**Metta Dharma Foundation**

**Jhana Practice and Study Group**

**Notes for Session 4**

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**Samadhi in Important Buddhist Lists**

In addition to its place as the last factor in the Noble Eightfold Path, samadhi appears prominently throughout the suttas dealing with mental cultivation.

Concentration is a significant element in important lists, such as the Four Bases of Power (Pali: Iddhipada), the Five Faculties (Pali: Indriya), also known as the Five Strengths (Pali: Bala), and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (Pali: bojjhanga).

In several places the suttas state that the entire Buddhist path fundamentally entails abandoning the Five Hindrances, developing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and realizing the Seven Factors of Enlightenment so as to gain true knowledge and release.

“All those who escaped from the world [in the past], or escape [now], or will escape [in the future], did so, do so and will [continue] to do so by abandoning the five hindrances which are defilements of the mind that weaken wisdom, and, with minds well established in the four establishings of mindfulness, by developing the seven awakening-factors thus present.”

Each of these three facets of the meditative path, abandoning the five hindrances, establishing the four foundations of mindfulness, and realizing the seven factors of enlightenment, entails some degree of samadhi; precisely what and how much concentration is a subject of much debate.

**Samadhi in Seven Factors of Enlightenment**

“Just as all the rafters of a peaked house slant, slope, and incline towards the roof peak, so too, when [one] develops and cultivates the seven factors of enlightenment, he slants, slopes, and inclines toward Nibbana.”

“What is the path and the way that leads to the cessation of craving? It is: the seven factors of enlightenment.”

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment is one of the most important lists in Buddhist teaching.

The seven factors of enlightenment are 1) mindfulness (Pali: sati-sambojjhanga), 2) investigation or discrimination of dhammas, or discernment of dhamma (Pali: dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhanga), 3) energy (Pali: viriya-sambojjhanga), 4) rapture (Pali: piti-sambojjhanga), 5) tranquility (Pali: passaddhi sambojjhanga), 6) concentration (Pali: samadhi-sambojjhanga), and 7) equanimity (Pali: upekkha-sambojjhanga).

Mindfulness is the balancing factor, followed by three energizing factors, Investigation of the Dharma, Energy, and Rapture, and three calming factors, Tranquility, *Concentration* and Equanimity.

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment is presented in the suttas both as a basic list of mental qualities and as a list of progressive steps to be developed sequentially.

As a simple list, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment represents the factors which, when developed and cultivated, lead to the ultimate goal of true knowledge and deliverance.

These are the factors to develop in order to reach full awakening.

An awakened mind transcends all these qualities; it may have them on hand to use as needed.

In that sense they should be thought of, even in their fruition, as factors of the path leading to enlightenment, rather than descriptions of an enlightened mind.

As a series of successive steps, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment is an encapsulation of the path of meditation practice, leading up Right Concentration.

Beginning with sustained mindfulness, the meditator closely examines the nature of his mind, body and all experiences, strengthening the investigation or discernment factor. As the mind turns toward and investigates more and more deeply into the nature of the body and mind, energy is aroused, and through repeated and persistent energy and effort rapture arises. For one whose mind is uplifted by rapture, the body becomes tranquil and the mind becomes tranquil. When tranquil, the mind becomes concentrated, and with a concentrated mind one becomes equanimous.

Each of the enlightenment factors can appear at any point in the development of meditation, most likely in a nascent form in the early stages of mental cultivation.

**Seven Factors as Path to Jhana:**

Though there is no explicit reference to jhana in the list, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment can be viewed as a condensed summary of the step-by-step path leading up through the cultivation of right concentration and the four jhanas.

The seven enlightenment factors, in their stepwise successive form, **correlate directly to the progressive development of jhana** and right concentration, as seen in this passage from the Samannaphala (Fruits of the Homeless Life) Sutta:

“And when he **knows** (Pali: passati) that these five hindrances have left him, gladness arises in him, from gladness comes **rapture,** from the rapture in his mind his **body is tranquilized**, with a tranquil body he feel happiness(sukha, also translated as pleasure in jhana definition), and with happiness **his mind is concentrated**. Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a he enters and abides in the first jhana [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, and accompanied by thought and examination.” DN2.75

Continuing from the formula in the jhana definition, the second jhana is characterized by **rapture** and pleasure, born of **concentration**. With attainment of the third jhana one abides in **equanimity,** **mindful** and clearly aware. And the fourth jhana is characterized by **purity of mindfulness** and **equanimity**.

