formation'; he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out tranquillising the bodily formation.'¹⁴² Just as a skilled turner or his apprentice, when making a long turn, understands: 'I make a long turn'; or, when making a short turn, understands: 'I make a short turn'; so too, breathing in long, a bhikkhu understands: 'I breathe in long'...he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out tranquillising the bodily formation.'

(INSIGHT)

5. "In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally.¹⁴³ Or else he abides contemplating in the body its nature of arising, or he abides contemplating in the body its nature of vanishing, or he abides contemplating in the body its nature of both arising and vanishing.¹⁴⁴ Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness.¹⁴⁵ And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(2. *The Four Postures*)

6. "Again, bhikkhus, when walking, a bhikkhu understands: 'I am walking'; when standing, he understands: 'I am standing'; when sitting, [57] he understands: 'I am sitting'; when lying down, he understands: 'I am lying down'; or he understands accordingly however his body is disposed.¹⁴⁶

7. "In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(3. *Full Awareness*)

8. "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu is one who acts in full awareness when going forward and returning;¹⁴⁷ who acts in full awareness when looking ahead and looking away; who acts in full awareness when flexing and extending his limbs; who acts in full awareness when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl; who acts in full awareness when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting; who acts in full awareness when defecating and urinating; who acts in full awareness when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent.

9. "In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally... And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(4. *Foulness—The Bodily Parts*)

10. "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, bounded by skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: 'In this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, contents of the stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.'¹⁴⁸ Just as though there were a bag with an opening at both ends full of many sorts of grain, such as hill rice, red rice, beans, peas, millet, and white rice, and a man with good eyes were to open it and review it thus: 'This is hill rice, this is red rice, these are beans, these are peas, this is millet, this is white rice'; so too, a bhikkhu reviews this same body...as full of many kinds of impurity thus: 'In this body there are head-hairs...and urine.'

11. "In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally... And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(5. Elements)

12. “Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reviews this same body, however it is placed, however disposed, as consisting of elements thus: ‘In this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.’¹⁴⁹ [58] Just as though a skilled butcher or his apprentice had killed a cow and was seated at the crossroads with it cut up into pieces; so too, a bhikkhu reviews this same body...as consisting of elements thus: ‘In this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.’

13. “In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(6–14. *The Nine Charnel Ground Contemplations*)

14. “Again, bhikkhus, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, one, two, or three days dead, bloated, livid, and oozing matter, a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: ‘This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.’¹⁵⁰

15. “In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

16. “Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, being devoured by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals, or various kinds of worms, a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: ‘This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.’

17. “...That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

18–24. “Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together with sinews...a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together with sinews...a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together with sinews...disconnected bones scattered in all directions—here a hand-bone, there a foot-bone, here a shin-bone,

there a thigh-bone, here a hip-bone, there a back-bone, here a rib-bone, there a breast-bone, here an arm-bone, there a shoulder-bone, here a neck-bone, there a jaw-bone, here a tooth, there the skull—a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: ‘This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.’¹⁵¹

25. “...That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

26–30. “Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, bones bleached white, the colour of shells...bones heaped up, more than a year old...bones rotted and crumbled to dust [59], a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: ‘This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.’

(INSIGHT)

31. “In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its nature of arising, or he abides contemplating in the body its nature of vanishing, or he abides contemplating in the body its nature of both arising and vanishing. Or else mindfulness that ‘there is a body’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(CONTEMPLATION OF FEELING)

32. “And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating feelings as feelings?¹⁵² Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling, a bhikkhu understands: ‘I feel a pleasant feeling’; when feeling a painful feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a painful feeling’; when feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.’ When feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel a worldly pleasant feeling’; when feeling an unworldly pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘I feel an unworldly pleasant feeling’; when feeling

a worldly painful feeling, he understands: 'I feel a worldly painful feeling'; when feeling an unworldly painful feeling, he understands: 'I feel an unworldly painful feeling'; when feeling a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.'

