

## MN10 The Foundations of Mindfulness - Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Presented by Bhante Vimalaramsi on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2006

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BV: Ok, we have the last two foundations to go through, and I think you'll find this quite interesting. This is the mindfulness of mind, cittānupassanā.

34. "And how, monks, does a monk abide contemplating mind as mind? Here a monk understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and mind unaffected by lust as mind unaffected by lust. He understands mind affected by hate as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate as mind unaffected by hate. He understands mind affected by delusion as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion.

BV: Question. What is delusion? It's taking everything that arises personally. A deluded mind is a mind that doesn't see the true nature of everything that arises. It's part of impermanence, it's part of thought, but it is seeing the thoughts and feeling as being me: "This is who I am. This is what I think. This is what I feel." Not seeing the true nature of existence, which is arising and passing away continually, and not seeing the impersonal nature of whatever arises. I'm going to ask you a lot of questions on this section, so...

MN: He understands contracted mind as contracted mind,

BV: What is a contracted mind? A contracted mind is a mind that has sloth and torpor in it. It's a mind that pulls in and gets lost in a dream world.

MN: and distracted mind as distracted mind.

BV: What is a distracted mind? That's a mind that has restlessness in it. Because it's distracted, it's always going away from your object of meditation.

MN: He understands exalted mind as exalted mind,

BV: What is an exalted mind? A mind in a (Rupa) jhāna. Now, this is not just any of the jhānas, this is one of the first four jhānas. These are called exalted states of mind. Now, did you ever realize that the Satipatthanā Sutta is talking about jhānas? I was always taught that it was talking about mindfulness, and it was never explained to me.

MN: and unexalted mind as unexalted mind.

BV: That's pretty easy. It's a mind that doesn't have any jhāna in it. Now, remember that jhāna does not mean concentration. Jhāna means a stage of development in the meditation; it's just a stage. And it's a stage of your understanding of the process of Dependent Origination.

MN: He understands surpassed mind as surpassed mind,

BV: What is a surpassed mind? A surpassed mind is a mind that experiences the arupa jhānas.

BV: Arupa jhānas. The arupa jhānas are different aspects of the fourth jhāna. Now, when you talk about, in the eight-fold path, the last part of the eight-fold path is called sammā samādhi. Sammā samādhi is always defined as the experience of one of the four jhānas. But in that it also includes the arupa jhānas. The arupa jhānas are: infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, neither-perception-nor-non-perception. These are exalted states, these are very, very fine states of attention where your awareness of the mind's attention becomes very, very precise and very exact, and you get to see everything very clearly. And it's just different stages of clarity when we get into the arupa jhānas.

Now, one of the things that had always happened to me when I was practicing vipassanā, straight vipassanā, was I was told that you can't develop insight if you're experiencing jhāna. But then again, when you look up in the suttas the words insight or vipassanā, and you look up the word samatha, which means tranquillity, and it's always translated as jhāna. Then you look at where it tells you those references are, they're always in the suttas together. Samatha and vipassanā work hand-in-hand. They can't be any other way, not if you're going to experience what the Buddha was talking about.

MN: and unsurpassed mind as unsurpassed mind. He understands collected mind as collected mind, and uncollected mind as uncollected mind.

BV: What is a collected mind? A collected mind... they have in this translation, they use the word concentrate a lot. But I found in this country, concentration always means some form of absorption, some form of deep concentration, of undistractedness. So I choose to change the definition of that a little bit because it's not very well understood that a concentrated mind can also be a very calm mind, a still mind, but a mind that's still fully alert, not just absorbed into one thing. So I choose to use the word 'collected', rather than 'concentrated'. I've even gone so far

sometimes to say that that's like one of the four letter words you don't ever say again.

MN: He understands liberated mind as liberated mind, and unliberated mind as unliberated mind.

