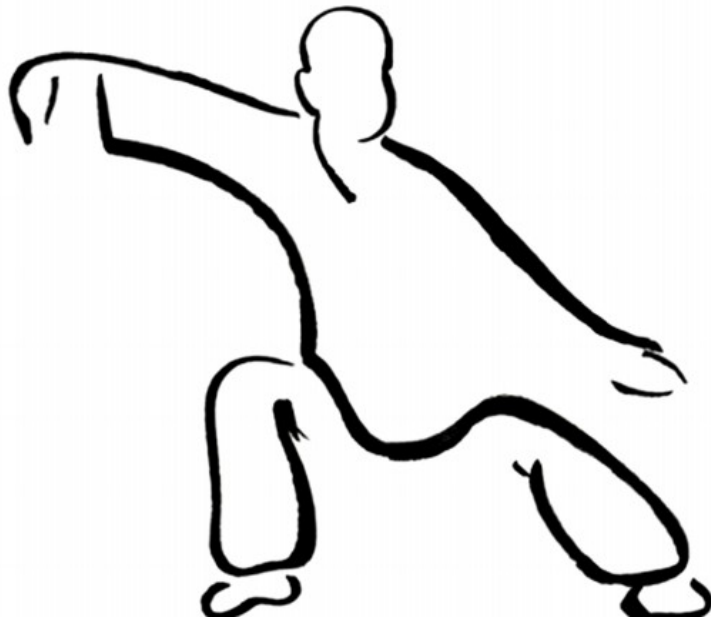


# **THE HUMAN BODY AND MIND:**

## **Working Towards A Practical Understanding**



By: Ajahn Kalyāno

# GLOSSARY

## The following are definitions of some terms as they are used in this workbook

ART – of conditional and “mind cultivation” phenomena involving heightened awareness: It arranges things to form a ‘sense’ of something. Its domain is states of mind. It is here, in our states of mind, that we will first truly open the mind to the vertical dimension of experience. We all know how ‘stuff comes up’ and our minds get ‘high’ or ‘low’. Becoming aware of these movements of mind instead of just the content gives us all kinds of new insight. This is a whole realm of experience that we will see as accessible through art. Its standpoint on the world is that of observing the scientific agent. Most significantly it has the power to change perception.

Art and Science are both representations of truth, the former to create and give mundane insight (in that a whole is greater than the sum of its parts), the latter to predict and to give power in the world.

BARE AWARENESS – a completely passive, open, heightened awareness in the present moment.

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL (C/B) – is the ‘top down’ pathway of intentions. It is the new karma we are creating in the present. Intention points it toward the future. In its broader sense, this is a term for the result of a mind that is involved in information. Potentially it has awareness in the present of the consequences of actions. It is adding to the automatic function of that which is perceived as needed.

CONSCIENCE – is the combination of actor and observer and takes both to the higher level of religion.

DESIRE – can be the desire to get something or get away from something. It can intensify to be the desire to be or become something or to not be something or to annihilate our ‘self’ as we see it. Desire is not the sense of need or of values held independent of circumstance. Our task is to convert our desires into values.

DESIRE-BODY – describes our normal experience of the body and feelings before this is transformed through religious contemplation of the realities of the physical body, its impermanence in particular.

DHAMMA – Truth. The unconditioned state of perfect harmony beyond the conventions of existence and non-existence; Ultimate Truth and the teaching and principles of this Truth; the Teaching of the Buddha. The Dhamma also refers to the wholesome qualities of body, speech and mind which need to be developed in order to realise this Truth.

DHARMA – Sanskrit version of “DHAMMA”.

FEELING – normally represents the habitual perception of desire or of needs and/or values that use sensations to call consciousness. It is the resultant karma of our perceptions. It can be subsumed by the conscience in which case it can become a useful sense to guide us.

HEART or CONSCIENCE – the function of the mind that integrates and furthers all its other wholesome factors: It is the knowing nature of the mind and we reclaim it through our practice.

HEIGHTENED AWARENESS – a feedback loop in the process of mind /body conditioning. This represents a training or refinement of consciousness. This is like human consciousness over animal consciousness: we are aware of our predicament to some degree. Ideally this heightened awareness develops moment by moment, reacts responsively rather than automatically to demands, and can relax once the demands have gone.

MENTAL BODY – the representation of the physical body in the mind: in Buddhism it is the psychological consequence of, and therefore in some way the representation of religion in the mind. This develops through practice to be completely different from the original perception of the body linked to feeling that is merely the ‘desire-body’. This change opens up a completely new pathway in the mind. Ultimately it is the condition for an ontological transformation.

MIND – is our general term when there is no need to be more specific. Pre-practice, it is a term that covers our crude mental self-image as opposed to our physical one. Practice shows us that this is centred in the action of perception in the present. Seen in this way, it is readily superseded by religious contemplation or by apperception or ‘heightened awareness’.

MUNDANE INSIGHT – is the reconciliation of personal/subjective and shared/objective views both within a person and between people. It leads to the promotion of heightened awareness. This may occur purely mentally or through physical or social/spiritual mediators.

PSYCHOPHYSICAL (P/P) – is the ‘bottom up’ pathway of feelings which when driven by desire are craving and clinging. It represents our past in the present; it is our old or resultant karma or habit. It has habit or compulsion pointing it toward the future. In a broader sense, one could say it is our sensory autopilot – or a term for the result of the mind’s involvement in the sensory/material realm. When included in heightened awareness in the present it can be readily subsumed into art or religious contemplation.

PURE AWARENESS – the passive heightened awareness of being aware: the mind is aware of its own presence. This is different from APPERCEPTION, when the mind is aware of the sum of its own perceptions and therefore of its states of mind.

RELIGION – is concerned with death and what we can do about it. It is the standpoint of the observer concerning our existential situation and hence the body. It also informs the whole fields of art and science.

RELIGIOUS CONTEMPLATION – is a function of both perception and apperception. Ideally it is accepting, with an element of impersonal dispassion and it recognises the rapidly changing nature of phenomena, especially the physical body. The physical body is accepted

as an object of nature.

**SAMĀDHI** – Concentrated or focused awareness. Samādhī refers to both the process of focusing awareness unwaveringly upon a single sensation or mind-object (see meditation), and the resultant state of such concentrated attention. In this state, because the mind has become so still and concentrated, it possesses the purity and power to illuminate and clarify the essential reality of anything it focuses on. This is analogous to a microscope which, due to the power of its inward focus, clearly reveals that which lies hidden and beyond the scope of normal vision.

**SCIENCE** – of causal phenomena: It draws pictures, putting phenomena and events into boxes and draws arrows to represent possible influence. Its domain is the senses. It is the standpoint of the agent.

**TRANSCENDENT WISDOM** – the integration of heart and mind: It combines 1. Conscience 2. Religious Contemplation and 3. Heightened Awareness. These three further each other and come together as a balanced gnosis or ‘knowing’ that takes us ultimately to a religious realization that leads either to the discovery of personal belief or faith and/or to supra-mundane insight and a total freedom from the conditioning of the mind by the desire-body.

**VIÑÑĀṆA** – sense consciousness.

# INTRODUCTION

All that we will ever become will be impermanent. Many books on self-help or self-development encourage us to become something bigger and better, happier or higher in the worldly or the spiritual sense. We try to change ourselves in these ways but our efforts cannot be sustained indefinitely and the conditions that sustain any kind of being are impermanent, so the results can never last forever. If we are wise we realise that this is the inevitable downside of a false spirituality generated by a mind that cannot see beyond a materialist view, which is spiritual materialism.

Real spirituality lies in relinquishing ourselves rather than in self-development. It is the happiness of the altruist. It is also the happiness of the wise who, seeing clearly, are freed from their attachment to the conditioned world including the illusion we call the self. Ultimately the true spiritual path goes beyond all kinds of being to realise a state of pure truth or knowing. Progress along the path lies not in a refinement of any state of being but in a refinement of knowing and seeing that covers all aspects of our experience. Meditation is aimed at this refinement of knowing and seeing. The encouragement is to stay with and examine the object of meditation, developing our ability to see clearly rather than developing a refinement of mind for its own sake or for pleasure. This is quite a different emphasis, one of awareness rather than withdrawal.

It is not that our awareness remains ordinary in its nature, however. Not at all. Neither does our view of the world or our experience of it remain the same; these are completely transformed. So what develops is not a bare awareness and acceptance of what we regard as normal but a completely new view of the world and an expanded experience of it in which it is possible to see all kinds of new phenomena, so that it amounts to a new reality. The process of meditation does not lead us away from reality but into reality, it opens the mind up to reality. We abandon our inner world in order to embrace the reality of the outer world. Ultimately we can know and see Nibbāna, ultimate reality.

What we need to understand most of all is our own body and mind, our own human situation. We need to place this at the centre and source of all other understanding. We need to be mindful and stay in touch with the reality of that situation and let this inform us, moment by moment. Otherwise we may not be addressing the real needs of our situation as it changes. Even with the highest moral standards, with the best of intentions, we can be harming ourselves and others in the present or heading for trouble in the future. It is when we understand what our human situation really is that we will find ways of satisfying our own deep needs and discover deeper sources of virtue.

In my view the Buddha's teaching is unsurpassed as a practical understanding of the human body and mind, as well as human spiritual potential, both being broader and reaching further than any other understanding. So in this workbook you will find a Buddhist way of learning to see the mind and body clearly through meditation. With benevolence, this way of seeing and the clarity it brings can help us to use our minds and bodies in many ways for our benefit and that of others. And yet it is in the quality of the seeing in-and-of-itself that the highest benefit lies.

In Part 1 of this workbook I put forward a Buddhist framework, the four foundations of mindfulness, in a particular form – a two-dimensional representation or model of our three-dimensional experience as human beings. It can be used as an intellectual framework with which to make better sense of our experience, one that objective information can be mapped onto, useful to write or scribble our lives onto. In Part 1 of the workbook, I demonstrate its use to show how our experience of ourselves can become clearer and re-organise itself through the practice of meditation.

Part 2 considers how we may deepen this awareness in a way that reveals the spiritual dimension. This involves a transformation of the nature of the relationship between the body and mind. It tends toward emptying the mind of its automatic reactions to allow a greater influence of conscious thought and feeling. It also opens up a quality of mind that is pure, spacious, empty and ultimately transcendent.

# PART I: USING A MODEL TO STRUCTURE YOUR EXPERIENCES

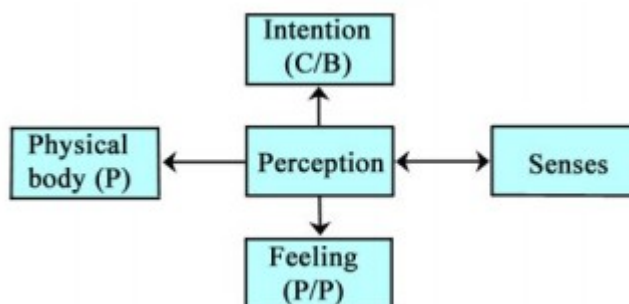
## Opening up the Mind

Meditation is the tool we can use to deepen our experience. The process of meditation does not lead us away from reality but into reality, it opens the mind up to reality. We abandon our inner world in order to embrace the reality of the outer world.

Through letting go of things while the object of meditation is kept in mind, the mind steps back and opens up, at first to find a bit of space but later to find a lot. This makes it possible to unify our experience of life, of our mind and body and the world we live in, within an open awareness, a sense of space. Within this space each of the different elements of our experience, the mind, body, thought and feeling can find its natural place and dynamic.

What happens is this. The essence of the mind steps back and finds its centre in the body. The contents of the mind, thoughts and emotions, appear in front of the body as a clear medium through which we experience the world. Physical feeling and mental or emotional feeling thus separate. We find a safe refuge when our inner world, which we realise was a product of our relation to the outer world, goes back to its source in the world, leaving the inner mind empty and bright. We do not identify with any particular part of our experience. Our experience becomes simply one of open awareness, a space in which all phenomena, real or mind-made, exist together and yet are not confused with each other. We see the movements of our minds within this space as well as the content.

Let us represent this space, this field of information, graphically like this, mapping it onto our subjective experience of bodily action:



**This model is meant to act as a structure for our experience and a means of deepening our understanding of ourselves.**

Within this map there are the top-down, cognitive-behavioural functions of intention (thought) and the bottom-up, psycho-physical processes of feeling (the ‘stuff that comes up’). It is proposed that perception is a central mediating factor that is usually very largely

unconscious. This is how we, usually unconsciously, make sense of our subjective world.

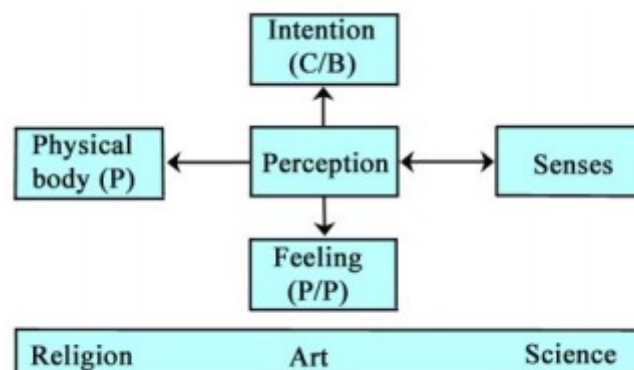
You can draw your own map at any time in order to track the movements of your mind (up/down and in/out) and to place information in locations that correspond on these dimensions with your mental and emotional experience. This will help to clarify the movements of your mind involved in forming your experience.

The model is dynamic, not static. As we centre the mind within the body we look out at the world through the window of our thoughts and their formative perceptions that are the central axis of the mind. We thus see clearly and separately what information we are projecting onto the world and what information comes back to us, the cause and effect of our mental activity.

This can become a conscious process as we place our states of mind back into the world of their origin. Then, very simply, we can be honestly asking: “What is it I am averse to here? What is it I am attracted to?” From a place of spiritual refuge our minds can take a fresh look. We can end up reviewing the priorities of our lives and at the same time see how and where to follow these priorities – an experience of body and mind taking us to a clear, present-moment view of the world we live in and our relationship to it. We then have a clear, broad, open and unified awareness of life.

Now I will build a more extensive phenomenological model. The purpose of this is to be able to gather into the immediate present moment not only all of the kinds of experience we may have but also the knowledge that is formed by this experience. The reason for using a phenomenological method is to ensure that each moment of experience stands on its own without direct reference to past or future. The past and future are included in the present as statements of context and meaning respectively. In language that is more normal, we can say that through reflection we integrate our experience of past and future into the present. This is the full use of the mind in the moment, mindfulness.

## The Domains of Science, Art and Religion



**Our two-dimensional map of the present moment experience now includes the domains of science, art and religion**



At each point on the map, wherever we may be, we can see knowledge as formed or gathered, and we can also see the quality of our minds. In phenomenological terms, this gives us a statement of context and process respectively: in the present moment, knowledge of the past is context and quality of mind is process. The picture is complete when we add a statement of meaning. The full meaning comes out of correctly placing phenomena within the map, tracking interactions between them and then relating them to their appropriate objective knowledge bases – whether religion, art or science.

All this is hard work. We need courage. If we see the value of work, this strengthens the spirit.

*Do not hope for a life without problems. An easy life results in a lazy and judgmental mind. So accept the anxieties and difficulties of life.*

Kyong Ho

Also, a reminder about our intentions in doing this work. The purpose of making such a picture is to spot weaknesses or blind spots and to suit practice to a given individual's karma and good qualities. The latter is very important; we must keep our eye on our strengths to sustain us and not become overly self-critical.

We will now define in detail the various domains the mind goes out into or extends into as it moves and the different quality of the mind in each of these domains: science, art and religion. The difference between the mind going out and extending is crucial, as we will discover. The domains of mundane, personal knowledge are where the phenomena of the senses, perceptions and the body reside. When knowledge becomes objective or shared truth it results in what we know as the fields of science, art and conventional religion.

Within our model we will be taking science to represent a functional, conventional truth rather than an ultimate truth. Its statements will be accepted as true until proven false. For practical purposes, as long as we stick to facts or truths on which all of us can agree then what we say will be regarded as objective. Functional truth says, 'we will understand this phenomenon in this way for this purpose.' In this way, we avoid losing our direction in theorising or speculation.

Truth can be subjective (the art of observation, perception formation), or it can be objective (the science of action) or it can be universal (religion). The term 'shared' could replace the use of the word objective here. Similarly, the term 'personal truth' could replace the term subjective truth. Meaning is the combination of objective and subjective truth. Belief is the most potent form of subjective truth and may be formed out of faith or insight.

We will not be confused if we see science, art and religious contemplation as different fields of knowledge or truth that come from acting as agent, observing the agent and just observing, respectively. Information only has meaning within its own domain. But note how art can point either way towards religion or science. We could say, for example, that one view of the physical body (that sees impermanence) points us toward grace, another toward the function of reproduction.