(INSIGHT)

33. "In this way he abides contemplating feelings as feelings internally, or he abides contemplating feelings as feelings externally, or he abides contemplating feelings as feelings both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in feelings their nature of arising, or he abides contemplating in feelings their nature of vanishing, or he abides contemplating in feelings their nature of both arising and vanishing.¹⁵³ Or else mindfulness that 'there is feeling' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating feelings as feelings.

(CONTEMPLATION OF MIND)

34. "And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind as mind?¹⁵⁴ Here a bhikkhu understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and mind unaffected by lust as mind unaffected by lust. He understands mind affected by hate as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate as mind unaffected by hate. He understands mind affected by delusion as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion. He understands contracted mind as contracted mind, and distracted mind as distracted mind. He understands exalted mind as exalted mind, and unexalted mind as unexalted mind. He understands surpassed mind as surpassed mind, and unsurpassed mind as unsurpassed mind. He understands concentrated mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind. He understands liberated mind as liberated mind, and unliberated mind as unliberated mind.¹⁵⁵

(INSIGHT)

35. "In this way he abides contemplating mind as mind internally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind externally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind its nature of arising, [60] or he abides contemplating in mind its nature of vanishing, or he abides contemplating in mind its nature of both arising and vanishing.¹⁵⁶ Or else mindfulness that 'there is mind' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind as mind.

(CONTEMPLATION OF MIND-OBJECTS)

(1. *The Five Hindrances*)

36. "And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects?¹⁵⁷ Here a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances.¹⁵⁸ And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances? Here, there being sensual desire in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is sensual desire in me'; or there being no sensual desire in him, he understands: 'There is no sensual desire in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sensual desire, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen sensual desire, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned sensual desire.'

"There being ill will in him...There being sloth and torpor in him...There being restlessness and remorse in him...There being doubt in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is doubt in me'; or there being no doubt in him, he understands: 'There is no doubt in me'; and he understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen doubt, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen doubt, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned doubt.

(INSIGHT)

37. "In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects externally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects their nature of arising, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their nature of vanishing, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their nature of both arising and vanishing. Or else mindfulness that 'there are mind-objects' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances.

(2. *The Five Aggregates*)

38. "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects [61] in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging.¹⁵⁹ And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging? Here a bhikkhu understands: 'Such is material form, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is feeling, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is perception, such its origin, such its disappearance; such are the formations, such their origin, such their disappearance; such is consciousness, such its origin, such its disappearance.'

39. "In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging.

(3. *The Six Bases*)

40. "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases.¹⁶⁰ And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-

objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases? Here a bhikkhu understands the eye, he understands forms, and he understands the fetter that arises dependent on both; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen fetter, and how there comes to be the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of the abandoned fetter.

"He understands the ear, he understands sounds...He understands the nose, he understands odours...He understands the tongue, he understands flavours...He understands the body, he understands tangibles...He understands the mind, he understands mind-objects, and he understands the fetter that arises dependent on both; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen fetter, and how there comes to be the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of the abandoned fetter.

41. "In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases.

(4. *The Seven Enlightenment Factors*)

42. "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors.¹⁶¹ And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors? Here, there being the mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is the mindfulness enlightenment factor in me'; or there being no mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, he understands: [62] 'There is no mindfulness enlightenment factor in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen mindfulness enlightenment factor, and how the arisen mindfulness enlightenment factor comes to fulfilment by development.

"There being the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor in him¹⁶²...There being the energy enlightenment factor in

him...There being the rapture enlightenment factor in him...There being the tranquillity enlightenment factor in him...There being the concentration enlightenment factor in him...There being the equanimity enlightenment factor in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is the equanimity enlightenment factor in me'; or there being no equanimity enlightenment factor in him, he understands: 'There is no equanimity enlightenment factor in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen equanimity enlightenment factor, and how the arisen equanimity enlightenment factor comes to fulfillment by development.¹⁶³

43. "In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors.