BV: What is a liberated mind? This is a mind that has experienced very deeply the third noble truth, the cessation of suffering. Every time your mind gets distracted away from your object of meditation, the instructions are: let go of that distraction and relax; let go of the tension caused by that movement of mind's attention. When you let go of that tension, that tightness, your mind, it feels expanded and then it becomes calm. Right after that your mind is very clear, your mind is pure, your awareness is very sharp. And you bring that mind back to your object of meditation. You have liberated your mind from the tightness of craving; you've let go of the craving. Craving always manifests as tension and tightness in your mind and in your body. So every time you let go of that you're experiencing a liberated mind. What's an unliberated mind? That's when somebody's practicing one-pointed concentration, their mind is distracted, they let go of the distraction and immediately come back to your object of meditation. There is no letting go of the craving. Your mind is not liberated at that time.

This particular part of the Satipatthanā sutta... I've had many discussions with Sayadaw U Silananda about this, and I always questioned him as to why he didn't explain it because he was a vipassanā teacher. Now, you're supposed to explain these things, but if you're a straight vipassanā teacher you don't want your students getting into the jhānas, you want them just experiencing what they call the insight knowledge's. Which actually as it turns out by the practice of straight vipassanā, it is a form of absorption concentration. It might be moment to moment, it might be quick kinds of concentration, but it's still concentration. And when mind gets into what they call access concentration, what happens is the force of the concentration that they have developed suppresses, pushes down, doesn't allow hindrances to arise. And that's the main problem.

Hindrances are where your attachments are. You purify your mind for the period of time that you're in 'access concentration', but you haven't completely purified your mind because when you get out of that access concentration, the hindrances come back. And by your not being able to recognize the hindrances so easily, it's very easy to get caught by them. So when you're practicing watching and relaxing, whenever the hindrance arises, your mind gets distracted and you start thinking about this or that, whatever it happens to think about. That is part of restlessness, that's a hindrance. How do you handle the hindrance? You let the thought go, you relax the craving, and now you have this pure mind that doesn't have any craving in it. Now, when you're practicing straight vipassanā, they tell you: "When your mind

gets distracted, watch that distraction until it goes away, and then immediately come back to your attention on the breath." There's no relaxing in that, so they're bringing back the craving. So there's no true purity of mind with that kind of practice.

I wrote a book called *The Anapanasati Sutta : A Practical Guide to Mindfulness of Breathing and Tranquil Wisdom Meditation*. In that book I described everything I'm talking to you right now. And after I wrote that book, I sent a copy to Sayadaw U Silananda, and he read the book, and he was impressed enough that he put it on the website. And it's fantastic the number of people that have gone to the book because he did that. He and I had a discussion about the method I was showing in the book, which is what I'm talking about right now, and he agreed that it was a very good method of meditation, and it more explained how you practice the meditation that the Buddha taught. But he said he could never teach that kind of meditation because for forty years he's been teaching the other kind of meditation. Isn't that odd?

Any practice of meditation that you do, **if it does not have the letting go and release of craving**, then it turns out to be one form or another of absorption concentration. And when you practice absorption concentration, there is no way to be able to see Dependent Origination in the way that it needs to be seen. Now tomorrow, in our Dhamma talk, we will have a discourse that's one of the most powerful discourses in *The Middle Length Sayings*; it's called "The Six Sets of Six". And I'm going to read that sutta to you with all of the repeating in it. And the reason I'm going to do that is because that will stick in your mind like you can't believe. And you will be able to see more and more clearly how the process of Dependent Origination works.

Anyway, when we're talking about contemplation of mind, the *cittānupassanā*, we're talking about being able to recognize lust, hatred, delusion, contraction of mind, distraction of mind, exalted mind, surpassed mind. You're able to see all of these different states as they arise, and they will. All of these different things will arise while you're doing your practice. What you do with them dictates what will happen in the future. If you let go of the distraction and relax, and bring that relaxed mind back to your object of meditation, you can look forward to being more and more alert to how this process works.