We can know our own minds and perceptions more clearly than the outside world. It is therefore proposed that art is a higher order of knowing than science. The relationships and

the differences between science, art and religious contemplation are further described in the table [Appendix to be added later.]

## **Virtue**

We must be careful in our focus on truth never to think that we are dividing truth and virtue; they come from the same place, the same heart and perception.

*Sometimes the nature of moral behaviour is altered from its true or inherent nature into doctrines and traditions. This is why people blame and criticize each other.*

Ajahn Maha Boowa

So we state religious contemplation as the place of ‘the one who knows Dhamma,’ the place of just knowing, a passive, receptive space. We see the place of virtue as that of entering into conditions according to this same knowing. Having abandoned desire we still have to do things and be things. However, we see these things for what they are; we use our doing to sharpen our knowing, our being to express it.

We make the distinction between truth and virtue to clearly form wisdom and compassion, the complementary aspects of this same view of Dhamma. Compassion is the mind directed toward the world, it becomes a thing of the world; our intention may be perfect but the result far from it. Wisdom comes from the world but is not directed back into it; it speaks from where it lies, inside. We stand back with wisdom; we look at the world through the glasses of compassion. At the beginning, wisdom and compassion must not be confused with each other, nor compassion neglected on the way into the world, so to speak. Once the pure mind is able to extend into the senses without losing itself or its perspective and therefore remains still, just the direction in which the pure heart moves, in or out, divides wisdom and compassion.

When this extended mind is still (it has detachment), science, art and religion are at one, a still field. Science becomes expressed as integration, renunciation, harmlessness, generosity; art as purification, good perception and intent; religious transcendence as perfect rest. To summarise, the ideals for science, art and religious contemplation are integration, purification and transcendence, respectively. Combining art and science throughout our daily lives we perfect detachment, recognising that we must deal with the karma of our human birth as best we can. With religious dispassion we can remain at rest.

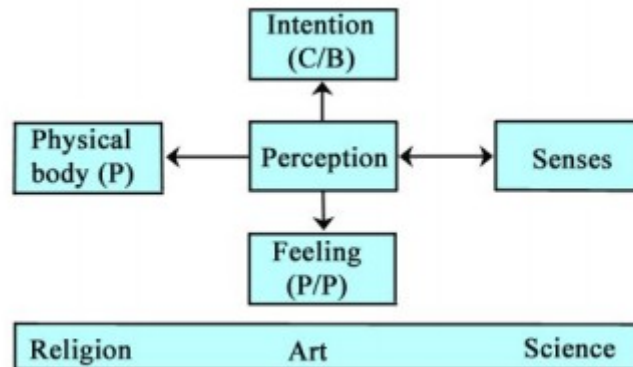
Ideals are not, or need not be, desires but interests. We must be very careful that our ideals, instead of uplifting us, do not become impossible standards or divert us from the purpose of the teaching. The purpose is always to abandon desire. It is not to try to perfect anything in the world.

## **Starting Out Along the Spiritual Path**

At the beginning, to arrive at clarity, we define what we are looking at (body, mind or senses) and from what standpoint (feeling, perception or intention). We can look at problems inner and outer with or without relating them to each other. This develops a clear, still, unitary

standpoint (a clear sense of ‘where we are at’) and places any problem in its correct sphere of knowledge.

Our practical problems relate to the horizontal dimension of experience. The vertical dimension, that of the purely personal, adds personal meaning of which the mind can become aware, or into which the mind can open. At the beginning this personal dimension is by its nature grasping. Later, when we can enter into these domains without grasping, we discover the possibility of a truly open, full mind, a still field of heightened awareness, a unified experience of life – body, mind and the world. Then we can see how we see things, or we can see what is on our glasses, so to speak (the dust of karma in our eyes, in Buddhist language).

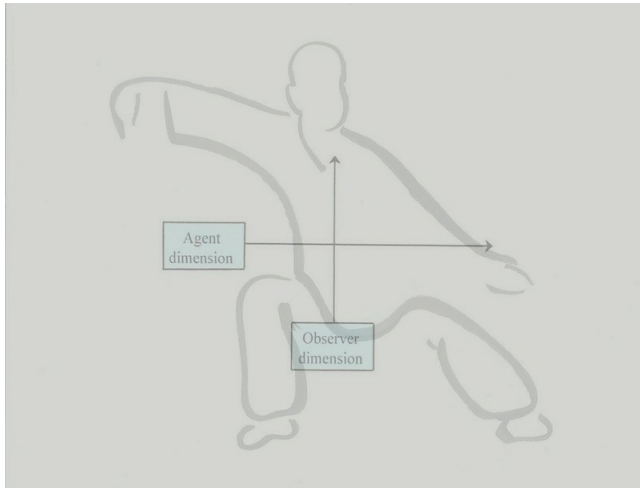


Note the direction of the arrows in this figure. These describe the dominant passage of information. At the beginning perception dominates through its divergence, feeding information in all directions (‘proliferation’). This will change as we describe how the mind may transform with the practice of Dharma. First of all we use the system as it is and look to replace unskilful perceptions with skilful ones. This is our spiritual education. Then, as we practice further, both directions of information become open. Information from the world and from thought, feeling and sensation can dominate, changing underlying perceptions that we never thought could change. This is where all aspects of the mind converge rather than diverge and the whole process is changed and begins afresh. This is our way of describing the process of insight.

## Tracking the mind – making the full, dynamic picture

Let us now consider how we can make the statements of context, process and meaning that we need in order to complete the full phenomenological picture. We can use the horizontal dimension to represent our context statement, the dimension of the actor, the situation we are in and what needs doing. The vertical dimension represents our personal process, the statement of the observer. The two dimensions are represented as a cross, with perception at the midpoint where the dimensions intersect. Meaning arises out of a combination of the other two perspectives (context and process) but is different from either. Note that until insight occurs the three perspectives of actor, observer, and mindful actor will always remain separate. All three standpoints are valid but the standpoint must always be specified.

**Fig. 3 The movements of the mind**

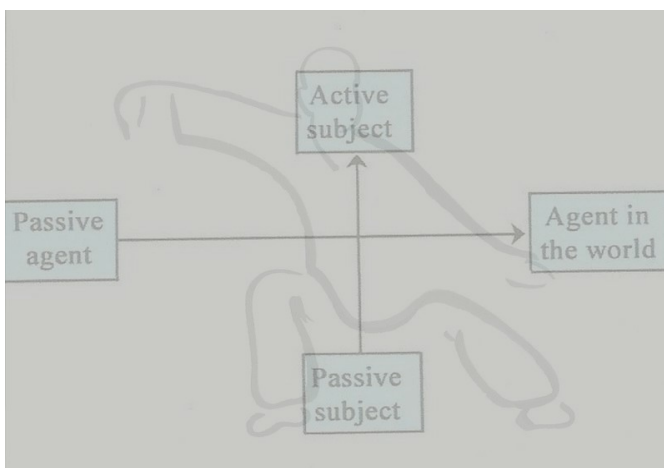


Because the horizontal movements of the mind represent those of the agent we can call them ‘agent effects’. In this dimension two types of movement are possible: the still point of perception can go out into the world from the centre or the open field of heightened awareness can extend into the world.

We can call vertical movements of the mind ‘observer effects’. Intention from above tends to try to pin things down, feeling from below to bring things up. When these exist in balance there is a still point. When intention from above is too strong the mind tends to be heavy and overconfident, or pushy. Too strong feeling from below will cause confusion.

Thus the two dimensions are like a navigation device for us on the path, the horizontal representing direction and the vertical, status. The still point can open to a field when intention becomes a direction rather than a point. Let us now show this scheme in action. First of all the aroused pre-active state might look like this:

**Fig. 4 The pre-active mind**



The passive subject settles down (into the armchair), the passive agent settles back (into the same armchair). The active subject wakes up. Then the active agent wakes up.

We come out of this with a language of practice in which we can identify and communicate a particular phenomenon. We can say, for example:

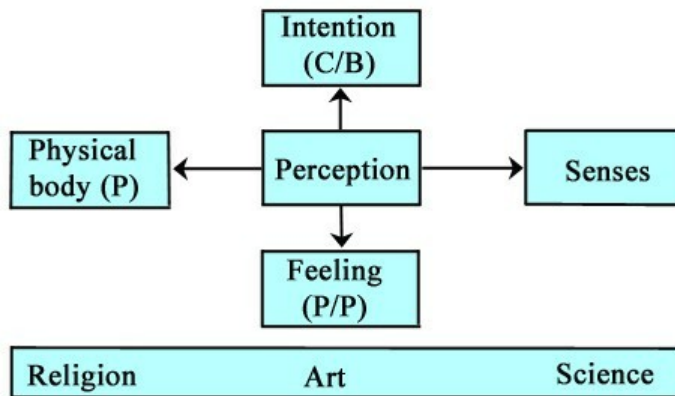
“From the perspective of observer or mindful actor, on the level of perception (or feeling or intention) the picture that forms (or the sense I have) is...” For the different domains we can say, “My picture

of...” is applicable to the domain of science; “My sense of...” would be relevant to the realm of art; “My perspective on...” to the realm of religious contemplation.

Internally, we have the ‘top down’ process of intention and the ‘bottom up’ process of feeling, of liking and disliking. Intention tends to lead us forward into the senses and is dominated by thought. Feeling is also an aspect of mind, although we usually attribute it erroneously to the physical body. These two (intention and feeling) both seem to be forces but are actually only informational pathways in the mind if we do not, or have not in the past, given them energy. Behind the automatic hasty feeling that arises out of perception comes a more conscious ‘feeling sense’. Usually this is dominated by desire and gives force to intention. This combination of feeling and intention can be developed to become our first moral restraint on the mind. But we have to beware that feelings seem to have minds of their own. They are in themselves a source of craving. We can suffer just as much by attaching to goodness as to badness. Outgoing perception is the mediator or balance point between intention and feeling. This is obscured by craving and therefore invisible to the untrained mind. The untrained mind completely, literally, overlooks it.

We end up with a scheme including the inner senses and the three domains of religious contemplation, art and science resulting in four ‘internal’ pathways or levels of information: the sense of the physical body, psychophysical (or ‘bottom up’), and cognitive behavioural (or ‘top down’) and the linking pathway of perceptions. These include the beliefs that are the conventional truth of religion. There is furthermore the emerging pathway of insight linked to a transformed perception of the physical body that leads to the realizations or ultimate truth of the Buddhist religion. Therefore, we begin with the body and end with the body, so to speak.

**Figure 2 The active Mind**



The three processes in the centre of the model (feeling, perception and intention) together form the Desire-body. They constitute our normal experience of the body and feelings before this experience is transformed through religious contemplation of the realities of the physical body, its impermanence in particular.

The most important aspect of this full picture is that all the processes of the Desire-body are seen as outgoing. This is a radical shift. Previously the whole dynamic of the system was one dealing with incoming experience. When we have withdrawn from this back into the physical body we see that all our internal experience comes from the mind going out into the sensory world. The world is not bothering us, we are bothering it, or rather our sense desires are bothering it, for a reason. This reason is out in the world, where our object of desire lies.

The three processes of the Desire-body are all different functions of the same thing. So when feeling is driven by greed or hatred or delusion, so are perception and intention. We are listening to feeling

and being dominated by it. There is no reason looking over it. If we are lost we are driven by the senses and the body is just dragged along behind. It is as though we have a purpose within the instruments with which we view the world. This three-process system cannot see itself; it has no reference point. Furthermore, no part of the system can control the whole. Therefore, to try to exert control is stressful in itself. To surrender out of control is also stressful. We can, however, step back from the system. Our only brake in these moments that can hold the mind back from going out into things is our Bare Awareness of what is happening and of the body.

The enlightened solution is a dynamic, open, heightened awareness in the present moment. This is crucial because it reminds us that perception is an active process not a passive one. We begin to realise that we see things not as they are but according to what we want. We promote the perception of phenomena that fits our agenda, and get frustrated if things then turn out not to be the way we see them. Once the perception is formed the action can follow on automatically.

*..we subtract or repress our awareness that perception is active and repress our awareness that action is passive. This it is to be conscious.*

Gregory Bateson (1987)

We try to establish an impression of free will or control in many ways. This is natural; it helps us to feel safe. The mind and body, as part of the nature around us, however, are self-organizing systems in a wider sense. Just perception without intention is what is gained by stepping back. So the key to free will lies in perception rather than in action.

An analogy may help here. A mature encounter with science can go something like this: 'What, they do not know everything? Scary, but they do not need to; they only need a functional truth.' Similarly, we can act without knowing the full picture. If we see that our perceptions are active, we can act on a functional truth and review the result in line with that truth. This is being heedful. We realise that the mind is usually caught up not by our perceptions or our actions but by our intentions. So this is what we watch, aware of how these intentions themselves reveal the perceptions that underlie them. This means that the full picture becomes something that naturally goes beyond our desires. Our desires become apparent to us because they have become only part of the picture. What really helps to clarify this is virtue because it restrains desire. If we do not always act on our desires, they become even more visible: the force of habit reveals itself when frustrated. In time, this further means very significantly that we become bigger than our desires.

Even in the absence of such experience or reflection we can still identify ourselves as outside of, or greater than, our desires as a matter of belief. Conventional religion often provides perceptions to do this for us. This may sound comparatively thoughtless but with skill it can open the mind to the experience of non-identification. It can provide the moral code that helps us to see desire more clearly. The disadvantage is that this can be a forced practice rather than a natural one. With a reflective experience of personal growth, on the other hand, we are seeing things as we go, naturally. We are kind of developing a natural religion out of relinquishing desire.

In my own personal case, I would say that Buddhism gradually emerged naturally out of my life when medical science took my attention to the realities of the body. I was then able to recognise the truth of the teaching as I encountered it. This was very powerful. The most powerful Dhamma are those that come out of the world, which I call the belief that comes out of faith or insight, not Dhamma from books. Imposing Dhamma from books onto our experience is an outward directed matching response, not the drawing together of the strands of information before us in the present moment that can lead to insight.

## **PART 2: TRANSFORMING THE EXPERIENCE OF BODY AND MIND**

**Part 2 of the workbook considers how we can deepen our view of life overall through the practice of meditation and the contemplation of body, mind and the mind-body relationship.**

We will begin with an overview of the spiritual domain and path. Then we will consider the contemplation of what we take to be ourselves. This begins with the body, then the transformation of the mind through meditation in which the movements within the mind separate out from the stillness of the mind (samādhi). Lastly we outline the contemplation of mind and body within this stillness, the practice that leads to the final liberation of the mind from suffering. It should be noted that the development of samādhi can be practised before the examination of body and mind in which case the result will be to contemplate in the still mind from the beginning.

# Chapter 1: The Spiritual Domain and Path

## The Spiritual Domain

It is proposed that all phenomena arising through sensory or material conditions are impermanent, that everything that arises ceases and therefore leads to suffering. Freedom from suffering, then, relies on the ability to distinguish and ultimately to separate in our experience the empty, immaterial, non-sensory mind from impermanent mind objects.

Mind objects comprise both:

a) states of mind: these have refined sensory/neural manifestation and therefore fine material existence, and

b) coarse sensory forms or objects: these are the most limited, operating according to the fixed, causal laws of the coarse material world. In human terms, they depend on the sense bases of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin. These things can affect the state of mind only through coarse sense desire.

We do not need to divide a) from b), the fine material from the coarse material, or the manifestations of the mind from those of the body and other coarse material phenomena. **This division is not necessary because if we can let go of attachment to the body, we can let go of the states of mind that are dependent upon it. In our terms, this means to let go of the desire-body and step back into the real body.**

Note that we are not concerning ourselves with what we would call the outside world but only with its representation in the senses. We are accepting, however, that the objects of these senses are the sources of our different perceptions. The diversity of sensory perceptions depends on the diversity of material elements (consisting of air, fire, water and earth), not the other way around. The mind depends on form, not form on the mind.

In recent years, with the development of instruments of fine material science, we have been delving into a realm where there is interdependence in this respect: observation as an action of mind changes the observed, which is also a manifestation of the larger mind. This is also the realm of the purely mind or heart sense that is independent of the other sense bases. In Buddhism, this is understood as the heavenly realms, which are the two realms of fine material form and the many formless realms. It is useful to be clear that these realms operate in different ways and according to different laws from the ways and laws of the coarse material world. Quantum science is beginning to expand our language and understanding to encompass such things, although as yet this is also with a degree of confusion and hence disagreement with coarse material science. Perhaps one day a clear distinction will occur in objective terms but this is not so important to us. The distinction in subjective terms will, I hope, become **clear enough** if we do not get confused looking down too many high-powered instruments. However, this distinction is not the goal of our practice; we need not let the finer discrimination of these things confuse or divert us. It is only the scientists themselves, perhaps, who have the job of sorting all this out clearly in their minds.