(5. *The Four Noble Truths*)

44. "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths.¹⁶⁴ And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths? Here a bhikkhu understands as it actually is: 'This is suffering'; he understands as it actually is: 'This is the origin of suffering'; he understands as it actually is: 'This is the cessation of suffering'; he understands as it actually is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.'

(INSIGHT)

45. "In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects externally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects their nature of arising, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their nature of vanishing, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their nature of both arising and vanishing. Or else mindfulness that 'there are mind-

objects' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths.

(CONCLUSION)

46. "Bhikkhus, if anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven years, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.¹⁶⁵

"Let alone seven years, bhikkhus. [63] If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for six years...for five years...for four years...for three years...for two years...for one year, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

"Let alone one year, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven months...for six months...for five months...for four months...for three months...for two months...for one month...for half a month, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

"Let alone half a month, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

47. "So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of Nibbāna—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

- 132 It should be noted that while ignorance is a condition for the taints, the taints—which include the taint of ignorance—are in turn a condition for ignorance. MA says that this conditioning of ignorance by ignorance should be understood to mean that the ignorance in any one existence is conditioned by the ignorance in the preceding existence. Since this is so, the conclusion follows that no first point can be discovered for ignorance, and thus that saṃsāra is without discernible beginning.

SUTTA 10

- 133 This is one of the most important suttas in the Pali Canon, containing the most comprehensive statement of the most direct way to the attainment of the Buddhist goal. Virtually the identical sutta is found as well at DN 22, though with an expanded analysis of the Four Noble Truths attached, which accounts for its greater length. The sutta, its commentary, and copious extracts from its difficult but illuminating subcommentary have been presented together in translation by Soma Thera in *The Way of Mindfulness*. A very readable translation of the sutta, with a modern commentary excelling in clarity and depth, will be found in Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*.
- 134 This town is said by some scholars to have been in the vicinity of modern Delhi.
- 135 The Pali reads *ekāyano ayaṃ bhikkhave maggo*, and virtually all translators understand this as a statement upholding *satipaṭṭhāna* as an exclusive path. Thus Ven. Soma renders it: “This is the only way, O bhikkhus,” and Ven. Nyanaponika: “This is the sole way, monks.” Ñm, however, points out that *ekāyana magga* at MN 12.37–42 has the unambiguous contextual meaning of “a path that goes in one way only,” and so he rendered the phrase in this passage, too. The expression used here, “the direct path,” is an attempt to preserve this meaning in a more streamlined phrasing. MA explains *ekāyana magga* as a single path, not a divided path; as a way that has to be walked by oneself alone, without a companion; and as a way that goes to one goal, Nibbāna. Though there is neither canonical nor commentarial basis for this view, it might be maintained that *satipaṭṭhāna* is called *ekāyana magga*, the direct path, to distinguish it from the approach to meditative attainment that proceeds through the jhānas or *brahmavihāras*. While the latter can lead to Nibbāna, they do not do so necessarily but can lead to sidetracks, whereas *satipaṭṭhāna* leads invariably to the final goal.
- 136 The word *satipaṭṭhāna* is a compound term. The first part, *sati*, originally meant “memory,” but in Pali Buddhist usage it far more frequently bears the meaning of attentiveness directed to the present—hence the makeshift rendering “mindfulness.” The second part is explained in two ways: either as a shortened form of *upaṭṭhāna*, meaning “setting up” or “establishing”—here, of mindfulness; or as *paṭṭhāna*, meaning “domain” or “foundation”—again, of mindfulness. Thus the four *satipaṭṭhānas* may be understood as either the four ways of setting up mindfulness or as the four objective domains of mindfulness, to be amplified in the rest of the sutta. The former seems to be the etymologically correct derivation (confirmed by the Sanskrit *smṛtyupasthāna*), but the Pali commentators, while admitting both explanations, have a predilection for the latter.
- 137 MA says that in this context, “bhikkhu” is a term indicating a person who earnestly endeavours to accomplish the practice of the teaching: “Whoever undertakes that practice...is here comprised under the term ‘bhikkhu.’”
- 138 The repetition in the phrase “contemplating the body as a body” (*kāye kāyānupassī*), according to MA, has the purpose of precisely determining the object of contemplation and of isolating that object from others with which it might be confused. Thus, in this practice, the body should be contemplated as such, and not one’s feelings, ideas, and emotions concerning it. The phrase also means that the body should be contemplated simply as a body and not as a man, a woman, a self, or a living being. Similar considerations apply to the repetitions in the case of each of the other three foundations of mindfulness. “Covetousness and grief,” MA says, stands for sensual