Now, for the last two or three Dhamma talks, I've talked quite a bit about the five aggregates. I haven't specifically said these are the aggregates, but I have talked about them quite a bit. This process is made up of five things. You have physical body. What's the first part of the *Satipatthanā Sutta*? *Kāyānupassanā*, mindfulness of body. You have feeling. What's the second part of the *Satipatthanā Sutta*? *Vedanānupassanā*, mindfulness of feeling. You have perception, and depending on

your translation, the next one is, in Pāli, it's called sankhāra. Bhikkhu Bodhi, in this book, he calls it volition. I call it thoughts. And all of those are correct. So perception is the mind that puts names on things. You see this; your mind says this is a book. The perception is the mind that recognized that, and it also has memory in it. Now, when we get to the third part here, this is cittānupassanā, or mindfulness of mind, that includes the sankhāras, the thoughts and the volition, and the perception. And the last part of the aggregates is consciousness. And that is very akin to dhammānupassanā, mindfulness of mind objects.

So you can see that the five aggregates and the four foundations of mindfulness are actually the same thing. Where we continually cause ourself so much suffering is when a feeling arises, we try to think the feeling away. And the more you try to think the feeling, the bigger the feeling becomes; the more intense the feeling becomes; the more pain you are causing yourself. So what's the instructions in the meditation? When a feeling arises, it's a pleasant feeling, it's a painful feeling. I won't go with the rest of them because it doesn't matter.

There is craving that arises right after feeling. And craving is always the "I like it, I don't like it" mind. Craving always manifests as tension and tightness in your mind and in your body. Right after craving is clinging. Clinging is the thoughts, the story, the opinions, the concepts about why you like or dislike that feeling. The weak link in Dependent Origination is craving. Why? Because craving is the easiest thing to recognize when it comes up. It always comes up and it does that in your mind and in your body. There's tightness, there's tension. So when a feeling arises, we like it and don't like it, which ever one it happens to be.

And then we have thoughts and then we have our habitual tendencies about those thoughts. We always think this way when this kind of feeling arises. So the first part of the instruction says, when a feeling arises, there are thoughts about the feeling. So what you have to do is let go of the thoughts, don't get involved and caught in the story about, and relax.

Next, you see that feeling, and that's what you're seeing, just the feeling. There's a tight mental fist wrapped around the feeling. Either we like it or we don't like it. And there's always the want to control the feeling, to make it be the way we want it to be. If it's a painful feeling, we want it to disappear, we want it to stop and we try to push it away as hard as we can. If it's a pleasant feeling, we grab onto that baby and pull it in and try to hold on as tight as we can. But the truth is, when a feeling arises it's there, and it's ok for the feeling to be there. It has to be ok because that's the truth. So, you have to let go of that mental hold around the feeling. Now, this feeling can be a contracted mind, it can be a distracted mind. It can be a mind that has lust in it, has hatred in it, doesn't matter. What you do is say: "Ok, that feeling is there and it's fine for it to be there." Now, you relax that tension and tightness

and come back to your object of meditation. When you treat the feeling in this way, there's no suffering. There's no: "I want it to be different that it is." There's no need to control. There's seeing what arises as it arises, as it truly is.

This is real important stuff. The more you start getting into the habit of relaxing, the more your mind becomes liberated. And that's what this part of the sutta is all about. And as you get deeper into your practice, you start to experience the candy of the meditation. The Buddha called it the pleasant abiding here and now, the *jhāna*. But *jhāna* doesn't mean concentration, it means your level of understanding, your level of your meditation, that's all. And whether you know which *jhāna* you're in, or not, doesn't really matter; the only person it matters to is me. So when you come and talk to me about what your experience is, I know how to talk back to you. I know how to say things that can be helpful for you. Again, whatever I say is suggestion. Don't believe what I say, try it and see if it works. If it works, keep it, if it doesn't, throw it away. I'm not attached to the things I say too much. Maybe a little.