For our less precise purposes, we will call the coarse material realm that of Conventional Science and the fine material realm that of Art. The former is a realm of relativity, temporary stability and local independence. The latter is a realm of infinite potentiality and interdependence. The fine material is a recognition of the possible inter-connectedness of certain kinds of subjective or personal experience. Perhaps in the realm of art we also discover the stuff of rebirth and hence a mundane refuge in a mind that can out-live the physical body and can develop and refine over many lifetimes. This is a wonderful source of optimism and motivation on the mundane religious path in the course of which we develop spiritual qualities of virtue and wisdom. These we can take beyond the grave, despite the fact that coarser material matters may hide them from us during our current life span.



Notice that we now have the coarse material realm, fine material realms that constitute realms of form and formless realms of formless beings. All of these are ultimately impermanent, conditioned realms. We are suggesting that it is desirable to move on up through these realms into more refined existences and also that it is possible to find a base for consciousness that is permanent, beyond them all. This is Nibbāna.

In the arising of conditions, a central concept is that of contact. Consciousness is seen as arising on contact, dependent on both subject and object but of a different nature to either. All phenomena are seen as arising anew, as dependently **originated**. The model presented therefore identifies all phenomena as the intersection of two dimensions. It proposes that to see things as anything else is deluded. We either delude ourselves that our perceptions are objectively real or that our subjective or personal world of mental conditions is somehow independent of material substrate for its arising.

The mind is a function not an entity within consciousness. It normally reveals itself only through the objects which pass through it. It has many channels, through the senses and within itself (e.g. feelings, thoughts and beliefs). All are the potential carriers of skilful or unskilful perception or intention, so we need to take care. Desire makes a thing out of a process, a feeling out of feeling-ness. This is a misuse of the faculties, which need to be listened *with* to guide us, not listened *to*.

Although reliant on material means for its receptivity and expression, the mind may still operate according to its own laws, those of the fine material, to the extent that a clear self-supervisory capacity is present. This acknowledges a very important role for free thinking and for the formation of belief and discipline. Furthermore, a mind that sees truth can be released from the material and fine material, having a purely informational origin; thus ‘he who sees the Dharma, sees the Buddha’. This is no longer trying to create the ideal mind; it is revealing something that is already pure, an eternal refuge through complete relinquishment, detachment. This relinquishment is not merely passive but it is not searching either...it is just seeing and knowing together. In seeing the ultimate inter-dependence of even the most refined, subtle realms, we are taken back to earth, in a sense, back to nature. We discover that the coarse material provides a comparatively stable realm from which the ineffable can be reflected.

*This is the Reflective Glory of the Lord Buddha.*

This is indeed the Reflective Glory of the Lord Buddha.

*This is the Reflective Glory of the Dharma.*

This is indeed the Reflective Glory of the Dharma.

*This is the Reflective Glory of the Sangha*

This is indeed the Reflective Glory of the Sangha.

## The Spiritual Path

In our normal experience, there is no subject or object, no knower or known, only knowing. **There is only perception.** Therefore, when we wonder whether suffering is in here or out there we just get confused. The tendency is to use an internalizing or externalizing story or way of considering mental phenomena rather than seeing the intersection. Always try to see how things inside and outside are forming a single experience. There is only one experience, that of knowing.

We all have a knowing heart-mind to realise. When we experience this it brings awareness itself into our awareness, we become aware of being aware. This happens through some kind of letting go of ourselves – through generosity, morality, mindfulness (presence of mind) or samādhi. This further develops into experiencing the knower within the state of knowing. We can directly see our state of mind in relation to an object within awareness. We can see our lovingness around our loved ones, for example. When we can see this, we realize that this state of mind is what we really know. Other

things we are just aware of - we just see sights, hear sounds, think thoughts etc. Furthermore as we become clearer about what we really know then this knower becomes stronger and its connection with virtue becomes clear. What really knows is our conscience.

This knowing is the beginning of the path out of suffering, the path to the deathless. On this path we are driven on by the fact that our knowing is dependent on its object and therefore impermanent – never able to sustain itself, always moving and changing with an uncertain world. (That lovingness turns to grief when he or she is not around, doesn't it!).

We are pulled on by the fact that when this knower is clear and strong we can strive to abandon all attachments to phenomena and watch the knower get brighter, happier and more loving. If we achieve this detachment fully for just one phenomenon (through wisdom or samādhi), the mind will be released from the senses and we will for the first time experience “the one who knows”. We must take care not to see this as an independent mind or we may grab it.

The aim is to abandon attachment to phenomena, not to abandon phenomena. Only detachment is necessary. We can influence things and be influenced by them, through information or truth. We do not have to, through desire, become entangled in them.

The Lord Buddha's method is to empty the mind and then return to contemplating conditions. To see how suffering arises with attachment by greed or by hatred. In addition, to see that when desire is absent there is no suffering and the emptiness is there in the midst of conditions. However, it is best not to call the emptiness anything, not even emptiness - just the end of suffering. This is enough; any more is the beginning of attachment all over again! We could end up attaching to emptiness or feeling like a god or something and pour scorn on our mortal flesh. Just stay with the desire-less-ness that is the supreme, or in the meantime enjoy those moments of freedom.

Although we all have this knowing heart-mind there is no doubt that it has darkness and ignorance within it. The spirit of the practice is not to turn toward this but away from it.

*Shall I drive evil out of my soul by wrestling with my own darkness? It is sufficient to turn away from the darkness to His light...*

Thomas Merton

In the spirit of Thomas Merton, **relinquishment is all that is required**. Attachment is the result of unwise attention or perception and its resultant actions, which involve greed, hatred or delusion. As we relinquish, both actively and passively, this attention is gradually purified. The results, wise attention and the resultant actions, are calm, clear and kind. As we see and act in this way a lack of remorse enables our minds to become calm and still and clear further. Then we can directly see what is right and wrong as well as what is what – Dharma and virtue cannot be separated.

A still mind becomes balanced and neutral, or the mind can become still through finding a balance or a neutral view, either way round – passive or active. Examples of balance include the principal one of Awareness with Contemplation. Awareness, our passive tool of relinquishment and equanimity needs to be balanced with Contemplation, our active tool of investigation and mindfulness. These two approaches, passive and active, together lead to wisdom and insight (vipassanā). Another important example is the balance of faith with wisdom; the calming “samatha” path is in a sense the path of faith and vipassanā is that of wisdom.

**When we discover more and more ‘what – is – really – what’ we can find ourselves under pressure to revise our worldly priorities. Our definition of what is kind shifts from that which leads to a lessening of suffering towards that which leads to liberation, to transcending rather than ameliorating suffering.** Essential in this respect is to balance wisdom and compassion and bear in mind that right intention comprises the three factors of benevolence, harmlessness and

renunciation. We can use wisdom very unskilfully if we lack compassion.

A good safeguard is to remember that the word “should” is never part of Dhamma practice; we must never suggest that we should be detached or dispassionate or we should be compassionate, rather that we need to be or that we benefit from having these qualities. Let us not forget the physical either. Physical suffering can be very acute even without added mental suffering. Let us never lose our compassion towards that or the urgency it gives to going beyond the body.

How do we know when our mind is still and clear? How does this show itself in our perception of an object? When we investigate, we see the three characteristics of experience pointed to by the Buddha, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self. When we are not seeing clearly we can remind ourselves of these. The spirit of that reminder is important; we remind ourselves of what we already know but have forgotten. Thus, **the spirit of mindfulness is one of recollection**. We are not trying to change our minds.

When we investigate the first two of these characteristics of existence, of impermanence and unsatisfactoriness, we are correct to discover that the suffering of conditions is their impermanence or uncertainty. It is not correct if we then take this to mean that they are great while they last, if we do not attach, tempting as this may be! First, the impermanence of conditions is apparent in the present if wisdom is there to see it. Secondly, if we experience conditions as pleasant then we will crave them in the future, we are making karma in the direction of attachment and becoming (‘bhava’). If we experience things as unpleasant we will want to get away from them and we are making karma in the direction of ‘vibhava’, wanting annihilation. What we need to discover is that our experience is actually a dual experience of feeling and perception. This is another way of saying that it is neither subject nor object. When the mind is still and we have the ability to detach from things, we see that the perception of suffering is not the same as the feeling. The perceived suffering can furthermore be conditional. Just as I know that a particular poison will kill me in the future if I drink it, I know that this particular experience will be suffering if I delight in it with either attraction or aversion. So the mind, seeing how it is being caught and wanting to be free to enjoy its own qualities abandons attraction or aversion to external objects and seeks neutrality first of all. It does not grasp with the senses. As a further step, it seeks a refuge beyond the senses. It does not grasp *to* the senses either. This is more subtle. The transformed mind **listens with the senses not to them**.

Listening is a very good word to use because it is naturally an open, receptive sense rather than a closed, grasping sense. We can use the listening capacity to help us to establish a more open awareness. Not knowing is open also, but the awareness we are seeking to develop still has the knowing quality. It is not like pinning something down sharply at one extreme openly not knowing at the other. It is more like weighing something up.

The most important sense to the practitioner is feeling because of its importance in guiding skilful, moral action and in determining our degree of attachment or freedom. In this respect, we could say that we do not develop a felt sense, where we grasp at a feeling as having some significance in it, but a feeling sense. Our feeling remains in contact with its object; it is always in this context. This means we also have perception arising of the same object, usually unseen based on this feeling. This perception is often revealed if we consciously make the act of believing something about what we are feeling. We can chase it out so to speak.

Here we can utilize the theory of phenomenology; that to be complete a description of experience must include a statement of process, context and meaning. Note, very importantly, that we are seeking an experience of process, context and meaning together **in the present moment**; we are not merely labelling experience in this way. What I am saying is not just that a complete **description** of experience constitutes these three elements but that a complete **experience** has in it these three elements **all together**. Although we can use these labels, we are not grasping at them. If we grasp at them, we will only ever have one at a time and our experience will remain fragmented. To be complete, it all has to come together and it can only do this when the labels are there but not grasped at. It is like learning to drive or something. We have to perfect the

different skills, focusing on each in turn without forgetting the others. We can help ourselves to learn by listening to the instructor label the next task. We can internalize the labels. However, when we are putting it all together in a difficult situation to think, “brake” or “mirror” or something would take us away from our necessary focus on the outside world.

My father invented what is called a head-up display for airplanes, where information is projected onto the windscreen so that the pilot need not take his attention away from the world to look at the dials. Our instruments do not merely give information on the process that is occurring. We are also seeking its subjective or personal and existential significance. In this way, we are investigating experience. Often we have to do this repeatedly, opening repeatedly to the simplest of experiences in order to gather together all the different aspects of it in the present moment. Often, I think, the reason why we do not do this is that we think to be wise we have to know very many things. This is not so in this context. If we are looking for the Dhamma of things we need only to penetrate to the reality of one to see them all in the same light. To have an experience of release from one object of desire can give us a dispassion not just for this object but for desire itself.

**When the label comes back to us out of the experience this is insight.** It is as though you hear your own mind coming from a different place. The message is often incredibly simple but it always seems to have a radical effect on the mind; it goes straight to the heart. Here the Dharma has only one taste: that of a blissful sense of freedom and love, light and playful. We may also see the truth of the third characteristic of experience, that no conditions are self; I think this is the only way to understand this one.

After such an experience we find we also have a perception in our heart that is stronger than a mere label. We can use it to defend ourselves from the labels that continue to be thrown up by our experience as well as from the mental feeling of our less enlightened moments. Therefore, we can empower the perception of suffering to such a degree that it protects us from the feeling of suffering. At this point, we really have to let go of the idea that we should feel a particular feeling in a particular situation. We have gone beyond the realm of what we may have previously thought of as normal, healthy reactions to realize that actually there is something more natural and healthy than these – that is mindfulness or awareness in the present moment.

To sum up, transcendence comes through a two-fold refinement of consciousness:

1. “Contemplation” is the standpoint of the mental agent where we use the power of perception and apperception to transform the mind and bring its strength into the present moment.

2. “Awareness” is experience viewed from the standpoint of the mental observer that can be developed to include bare awareness and pure awareness, the awareness of being aware.

Both of these approaches are enhanced by calm and concentration – when the mind is still it sees clearly. They can seem very different at first but as time goes on the differences become subtle and disappear. The first begins actively, we reason with ourselves, more in a heart sense than a cerebral one. It becomes like doing nothing as our minds become clear of the activity of desire and the work of relinquishment takes hold. The second is passive from the beginning but then a need for restraint and virtue shows itself and we follow what is skilful and turn away from what is unskilful, so a subtle activity comes about.

When we put the two approaches together we take both beyond themselves. Until this point these two approaches can further each other, a balance of activity and passivity. In the longer term they will come together as a balanced ‘knowing’. This knowing will take us ultimately to a religious ‘realization’ that involves subjective or personal belief or Wisdom, **emerging out of phenomena**. If we are on the right track and these beliefs match the Buddha’s teaching as I have described we can potentially experience a total freedom from the conditioning of the mind by phenomena. The ‘knowing’ is in itself both the initial realization of our path as I have described above and the ultimate realization of it. We raise it up higher and higher, more and more refined through our contemplation and the cultivation of pure awareness.

## Chapter 2: Contemplation Of The Body

The Buddha identifies the body as the most fruitful of all objects of our awareness and contemplation. In fact, the body naturally brings contemplation and awareness together as well as reminding us of impermanence, of our mortality. The body also shows us a crucial way in which we have misconstrued our experience. We have taken feeling and form to be the same. Through Dharma practice, we learn to re-perceive these as separate realities in the mind.

We need to solve the riddle of how we get beyond the body when we are directed towards it in the practice, how we are to transcend the body through contemplation of the body. We will see how this hinges on transforming apparently real objects into mental objects or rather mental realities, not as a philosophical stance or conventional perceptual shift but as a brand new experience altogether. Let us begin by putting our contemplation of the body in the context of the other elements of our scheme. The image of the body in the mind is usually a functional one (a desire body), not a passive, contemplative one (a mental body). The functional image is calmed both by contemplation of the objects that elicit the body's functions and by simply relaxing into passivity. It is important, however, not to be mistaken that in our passivity we have resolved the issues inherent in function. In order to do this we need to have wisdom informing our actions.

The desire-body consists of feeling, thought and perception, all of which become transformed:

### Feeling

The mind is looking for pleasant feeling. It is using the body for this. We attach to the body as a source of feeling. This pleasure, if it does not compromise our integrity, is blameless, although we can see it as spiritually unprofitable in the long term. When the mind has samādhi and wisdom it no longer wants the pleasures of the body.

### Thought

Two sources of thought need to be distinguished. Any 'functional thought' results in feeling. These thoughts relate not to the body in and of itself but to the function concerned (e.g. we feel hungry – this is a feeling about food and the body, the function of eating). This is distinct from passive contemplation of the body in and of itself where there is no intention, just an examination and feeling out of the situation. This can generate feelings of desire or aversion which need to be calmed before the mind sees clearly.

### Perception

In terms of perception, the mind of cultivation finds that it actually has to sort out the confusion of having a body – and this sense of confusion in itself is a way that the mind can begin to realise that the body is not self. In practice terms this amounts to bringing together the experience of bodies out there and this one in here. The former is the perception of the bodies of ourselves and others as we see them; the latter is the proprioceptive or postural sense. The usual way in which these come together is through action, movement. This is monitored through its results in feeling. Desire for this feeling sees these movements as actions; they are something that we are doing. Virtue, on the other hand, sees movements as allowed rather than executed. The mind is not acting but supervising an action.

The functional image of the body exists in the dimensions of our actions. It is defined by movement trajectories. Points of intention become lines as we move. This is the time-bound perception of actions driven by desire. The desire-body is a time-bound perception. The image of the body in the mind can open into a three dimensional space to form a mental body - the fine material represents qualities of this space. This is facilitated by movements of the body that are rotational rather than linear and allowed rather than executed. Desire-less-ness is time-less-ness. Actions without desire are actions out

of time, timeless actions. The mental body is a perception free of time.

We also learn to see our bodies as perceptions, as representations of reality not reality. We could say we live 'as if' we are the body or its elements.