desire and ill will, the principal hindrances that must be overcome for the practice to succeed, enumerated separately below in §36.

139 The structure of this sutta is fairly simple. Following the preamble, the body of the discourse falls into four parts by way of the four foundations of mindfulness:

I. *Contemplation of the body*, which comprises fourteen exercises: mindfulness of breathing; contemplation of the four postures; full awareness; attention to foulness; attention to the elements; and nine “charnel ground contemplations”—reflection on corpses in different stages of decomposition.

II. *Contemplation of feeling*, considered one exercise.

III. *Contemplation of mind*, also one exercise.

IV. *Contemplation of mind-objects*, which has five subdivisions—the five hindrances; the five aggregates; the six sense bases; the seven enlightenment factors; and the Four Noble Truths.

Thus the sutta expounds altogether twenty-one exercises in contemplation. Each exercise in turn has two aspects: the basic exercise, explained first, and a supplementary section on insight (essentially the same for all the exercises), which indicates how the contemplation is to be developed to deepen understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Finally the sutta concludes with a statement of assurance in which the Buddha personally vouches for the effectiveness of the method by declaring the fruits of continuous practice to be either arahantship or non-returning.

140 The practice of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) involves no deliberate attempt to regulate the breath, as in hatha yoga, but a sustained effort to fix awareness on the breath as it moves in and out in its natural rhythm. Mindfulness is set up at the nostrils or the upper lip, wherever the impact of the breath is felt most distinctly; the length of the breath is noted but not consciously controlled. The complete development of this meditation method is expounded in MN 118. For a collection of texts on this subject, see Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *Mindfulness of Breathing*. See too Vsm VIII, 145–244.

141 MA explains “experiencing the whole body” (*sabbakāya-paṭisaṁvedī*) as signifying that the meditator becomes aware of each in-breath and out-breath through its three phases of beginning, middle, and end. In the first edition I followed this explanation and added in brackets “of breath” after “the whole body.” In retrospect, however, this interpretation seems forced, and I now prefer to take the phrase quite literally. It is also difficult to see how *paṭisaṁvedī* could mean “is aware of,” as it is based on a verb meaning “to experience.”

142 The “bodily formation” (*kāyasankhāra*) is defined at MN 44.13 as in-and-out breathing itself. Thus, as MA explains, with the successful development of the practice, the meditator’s breathing becomes increasingly quiet, tranquil, and peaceful.

143 MA: “Internally”: contemplating the breathing in his own body. “Externally”: contemplating the breathing occurring in the body of another. “Internally and externally”: contemplating the breathing in his own body and in the body of another alternately, with uninterrupted attention. A similar explanation applies to the refrain that follows each of the other sections, except that under the contemplation of feeling, mind, and mind-objects, the contemplation externally, apart from those possessing telepathic powers, must be inferential.