MN: 35. "In this way he abides contemplating mind as mind internally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind externally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind its nature of arising, or he abides contemplating in mind its nature of vanishing, or he abides contemplating in mind its nature of both arising and vanishing.

BV: Now, with the sutta that I gave the other night, one by one (MN111), I showed you all of these different things that Sariputta experienced while he was in the *jhāna*. And they all arose and pass away, arise and pass away, they didn't all gang up and come up at one time, and that's how you experience impermanence. And the more clear you become with seeing this as a process of Dependent Origination, the more you truly understand that this is an impersonal process. Everything happens because of a cause; it's dependent on the cause. So you're seeing the true nature of everything when you see it as continually moving and changing, and seeing it as being impersonal.

MN: And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

BV: How do you not cling to anything in the world? What's the definition of clinging? It's all of your opinions, all of your concepts, all of your thinking and story telling in your mind, and identifying with those opinions and thoughts and that sort of thing. So if you don't want to cling to anything, continually let go of the craving. Why? Because clinging doesn't arise after that. Your mind is pure, you don't have any thoughts in it, every time you let go of that craving.

MN: That is how a monk abides contemplating mind as mind.

BV: Now, we get into the contemplation of mind objects. And this is real interesting because the first part of this is the five hindrances; awareness of the hindrances. This particular section tells you exactly how to handle a hindrance when it arises.

MN: 36. "And how, monks, does a monk abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects? Here a monk abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances. And how does a monk abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances? Here, there being sensual desire in him, a monk understands: 'There is sensual desire in me'; or there being no sensual desire in him, he understands: 'There is no sensual desire in me';

BV: That's pretty straight forward.

MN: and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sensual desire,

BV: How do you understand how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sensual desire? When your mind is on your object of meditation, and it begins to become distracted, what happens is your mind is here and all of a sudden it's there, and you didn't see that process. All you know is your mind jumped from being on the breath and relaxing to having sensual desire in it. How did that happen? What happened first; what happened after that; what happened after that; what happened after that? What you'll be able to see, when your mind is reasonably calm, is that there is more happening than just all of a sudden there's this distraction. As you let go of the distraction and relax, bringing that pure mind back to your object of meditation, it will go back to that distraction. But now you start working with the enlightenment factor of the investigation of your experience. So, how did your mind jump over here?

What you will see is there's something that happened before your mind got carried away and starts getting involved and really getting caught by the sensual desire. There's something that happens right before that. As you are able to see as it keeps pulling back and you relax and you come back, you'll be able to start to become familiar with how this distraction occurs. This is one of the reasons why your hindrances are your best friends because they're showing you where your attachment is. Mind gets pulled away, you'll see this feeling arise right before you start thinking about that sensual desire, whatever that happens to be.

So as you are quote, 'wrestling with the hindrance', as you're getting caught by the hindrance, at first you might get caught for a minute or two minutes before you even notice that you are caught, and then you let go of that hindrance and relax, and bring that attention back to your object of meditation. The nature of the



hindrances is they'll keep pulling you back to it, and that's good. Why? Because every time you get your mind pulled away from your object of meditation, and you notice it and you relax, and you come back to your object of meditation, you are improving your mindfulness. You're improving your observation of the movement of mind's attention. So, it's going to be bouncing back and forth. But as you become more familiar with how this process works, you start to see little things more and more clearly.

Now, what happens first? And you won't be able to notice this until, most of you until a little bit later, but you'll notice that your mind is very still on your object of meditation, and all of a sudden it starts moving, it starts wobbling. And it wobbles and it wobbles faster and faster and faster and then finally it floats away. Now, what this is talking about is how to be aware of that process; how to be aware of this movement. At first you're not going to see this at all, and sometimes you might be able to catch just as it's starting to go away, and you can let go right then and relax and come back. And you're not really caught by that hindrance, and sometimes you won't be able to. So it's letting go of the hindrance, relaxing, coming back.