We say something happens 'as if by magic'. However in Dhamma practice, this 'as if' **is** magic

*It is as if we are in the world*

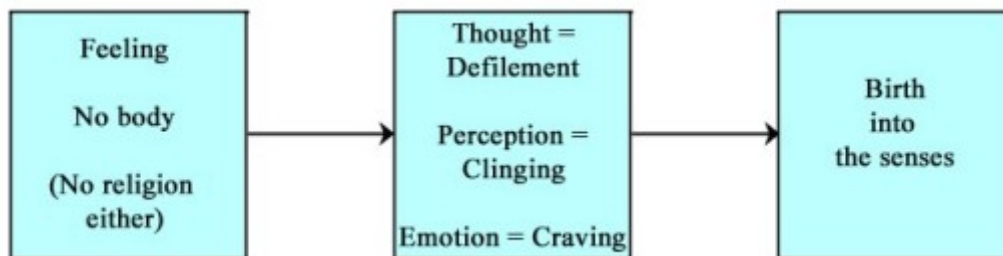
*It is as if we are not of the world...*

*Thus it is as if we are free of the world...*

## Perceptions of the body

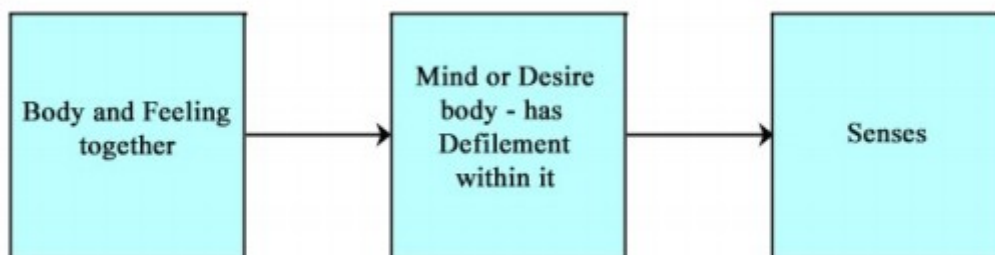
We will now consider the stages of practice related to the *perceptions* of the body alone, before returning to an overall picture of contemplation that is body-centred.

**Fig. A the pre-practice situation** = ignorance of the body



I hope this is self-explanatory. The less said about it the better.

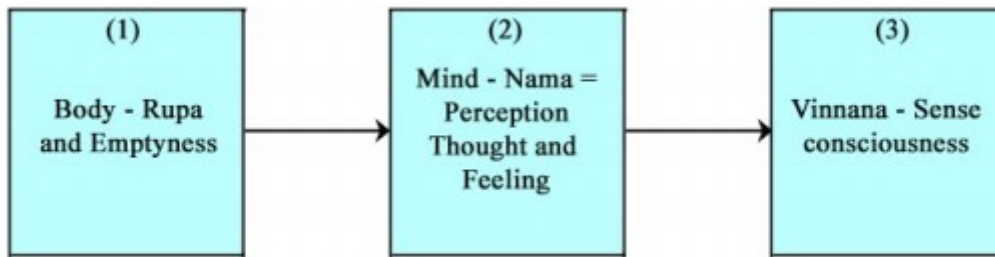
**Fig. B the trainee mind**



At first, the combination of feeling and body makes it seem as though defilement is in the body, driving desire.

**In the next step the physical body is allowed into consciousness, not sought out by it. If we seek it out it becomes confused with the desire body.** As the practitioner becomes more aware then it is seen that it is feeling, not the body that drives the desire. The presence of the body is an anchor and source of perspective. Gradually, the stillness of the body separates it from feeling, which begins to reveal itself, operating more openly within the mind.

**Fig. C the well practiced mind**



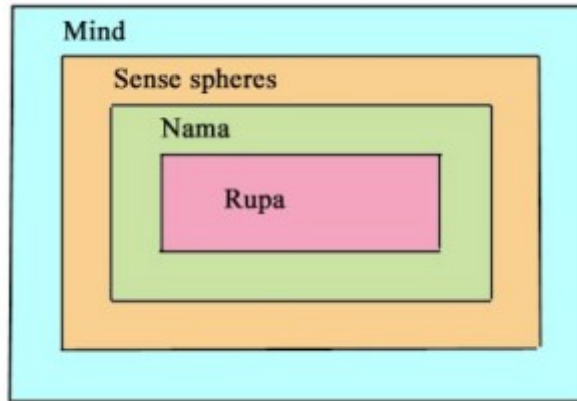
In Buddhist terms, we are investigating the relation between nāma, rūpa and viññāṇa.

3. rūpa is a source of sensation
4. nāma is a source of feelings, perceptions and intentions
5. viññāṇa is a source of cognition

We can see that at this point that just through centring our minds on the body we are **naturally** dividing in our experience the empty mind, mind states and the sensory world, as was the goal of our practice. Emptiness arises within the body as it is emptied of thought and mental feeling. Then this inner space unites with the outer leading to a unification of experience and we have no need to divide ourselves off from phenomena to find peace. The practice of meditation on the body has cleared the perceptual channels to lead to this unification. Also, we have from left to right the still field of emptiness, the movement within stillness of thought and feeling, and just movement within the senses – our scheme of practice.

Further practice leads us further and further inward. The result is that the well practised mind is centred in the body and is aware of looking through dirty glasses, so to speak, at the world. The dirt becomes more and more apparent. Through contemplation we clean the glass until it no longer obstructs the mind.

**Fig. D the very well practised mind**



The unobstructed mind, centred in the body, extends to encompass body, mind and senses. There is no defilement to make the mind cling to feeling and limit it. Body and mind are now termed name and form to denote their existence as mind objects within a larger frame, rather than entities of any kind.

### **Developing a complete perception**

If we apply our scheme to consider the body alone, we see that we are developing three different appreciations of the same object.

1. The sense of the actual physical body as movement or posture, activity – the body here and now. Using physical means toward energetic or motive goals is a particular use of the body utilising this perception.
2. Feelings of the body (pleasure and pain) and regarding the body (attraction or aversion) that with practice are revealed to form a ‘desire-body’ in our perceptions with their related thoughts. This would be included in our scheme as perception resulting in, accessible to the artistic view. It is our psychophysical (P/P) pathway.
3. The body as an object seen, heard, tasted, touched, and smelt. This relates to the scientific view.

The first thing to note is that these three perceptions can exist completely independently of each other and function very smoothly. We can have a medical and sexual perception of the body in our minds at different times, for example. Neither may be related to our own body until we look in the mirror. Note also, how easy it is to see our own body as the same as other peoples’ bodies when appreciated through the senses (perception no.3) but that this is completely divorced from perception no.1. If we are clear what we are doing there is no problem in this.

The big perceptual leaps occur when these perceptions come together. The contemplation of the body is aimed at precisely this. However, in order to do this all three will need to be worked on. Therefore, we will discuss them separately in a way that is intended to facilitate this process. Then we will bring the whole thing together in examples of contemplative practice.

### **The practice system**

In brief, the recommendation is to begin by:

- i) Strengthening and calming no.1 – this is referred to as P/P practices. We are adding conscious, skilful processes to this pathway. Pure perception 1, is the bare awareness of satipaṭṭhāna (chapter 5). the development of perception 1 progresses (or regresses) naturally in a certain way. Following this enfolding with awareness can enhance the process.

### **A system of progressive bodily awareness to develop perception 1**

Watching over

1. movement as doing
2. posture



3. movement as allowed
4. maintenance of the body as doing
5. maintenance as allowed
6. the breath as doing
7. the breath as allowed
8. repeat 1-7 with the breath in mind
9. elements
10. impermanence

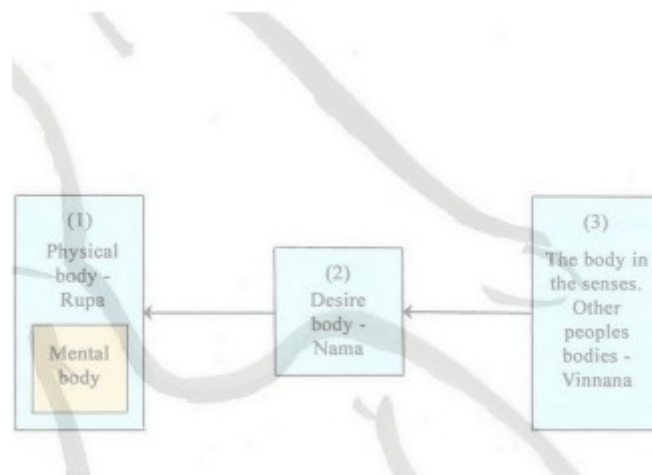
ii) calming, gladdening no.2 – we can say that our concept of Partnership below is the calming and gladdening of no.2 in relation to no.3. our ‘scientific’ sense. No.2 is essentially the feeling sense of the body and all its ramifications in thought and desires.

iii) strengthening / sharpening no.3 – our ‘scientific’ view of our own bodies that generates C/B skilful means. I have found medical anatomy books the best for this and have also had the opportunity to see the real thing in pathology departments of hospitals as well as working for many years on the wards.

Then the images from no.3 are compared directly with perception no.1 without the interference of perception no.2. The desire-body is what obscures clear knowing and seeing of the physical body. This happens inside the physical body, so to speak.

### Fruits of the practice

In this way, ultimately we form a so-called mental body within the physical body. Note that we are reversing the usual movement of the mind: the mind turns back on itself when insight occurs. This is illustrated in the figure below:



In this way, the practice of body contemplation brings all elements of the mind together, sorts them out and ultimately releases the mind. We realize that the map (3) is not the territory (1) not in philosophical terms but in an experiential way. We realize that domain no.1 is the place for religious belief, it is not a thing of the mind or the world, again in an experiential way. We are not trying to mix these views, this is craziness.

In this wider sense what these three perceptions teach us in turn:

1. The body represents the nature of calm within activity to the mind, as a stillness that moves.
2. Also, we see our relationship to the desire mind, the movements of it we can control, the movements in it we cannot.
3. Our relationship to nature, our body is no different from that of others or from other creatures.

The mind is tested because dissonance will occur if these three perceptions are confused. If not then there is no suffering. This is the same goal in part as that of a health professional trying not to get over involved or stressed emotionally.

The view that comes together, the mental body, is something completely new both as a perception and existentially. It is like a perception beyond perception. Through it, we realize that the heart is not perception but lies behind it. This is the culmination of perception 1.

These practices naturally lead on from one to the next as they bear fruit.

We are establishing a sense of relaxed composure in activity first of all. We extend this into the supervision of movement and posture together. As we do this we become aware that there is a higher sense of movement, that of movement as allowed (we allow posture to change and flow) rather than guided. More subtle we also realize that we do not really know what we should do or not do, allow or not allow. Furthering this with regard to the maintenance of the body do we actually know at this level how to look after a body? Actually we are not sure what to do, even more uncertain what to allow or not allow. Strange, we thought we did, perhaps. If we do not, how can this body be our self?

The later fruits of this practice can take it in radically new directions. When our minds come together a brand new sense of the body is born. This may take many forms that are both fruits of the practice in themselves and signs of the way ahead.

For example, when the mind is ready to contemplate the impurities of the body or its impermanence a sign will appear to indicate this such as a vision or 'nimitta' of a corpse or bodily organ.

This opens the mind's eye to the body. The function of contemplating the bodies of others or of examining anatomy is not to be able to visualize the parts in our imagination. This can be useful, if we can do it, at the superficial level of asubha contemplation and to calm the mind or to motivate it through the contemplation of death. Such images are super ceded when the mind is able to enter the body. This is when effort is replaced by effortlessness as knowing and seeing naturally blend together. Thus, we do not need to imagine the body in all its parts, it can be seen directly in the mind's eye, the mind can penetrate the body. We see inside it but in a way that is not frightening or depressing because it is clear that it is not what we are; the mind is clearly separate from it.

*What could be more depressing, more life-denying, than to see a corpse if we see it as self? What could be more liberating, more life-affirming if we see it as not self?*

There are different words used by the Buddha to describe different perceptions concerning the body. These are describing responses of the mind at different depths of the practice. It is very important not to misuse a term. In this way we can overestimate our practice or take it in a wrong direction. All the terms used for mundane perception involve opposites. In terms of the body an example would be beautiful ('subha') and unbeautiful ('asubha'). Our first step is to find a neutral perception by using the perception of unbeautiful to balance that of beautiful. We take note of a fault, a mole on the cheek or hair up the nose or something, whatever turns you off! This is enough to counteract the infatuation of the perception beautiful. When the mind is calmer and more easily settles in the neutral state then we can try to go a little further into spots or boils, perhaps and so on...This is practising at the dual level of the thinking mind. Thinking in one way will produce a reaction in the other if the heart is not carried along. It may or may not be, depending on how strong our karma is in this respect.

When there is no thought, the mind is unified the perceptions are of a completely different order, completely new and incorruptible by the hindrances. There are only single words for these, they have

no opposites. The reaction of the mind to these perceptions is also new. The perception of disgust or revulsion leads to release, not grasping through aversion. These words are not a description of aversion. We never cultivate aversion, we cultivate dispassion.

The contemplation of the body is a practice of samatha and vipassanā together. It calms our desire and presents us with the three characteristics at the same time. The radiance of the mind seeing itself is also present; as we see impermanence we see it with permanence.

The contemplation of the bones can naturally lend itself to this in a further way. Bones are white and therefore the perfect reflectors for the white light of the mind released.

## **Meditation**

In the Thai forest tradition, it is recommended to establish protective samādhi before the unattractive nature of the body is contemplated. This recommendation should be taken in context, having been made after a group of monks who had contemplated the body committed suicide. Samādhi is the ideal. If we fall short of this in our meditation we take care to generate an attitude of metta (to calm aversion) or dispassion (to calm attraction) when addressing the body as an object (perception 3). Also, with regard to calming aversion, even the least attractive aspects of the body can seem quite remarkable from the point of view of science.

The metta is kindness for ourselves, and need not be felt for the body itself. We do not have to care about the body because this will dampen our spirits and because we do not want our benevolence to lead to attachment. When perceptions 1 and 3 come together, there will be an attitude of detached benevolence. Benevolence will be a natural result of detachment. When dispassion arises, this is seeing the beautiful in the unbeautiful. Until this occurs, we balance perception toward the neutral by looking for unattractive or attractive aspects. We can also enjoy the stability of the body as an object. The body in itself does not mind about anything; it can teach the mind equanimity.

When the mind is contemplating the body, Mara can enter the mind through the sense door of feeling so it must be guarded by the meditator. There are many stories in the sutras where Mara is spotted as black smoke. This contrasts with the brightness of a concentrated mind. In our terms, when the mind is engaged in perceptions 1 and 3 we are protecting the mind from the influence of perception 2.

## **Self Images**

At different times we may identify with our bodies, thoughts or desires or our will and aspirations, with our family or community. We see that in a sense our 'self image' is a thought or emotion. This definition of what constitutes ourselves also defines what is other than ourselves. In meditation what changes is a person's model of themselves. The converse is also true. Changing someone's view of himself or herself by facilitating his or her reflection on the laws of nature, in the way I have suggested, can alter someone's state of consciousness. Both experiences can be assessed by considering the resultant change of self-image; both these related processes are documented in spiritual literature but this needs some translating if it is to be used in a doctrinally neutral, demystifying way.

This workbook tries to facilitate models or images of the self within the truths of physical constraints.

We can help people discover images of themselves they find helpful to bring to mind in different situations and what happens when they identify with these images. The latter is seen here as a discrete step that is not necessary if it should prove painful or disempowering. The freedom to reject what is unhelpful is an exercise in being utilitarian with our own perceptual processes, recognizing that we do have a choice about how we view our problems.

## **Further Methods and Results**

### **Meditation - 'loosening up' our identification with the body**

Note that the mind of the meditator is not necessarily focusing on or examining the body. During walking meditation as the mind calms to bare attention it can seem like the body is still and the world passing by, like on a moving walkway. This perception further calms the mind, it is a perception of a stillness in which things arise and cease, mirroring the meditative mind. After this one can cultivate the same perception and return to that calm state, like a meditator's shortcut (bear in mind that this won't always work). It can also be taught as a skilful means to others.

Other examples would be the perception of the thinking mind as in the head, or as physical feeling as necessarily limited to the form of the body (this commonly breaks down when concentrating on the breath, suddenly it is as though the body expands to fill the room). Or we can see mental feeling as something that travels into the other senses (after this has been centred in meditation we see it move).

As all these perceptions break down new possibilities are seen. The mind is no longer so restricted. The field opens up and feeling in particular has a much wider scope. Within such scope clear patterns of movement emerge which are like tracks. The tracks of the unwholesome can then be followed, replacing unskilful habit with skilful (to cool it down) or merely learning not to follow, to avoid or step back from the unskilful.

The perceived solidity of things we begin to see as an aspect of the desire body (perception 2). The perception of pleasant or unpleasant firming things up, even the perception of the elements may break down.

### **Mindfulness and internal and external locus of control**

Our self-image can also be formed in the different spheres of life by our locus of control. Bringing awareness into our action in the present, mindfulness, will both empower us and clarify us.

To summarize the situation when we are out of control:

Heedless perceptual contact between this subject and object through any of the senses elicits pleasant or unpleasant feeling. Perception is the action of the mind and the feeling is the automatic result. This feeling is then a source of motivation. The mind reacts to this feeling, towards pleasant and away from unpleasant.

This can be contrasted with the cultivation of mindfulness. Here there is conscious monitoring of perception. Neutral perception elicits neutral feeling. There is then no reaction to this feeling and the mind may instead observe throughout the process of conscious action and its result.