In the following passage, the Buddha recounts his period of meditation practice before his enlightenment:

“Tireless **energy** was aroused in me and unrelenting **mindfulness** was established, my body was **tranquil** and untroubled, my mind **concentrated** and unified. Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first jhana . . . the second jhana . . . the third jhana . . . the fourth jhana.” MN4.22-26

Thus, six of the seven enlightenment factors appear directly in these introductory passages to the jhana formulation or in the jhana formula itself.

Though discernment or discrimination of the dharma is not explicitly mentioned in these examples, a correspondence with the above passages can be seen. The Pali term *passati*, from “And when he **knows** that these five hindrances have left him”, means ‘to see’.

Seeing, in and of itself, does not necessarily equate to discernment, but there is a secondary meaning to *passati*, which is to recognize, realize, or to know.

The term *vipassana*, meaning insight, is derived from this term.

In this sense *passati*, knowing, is near in meaning to vicaya, discernment or discrimination.

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment give us a concise summation of the process of mental cultivation through jhana.

**The Satipatthana (Foundations of Mindfulness Sutta)**

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness fulfills the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

So the Seven Factors of Enlightenment can be considered to be the culmination of practice and the foundations of mindfulness the method of practice leading to that culmination.

The Satipatthana sutta is one of the most detailed of the discourses focusing on meditation practice.

“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 realization of Nibbana”.

This sutta appears in two places in the Pali Canon, as the Satipatthana Sutta in the Middle Length Discourses(MN10) and as the longer Maha (Great) Satipatthana Sutta in the Long Discourses. (DN22)

These two are identical except the Mahasatipatthana Sutta expands the section on the Four Noble Truths to explain all four truths in detail.

Contemplation of the body, the first of the four satipatthanas, consists of six distinct practices: mindfulness of 1) breathing, in four steps, 2) of four postures, 3) of general activities, such as eating and drinking, defecating and urinating, and talking, 4) deconstruction and analysis of the body into constituent parts, 5) deconstruction and analysis of the body into its four constituent elements of earth, air, fire and water, and 6) nine contemplations of a corpse in varying degrees of decay.

Contemplation of feelings, the second foundation, refers to mindful investigation of the pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling tone accompanying any experience.

In the third foundation of mindfulness, contemplation of the mind (Pali: citta), the meditator is instructed to understand the presence or absence of lust, hatred and delusion, as well as whether the mind is contracted, distracted, great or narrow, unsurpassed, concentrated or unconcentrated, and liberated or unliberated.

The last of the four satipattanas is contemplation of *dhammas*, generally translated as mind-objects or mental qualities. This foundation of mindfulness consists of contemplation and understanding of the Five Hindrances, the Five Aggregates, the Six Sense Spheres, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, and the Four Noble Truths.

Throughout all of these practices, the meditator should be actively involved in the process, and **not merely a passive observer**.

The third and fourth steps in mindfulness of breathing, the first of the contemplations of the body, are to *train* experiencing the whole body and tranquilizing the body formation, pointing towards an engaged role in the practice.

In the contemplation of the hindrances and seven factors of enlightenment, the meditator is told to be aware of how to prevent the hindrances from arising, and of how to bring the seven factors of enlightenment to the culmination of their development.

Though the sutta itself only instructs us to understand these, that understanding points toward taking an active role in working with them.

In the expanded version, the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, knowing as it really is the Fourth Noble Truth, the way leading to the cessation of suffering, includes the understanding that right effort entails arousing energy and exertion for the arising and sustaining of wholesome mental states, and for preventing and overcoming the arising of unwholesome mental states.

The meditator should clearly be actively engaged in the process.

**Samadhi in the Satipathana Sutta**

The meditator is not directly instructed anywhere to strengthen or diminish any of the experiences that arise and pass away, including samadhi, but to just mindfully be aware and clearly understand whatever experience is present.

Samadhi is directly mentioned in the Satipatthana Sutta in only three places.

**1)** In the third foundation, of mind, one understands “concentrated mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind.”

The Pali term used here for concentration is samahitam, meaning ‘having attained samadhi’.

From this alone it is not clear whether the passage means knowing whether or not one has attained a particular stage of samadhi or just knowing whether or not concentration has been attained to any degree at all.

We might suppose that samahitam refers to having attained jhana, since the satipatthana practices are the path leading to fulfillment of the seven factors of enlightenment, and, in any case, the suttas probably are not interested in having the meditator develop anything other than right samadhi.

**2)** The second place where samadhi is mentioned is in the fourth foundation, in the section on the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. “If the concentration enlightenment factor is present in him, he knows ‘there is the concentration enlightenment factor in me’; if the concentration enlightenment factor is not present in him, he knows ‘there is no concentration enlightenment factor in me’; he knows how the unarisen concentration enlightenment factor can arise, and how the arisen concentration enlightenment factor can be perfected by development.”