144 The expression *samudayadhammānupassi kāyasmiṃ viharati* is usually translated “he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors” (as was done in the first edition), on the assumption that the compound contains a plural, *samudayadhammā*. A plural sense, however, is not mandatory, and it is more consistent with the use of the suffix *-dhamma* elsewhere to take it to mean “subject to” or “having the nature of” here as well. The commentarial explanation of the conditioning factors for each of the four foundations does not imply that the commentary understands *-dhamma* to mean the actual conditioning factors.

MA explains that the arising nature (*samudayadhamma*) of the body can be observed in its conditioned origination through ignorance, craving, kamma, and food, as well as in the moment-by-moment origination of material

- phenomena in the body. In the case of mindfulness of breathing, an additional condition is the physiological apparatus of respiration. The “vanishing nature” (*vaya-dhamma*) of the body is seen in the cessation of bodily phenomena through the cessation of their conditions as well as in the momentary dissolution of bodily phenomena.
- 145 MA: For the sake of a wider and wider and higher and higher measure of knowledge and mindfulness.
- 146 The understanding of the bodily postures referred to in this exercise is not our ordinary natural knowledge of our bodily activity, but a close, constant, and careful awareness of the body in every position, coupled with an analytical examination intended to dispel the delusion of a self as the agent of bodily movement.
- 147 *Sampajañña*, also translated as “clear comprehension” (Soma, Nyanaponika), is analysed in the commentaries into four types: full awareness of the purpose of one’s action; full awareness of the suitability of one’s means; full awareness of the domain, that is, not abandoning the subject of meditation during one’s daily routine; and full awareness of reality, the knowledge that behind one’s activities there is no abiding self. See *The Way of Mindfulness*, pp. 60–100; *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 46–55.
- 148 In later Pali works the brain is added to the above list to form thirty-two parts. The details of this meditation practice are explained at *Vsm VIII*, 42–144.
- 149 These four elements are explained by Buddhist tradition as the primary attributes of matter—solidity, cohesion, heat, and distension. The detailed explanation is found at *Vsm XI*, 27–117.
- 150 The phrase “as though” (*seyyathāpi*) suggests that this meditation, and those to follow, need not be based upon an actual encounter with a corpse in the state of decay described, but can be performed as an imaginative exercise. “This same body” is, of course, the meditator’s own body.
- 151 Each of the four types of corpse mentioned here, and the three types below, may be taken as a separate and self-sufficient subject of meditation; or the entire set may be used as a progressive series for impressing on the mind

- the idea of the body’s transience and insubstantiality. The progression continues in §§26–30.
- 152 Feeling (*vedanā*) signifies the affective quality of experience, bodily and mental, either pleasant, painful, or neither, i.e., neutral feeling. Examples of the “worldly” and “unworldly” forms of these feelings are given at MN 137.9–15 under the rubric of the six kinds of joy, grief, and equanimity based respectively on the household life and renunciation.
- 153 The conditions for the arising and vanishing of feeling are the same as those for the body (see n.144) except that food is replaced by contact, since contact is the condition for feeling (see MN 9.42).
- 154 Mind (*citta*) as an object of contemplation refers to the general state and level of consciousness. Since consciousness itself, in its own nature, is the bare knowing or cognizing of an object, the quality of any state of mind is determined by its associated mental factors, such as lust, hate, and delusion or their opposites, as mentioned by the sutta.
- 155 The paired examples of *citta* given in this passage contrast states of mind of wholesome and unwholesome, or developed and undeveloped character. An exception, however, is the pair “contracted” and “distracted,” which are both unwholesome, the former due to sloth and torpor, the latter due to restlessness and remorse. MA explains “exalted mind” and “unsurpassed mind” as the mind pertaining to the level of the jhānas and immaterial meditative attainments, and “unexalted mind” and “surpassed mind” as the mind pertaining to the level of sense-sphere consciousness. “Liberated mind” must be understood as a mind temporarily and partly freed from defilements through insight or the jhānas. Since the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* pertains to the preliminary phase of the path aimed at the supramundane paths of deliverance, this last category should not be understood as a mind liberated through attainment of the supramundane paths.
- 156 The conditions for the arising and vanishing of mind are the same as those for the body except that food is replaced by mentality-materiality, since the latter is the condition for consciousness (see DN 15.22/ii.63).