You might do this a hundred times, you might do it a thousand times, depending on how strong your attachment is to believing that these thoughts and these feelings of sensual pleasure are yours. But as you start looking at this as a process instead of: "This is me, this is who I am" you start letting go of that ego belief that this is who you are, and you start seeing little parts of this distraction. As you start letting go, as you become more familiar with the distraction and how it arises, you start catching it a little bit faster. So instead of being distracted for one or two minutes, you might be distracted for thirty seconds. And then as you continue on with that, it might be fifteen seconds. And as you continue on, you start seeing the process more clearly; it might be only five seconds.

As you improve your mindfulness, you will get to the state where you see your mind starting to wobble and you let go right then and your mind doesn't even get distracted. You see this is the importance of having the hindrances because they are your teachers. I'm not your teacher. The hindrances are your teacher because they're showing you very clearly how mind's attention moves. And when you see it very clearly, you start seeing more and more clearly the little tiny pieces, and you'll start recognizing different parts of the Dependent Origination. Dependent Origination happens fast. Now, I know that there's some commentaries where they talk about Dependent Origination happening over three lifetimes. That's wishful thinking. But (snaps finger) that was a million thought moments, that was a million arising and passing away of the twelve links of Dependent Origination. It happens in a thought moment. As you become more familiar with how that process works, you start educating yourself and teaching yourself how to let go of believing that



anything that arises is personal. You start seeing everything as an impersonal process, and that is incredibly freeing and liberating when you're able to do that.

MN: {repeats} and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sensual desire,

BV: He sees the movements. That's how you're able to see that.

MN: and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen sensual desire,

BV: How do you abandon the arisen sensual desire? So it's being able to recognize when your mind is distracted, and let go of the distraction, and relax, and come back.

MN: and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned sensual desire.'

BV: How does that come to be? It is staying on your object of meditation. When you stay on your object of meditation, the hindrance won't arise. So what we have is we have a distraction that you're starting to catch a little bit quicker, and little bit quicker, and little bit quicker. And you're improving your mindfulness all the time by letting this go and relaxing, coming back to your object of meditation. Eventually, that hindrance doesn't have enough energy to even arise and your mind naturally stays on your object of meditation for longer and longer periods of time. And that's how you overcome every hindrance. But the trick is you are on your object of meditation, but you're not holding on to it. If you hold on to your object of meditation, you're putting in too much energy and too much effort, and you will have one of your friends come to visit, called restlessness. Now, this is the same for all of the hindrances. How you treat all of the hindrances, you treat all of the hindrances in the same way. And I call hindrances 'distractions'. So any time your mind gets pulled away, it's distracted. Let go of the distraction, relax, gently come back to your object of meditation.

Every time you let go of the tension and tightness, you are experiencing Nibbāna. It's mundane, it's still a worldly kind of Nibbāna, but there is no fire in that. Nibbāna, ni = no, bāna = fire. And craving is called fire; it's heat! So every time you let go of that distraction, doesn't matter which one of the hindrances it is, when you let it go and you relax, you're bringing that pure mind back to your object of meditation. Your mindfulness, your awareness of the movements of mind becomes sharper every time you let go of the distraction, relax and come back. So you're not caught for as long a period of time, and you start staying on your object of meditation for longer periods of time, and that's where you start experiencing your jhānas. Investigating constantly improves the mindfulness. And you have to see the

whole thing with the enlightenment factors, is they have to be in balance. So we can talk about the enlightenment factors in just a minute actually. Well, I'll go to it because this is just repeating the whole thing over and over again, and I've repeated it plenty of times for you, so I'll give you a break this time.

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

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

Ok, I'm going to jump to the seven factors of enlightenment. We'll go back to the five aggregates and the six bases in just a minute.

