

**Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation
and
Overview of the Teachings of the Buddha**

Session Eight: **The Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness**
 The Seven Factors of Awakening/Enlightenment
 The Five Aggregates of Clinging
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The Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness

As previously discussed, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness categorize things we can be mindful of into 4 groups. The first group is 6 meditations on the body. The second group is feelings (vedana). The third group is mind. Now we'll discuss the fourth group which has been translated in different ways. One translation is Dhamma categories, Dhamma referring to the teachings of the Buddha.

If you read the Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness in the Pali Canon, you will see that it contains many different Dhamma categories. But, as mentioned in Lesson 7, Buddhist scholars believe that the Sutta on the Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness was "padded" with other teachings of the Buddha. Ajahn Sona believes the essential Dhamma categories of which to be mindful are the 5 hindrances to our progress on the Path and the 7 factors of Awakening/Enlightenment.

These 2 Dhamma categories fit with the Four Efforts. We make effort to prevent the arising of the hindrances or, if they have arisen, we make effort to let them go. And we make effort to cause the arising of the factors of Awakening, or if they have arisen, we make effort to develop them. See Lesson 4 for a fuller discussion on Right Effort. And see Lesson 5 for a discussion of the Hindrances and their antidotes. The 7 factors of Awakening will be discussed below.

In addition to making the appropriate effort, the Buddha suggests that we do the following exercises with the hindrances and factors of awakening. These exercises will assist us in discerning the appropriate effort required:

1. To observe the arising and passing away of each. In other words, to observe the reality of impermanence.
2. Contemplate the factors that were present that allowed the arising.
3. Contemplate the factors that were present that allowed the passing away.
4. Do not cling to whatever arises or passes away.

You can be mindful of the hindrances and factors of Awakening, as much as possible, as they arise or you notice their absence, during your daily living as well as during your meditation practice.

The Seven Factors of Awakening/Enlightenment

The Buddha said that just as the rafters in a peaked house slope to the peak, one who cultivates and develops the seven factors of Awakening slopes to Nibbana (Awakening). The mind is very powerful, so we want to train it with our meditation practice. If we let it entertain unwholesome thoughts the mind can cause disaster. But when the mind focuses on the factors of Awakening, it can lead us to the end of suffering.

To pursue Awakening, it's helpful to know the impediments to it. There is a long, causal chain of impediments:

- suffering is caused by ignorance
- the 5 hindrances are the nutriment/condition for ignorance
- the nutriment of the hindrances are the 3 immoral modes of life: physical, verbal and mental wrongdoing
- which are nourished by lack of sense restraint
- and this is nourished by lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension
- which is nourished by unsystematic thinking which is not focusing on the 3 characteristics of all things
- which is due to lack of confidence/faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha
- which is due to not hearing the Dhamma
- which is due to lack of contact with the wise
- which is due to lack of good friendship

Now we can go down the opposite causal chain:

- friendship leads to the Dhamma
- which leads to confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha
- which leads to systematic thinking, mindfulness, clear comprehension, restraint of the senses, moral body, speech, mind
- then the 4 foundations of mindfulness

- the 7 factors of awakening
- and deliverance from suffering through wisdom.

The seven factors of Awakening are:

1. Mindfulness
2. Investigation of Dhamma
3. Effort
4. Rapture
5. Calm
6. Stillness/Concentration
7. Equanimity

1. Mindfulness

See the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (sessions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8). The goal is to be fully aware of our mental, verbal and physical actions at every moment of our waking life. Only by being mindful can we be aware of the skillfulness or unskillfulness of our actions. Mindfulness is the most powerful factor in the arising of skillful thoughts and the cessation of unskillful thoughts.

2. Investigation of the Dhamma

This is analytical knowledge of the true nature of all things ie. that all things are impermanent, changing moment by moment, that they are inherently unsatisfactory and without a permanent self and that all things arise and cease because of conditions. Investigation is done by focusing on the 5 aggregates of clinging (see below) and watching their arising and passing away and the conditions that lead to this arising and passing away.

3. Energy

This is Right Effort in the Noble Eightfold Path. See session 4. Each person has to put forth the necessary effort to be freed of suffering. The Buddha only pointed the way.

4. Rapture/Joy (Piti)

Joy is important because without it one develops aversion to meditation. Joy is built up by making the effort to resist cravings and impulses and to develop contentment. Real joy comes not from grasping but from renouncing. And joy is developed by making the effort to concentrate and develop the jhanas (see session 7). And joy is cultivated by living a moral life (see session 6). It is best to seek joy not in material or external things but in the joy that comes with a developed mind.