In terms of our behaviour we can know our intention. Note that ultimately this is what matters in terms of our karma both for ourselves and others. It is only if we have worldly priorities that it is important how well informed this intention is!

There is nothing wrong with having such priorities if we don't attach to them. We do our best and accept that whatever happens, happens.

## Chapter 3 Movements Within The Mind

We practice all aspects of the 8-fold path with faith that they will come together in virtue and samādhī, our tools for the further development of wisdom, our source of insight. In the mundane path, many forms of learning and healing can be used. The danger is that we will confuse one kind of healing or learning with another. In terms of my personal experience, I practiced various kinds of body awareness and physical disciplines for many years. This also led me on to body contemplation both in a medical and monastic setting. This had results that I am now only beginning to understand by using the Buddha's teachings, having tried to fit my experiences into many other conceptual frames with only suffering and confusion resulting. I hope I can help you avoid some of this confusion. I also hope I can convince you of the value of this practice.

I would like to propose a scheme to avoid such confusion at the beginning that also takes our attention to a point relevant for the rest of the path. **This is based on the principle that all states and actions of mind are associated with movements in the present moment – these are of two kinds, movement of the mind and movements within it.** Alternatively, we can say that some of the movement of the mind will be consciously directed in the present and some will be reactions to an object. The latter will involve skilful and unskilful reactions. The latter is what we are working to overcome; they are the delusions, the impurities of the mind. We can watch and analyse these movements to help us to see what is what in our experience. We see how reactions arise when we do not see with Dhamma. We follow the reaction and ultimately we add the necessary Dhamma; we also calm and firm up our intentions to overcome unskilful habits. Moment by moment we can see what we have achieved and where further work is needed.

We begin with **just movement**. Next, we find an anchor of some sort, a **still point**. If the mind can let go of the senses in some way, this still point can open to become a **still field**. Now we have movement occurring within the stillness of concentration. This stillness can then become dynamic, **stillness within movement**. This is how wisdom manifests. The process of watching the mind can be described as: 'This is my awareness. There are objects within it. It has movement to it. There is also stillness about it.'

### Just movement

When we begin, we start to practice the skills of Dhamma. We do this out of faith, following ideas and practices, using trial and error. We begin with the practice of virtue and generosity; inside and out, we clean up. Simplicity is often won through hardship. Both are the friends of Dhamma. We become more restrained - the sense of space makes restraint pleasant. We need not become self-conscious, think about, or analyse ourselves. Nervous self-consciousness can come out of a lack of self-awareness, when we perceive others to be more aware of ourselves than we are. Healthy self-consciousness is a happy sense of moral shame or 'hiri-ottappa'.

We must be careful not to confuse ourselves by using analogies drawn from the physical world in describing the phenomena of the mind; it is mental feeling that we are concerned with, not physical. Ultimately, the power of the mind, of mental feeling, comes from withdrawal, from emptiness. If we experience emptiness, there can be no confusion between this and the energies of the world. They are like opposites, in fact. Worldly energy comes from harnessing, grasping something else with energy. Spiritual energy comes from letting go. In our practice we will find use for both of these.

If we use skillful means to help us find calm or energy we must do so consciously for this purpose. The most useful distinction to make is between skillful means the intention of which is energetic and those the intention of which is informational or to do with the empty mind. These can come together - this is good, they can enhance each other. However, we need not let this confuse our intentions, which need to be directed through clear understanding of what is physical and what is mental. This is all

very important in the end. Although we can get good results from skillful means in the short term, we risk running aground because we are misconstruing our experience.

EXAMPLE - The use of hyperventilation to generate energy can be a dangerous one if either we have a wrong understanding or we do not practice correctly. In terms of understanding it is not that these techniques remove physical blocks to emotions, as many therapists claim. These techniques generate or recreate the states of mind experienced through raising the level of arousal of the whole system. We are turning on the alarm systems of the mind in the absence of outside stress. This can be initially confusing to the mind but if we understand that this is what we are doing we can raise our state of arousal without believing in the content of mind generated. This will make our mental reactions less disturbing and they will gradually subside. We need to see clearly that what we are doing is stimulating the mind rather than generating energy. Furthermore, it is not the case that our emotions are stuck in our bodies we merely experience many of them there. They are stuck in our minds, our memories and perceptions.

We need to be careful to practice correctly and not induce a chronic over-breathing pattern and hence generate anxiety or restlessness in the mind. If we learn how to drive the system like this then we also need to learn how to relax the system. So the deep breathing should be followed by a return to a normal shallow breathing pattern.

Getting back to our system, we can call energetic means psychophysical means (P/P) to identify the direction of our intention toward the mind/body complex. Although this is toward what we take to be ourselves we should see this as an outgoing function of the mind in terms of our model. Or we can say it is skillful to treat inner and outer always the same. We will see the real distinction between these later in practice.

We can usefully distinguish psychophysical means from cognitive (C/B) means where our intention is in gathering and using information. Again, it is not important whether this information is from within our minds, as thought or memory, or from others or books or whatever. We can take on skillful religious conventions and beliefs. Although we do not see in the way of Dhamma, yet we can skillfully learn to pretend that we do. Most importantly, we can have the faith to act as though we understand. It is crucial, however, to remember that we are out to examine our experience using the Buddha's teachings. We are not just investigating the teachings, getting intellectually side-tracked. Our method is simply, first and foremost 'what's this?' The recognition of a phenomenon, bare awareness, is pre-verbal but this does not mean that we cannot go on to consider phenomenon in some way. This can involve discursive thought but to investigate without this is superior, it goes deeper. Notice that the Buddha always suggests looking for the cause of a condition. Very often, it can be counter-productive to tackle the mind directly. Better to be indirect.

To conclude our consideration of skilful means to reiterate if we are going in a good direction these will always be clarifying, cooling, steadying, opening as well as energising. This way we gradually find a steadier base. It will always be clear seeing that will lead to lasting release from suffering.

**Finding a still point** - To find a still point, however, we need to stop acting and just watch from some vantage point. Our intentions are now not in the world but towards the mind. We have done our best with the suffering of the world already. We are now looking for the source of suffering within, realizing that when we are at peace with ourselves we are at peace with the remaining problems. The movement of mind that takes us here can be as simple as taking responsibility, being on our own case, we are aware of being aware in some way, or as highly developed as deep meditative states. What all these states of mind have is a source of stillness within, an anchor. Until now, the mind has been just movement. We are tossed around in the sea of our experience. We can move skillfully with it in our actions, we can learn cause and effect which in this realm is all that there is. When we have some stillness we gain a perspective on movement, we see it in relation to this stillness. Therefore, we have a boat in the sea or we dive deep out of the waves, or we float aloft depending on our individual tendency. We have our own angle or vantage point.

We also see that there are both movements of the mind and movements within the mind. There can be pure movement of the mind without movement within the mind. Delusion (kilesa) always manifests as movement within the mind (experienced as a kind of heat) as well as movement of it. The practices of purifying the mind are like clearing a cool channel by coming from different directions. We actively move in all directions, replacing the movement of reaction with response. It is as though the hindrances are showing us where we are lacking attention. We may need to address the hindrance before we can move on. The practice is overcoming reactions with responses, when a response is necessary. Skilful ways to approach the hindrances vary according to the situation. Ajahn Chah gives wonderful analogies for these, usually to do with relationships to teachers, children, and parents – usually very soft and patient.

If the mind is engaged in some activity, including the practice of concentration, the hindrance can be noted on the periphery of our attention and ‘kept an eye on’ while we proceed. If we confront it straight away, we find it may fight us. So we take our minds in another direction. If calm and mindfulness is established, we have a still point we can greet it, knowing that it cannot cause us to react. When we have a still space we can invite it in, giving it nowhere to stay. We do not go looking (down) for the hindrances; we look instead for useful qualities (look to raise the mind up).

**Watching specific movements** - These are up, down, in and out. First of all, note that this is why we can see the breath as a universal tool, it moves in all these directions. Following it with a pure mind can both put us in touch with what is associated with these different movements of mind and begin to clean the channel out.

In the vertical dimension - In the absence of karma there is just knowing, pure perception, pure motivation. This originates at the heart, in the middle. This is pulled by new karma and pushed by old as it grasps at thought and feeling respectively. In terms of movement, perception has our motive energy within it that spreads out from the area of the heart. This creates a downward judgment of feeling that connects to sensation, match or no match. Similarly, the judgment of right /wrong rises up to pick up thoughts.

In the horizontal dimension - Craving discriminates out in the world and is the deadly ‘seamstress’ that stitches consciousness to subject and object, so to a death bound body and its senses. Wisdom discriminates inside (this is further in than we have been before) and can then after be extended out. Considering the UPWARD reactions of mind or passion: we can further still the passions directly following and pacifying their movements to purify that which “comes up”, through samatha practices. We need to be very careful not to blame these on the body.

If feeling uproots us, we can see that we have somewhere lost our still refuge. We see that we have grasped at something in the world that has then moved us. We have to investigate what this is and let go. If we are attached to whatever it is, we will not be able to let go unless we can see the danger of the attachment. At the other extreme, we can lose touch with what is happening and space out. In terms of “what is going DOWN,” we purify our thought to purify that which ‘goes **down**’ or tends to try to pins things down. When we do not do this consciously with the heart and mind find ourselves trying to do it almost physically. Thought can serve us better by gently putting things down in their place. Our thinking, for example, no longer feels suppressive, oppressive or repressive for this reason, also because we are not fighting feeling with it. We can rather teach feeling perhaps, which is our old karma, updating ourselves.

In terms of what comes IN, this is the results of our mental action going OUT. Before we train, we cannot see this; we have no observer of the mind. We may think we do, or rather we try to construct one with our thoughts and perceptions. **When we see truly we realize that our active states of mind have only one direction, out. When we can see this, we gain a new, second perspective. This is the principal fruit of gaining both stillness and a degree of being centered.** We see action and result together, and can therefore truly learn from both, truly see cause and effect. Our mind is unified. This is the beginning of virtue and of wisdom proper.

**The still space** - If the mind finds a still space this is superior to the still point. This occurs when the mind withdraws or has withdrawn. The clear space of the mind remains and is not affected by the objects within it. If we experience this, we realize that all movements of mind disturb the picture of our contemplation. Without them it is like looking into a clear pool, we can see clearly. This requires, at least momentarily, an absence of thought or focal feeling. There are different inner realms where the mind no longer experiences sensory input. Once we are completely within the mind we have left behind the world of physical action and outward thought and behaviour. To the extent that we have this still refuge, we can go on to purify the mind directly without the possibility of movement occurring within this still field. Therefore, we are completely free of any source of confusion or side effects - our mind is unhindered. If there is wisdom, we can extend this outward as wise seeing and have a still space within conditions. (*Bliss!*)

**The stillness that moved, how amazing!** Letting go of sense objects in their presence is wisdom. It comes out of samādhi, which is using an object to help the mind let go of sense objects. Like samādhi, the experience of wisdom is completely new, different to anything before. It is like the stillness of samādhi extends all of a sudden. Wisdom is itself not thought; it is a cool brightness of mind, although it may arise because of thinking. The sign that wisdom is present is also a lack of hindrances. Once wisdom is present there is no need to turn the senses away (only to rest). Our mind has already turned away from, let go of the senses. There is no movement of mind, no suffering, while we can sustain this open-ness. The space of mind that encompasses the mental body is also a space in which suffering does not, cannot arise. Putting this the other way around we see that attachment to the body is the source of all other grasping and hence of all our suffering. Suffering arises again as we see the open mind grasp at something and close down. Then we have to examine again with wisdom to let go.

## **The physical body and realisation**

Let us consider again the relation between wisdom and the body. Both are only receptive. To go into this a little further: In terms of karma, the desire-body is a source of memory. Memory is not karma. Karma is linked to intention. Therefore, if when a memory arises the intention of that moment arises with it, this is karma. If the intention does not arise or another, different, intention is present, this is not the arising of resultant karma or 'vipāka'. So it takes more than just memory, body and mind (or 'name and form' together), for karma to bear fruit. This is another way of describing how the wheel of karma continues to turn through the arising of consciousness based on name and form and seeing the essential role of intention in this process.

When there is no craving and no intention, there is no accumulated karma, past or present. There is transcendence. In addition, again, not to blame the body - the kilesas then are not in the body, they are in the mind. Kilesas merely use the body - so conscious control of the body takes this use away from the kilesas. The top down processes of bodily composure and posture sense naturally override the bottom up process of feeling and aids us in putting feeling in its place.

Mindfulness of body also simultaneously improves the ability to restrain the senses without the mind going dull but instead becoming brighter, more spacious. More subtle than this, in terms of the body, **through our material intention**, we misperceive material form as feeling and feeling as material form. In this way, we are in a sense blind to material form and not just in terms of the body. This misperception binds consciousness to mind and body, to the death bound, or in this context, what is better termed as name and form. This is how deep this connection goes and the potential in breaking it. When we see that body and feeling are not the same the consciousness dependent on them coming together ceases - the mind is liberated from both.

This occurs in two ways:

Firstly, we examine feeling and see it as different from the body. In order to do this we have to determine to be non-reactive to feeling as best we can so that actions of mind do not interfere. If we understand this, this is the point to take note of, we can also see how we are most lost, how deeply we



are lost, when we are just ‘doing feelings’ so to speak with our minds – when our minds are not calm. We can lose sight of what we are doing and of ourselves. In the context of what we were saying earlier, we have lost sense of both actor and result. This is not the path. The pleasure of renunciation comes always from very clearly seeing what one is letting go.

Secondly, liberation can occur when conditions of mind are abandoned for the physical body in our contemplation. In this context, the still field gives us a completely new way of contemplating the body. I will come back to this in the next section.

### **Samādhi and Wisdom coming together**

Samādhi and wisdom are both manifestations of emptiness, of the still space. In terms of wisdom, samādhi in itself gives signs or ‘nimittas’ of calm that also reveal the way the mind works. Light nimittas that are in and up mark the cessation of kilesa, which moves outwards and downwards. This Right or ‘Samma’ samādhi comes out of both virtue and relinquishment. It represents samādhi and Wisdom coming together. Or we could say that sammā samādhi and wisdom are the same thing, passive and active respectively.

What’s it all like? The path of samādhi is like going to heaven. When the meditator emerges from samādhi it is still like being in heaven, although one is on earth - until one grasps at something, intention arises. Wisdom can then be used to burn this bridge back to the world. The path of wisdom alone is one of dying before you die. Heaven is brought down to Earth. With wisdom there is never any need to reject anything, we naturally do not pick things up. When we have wisdom, we see things in a way that the hindrances do not arise. When grasping arises, it is clearly seen as such and can be investigated clearly. In terms of such investigation - first with wisdom, the knowing of skilful/unskilful can replace that of pleasant /unpleasant.

When investigation rather than calm is at this edge we can term this vipassanā samādhi, this is because the samādhi is arising out of the act of cutting rather than being at the cutting edge itself. To come back to the investigation of the body as a vehicle for realization; either the meditator has a still space established with samādhi and is able to examine the body within this space or as the mind examines the body, it gradually becomes enveloped in still space. The space fills it up and overflows it.

The second of these is the vipassanā path of wisdom developing samādhi; the first is the path of samādhi developing wisdom. The advantage of the first is that the mind is guaranteed free from hindrance so tends to progress smoothly; the disadvantage is that the space of samādhi is in itself so seductive. The advantage of the second path is that it avoids falling for samādhi or taking the brightness of it to be a self. The disadvantage is that it initially lacks the pleasure of samādhi that takes the practitioner away from the desires of the world. In both cases, what is developed out of the physical body is a mental body. The body can then show us anicca, dukkha and anattā without thought. In this way, it is as though this mental body is freed from the physical.

If all that (or any of this philosophical stuff), just confuses rather than enthralls, never mind. Do not let me get you caught up puzzling over the mind/body problem. Just think that if the body is healthy, get it to meditate!

## Chapter 4: The Still Mind

*The more we hoard for ourselves the less we have for God, the less we cling to anything else the more we shall possess God and all creation besides.*

Meister Eckhart

It is important to understand what cultivation of mind is **in its purest form**. It comes about through relinquishment. Renunciation turns away from the world of sense desire, the world of entanglement through greed, hatred and delusion. When desire is abandoned through practice the mind returns to its source within the body and is gathered there. It can then extend itself back into the world, only now disentangled from it. Desire may arise again but now within a calmer field.

This process happens repeatedly in little ways and big ways. The desires are gradually weakened, as the field of awareness becomes in itself the predominant experience. In this way we are emptying or releasing the mind from conditions, as though we are cultivating emptiness. Cultivation is also overcoming reactions and creating conditions for relinquishment in the future. What we find is that this mind contains within it natural qualities that are not conditions. These qualities, which are revealed as the mind encounters either internal or external conditions, are unchanging.