Again, the instruction is to know and understand the presence, absence and skillful means to cultivate concentration. The implication is that we should act on that understanding to develop the concentration factor of enlightenment to its ultimate fruition.

**3)** The third place where samadhi is discussed is in the expanded section of the Mahasatipatthana Sutta detailing the Eightfold Path, which restates that right samadhi is jhana.

This could be interpreted to mean that satipathana is the practice leading to jhana, and jhana is a fruit of satipathana practice. Here, too, the practitioner is not directed to develop jhana, or any particular meditative state.

The instruction is to “know as it really is: ‘This [the Noble Eightfold Path] is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering’ [which is] Right View . . . Right Concentration. And what is Right Concentration? Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, one enters and abides in the first jhana . . . in the second jhana . . . the third jhana . . . the fourth jhana . . . This is called Right Concentration”

One should know and understand that right concentration is jhana, regardless of the degree of samadhi actually attained.

From these instances of samadhi in the Satipatthana Sutta, we would not expect the sutta to point us toward passive realization that samadhi properly culminates in jhana, without actually attaining jhana.

Based on the sutta itself we cannot determine what level of samadhi the sutta wants us to develop. For that we have to look elsewhere.

The first practice of the sutta, breath meditation, is presented in four steps, beginning with bare awareness to understand when breathing in and out long and short in the first two steps. As concentration is strengthened through these preliminary practices, the practitioner experiences the whole body in the third, and tranquilizes the bodily formation in the fourth.

The bodily formation is defined in other suttas as in-breathing and out-breathing (MN44.14), so this practice culminates in calming the breath, and subsequently, the whole body, entailing a degree of samadhi.

Establishing the foundations of mindfulness is the path leading to the realization of the seven factors of enlightenment.

If we interpret the Seven Factors of Enlightenment as a condensed outline of the path for jhana development, then the Satipatthana Sutta describes the method for developing jhana.

When engaged in the satipathana contemplations, **if the mind does not become concentrated** the defilements are not abandoned, the mind does not pick up the sign of concentration, and the meditator “does not gain pleasant dwelling in the present life, **nor does one gain mindfulness and clear comprehension**.” SN47.8

So the suttas expect the meditator to develop a strong degree of concentration and tranquility.

Mindfulness is a practice leading to concentration, and the four foundations of mindfulness are the framework for developing jhana:

“In one of right view, right intention comes into being; in one of right intention, right speech comes into being; . . . in one of right mindfulness [suttas define right mindfulness as Four Foundations of Mindfulness], right concentration comes into being.” MN117.34

“What is concentration? What is the basis of concentration? . . . Unification of mind is concentration; the four foundations of mindfulness are the basis of concentration.” MN44.12

So Satipatthana is clearly meant as the basis for establishing deep Samadhi.

**Other sutta quotes relating four foundations of mindfulness to jhana:**

After having abandoned the five hindrances and contemplated the four foundations of mindfulness, the meditator is then instructed to contemplate the body, feelings, mind and mind-objects without thinking thoughts about them and, finally, to enter the second through fourth jhanas, with no explicit mention of the first jhana:

“Abide contemplating the body as a body but do not think thoughts connected with the body; abide contemplating feelings as feelings . . . mind as mind . . . mind-objects as mind-objects but do not think thoughts connected with mind-objects . . . With the stilling of thought and examination, he enters and abides in the second jhana . . . the third jhana . . . the fourth jhana.” MN125.22-25

The last statement in this passage begins with the second jhana, with no mention of the first.

The second jhana, which is without thought and examination, is not attained without going through the first, so the first jhana must be attained at some point.

The implication is that the first jhana was already attained through cultivating the foundations of mindfulness.

The second jhana is then reached by continuing with the four foundations of mindfulness as objects, but with relinquishment of thought and examination.

When contemplating the four foundations of mindfulness, if discomfort in the body, sluggishness or distraction arises, one “should then direct the mind towards some inspiring sign. When the mind is directed to an inspiring sign, gladness is born. When gladdened, rapture is born. The body of one who is rapturous is tranquil. One whose body is tranquil feels happiness, and the mind of one who is happy becomes concentrated. He then withdraws the mind from the sign and does not think or examine, understanding ‘without thought and examination, internally mindful, I am happy.’” SN47.10

Meditating without thinking suggests a level of samadhi associated with jhana. Rapture, happiness and tranquility are all factors connected with jhana. The first jhana is accompanied by thought and examination; ‘without thought and examination’ is associated with second and higher jhanas.