I want to emphasize the importance of joy. It is very possible to develop

stillness without joy. This can be a pleasant due to the absence of negativity. However, it lacks the energy to take you into Jhanas. If stillness without joy occurs, a skillful means to develop joy is to widen our focus on the breath from a single spot to the whole body. See the Resource page for Lesson 1 for many good techniques to cultivate joy during breath meditation.

5. Calm/Tranquility

This is achieved by systematic attention to the arising and passing away of what occurs each moment.

6. Stillness/Concentration

This refers to the Jhanas. The still mind sees things as they really are. Right Stillness dispels the passions that disturb the mind. (See The Jhanas, session 7).

7. Equanimity

This is mental equipoise, not indifference. It is the result of a calm, still mind. It allows you to see all beings impartially. Understanding kamma, that all beings are the result of their actions, causes equanimity.

The Five Aggregates of Clinging

This is another way to divide the world up into categories. These 5 categories include all conditioned things. They are:

1. Matter or Material Form
2. Vedana
3. Perception
4. Mental Formations
5. Consciousness

The second Noble Truth defines the cause of suffering, and that cause is clinging. The above list defines everything that is subject to clinging which, as you can see from the list, is all conditioned things. This is everything worldly. The only unconditioned "thing" is Nibbana (the Awakened state).

We have already discussed the reality of non-self, meaning that nothing has a permanent core. Beings are a manifestation of constantly changing psychological and physical energies. These energies are categorized into the 5 aggregates of clinging.

Matter includes the physical substance of one's body and the external world. We cling to a healthy and attractive body and surroundings.

Vedana are the feelings of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral that arise from the contact of our senses with sense objects. We cling to pleasant feelings.

Perception has the function of recognizing physical and mental objects, being able to name them. It differs from consciousness which just becomes aware of an object, without naming it. Perception recognizes the distinctive features of the object and

therefore distinguishes it from other objects. Thus perception is the basis of memory. But perception can deceive us by not reflecting reality, eg. a rope in the dark being perceived as a snake. It is by clinging to false perceptions that we create suffering for ourselves.

Mental Formations/fabrications are also referred to as volitional formations. Volition means intention. Formation means built up from causes (conditions). It's very important to understand that our intentions are not always in our conscious awareness. Unconscious intentions are popularly known as habit energy. A large part of our life is an acting out of habit energy. Thus, a very important aspect of our meditation practice is to become aware of our habit energies and transforming the unskillful ones.

There are 52 mental formations. Vedana and perception are also mental formations but they are so important, they are mentioned separately. Kamma is produced by intention....conscious OR unconscious. This means that if we have good intentions we produce good kamma. If we have bad intentions we produce bad kamma. Vedana and perceptions in and of themselves will not produce kamma. But subsequent mental formations based on them can lead to the production of kamma. Volition is directed towards the 6 sense objects. Clinging to mental formations causes suffering.

Consciousness is of 6 types, one for each of the 6 sense organs. So there is consciousness of sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch and ideas/thoughts. Consciousness by itself does not cause suffering. But clinging to our subsequent thoughts or ideas causes the suffering.

The Six Sense Bases

These are:

1. The eyes and visible objects
2. The ears and sounds
3. The nose and smells
4. The tongue and tastes
5. The body and tangible objects
6. The mind and thoughts

The Five Spiritual Qualities

These qualities bring power and balance to our minds. They are developed through meditation. They are:

1. Faith
2. Effort/Energy

3. Mindfulness
4. Stillness/Concentration
5. Wisdom

1. Faith

The first level of faith in the Dhamma (the teachings of the Buddha on how to be free of suffering) arises when we are inspired by hearing the Dhamma. A deeper faith develops from experiencing the results of practicing the meditation instructions of the Noble Eightfold Path. The results are peace and reduced suffering. This is now verified faith. As this faith in the Path deepens, every aspect of our life becomes our practice so there is no separation between sitting practice and life. Each moment is appreciated as an opportunity to develop wisdom.

Faith is developed by staying open and connected in every moment. Be here now, rather than ruminating on the past or the future. This present moment is the only moment that we are alive. The past is past and the future is not yet here. We miss living if we focus on the past or the future. "Faith means trusting the unfolding process of our lives. It is a willingness to let go of fears and attachments, and open ourselves to the unknown in each new moment". This quote was taken from Seeking the Heart of Wisdom, by Goldstein and Kornfield. This book has an excellent commentary on the 5 spiritual qualities.