In its method cultivation is a not controlling or forcing but taming, calming, encouraging what is skilful and discouraging what is unskilful. So if there is greed, hatred or delusion in the mind then these are counteracted by perceptions that lead the mind the other way, back toward the balance point of calm that is the basis for wise action, for seeing the truth and for releasing the mind from suffering. **Seeing is the only doing needed.**

The sequence of practice is to calm, energize, gladden, investigate and release from attachment. The mind is protected by faith and care as it uses positive perceptions (when attachment is through aversion) or negative perceptions (when the attachment is through greed) to loosen or break attachment. The deliberate use of pain is unskilful but its endurance has many useful lessons for us. **We cultivate the mind by no longer desiring any of the objects within it and therefore detaching the mind from them.** Notice that we are also redefining what is inside and outside the mind in quite a radical way. We are seeing everything we experience as a mind object. We gradually assign all that we thought to be the subject to the category of object as we see its impermanence or suffering. Similarly, we attribute no ultimate knowledge to these things; instead they become the objects of our knowledge or our contemplation. This is a change, an advance of our contemplation from the first foundation of mindfulness through to the fourth.

This is important. We must protect our sense of knowing from trying to know things that it cannot. This means also that we cannot always know things in the way we want to. So we cannot know the objects of the senses, only see them, feel them, think **about them**. We know them only as mind objects. This occurs when the mind is centred and does not enter the senses. In the seen there is only the seen, for example. We can know that there is no contact because there is no feeling in the sense of no liking or disliking. In addition, the spaciousness of the mind remains. It is bright in itself. It is cool and peaceful. This is a different kind of brightness from that of a mind brightened by an object, by getting what it wants or sensing power, for example.

The mind first sees the mind directly in relation to objects through the conscience. Later, the mind also knows itself indirectly, as we see the results of our attention. Then, it reveals itself to itself by the appearance of signs or nimittas which exist only in the mind. The luminosity of the mind is a sign that the mind has found a footing in a subtle base, outside the senses. These are still subtle perceptions in the world, perceptions of space.

Upacāra concentration is another term for this luminosity. Wisdom and good intention are what

maintain it. It may be sufficient, or it may be experienced within samādhi. If it appears outside it this has made the experience of absorption inessential to that practitioner (although it is still useful to rest and strengthen the mind). Samādhi is where the luminosity in itself becomes stronger than the objects within it. What still remains to be done is to cool these energies. When it is cool and still it goes 'further inside' to find true emptiness beyond the world. Complete transcendence. We realize that **the mind is changed not by anything outside but by attachment to its own objects. It seems that things are being 'born into' the mind when it is the mind that is being 'born into' things.** It is important to note that this process occurs in calm and stillness, the mind emerging as space around the objects or on withdrawal emerging on its own. There is no conscious movement of the mind towards or away from anything through desire. Interest, concentration, contemplation and wisdom do the work, not desire.

## **Buddhist Phenomenology**

Let us return to our original phenomenological model to provide a frame of reference to our contemplation – this time using more Buddhist terms. In Buddhist terminology, our horizontal dimension represents the sense spheres. These are external, internal and the attachments in between. The vertical dimension is the aggregates or “khandhas” – the part of experience we tend to see as representing self. The different pathways of P/P and C/B develop into the practices of samatha and vipassanā respectively. Note that the word vipassanā is used as a practice of its own as well as that which can develop out of samatha.

Contemplating particular saṅkhāra as objects can be done using phenomenological analysis. Up to this point we have done this by mapping personal observations onto a shared framework and making phenomenological statements in terms of process, context, and belief. In this section, we will put forward a different method that is altogether internal. We will be looking to become more independent in our understanding, developing a paradigm for the direct observation of the mind in a new way. This will further serve to draw the information or insight we have had already deeper into the heart.

Phenomenologically, the context for a practitioner's experience is the physical body (as we have discussed). We bear it in mind. The process occurring is the mind and the context the things that affect the mind, mind objects. Meaning is extracted from mind objects. In Buddhism, this is ultimately the three characteristics and four noble truths that emerge from practice experience, rather than being imposed on it. The insight of impermanence emerges from looking for permanence, for example.

This first arises when the mind is centred on the physical body, through restraint. This whole experience changes. We realize we have been ahead of ourselves all along. Notice this is different from intentionally seeking the physical body out as an object of attention. This will tend to point the passions at it, oh dear. One way of seeing the difference clearly is a particular technique of walking meditation. Normally we would walk trying to keep our minds on the

physical body. Instead we can concentrate on letting the world go by. Rather as the world was moving and we were standing still, as though we were going the wrong way along a moving walkway. So we do not grasp at the world. If you do this you will find that the mind will naturally be centred on the physical body. If we use a mantra we can prevent our minds slipping out of the present. As we watch ourselves, however we can begin to see when our minds have rushed on ahead.

When the mind is so centred, the three processes of the mind become like instruments before the mind, rather than the mind being lost in them, pushed around by them.

In addition, the experience of the physical body begins to change. It gradually enters the mind so to speak until it becomes predominantly a perception rather than a feeling (feeling remains as a separate sense). A clear perception of the physical body, as it is, is henceforth a radical new perspective or context for the mind. Typically craving will initially fight this like crazy. However, this in turn reveals

to the heart the coarse, deluded nature of craving. Therefore, the heart begins gradually to turn away from it. It can find a steadiness initially in composing bodily action. Although many functions of the physical body are not controllable by the mind its movements are. This restrains the mind and gradually leads it inward. The mind that truly enters the physical body discovers emptiness. This experience is completely transforming. It is like coming home. This experience is the most genuine, powerful drive toward the renunciation of our attachments to the world. These hold us away from home.

Emptiness does not in turn hold us away from the world. It can be extended to encompass it. This is also when we see that this emptiness contains within it all the wholesome factors of mind, naturally. Therefore, we realize that all our desires are based on a deluded perception of the body. We also see that all the constructed states we knew before, although useful, cannot compare to this. In terms of the other khandhas of thinking, feeling and the senses this opens up the possibility of reversing the direction of the mind. Perception becomes receptive and able to change. Perception remains the leader, the director of operations, but is no longer simply running after feeling. When the direction of the mind is solely inward, the mind converges on perception or 'knowing', then insight occurs.

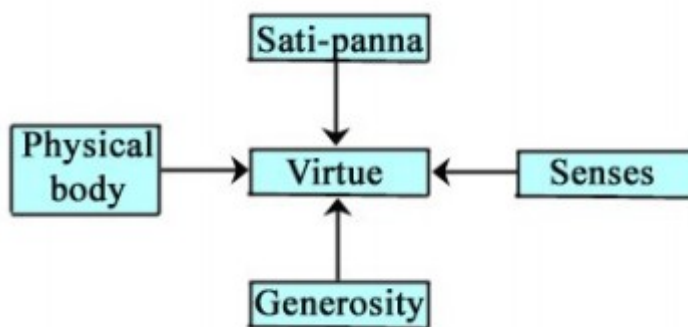


Fig. E

When virtue or wisdom holds sway over the heart the mind is centred on the body and the mind is our way of relating to the world. We are no longer pulled along. We are listening *with* feelings not *to* them. We have no purpose within the instruments so to speak, our purpose is outside them. In addition, we can reframe our earlier model in simple terms as below:

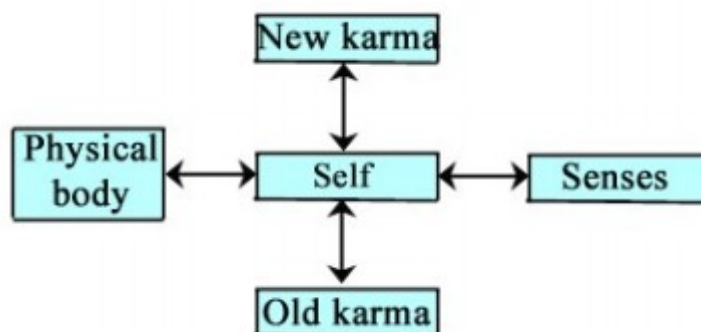


Fig. F

We can see how, when the sense of self disappears then our karma also disappears and then there is just the body and the senses.

### Inner Standpoints

Most of us have some greed, some aversion, and some delusion in different areas or at different times - therefore no one system or approach that will always work for us. There can be no single answer or fixed standpoint. Although delusion is always the root cause of suffering, so ultimately we need only see, this is not a single answer. We can only do this from a point of stillness, a clear standpoint and

sense object. We need to win this standpoint over the objects that are at issue. When we can clearly see the movements of the mind we do not have to doubt what we see, we can test, act in the kind of ways I will suggest to see if we have seen correctly. We are not presenting theories of the mind but suggesting how it may be gathered together to show itself.

Throughout there is no external standpoint recognized. This is a unified, not a dualistic view. We find our standpoint within. We define it there and then our movements of the mind are seen in relation to it. We can describe and facilitate this process using a map to both track the movements and locate the standpoint. We are not splitting the mind into subject and object but observing the action of the mind, in a particular domain (process) from a given standpoint (context) e.g. thought from feeling or the senses from feeling. Note that our object and standpoint can be the different or the same location on the map. Therefore, our phenomenological point is the crossing of actor and observer dimensions to join them if they are separate.

The actions of mind are perception, thought and feeling is the result. It all comes together at the feeling point that feeds back into perception. The standpoints are all tracks or movements, positions within the same system. Our map now also has clear purposes to it. Our principle purposes are the one of active contemplation leading on to the development of bare awareness. A phenomenon arises at a given point in the map and it is drawn into the middle. We look to draw them all together into the centre and anchor them to the body.

Despite our overall purpose, this is an open system and as such has many advantages. From the beginning with this system we do not need to identify with a standpoint in order to have a view, we just have one from wherever we are. We can join in with someone else's standpoint, we can meet them in it.

Both standpoint and object are on the same map, they can therefore swap positions. Dialogue, both internal and external is thus also always a possibility. We are not taking any fixed view. Pain and suffering is not first person or third person but an invitation to a dialogue. We can take either side in the dialogue.

There are no inherent rights or wrongs any more formed by our standpoint. If we see the process for what it is, in perspective, we will see if it is skilful or unskilful, even better we can see something skilful in it, whatever it is. Either way a path will be clear – e.g. is it useful to think about these feelings in this way? or is it just confusing? If feelings and thoughts start to dialogue (do they ever stop!) have we lost sight of the object of it all, what is it all about? Are we blind to the perception that is linking the two together.

Do we still have the perspective of bare awareness, do we see our bodies or feelings for what they are in and of themselves or are we lost in their meaning or their desires? Often we need to add perspective before we can see. There is a natural perspective, a natural stillness given to us of the body, our first perspective. There is also a perspective from within if you like, an empty standpoint formed by bare awareness and always present there within things, in their stillness. These two can naturally fall in together as we will see.

We are laying out the position of possible standpoints of the body, thought, feeling, or the senses the crossroads standpoint of perception. Note we do not often see the senses as a possible standpoint but they are a very strong one. The sense bases are a kind of intermediate step in and out. They are sources of karma, of feeling so they effect the mind through this route and sources of thought and perception. We can become aware of the sense bases just as they are, like seeing them as a layer of the glass through which we are looking, they have a brightness to them. All standpoints, apart from that of the body, involve a movement of mind in themselves or a tendency, inclination of mind. The perception standpoint can be anchored, stilled by the body standpoint.

Seeing the standpoint is crucial. We can have only one at a time in the grasping mind and watch our

attention jump from one to another. We always try to bring the different standpoints together by linking them with cause and effect rather than letting them have a life of their own. We see feelings as the result of specific mental actions, perceptions and their related intentions. If we are not relying on an external standpoint for perspective we also have flexibility of mind to move from one standpoint to another. We are not defining a standpoint in order to stand on it. We have to be careful that a standpoint does not become still or fixed, we have to keep it moving - to get different angles on things and form a full picture. When we have a full picture, we no longer need a standpoint. Until then, perspective relies on a still or calming object or the unification of standpoint with the object. In meditation, the second can come out of the first.

When we cannot open our awareness to the whole field, our perspective is the still point behind and within. If we are not always moving with things we recognize this point, to the extent that we are disciplined or calm we realize it. To the extent that we have pārami that are stable, unconditional mind states, these act to support the stillness of the mind. When it is so stabilized, we see that all the contents are changing and moving, to the extent that it is still we naturally see this. It is the natural perspective of recognizing change or movement not a separate position. This much is an anchor within phenomenon not outside of it. The openness and flexibility of such a system gives us many possibilities from the beginning and every possibility in its fulfilment.

Ultimately, if we are not grasping through desire our mind has no source of movement within or without. It is naturally both a still and open field. This is the only way to find a still, open field, the unshakeable mind. The Buddha is the only natural still field. The still mind that no longer has to be held that way. The open mind that has no grasping left in it. The mind that naturally drops into a transcendent state.

Remember this model or map does not exist over time or independent of the territory. It is a snapshot. By mapping we are not fixing things in place over time, this is not stillness. Let us not attach to or mistake the map for the territory. The map is never an end in itself. It is merely a tool to use **moment by moment**. For example, the mind goes out, away from our meditation object as our standpoint so we try to find it and bring it back. Perhaps we have to take it away from something to which it has attached.

When we are in the receptive place in the middle, at the cool, still heart, our receptivity is empty. Instead of the dreaded committee, we have merely channels of information. Neither mind movement up or down needs to happen. Now bare awareness is a possibility. Until now there has been a degree of conceptualization to our attention, we have used this to examine experience, cause and effect. At this point calm observation takes over, we have a still field. If the mind has no intention then objects are naturally seen in a different way. The parts of things become apparent. When the mind is very peaceful, for example, we can look at an electric fan, say – we know what it is but because we have no desire we do not see it only as an object that cools us, do I want it on or off? Instead, we see it is plastic and metal parts, whether it is clean or dirty, perhaps. Ultimately, we view the body in the same way. When we desire nothing from it, then we see hair, nails, teeth, skin and the rest, naturally. **Therefore, when the mind is still, with bare awareness the standpoint and the object are the same.** With bare awareness, we see the body from the standpoint of the body, we can also see the body from within. Feelings we see from the standpoint of feeling, feelings as a kind of feeling. Everything makes sense in and of itself in this way. Up until this point, we are always in a position of having to define action and our observation standpoint to make sense of something. We view feelings from thought or the senses from feelings or thoughts from the senses. Until we have a still field then everything goes is routed through perception. Thankfully, in one way, this can be a great mediator, if it is a clear channel. It is not when there is movement or ‘heat’, passion within it but we can see this, we know when to trust it and when not to. We know the still, cool mind from the agitated, heated mind.

It is when we only have the perspective of bare awareness that we will not only see a feeling as a feeling but also as impermanent, stressful and not-self. The mind will naturally be detached. The body (perception 1. in our scheme) naturally shows these characteristics because naturally the standpoint

and object are the same. Bringing perceptions of the body from other standpoints together with this one will also unite and naturally still the other functions of the mind.

When we have a still field then thought, intention and perception all come together, they are unified. The action is clear with a clear result. The result can be seen at the heart even before the action takes place, the intention passes by the heart. We can supervise the heart in this way, stopping any unskillful karma from entering in to influence the mind. In meditation we can see how the latter can overwhelm us coming in through our area of attention if we do not guard it. I had an experience one time of seeing what looked like black smoke in my mind's eye enter the mind up my nose into the eyes. For a moment, before I literally spat it out, I felt hatred for the monk I was looking at while all the time knowing that I was being influenced against my heart's higher inclination. After such an experience we can relate all our previous perceptions of the mind to this by saying, as the Buddha instructed, "The agitation of the mind is all part of the darkness". This is the heart level.

### **The heart level**

The experience at the level of the heart is a very radical one. We discover here that, in the words of Ajahn Mun, the source of suffering is the love that puts a squeeze on the heart, from above and below, making it care for the khandhas. Freedom from suffering is to get beyond such caring.

This can seem dangerous, to get beyond caring, callous even as an idea. In fact, it is callous as an idea which is why the mind protects us from it as an idea, it will only reveal it on the heart level. As an experience, it is liberating to go beyond caring if we stay mindful. We can love all the more because we are not worried for ourselves. Thus the heart is opened by relinquishment when it comes naturally, if it is forced it is not right, it is impatient. When we have such patience, we relinquish, not through austerity, but through the Middle Way that has the compassion, where it can, to appease the basic needs of the body and mind.

This physical form in a sense demands this compassion of us, that we blend our wisdom with it. Therefore, unpleasant though it may be compared with a nice ethereal body (so I am told), it is a good school. If we are 'carried away with ourselves', the body will let us know about it.