If you put all these passages together, it seems clear that in the suttas, mindfulness and satipatthanas are the practice leading to jhana.

**Practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness**

This sutta is open to a variety of interpretations and opinions regarding how the system should be practiced and what degree of samadhi the meditator should develop at each step:

1) The four foundations of mindfulness can be practiced systematically, beginning with mindfulness of breathing and directing the attention to expand step-by-step through the sutta to incorporate all experiences into mindfulness meditation.

2) The meditator can select one practice from the sutta to emphasize as the entire meditation practice. For example, some teachers want students to focus exclusively on the third foundation, mindfulness of cittas (states of the mind). Others want students to focus mainly on the second foundation, mindfulness of vedana (pleasant, unpleasant and neutral). Some teachers exclusively practice mindfulness of the four elements or mindfulness of the parts of the body.

3) The meditator can work with all of the practices without working through the sutta in any particular way, but bringing mindfulness to meet whatever experience is occurring moment by moment.

4) The steps can be viewed as a description of how breath meditation naturally unfolds through the simple act of mindful breathing. When practiced in this way, mindfulness of breathing becomes a complete practice, incorporating mindfulness, concentration and jhana.

**The Anapanasati Sutta**

Breath meditation is often taught merely as a preparatory practice, since it is the initial practice in the first of the four foundations of mindfulness practices.

But the Anapanasati Sutta declares that, when developed and cultivated, mindfulness of breathing alone fulfills the entire four foundations of mindfulness, which, in turn, fulfill the seven factors of enlightenment.

Anapanasati should be viewed, not as a preliminary practice, but as a complete method to develop right concentration and insight necessary for enlightenment.

Mindfulness of breathing is the means by which the hindrances are abandoned and the entirety of the four foundations of mindfulness is accessed and developed, bringing the seven factors of enlightenment to fruition.

Concentration by mindfulness of breathing leads to jhana and the formless attainments. SN54.8

The meditator proceeds through sixteen steps of mindful breathing, the initial four steps of breath meditation in the Satipatthana Sutta followed by an additional twelve steps introduced in this sutta.

The sutta is structured as four groups of four steps each.

The sutta declares that the foundation of mindfulness of the body from the Satipatthana Sutta is fulfilled through the practices in the first tetrad, mindfulness of feelings through the practices in the second, mindfulness of mind in the third, and mindfulness of dhammas in the fourth.

Breathing in and out, the meditator:

1st Tetrad

1. Knows long breath

2. Knows short breath

3. Trains experiencing the whole body

4. Trains tranquilizing the bodily formation

2nd Tetrad

5. Trains experiencing rapture

6. Trains experiencing pleasure

7. Trains experiencing mental formations

8. Trains tranquilizing mental formations

3rd Tetrad

9. Trains experiencing the mind

10. Trains gladdening the mind

11. Trains concentrating the mind

12. Trains liberating the mind

4th Tetrad

13. Trains contemplating impermanence

14. Trains contemplating dispassion

15. Trains contemplating cessation

16. Trains contemplation letting go.

This sutta is open to a variety of interpretations and opinions regarding how the system should be practiced and what degree of samadhi the meditator should develop at each step.

The steps can be viewed as a description of how breath meditation naturally unfolds through the simple act of mindful breathing.

Or it can be viewed as steps to be practiced systematically (hence the word ‘trains’).

In either case, some degree of concentration is clearly an important aspect of every step in the sequence.

As evident in the structure of the Anapanasati Sutta, tranquility and clarity of concentration are supportive conditions for insight to arise.

The first twelve of the sixteen steps are easily recognized as concentration practices, while the last four, contemplation of impermanence, fading away, cessation, and of letting go, clearly are insight practices, having been built upon the previous steps of concentration.

As concentration deepens, rapture and pleasure, two of the jhana factors, arise in steps five and six.

So, though not explicitly stated in the sutta, this stage is commonly understood as the beginning of jhana.

The first steps of the sutta are often classified purely as a concentration practices leading to jhana.

The initial four steps are identical to the beginning breath meditation sequence in the Satipatthana Sutta, leading to a certain degree of samadhi since, through mindfulness of breathing in and out long (step 1), breathing in and out short (step 2), and experiencing the whole body (step 3), the bodily formation (breathing) is tranquilized (step 4).

Because rapture and pleasure, as well as the tranquility, gladdening and concentration of the mind in later steps, occur to some degree throughout a wide range of samadhi, including well before entering jhana, these steps do not necessarily correlate to jhana.

However, it is a reasonable interpretation since anapanasati fulfills satipatthana, which fulfills the seven factors of enlightenment.