2. Effort/Energy

Effort is needed to follow this practice to end suffering. This effort though, must be correctly understood as it could lead to grasping and more suffering. Effort needs to come from within (from our faith) rather than be felt as a should or must from outside of ourself. Energy is decreased by staying in the comfortable and unquestioned routines of daily life. It is encouraging to discover that expending effort leads to increased energy. Energy can also be aroused by reflecting on the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death, but its uncertain timing. Since we don't know how much time we will have to practice, there is some urgency to not delay or neglect our practice.

3. Mindfulness

See sessions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8.

4. Stillness

See session 7.

5. Wisdom

Wisdom and insight and vipassana all mean the same thing: seeing things as they are. Wisdom unfolds by itself when mindfulness and stillness are well developed. Wisdom is intuitive understanding. It is not attained by intellectualizing. Seeing things as they are means seeing their impermanence, understanding suffering and awareness of the selfless nature of everything. These are the 3 characteristics of all things (see session

3)

These 5 spiritual qualities are most powerful when faith is balanced with wisdom and effort with its resulting energy is balanced with stillness. Mindfulness balances all 4 of these qualities.

Transcendental Dependent Origination

In session 6, Dependent Origination was mentioned. There are 12 steps in Dependent Origination which outline the path to suffering. Transcendental Dependent Origination picks up where Dependent Origination ends, with suffering and outlines the 12 steps of the meditative practice that lead from suffering to liberation (Awakening). Each step is dependent on the previous step.

Since each step is dependent on, or in other words, caused by the previous step, our practice of being mindful of what is arising/ceasing in each moment and looking deeply at what conditions allowed the arising/ceasing, we are aware whether we are on the path of dependent origination towards suffering or on the path of transcendental dependent origination towards liberation. If we are on the path towards suffering, our awareness gives us the choice to make the effort to switch to the transcendental path by making the effort to put in place the necessary conditions (causes).

Here is the causal chain of Transcendental Dependent Origination:

- suffering is the supportive condition for
- faith which is the supportive condition for
- joy which is the supportive condition for
- rapture which is the supportive condition for
- tranquility which is the supportive condition for
- happiness which is the supportive condition for
- stillness which is the supportive condition for
- wisdom which is the supportive condition for
- disenchantment which is the supportive condition for
- dispassion which is the supportive condition for
- liberation which is the supportive condition for
- knowledge of the destruction of craving

As you can see, there is an overlap with several of the factors of Awakening.

The Pali Canon

The teachings of the Buddha were memorized and transmitted in oral form by the Buddhas's disciples during his lifetime. Immediately after the Buddha's death (5th century BC) there was a meeting of his Awakened disciples to agree on the text of the

teachings. In the 1st century BC, the teachings were written down in the Pali language. (Pali is an oral language with no written form. So it was written phonetically in the language of the day.) As the teachings spread to different cultures, translations were made in many languages, most notably, Sanskrit. Many English translations were originally made from Sanskrit translations which explains why many Sanskrit terms are more familiar to us than the Pali terms (eg. karma and Dharma [Sanskrit] versus kamma and Dhamma [Pali]). The written collection of the Buddha's teachings is called the Pali Canon.

Here is a wonderful explanation of the Pali Canon by Ajahn Punnadhammo, the abbot of Arrow River Forest Hermitage. It is near Thunder Bay, ON. This article was published in their newsletter, River Dhamma in Winter 2016. *Any additions by me are in italics.*

Studying Buddhism Through the Written Word

by Ajahn Punnadhammo

READING THE SCRIPTURES

If you want to learn about any topic, it is always best to go back to the source. In Theravada Buddhism, that means the Pali canon. There are many good and useful books about Buddhism, but the serious student must eventually look into the words of the Buddha himself. It is only by a familiarity with the suttas (*the teachings of the Buddha*) that a reader can judge whether a modern work is in accord with the original teachings or not.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CANON

The Theravada scriptures are quite extensive. If all the books are gathered together, they easily fill a couple of library shelves. The canon is divided into three piṭaka, “baskets”. (*Thus the word, Tipitaka - 3 baskets. The canon was given this name because the texts were originally written on banana leaves and stored in baskets.*) These are the vinaya piṭaka, the sutta piṭaka and the abhidhamma piṭaka. The vinaya piṭaka contains the rules and procedures for the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis as well as narrative material, which is a major source for the Buddha’s biography. The abhidhamma piṭaka is comprised of technical information about mental states and represents a very thoroughgoing system of psychology and metaphysics. It is the sutta piṭaka that has the greatest general interest for most students; this is the record of the discourses given by the Buddha and his senior disciples over the span of his forty five year teaching career.