## Chapter 5:

### PRACTISING WITH THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS – SATIPAṬṬHĀNA

We have already discussed knowing through calm and contemplation and suggested how we may see with bare awareness. **We will next discuss how to know and see at the same time.**

We can see the phenomena of the mind as information concerning the world about us or we can see them as phenomena in and of themselves. Thus far, we have been looking at our experience in the former sense. When we hold wrong views, we do not see clearly what our faculties represent. Our earliest priority is to try to correct this. Otherwise, our misunderstandings can cause harm to ourselves or others. When we have a clearer notion, we can move on to look at things in the second way. We naturally see in this second way when we abandon desire for the things of the world. We can also do this at times of inactivity or passivity, in purely contemplative moments, when we are not looking to these faculties to guide our intentions.

The pure practice of satipaṭṭhāna is just this second contemplation. In practice, unless we have cleared the mind through samādhi, we begin with contemplation that is moving towards this kind of detachment or bare attention rather than representing it. We use skilful methods of attention and reflection to keep the mind calm, clear and balanced in the face of internal phenomena. There is some overlap in this sense with what we have already looked at but as we change our purpose, the view changes in a gradual way. We gradually withdraw according to the degree to which we have let go of desire and continue to let go of it throughout the process of contemplation. We are describing the path by which wisdom may take us toward samādhi in other words. This is complemented by the application of concentration. Samādhi can likewise become a firmer platform for contemplation and give the mind a wider perspective and the power and stillness to penetrate phenomenon. Samādhi may also intervene spontaneously in this process and radically change the way we see things.

Whatever route our individual effort takes us in, we begin to see mental and physical phenomena as empty in and of themselves – the body is just a body, a feeling is just a feeling, a thought is just a thought – impermanent, un-fulfilling and not master-able in themselves. Therefore, we see that the stuff that we have gleaned from the world, our attachments to it, are not something we can hold on to or control. Furthermore, we see that in themselves they have become meaningless to us; that they only had meaning as information related to the outside world. As they lose their meaning, they lose their power over the mind (and may disappear altogether). This is the crux of the whole thing; this is detachment occurring.

Conversely, if we ascribe meaning to these phenomena in and of themselves, we have missed the point. We are just grasping back at the world with our grief or covetousness, further internalizing the world in fact. Actually, as long as we know that is what we are doing it is alright - we maybe need to contemplate our karma. If we have not let go of our desire, we may need to address it. So, this is also not to say that should something arise that has meaning at that moment that we cannot break our contemplation. Like the bell that ends our meditation, for example, or the meal bell that will cut through just about anything. Perhaps a better analogy is that used by Ajahn Chah when asked the classic question whether to continue with the bare awareness offered by the space of calm in meditation, or whether to investigate. He said, 'If the visitor is an old friend or adversary, stay with your object. If you



do not recognize him, investigate'. That advice can save a lot of doubt.

What is essential to understand is the difference between the active and contemplative situation. Our feelings do not continue to be meaningless as we become active. We don't walk about in a trance or something, or ignore our feelings or continue to look at them as separate from events around us. We give all power to our feelings. We realize that before our contemplation our faculties were using us, or perhaps that our desires or defilements were using them. They had power over our minds. We can take that power back and use it for liberation.

Our map of experience already includes the four foundations of mindfulness and the realm of the senses. Having discussed how these may interact in experience and how they relate to our understanding of the world, we will now look to deepen our contemplation of each of these in turn. We are seeking now to separate these four foundations from each other.

## **1. Physical Body**

We have already talked about body contemplation. Here we will discuss the use of Samadhi. This stabilises knowing, so it enables us to know and see at the same time. The knowing faculty so steadied can so encompass or be directed at the body. The mental body can become a continuous perception in the mind or one that is always accessible and can be investigated in any way desired.

We may develop samādhi prior to contemplation or as a fruit of it. If samādhi has not been developed then contemplation may interfere with the calm of the mind. In this case particularly we need to prepare ourselves.

Before we begin to revisit the realities of the body, to be properly motivated and prepared, we must get religious and establish some kind of possibility in our mind that we can get beyond the body, and some reason for wanting to do so. Otherwise there would be no reason not to live as an animal, to live life only to satisfy the appetites of the body, would there? I cannot see one. There is a stick and a carrot, to take the old donkey training analogy. The stick is the suffering inherent in the life of the body, its vulnerability and the impermanence of the pleasure it can experience. The carrot is the possibility of life without a physical form. Remember the bones of those arahants, or reflect on the beauty of a mind released from the body in samādhi.

We often begin our practice with the physical body because in this way we avoid delusion by building our mindfulness in the proper context of the realities of physical life and of the reliance of states of mind on its physical substrata. We can reflect in whatever way, depending on whether we need cheering up or calming down. Usually it is obvious which emphasis to go for in which circumstance but sometimes not. Sometimes if we feel averse to the body but the mind is strong, it can cheer us up to reflect that the body will not last forever, or to consider the fruits of a lack of concern for the body in our lives. This does not mean there needs to be a lack of *care* for the body, which is going too far.

## **Six methods of deepening body awareness**

### **i) The elements**

When the physical body begins to emerge in our attention from the desire body of feeling, it is as a set of sensations related to the elements. Physical body position sense and activity are

distinct from the senses of pain or pleasure.

The Lord Buddha gave the analogy for mindfulness of the physical body as a number of tributaries coming together to form a river that flows to the sea. We can interpret this as meaning that all the different practices listed come together at some point to form a full picture of the physical body in the mind of the practitioner, a mind made physical body. This flows to the sea as it becomes united to its surroundings. For example, the feeling of earth, the solidity of the physical body with dispassion becomes the same as the feeling of the ground. The water element can be thought of as the coolness of dispassion. Also, the boundaries of self and other are lost.

With insight this can become dispassion not only for the physical body but also for the conditions of the mind that rely on it, the khandhas. So this naturally becomes most acute for the coarsest elements of the mind. We can also see that qualities such as humility, compassion and patience are all natural results of seeing the physical body for what it really is.

## **ii) Concentration**

The placing of a point within the physical body shows the meditator the influence of intention at a given point. There is no directing of attention without intention hence initially there is not any pure or bare awareness of phenomena, so the direct intentional examination of the physical body will involve to some degree or another projection or rather interjections of desire. Thus we are in danger of a sort of karmic vortex.

To avoid this I would propose that such a bare awareness is achieved firstly by noting that some movement within the mind always characterizes desire so that a calm, still mind is a prerequisite for direct investigation. This is a relative thing, not an absolute thing. We can begin by withdrawing intention from both internal and external concerns and place it between the two, traditionally at a point just in front of the mouth, using the breath to cool and contain the field of intention. Until there is a sense of a light innocence centred at this point that both brightens the eyes and softens their focus. This is where our sīla and samādhi can come together.

The physical body can then appear first behind this guarding point as a background field of bare attention in which elements can manifest without other perception or feeling. Thus we can expand from a still point to a still field of attention in which we allow the elements to flow, returning to the point to settle the mind again if attachment causes movement within the mind. This dynamic is also the inner expansion of the mind as it follows the breath inward, the appropriate attitude being a yielding of outward intention without dropping the guard.

The mind can flow with the breath like still, flowing water. Any movement within it that comes through defilement (and obstructs our clear view) will be swept along and therefore calmed. Such movement also occurs within, and can be gathered around, the sense of craving for the in breath. If the meditator just relaxes at the end of the out breath and rests for a moment on the sense of the physical body wanting to breathe, craving gathers there as a sense of 'air hunger' and can be calmed both calming the mind and making the breath more shallow and peaceful.

The elemental sense of the physical body can naturally develop into a mental picture of the internal bodily structure that can be clarified or augmented by the use of mental imaging. If we gain a sufficiently clear image the mind will naturally let go of the body. This is why the Lord Buddha saw mindfulness of the physical body as the source of all wisdom because through it we can divide the conditioned and the unconditioned. Letting go of the physical body lets go of everything (and the mind enters the emptiness

within the body). As other phenomena re-arise, such as thought and feeling, this drags us back into existence, so to speak, revealing the nature of the dependence of mind and physical body (nāma and rūpa).

In contrast we see the independence of a consciousness cooled from the passions through examination of the physical body. When the mind is open and calm there is no longer a mind in a physical body but a physical body in a larger, open mind. It is as if a barrier drops away and the physical body is seen and there is just emptiness of mind seeing it. This is what I would understand the Lord Buddha to mean by the body in the body.

In other words, clinging to the body produces energy currents in the mind. When there is no clinging, there are no such currents. Otherwise physical body contemplation will have some kind of interference from our attachments. Alternatively, we could say that this whole process of contemplation will reveal the attachments to be worked through. It is only when clinging is broken and the physical body is clearly seen for what it is in the mind's eye (as a sort of vision) that it is blameless and is a source of cooling dispassion. The repetition of such a practice leads the meditator to prefer this cool and expansive inner state to the knowing of outer phenomena.

When there is no outward intention, no little mind, a big, open mind can enter the physical body. Therefore, it seems like a big mind has grasped physical body and mind through intention, and been carried forward as a little mind. Therefore, the passion of intention is very literally like a boil or a dart. We also see that although the little mind obscures the big mind they are the same mind.

The space that the physical body lies in seems like source of pure, calm consciousness. With the lightest touch of awareness the elements shift toward the lighter and the mind less obstructed becomes brighter until it outshines its contents. In this way we can clear out the elements so the physical body becomes like a field of awareness. The mind expands into this space. The physical body is lit up by this consciousness and we can see inside the physical body. Thus, it is directly seen that the physical body is not self. There arises the most sublime calm state.

### **iii) memories**

Our old karma is in the mind, not in the physical body. The mind is in the physical body and extends out into the senses. Therefore, it can appear that our karma is in the physical body but it is not. We need not blame the physical body for our suffering, nor attribute to it any mind state we do not like!

If we are without awareness, all kinds of partial memories, bits of things accumulate. They are not held in the body as is so often suggested, your fear in your shoulder and so on. However, if the last time you were aware of your shoulder was when it was somehow threatened or damaged then it will remain in a guarded state. It may suggest this state to you in some way but this is not some sort of physical body memory. The event has passed so not all of the conditions are present to reproduce the fear; we will experience only the ghost unless we ourselves recreate the rest. This will recreate the conditioning experience rather than de-condition it.

Anyway, we do not need to deal with the past so much as to come more fully into the present for healing to occur. Often only our curiosity or pride prevents us. We want to know why or how or we still insist on blaming our poor bodies; and when we withdraw from the senses for that moment, we are free from our karma. The mind goes home into the physical body empty, like white light (*bliss!!*).

### **iv) Balancing perception**

To counter-balance attraction we can contemplate simply, what am I attracted to? We can cool the fire with the pimple or the crooked tooth.

To counter-balance aversion ask, What am I averse to?

The cave of wonders that cools the passions? Cooling centring steadying grounding pacifying diffusing collecting, the physical body can make the mind like any of the elements.

#### **vi) Dispassion**

The physical body teaches the mind equanimity and humility. Ultimately the formation of a complete physical body image in the mind can, at least for a short time, transcend the sensations of the elements and the resultant suffering. The physical body feels very light. This basis of dispassion will allow the meditator a freer reign without regress and its cool presence serve as a reward. Whether or not this can be maintained, the meditator now knows when his mind is clear and when it is deluded.

#### **Difficulties**

The difficulty with this work is maintaining concentration and interest within both an impersonal and neutral perception. The impersonal quality is achieved through wise reflection and carried forward by faith. The perceptual neutrality is achieved by calming the mind and through a skilful balancing of attention. Thus, it begins by balancing different perceptions of the physical body to avoid either attraction or aversion and then as the calm becomes more stable it progresses toward a calm appreciation of the more unpleasant aspects of bodily life. This gives the mind the incentive to let go with wisdom not through aversion or negativity.

This process goes so directly against the craving of the mind that it must be accepted that there will be a lot of resistance, temptation will arise as a counter-force and a meditator has to work through their karma as part of this process. Moral support and conditions of minimal temptation and distraction will help. A lot of investigation and detailed observation are also necessary to maintain interest. In a way generating this kind of enquiry is what this book is all about!

## **2. Feeling**

Feeling is usually associated with the physical body. It is when we see that it can be sent beyond the bounds of the physical body that we can see the nature of our experience at this point more clearly as a mental rather than a physical one. The association of feeling with the physical body is broken down when there is sufficient awareness of the physical body.

It is important to understand that feeling belongs to the mind, to the desire body, not the physical body. This applies even to the most powerful physical feeling. Hence, for example, soldiers who lost limbs in battle have frequently been reported to experience no pain. Their overriding perception was that they had survived and could fight no further; different dominant perception, so different feeling. We will return to this when we consider perception.

Feeling is always resultant karma. Take happiness, for example. In our understanding, the feeling is not happiness as the word is usually used. The feeling is a result of happiness past or present. This is a bit subtle but an important linguistic catch.

In the present, feeling is further conditioned by thought, behaviour or perceptual action. The latter is invisible to us unless the mind is trained to see its subtle movement. Feelings are produced by thought or perception past or present (not the other way round as we often see it) and they are the source of future thought. They mix and merge in perception.

It is as though “the heart has reasons which reason cannot at all perceive” (Pascal).

If we become obsessed by feeling we can miss seeing its causes and see only the result. Then the end will always justify the means. Whenever we lose our mindfulness like this we enter completely into the dark. We do not really know what we think or feel or why. We are back to being blind machines and slaves to our desires. Quite literally all we can see is what we want. Perhaps worse, if we think we can sort out our feelings just in themselves we are capable of doing just about anything to clear up the mess afterwards. Hence Dhamma is always dependent on morality as its basis.

### **i) Pleasant and unpleasant**

It is a common trap to want to cultivate only the pleasant feelings and not the unpleasant. The happiness of greed, hatred or delusion (in the present moment this can be considerable, eh?) may lead to dire consequences of loss, reprisal or disorientation. Conversely, not all skilful states or actions of mind are initially pleasant. To the Dhamma practitioner the important distinction to make with feeling is whether it is arising from skilful action or not. In the longer term this is what will determine our happiness or unhappiness. The fruits of skilful cultivation will be the happiness of goodness and peace of mind or pleasant mental feeling which, as the mind becomes strong, becomes more important than sense pleasures and leads to pleasant physical feeling or well-being not of the senses.

Pleasant or unpleasant feelings are not just relative judgements to each other, they are relative experiences. You cannot have one without the other. Therefore, the pursuit of pleasant feeling has no lasting satisfaction to it. It is also a constrictor of the mind. Neutral feeling is contrastingly wide and expansive. Significantly, it is also mildly pleasant to a mind with wisdom, a mind that sees the drawback of extremes. We must take care, however, not to perceive it as permanent - it can feel that way and delude us.

It's a fine line between feeling and craving but a crucial one. As we have stated, feeling is pleasant or unpleasant in itself but actually always leads in to liking or disliking at least in a subtle way, as preferences. Craving is the liking or disliking that leads into desire, it is appetitive. It is the desire of wanting something or the desire to be something or not be something.

### **ii) Mental and physical**

Feeling is of two kinds, mental and physical. Mental feelings become stuck when we associate them with, and therefore bind them to, the physical body. When the perceived connection is broken, they can go their own way.

The interaction of the mind with the physical body leading to the re-arising of feeling can help us to both understand and train the mind. When we take the mind (our intention) back to the physical body then we see clearly how the desirous or "little" mind generates feeling. We can see then how our thoughts and intentions affect our feelings in a direct way. Alternatively, we can think and consciously generate feeling. In this way we can clearly see feelings arising as a result of thought. We see them clearly as the vipāka karma they represent.

It is very important to realize that although these feelings are sensed in the physical body initially, they are separate from it and need to be contemplated in their place as the second foundation of mindfulness once the first is firmly established, to be clearly seen as separate. This means experientially that our mental feelings will always be in a cooler space. If we do not prepare the mind for this with concentration practice we will not be able to hold the mind in place to let things clarify. We will furthermore tend to be reactive towards our feelings or believe in them unwisely. If we hold our awareness in place and become more aware of the physical body, we can see this as separate from this feeling. We can still our mind on the physical body.

This can also give an elemental sense for feelings as a kind of heat in contrast to the cool body. At this point, we can if we wish train the mind to be like the elements. Firm like the earth or cool like water for example. This does not so much change the content of the mind as the energy of it.

Ultimately when there is no focused outward intention, there is no little mind. There is no heat in the mind, it is cool and bright. The physical body is lit up by this consciousness and we can see inside the physical body. Thus, it is directly seen that the physical body is not self and there arises the most sublime calm state.

### **iii) Feeling in Dhamma practice**

If the above is using the mind or attention to train feeling, we can also use feeling to train the mind - because movements of the mind are felt. Through wrong view the mind attaches to feeling, so all our awareness has a feeling element to it. This feeling element entangles us when it generates craving. If we see feeling as an intensification of mental touch, feelings are all kilesas.