- 157 The word rendered here as “mind-objects” is the polymorphous *dhammā*. In this context *dhammā* can be understood as comprising all phenomena classified by way of the categories of the Dhamma, the Buddha’s teaching of actuality. This contemplation reaches its climax in the penetration of the teaching at the heart of the Dhamma—the Four Noble Truths.
- 158 The five hindrances (*pañcanivarāṇā*) are the main inner impediments to the development of concentration and insight. Sensual desire arises through attending unwisely to a sensually attractive object and is abandoned by meditation on a foul object (as in §10 and §§14–30); ill will arises through attending unwisely to a repugnant object and is abandoned by developing loving-kindness; sloth and torpor arise by submitting to boredom and laziness and are abandoned by arousing energy; restlessness and remorse arise through unwisely reflecting on disturbing thoughts and are abandoned by wisely reflecting on tranquillity; doubt arises through unwisely reflecting on dubious matters and is abandoned by study, investigation, and inquiry. The hindrances are fully eradicated only by the supramundane paths. For a fuller treatment, see *The Way of Mindfulness*, pp. 119–130; Nyanaponika Thera, *The Five Mental Hindrances*; and also below, MN 27.18 and MN 39.13–14.
- 159 The five aggregates affected by clinging (*pañc’upādāna-kkhandhā*) are the five groups of factors comprising the individual personality. The aggregates are discussed in the Introduction, pp. 26–27, and are analysed and explained in terms of their origin and disappearance at MN 109.9.
- 160 The internal bases are, as shown, the six sense faculties; the external bases, their respective objects. The fetter that arises dependent upon the pairs may be understood by way of the ten fetters explained in the Introduction, pp. 42–43, or more simply as attraction (greed), aversion (hatred), and the underlying delusion.
- 161 How the seven enlightenment factors unfold in progressive sequence is explained at MN 118.29–40. For a more detailed discussion, see Piyadassi Thera, *The Seven Factors of Enlightenment*.

- 162 “Investigation of states” (*dhammavicaya*) means the scrutiny of the mental and physical phenomena presented to the meditator’s mind by mindfulness.
- 163 The commentaries explain in detail the conditions that conduce to the maturation of the enlightenment factors. See *The Way of Mindfulness*, pp. 134–149.
- 164 With this section, the contemplation of *dhammā* culminates in the understanding of the Dhamma in its core formulation as the Four Noble Truths. The longer *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of the Dīgha Nikāya gives extended definitions and elaborations of each of the truths.
- 165 Final knowledge, *aññā*, is the arahant’s knowledge of final deliverance. Non-return (*anāgāmitā*) is, of course, the state of a non-returner, who is reborn in a higher world where he attains final Nibbāna without ever returning to the human world.

SUTTA 11

- 166 The phrase “only here” means only in the Buddha’s Dispensation. The four recluses (*samaṇa*) referred to are the four grades of noble disciples—the stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner, and arahant. A “lion’s roar” (*sihanāda*), according to MA, is a roar of supremacy and fearlessness, a roar that cannot be confuted. In connection with the Buddha’s proclamation, see also his discussion with Subhadda in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16:5.27/ii.151–52).
- 167 MA: Even though the adherents of other sects all declare arahantship—understood in a general way as spiritual perfection—to be the goal, they point out other attainments as the goal in accordance with their views. Thus the brahmins declare the Brahma-world to be the goal, the ascetics declare the gods of Streaming Radiance, the wanderers the gods of Refulgent Glory, and the Ājivakas the non-percipient state, which they imagine to be “infinite mind.”
- 168 “Favouring and opposing” (*anurodhapaṭivirodha*) means reacting with attraction through lust and with aversion through hate.