The sutta piṭaka is divided into five collections, called nikāyas. Each nikāya has its own particular flavour and style and each serves a specific purpose. The Dīgha Nikāya, “the Long Discourses”, contains much narrative and legendary material as well as some

of the most important basic teachings, for example the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the sutta on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. This collection was most likely originally intended for the purposes of introducing the teachings to new people. It is still the best place for a new student to begin reading.

The Majjhima Nikāya, “the Middle Length Sayings”, contains many more somewhat shorter suttas; there is still considerable narrative material but the focus shifts to a more in depth examination of the teachings. This collection was likely intended for those people who had already taken up the practice and wanted to learn more.

The Samyutta Nikāya is a large collection of mostly very short suttas. There is little narrative structure and the approach is more technical, resembling in some ways the Abhidhamma. This was probably meant as a manual for bhikkhus who wanted to undertake a deeper study. (*Teachings on the same topic are grouped together.*)

The Aṅguttara Nikāya is arranged by numbers, there is a book of ones, a book of twos and so forth up to a book of elevens. The suttas are mostly structured around lists; the four of this and the five of that. It was probably composed as a teaching manual. A bhikkhu (*bhikkhuni*) giving a talk could structure his (*her*) discourse around one of the lists. Indeed, it is still a useful resource when used in that way. (This paragraph loosely follows the description given by Bhikkhu Bodhi in his introduction to the Samyutta translation.)

The fifth collection, the Khuddaka Nikāya, falls outside this scheme. It is a heterogenous collection of several usually quite short books that don't fit in anywhere else. Much of it is in verse. Among the books of the Khuddaka are the Suttanipāta (*famous for containing the Metta Sutta*), the Dhammapada (*beautiful poetry*), the Jātakas (*stories of the past lives of the Buddha - likely fictional*) and the Theragathā and Therīgathī (*personal stories of arahants and their struggles along the path...very encouraging for struggling meditators!*) among many others. It should be noted that only the verse sections of the Dhammapada and the Jātakas are considered canonical; the well known stories come from the later commentaries.

THE STYLE OF THE SUTTAS

In general, the suttas have a formal style with much repetition and use of stock phrases. This is because they were originally formed as oral literature and the structure makes memorization easier. The division into nikāyas also dates from the oral period, as a “college” of bhikkhus would be responsible for memorizing and reciting one nikāya. Nevertheless, beneath the formal structure the discerning reader can easily sense a real human immediacy in many passages. The characters presented in the narrative sections are real human individuals, quite recognizable even from this distance of time and culture as familiar psychological types. Even a considerable amount of humour finds its way

through the elegant prose. *Bhikkhu Thanissaro has collected many of these humorous passages into a book: The Buddha Smiles.*

It is important when reading the suttas to pay attention to the narrative setting. If we know who the Buddha was speaking to, and what circumstances prompted this particular teaching, it can set the doctrinal elements into a living context that often bears on why he took this precise approach.

PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION

No two languages are fully isomorphic. That is to say there is never an exact one to one correspondence between even the very best translation and the original text. This is especially a problem with Buddhist texts in that the Pali language has a precise technical vocabulary for mental states and factors which the English language lacks. When the redactors of the canon used a word like *vinnana*, they meant something very precise and specific. Some words correspond and some do not. The English word “consciousness” used to translate it can have a wide range of meanings, some of which apply and some of which don’t. Think of a Venn diagram composed of two overlapping circles; some parts of the meaning of each word correspond and some do not.

Beside issues of vocabulary, there is also a fundamental difference of grammatical structure. Pali is an inflected language, like Latin, and sometimes it is just impossible to convey the tone of a passage into readable English prose; something of the subtlety must be sacrificed. (If you are unfamiliar with inflected languages, try reading some Milton. Critics have said that he wrote English as if it were an inflected language.)

All of these problems are present in prose, but are much more difficult when it comes to verse. Pali verse often uses odd grammar and vocabulary for the sake of the metre (which is very strict) and all verse translation should be regarded as conjectural. Of course, translators are well aware of these issues and will include copious footnotes to help guide the reader through doubtful passages. It is advised to pay close attention to these.