The feeling generated by knowing itself is no different. From both within a person and between individuals the wisdom element can also overcome the feeling of knowing, disbanding it or returning it to its origin at the heart. So even the feeling of knowing (this is vipassanā kilesa) has to be abandoned. This feeling can be abandoned by wisdom, by the insight that all feeling is suffering compared to the experience of its cessation (not its mere absence). To wisdom, feeling represents a value judgement. Feelings are like pointers. If we try to resist the feeling or contemplate it instead of the object it is judging, we just add internal judgement to external. If we investigate our values we can release ourselves. There is no such worldly feeling in mettā. Mettā is not touch; it is open, detached. Wholesome states never manifest as such feeling. In terms of the mind, if you let go of feeling you have let go of materiality. If you let go of the desire for feeling you have let go of it for good.

For someone who has not experienced the cessation of feeling in samādhi pleasant will be better than unpleasant. For someone who has experienced samādhi all feeling is suffering by comparison. If feeling ceases through contemplation this is different. The experience causes no reaction in a mind that remains lucid and detached.

### **iv) The forces of habit**

Feeling can also have an illusory impact on form. Illusion or not, when we sense it we can respond in a physical way to it. If we know what to expect we can further brace ourselves against this force of habit. External movements of the mind precede action. They change our balance or equilibrium point of stillness, wherever we may feel this to be. Tai chi and chi kung provide skilful means to calm the physical body in relation to such feeling, always aiming towards centring, cooling, expanding and relinquishing.

We need to move our minds to act but this needs to be with dispassion. What we are looking for is not to just maintain stillness but a mind that is free to move, yet is not pushed around by habit. Also, a mind that has no movement within it. The defilements express themselves as movements within the mind as well as movements of it. So what we are looking to feel is balance, equanimity and detachment.

## **3. Perception and apperception**

In the Buddha's teaching saññā or perception refers to the labelling of phenomena with words and the drawing of pictures in the mind. This is more than bare awareness or recognition, which is mindfulness or sati. There is no correct, fixed perception. What is correct is not holding to a fixed perception but finding a skilful perception. Right view is a

matter of the heart, it precedes perception.

Perception is the most powerful of the preconscious processes of the mind and the most invisible. This makes it the most beneficial or most troublesome. It is the force of recognition. It bears the strength of judgements of right and wrong, good and bad as distinct from the less pointed liking and disliking of feeling. When driven by desire it drives us to want to become the things we like, to identify ourselves with them. When driven by aversion, to dis-identify and try to get rid of things. This is different from seeking or renouncing things when we act through wisdom not through desire in the face of adversity or temptation. The conscience is the way that all this encapsulates itself. With attachment it contracts and spins the mind, adding a kind of drilling force to desire. It holds the power of consent or restraint over action. It is as if it rides on the back of intention. Its full function of apperception encompasses the qualities of awareness as well as the objects of awareness. When relatively free of attachment it is expansive and clear.

As a more conscious process, perception can dominate thought and feeling. We see things a certain way and then we feel or think things accordingly. It is often difficult to train the other way and think or feel certain things to the point that we change perception. There are examples, however where thought or feeling has more strength. With the feeling of hunger, for example, we perceive food as tempting but when we feel replete, we do not. The Buddha identifies the perceptions of things as permanent, satisfactory and self (including belonging to me or mine, under my control) as the central misperceptions underlying suffering.

Perception can also be the tamer of the mind. Most importantly, it is the element that can be freed from the senses. It then manifests in different ways as pure awareness, having a base outside the sense bases. This has a different quality depending on the degree to which relinquishment has occurred. With sufficient mindfulness it is transformed into samādhi or wisdom. Therefore, our approach is first to take ourselves as fully as possible into the realm of perception. This means calming thought and feeling in various ways. Examples are through meditation and virtue that leave the mind clear.

Virtue also takes us to the conscience that is the most tangible of all the functions of perception. The conscience takes us deep into the mind; it is the mind perceiving itself, knowing itself. This quality of knowing is the characteristic of a mind that we have centred in perception, thought and feeling are always uncertain. We can know in all sorts of ways, right and wrong or deluded and non-deluded. Not knowing can be equally a kind of knowing, [if](#) we know that we do not know.

To describe the experience of such contemplation, we are using our mind to contemplate the mind, looking for signs of brightening, a lessening of suffering as our guide to the path. It is very important to be able to conceptualise freely, to use terms loosely and see what makes sense through time rather than get too scientific and think that we are looking to get it right from the start. Take examples as experiments rather than as formulas or techniques. Keep trying to test perceptions, asking yourself, 'Is this so?' Am I getting closer to truth or further from it?' This I think we all recognize as a search for truth. The other side of it all that is seldom recognized is the formative nature of our own enquiry. For example, the mind that knows it does not know can open up; the mind that sees itself as in the head suffers from a headache. Different truths have different effects and we can choose our truth, within the bounds of virtue, to have the effect that we want it to have.

Apperception is the mind aware that all phenomena are objects within the mind and in this way more clearly aware of its own state. At this level of function all phenomena are informational in nature (whereas other functions include energetic and sensory influences). With apperception our experience is not of subject or object but of the result of the two - this is what IS. It is not an entity, it is information manifesting as elements. This consciousness is

clearly not independent of conditions but all that manifests is information concerning the physical body and the senses in which it exists in mutual dependence. Consciousness can be based in the space element, however, so it is possible to empty consciousness completely without it ceasing. This frees the mind of its attachments to the body and all mind objects other than space. This mind will naturally see the impermanence of conditions relative to its own stability. Then there will be just the pure mind or 'one who knows'.

Restraint from contact, meaning the complete withdrawal of the mind from contact with the senses leading to the cessation of sense consciousness, reveals the pure empty mind. This begins with moral restraint then sense restraint until the empty mind becomes more powerful than its objects and begins to manifest as brightness or luminosity. This knowing of the pure mind affects consciousness through its informational and apparent energy. That is to say, becoming aware of the brightness of our own mind has two different effects. The brightness has its own dynamic which is a source of information, and the brightness gives energy or power to the mind. This means that when an idea occurs according to the way things are then there is a resonance between energy and information in the mind. The knowing of eternal truths is therefore a deathless energy.

### **i) Release**

The mind can find release from objects through contemplation or through absorption in which all externals disappear and there is just mind. After this you can see the relationship between the pure mind and the world. You find that you can only maintain such release by the continual effort of contemplation of the three characteristics of all that arises and by not grasping at the fruit by trying to grasp the mind (by conceiving any 'I am').

The mind is also freed up from attachment to itself by not making anything out of the knowing, by realising that we cannot conceive of it as anything. Alternatively, energetically, we can make nothing out of it by conjoining it with more and more subtle objects (classically the breath).

The physical body itself also knows or senses release. This is the first release to happen. We can then look for similar release from the conditioned mind and dwell independently by seeing misery or uncertainty or dependency, the three characteristics applied to the conditioned mind.

Freedom comes from cycling through your contemplation at the different levels of function, releasing subject from object, rejecting objects inner and outer, and finally letting go of sense consciousness itself.

### **ii) Wisdom**

From this contemplation, the energy of wisdom is added to consciousness. Wisdom is a passive inner confidence leading to emptiness and an outer uncertainty leading in turn to dispassion. The combination of these generates a revealed space through non-attention, cessation. Emotionally, we can relate to this original mind as our beloved Lord, intellectually, as our liberating truth and outwardly, as the dignity of virtue.

## **4. Mind objects (saṅkhārās)**

*Out of ignorance arises the saṅkhāra.*

Saṅkhārās are firstly our karmic inheritance from the past, our habitual drives as it were; they can be rekindled by a stimulus in the present. The mind of desire will always be confused as it tries to mediate between the demands of different senses. If we are not seeing



clearly in the present then thoughts arise spontaneously in the mind, as proliferation. We become confused. All these thoughts represent the automatic coming together and expression of the other khandhas of body, feeling and perception. The mind and the physical body are two different things; where they attach to each other, the saṅkhāra arises.

It is the automatic turning of the wheel of karma. We may also add further to these thoughts in the present, making something more out of them. This is the further action of intention which feeds back into the whole process.

We can add skilful mind objects (dhammas) to the process or unskilful ones. If we are seeing clearly, then both of these sources of thought will be replaced by wisdom. Gradually our minds will clear until ignorance is finally resolved or overcome.

### **Sankhara as proliferation**

We can loosely define mental proliferation as the mind that answers us back, so to speak, with thoughts or feelings or a mixture of these. The element of movement, of agitation within the mind is more subtle but is another very important defining factor. This movement is the initial sign of trouble. We can act on it and avoid the influx of unskilful feeling or thought. This movement can also help us to clearly see proliferation as different from our skilful thoughts, to see how it can creep in and add desire to the mind on its way out - to see it impersonally like this.

Previously we have described how the mind only really knows itself. Now we see more implications of this, and also that the domain of the mind is not a place, a location, it is stillness. Saṅkhāra are movement. If our knowing moves with them we have stepped out of the realm of knowing. Our knowing will be there but it will be deluded. This stillness is initially found within, so truth has its location but if it remains still it can extend.

Another way we can see the nature of the saṅkhara is through bodily stillness. It is like the passions come to push us around. If we refuse to move with them they can abate quite quickly, even though they return. When I first visited Chithurst Monastery I remember thinking, "Wow! These people can sit still whatever is going on in their minds." I did not realize then just how true and how important this was, what an advanced practice it actually is just to sit through everything.

Sometimes we can see how if we look with our full attention there is no greed or hatred, we cannot find any however hard we try. As soon as we lose our confidence or mindfulness there is some movement and greed or hatred again taint the mind.

There are occasions when the mind speaks to us uninitiated with insight. This is not proliferation but comes out of stillness or silence. It is very different, and the contrast may be revealing of the way things work. We can see that if we are to have insight, proliferation has to stop. We have to be very careful not to create unskilful karma. We must learn patience and endurance so that we can put a brake on desire. We have to find ways of weakening it and its influence over the mind. Beware! This thing has a mind of its own. If we do not find some way of cutting into it, the same old stuff will keep spewing out day after day, lifetime after lifetime.

Mental proliferation or saṅkhāra are always defilement, formed by grasping, past or present. Their nature is that of attachment, the root of which is delusion. This is a very important fact; we can accept them as valid information unless we get to the root of them in order to dispel the delusion or uproot the attachment. Believing them is different from believing our

thoughts. Of course we believe in what we are consciously, intentionally thinking in the present. If we did not we would not think it. We believe what we think until it is proved false. In this way, natural thought tends to be inductive rather than deductive in character even if it is deductive in content. This is what we are calling functional truth. It lends itself very well to religious convention that is held in faith. It is vulnerable, however, to the intrusion of proliferation and hence delusion if mindfulness is weak.

The ideal is thus to hold an element of uncertainty at all times to protect the mind from this vulnerability. This is not a wavering uncertainty. We keep an open mind. This is a function and a fruit of meditation. Our minds can be open and remain firm, placed clearly on an object and calm despite not knowing. Faith need not be affected by this. We are merely willing to change our minds. We do not have a fixed view or dogma. This is also important with regard to the influence of perception on thought. There is no such thing as a single, correct perception. Perception has many facets to it. It is motive as well as rational. Food looks great when you are hungry. This is not correct or incorrect. Therefore, there is flexibility there. We find with meditation that we can choose skilful perceptions. Perception is also a function that can be naturally inductive.

In terms of a healthy attitude towards saṅkhāra, we don't have to feel bound down - the saṅkhāra arise and disappear completely. We can see however that if we grasp at proliferation, it grasps back. We need instead to think deliberately rather than going automatic. We must at least have a questioning attitude toward proliferation.

Skill at the level of saṅkhāra is a unified attention that brings the mind together into a particular wholesome function. In this way, it can be discovered that love can be brought into life by doing something lovingly where it cannot be by trying to be loving or have love or get love. This is because the mind cannot function in two places at the same time, with the love in here and the person out there. This is how grasping onto either ourselves or the other person confuses the function of loving. We can apply and train skilful attention onto simple objects. If we think of holding this object in some way then we have created a duality that separates us from the object. If we think instead of doing a function in a particular way, the mind remains unified.

This is complete when unified attention is applied to all four foundations of mindfulness as the function of sensing (physical body), feeling, knowing (mind) and choosing (mind object). In this way the mind can function in every aspect of what is taken to be ourselves and the tendency to create 'me and it' can be defeated.

## **The Hindrances**

These obstruct dialogue, wisdom and samādhi. Everything we talk about is in one sense the development of a mind without hindrances but we have not tackled these directly. This is deliberate. We do not want to give undue attention to these rather than to the wholesome mind that is revealed by their absence. We are well advised to look around them until we have the strength to face up to them.

Then, as obstructions to our path we can get round them, cut through them or recognize we have lost our way. In the last case, we can find our way back to the path through turning away from the hindrance or balancing our practice, recognizing that it has arisen through turning too much in one direction.

We have already discussed some approaches in general, here I will give examples of a few specific skilful means that have worked for me. It is skilful as well to just be aware of a hindrance, just tolerate it, have patience with it.

**i) Ill will** - This is a seldom-used but well-chosen term. It is anger with hatred behind it. It is important to note that anger can also have a benevolent motive. However, when expressed heatedly the response to it is often not good. In fact, any negative or critical response is likely to elicit a negative reply, whatever its motive. Therefore, we have to be very careful of our problem-solving minds. When the mind is in such a critical space trying to generate care is difficult. Generating qualities like this from scratch is difficult anyway. Better to do something with the required quality in mind. It is often just patience that is needed with irritation that has not yet turned into outwardly directed anger and ill will. Wishing harm upon another is another step. Calming attention to the breath, being aware of the out breath most of all, is good to cool the energy of it. Always listen sympathetically to the angry mind to see what the underlying problem is and try to act on it rather than act it out.

**ii) Anxiety** - Anxiety can be the wisdom of the kilesa; anxiety toward conditions is justified (this anxiety will often be appeased if agreed with) but symptomatic of attachment. Anxiety towards the mind is not justified; it is delusion (and is dismissible by faith or sometimes, alternatively, by teasing i.e. "that got you worried"). These two kinds of anxiety can be confused with each other - with the first of these, knowing is also present; with the second knowing is absent; it also has a different feel / movement to it. Another approach is to out-worry the worry with the even uncertainty (or wonder) of wisdom. Awareness of the body can also help steady the mind. When stilled the body becomes the host, a presence that has nothing to do with sensation, beyond worry.

**iii) Restlessness** - Sense restraint and relaxation seem to work although relaxing may be the last thing you want to do. Try lying down in a warm, darkened room.

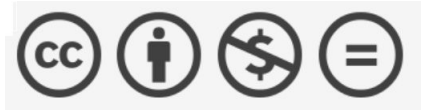
**iv) Sloth and torpor** - The Buddha's advice to Mogallana says it all in the 'acute case'. More chronically, torpor can be a cover up of something else or just be the result of turning away from a lot of stuff. Therefore, a bit of wholesome entertainment is in order to give the mind something to turn into. Chronic sloth can also develop into depression. Take care to fully wake up after sleep or rest (cold shower or exercise!) if you feel yourself sinking.

**v) Sense desire** - I decline to comment on this one - better for everyone to make his or her own mind up. Just ask yourself, "How does it or the desire for it (whatever it is) really feel? Is it really worth it? Is it addictive or not?"

**vi) Doubt** - Have faith and give it a go if it is wholesome. Alternatively, look to answer your doubts. One or the other.

More generally speaking: the hindrances are all types of desire: if you do not feed them, they stop coming to call. Also, remember, as obstructions we only have to find a way past them. This can be by a forest path, we need not build a motorway.





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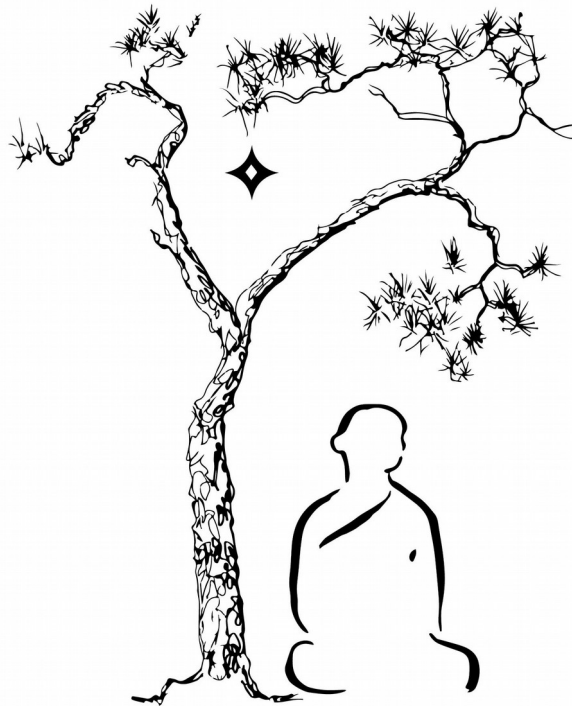
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Lokuttara Vihara, Skiptvet, Norway.  
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**Lokuttara Vihara**

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