AVAILABILITY OF THE TEXTS

The entire Sutta Pitaka has been translated into English and other modern languages. The four principal nikāyas are available from Wisdom Books in good modern readable English; the Digha translated by Maurice Walshe, the others by Bhikkhu Bodhi (his Majjhima translation is based on the earlier work of Nyanamoli.) There are also many individual suttas available on the internet from acesstoinight.com, mostly in Ajahn Thanissaro’s translation. *The entire Pali Canon can be found on Ajahn Brahm's site: dhammaloka.org.au under Sutta Central.* All of the canonical books, and many of the commentaries and other later works are also available in translations of the Pali Text

Society. These are good scholarly translations and the earliest of them were real pioneering efforts, dating to the late nineteenth century: which means that the language seems somewhat dated now.

LEARNING PALI

For those who want to take it to the next level and learn some Pali, there are now plenty of resources available on line and in print. The Pali English Dictionary of the Pali Text Society is essential and although the print edition is expensive, there are at least two on line versions; try <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/pali/index.html>. The best general text-book is Warder's introduction to Pali. But the beginning student will probably find, "A New Course in Reading Pali: Entering the World of the Buddha" by James W. Gair, and W.S. Karunatilake easier going. When you feel up to exploring the texts in the original Pali, you can get the very useful Digital Pali Reader: <http://pali.sirimangalo.org/weblog/> This resource has all the canonical and commentarial texts in Pali together with a very sophisticated search engine and a built-in hyperlinked dictionary. *Ajahn Punnadhammo has a Pali Tutor on his website: arrowriver.ca*

The Three Refuges

To seek refuge is to look for a place that is safe and secure. In Buddhism one takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. The word buddha means awake. The person we know of as the Buddha was called this because of his wakefulness or mindfulness; his clear seeing of reality. When we take refuge in the Buddha we are taking refuge in the mindfulness that is within us. It may yet be just a seed. But if we water it, it will grow and become strong.

The Dhamma is the teachings of the Buddha which we can receive from teachers, books and recorded talks or from our own realizations obtained by following the Four Noble Truths (which includes the Noble Eightfold Path). There is no single way to take refuge in the Dhamma. There are said to be 84,000 different doors to the Dhamma. So each of us can choose the door(s) that is best suited to us.

The Sangha, in its original meaning is the community of monks and nuns. The Noble Sangha refers to those who have Awakened. It is very difficult to follow the practice without the support of a Sangha. So we take refuge in our Sangha. The word Sangha is now in common usage to refer to lay groups of Buddhist practitioners. The proper term for the lay group is Parisa.

Traditionally, one is said to be a Buddhist if one takes refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and agrees to live by the precepts.

Developing a Meditation Practice

In session 4, some comments were made on developing a meditation practice.

Now that we have been introduced to the major teachings of the Buddha, I will repeat the practice suggestions from session 4, incorporating what has been taught since that session.

1. Do a daily sitting practice, starting with at least a brief metta meditation or the chanting of metta.
2. Then, depending on what is skillful for us at this moment, we can switch to breath meditation or stay with metta to develop stillness. Breath meditation is good for monkey mind and metta is an antidote for anger/irritation.
3. If we are agitated or sleepy, walking meditation is recommended.
4. After our mind has achieved some initial calming we can stay with stillness meditation, or use one of the 40 meditation topics listed in session 7. We choose what is skillful for us in the moment. Detailed instructions for some of these topics are found in the notes. For others, you will need to look in the library or visit the monastery and receive instructions from a monastic. The fallback option is the breath.
5. However, if our mind is resisting developing stillness, discern which hindrance is active and employ its antidote. Once our mind is calm again we can refocus on developing stillness. Keep the factors of Awakening in mind and the 4 Right Efforts.
6. Outside of your formal practice time, attempt to stay mindful of your breath and practice momentary concentration (see session 7), plus use the exercises listed in the Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness.
7. Re-read the lessons again and again, to remind myself of the teachings so that they are in our mind when clinging arises.
7. Read books on Dhamma or listen to talks for the same reason.
8. Attend the meditation group to receive the teachings and to receive support from fellow meditators.
9. Attend a retreat or a day of mindfulness or visit a monastery. The closest to our group is:

Sitavana/Birken Forest Monastery

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May you be well and happy.