42. "Again, monks, a monk abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors. And how does a monk abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors? Here, there being the mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, a monk understands: 'There is the mindfulness enlightenment factor in me'; or there being no mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, he understands: 'There is no mindfulness enlightenment factor in me'; and he also understands

BV: You're going to love this.

MN: how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen mindfulness enlightenment factor, and how the arisen mindfulness enlightenment factor comes to fulfilment by development.

BV: How do you bring up that mindfulness enlightenment factor? The function of mindfulness is to remember. To remember what? What is your mind doing in the present moment. How is mind's attention moving from one thing to another? How

does that happen? See, it always comes back to the investigation of Dependent Origination. Seeing all of these different links arising and passing away. It's remembering to look, remembering to observe. That's what mindfulness is.

MN: { repeats} he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen mindfulness enlightenment factor,

BV: How does that come to be? Remember to pay attention. Remember to observe how mind's attention is moving from one thing to another. Letting it be, relaxing, coming back to your object of meditation, is the way you strengthen that mindfulness. That's how you develop the mindfulness, and how the mindfulness enlightenment factor comes to be fulfilled by development.

Get good at it. Now, when I'm talking to you about doing your meditation, most people think meditation is just sitting on your cushion and that's it, and you know that I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about all the time. And this is somewhat difficult practice to do the meditation all the time. It doesn't matter what you're doing. What are you doing in the meditation? Developing that sharp awareness of what mind is doing in the present moment. Right now, mind's tight. Why? There's craving in it. Let it go and relax, smile, come back to your object of meditation. When you get into the jhānas, that doesn't mean that you're only sitting in meditation. You can be in a jhāna while you're chopping vegetables, or washing your clothes, or taking a bath. You can be in jhāna at any time. Can you have joy when you're taking a bath? Can you have joy when you're chopping vegetables? Can you have joy when you're mowing the lawn? Whatever task there is, if your mindfulness is sharp, you can be in a jhāna. And that's where your mind is absolutely pure. No hindrances arise when these jhāna factors are present. It's when your mindfulness slips a little bit for whatever reason.

Remember I gave you that chart yesterday that had the five aggregates and the four foundations of mindfulness, and the hindrances right underneath that. When your mindfulness is weak, when your mindfulness slips a little bit, you can look forward to one of those hindrances coming, or two of those hindrances coming because they like to gang up, they don't like to come one at a time. You get restlessness and you like the restlessness if you're planning, or you don't like the restlessness when you feel like jumping out of your skin. So you not only have the restlessness to deal with, you have the aversion to it or the grabbing on to it.

Now, you have to have enough interest in having an uplifted mind to recognize this is what it is, to let it be, relax, come back to an object of meditation. For some of you, you're doing mindfulness of breathing, so you come back to your mindfulness of breathing and relaxing. On the in-breath relax, on the out-breath relax. For some of you, you're doing your metta. Come back to that feeling of loving-kindness. With

your daily activities you don't necessarily have to stay with that one spiritual friend. You can radiate loving-kindness to everybody, that's fine. But the key is to recognize that your mind is caught by a hindrance, let that hindrance be, relax, come back to your object of meditation. You do this with your daily activities. That's why I'm pushing you right now. I want to know how your daily activities are going. Are you able to stay with feeling happy when you're doing your loving-kindness? Can you be happy while you're chopping this or sweeping that, or washing this, or going to the toilet, or eating? Can you do that? Keep it going, don't let your mind just ho hum? That's what the practice is about. And the more closely you can continue on doing that, the less suffering you will experience. The more you will experience a mind that is uplifted, and happy, and very alert! Any time you see that you have repeat thoughts; you have an attachment there and your mind is caught by the craving and clinging, and that is a distraction.

You relax after you recognize... the recognition is part of the mindfulness, and it's also part of the investigation. But right after that there is the energy of letting go of that distraction. And then the joy will arise, and after the joy, there's tranquillity, and your mind becomes very still, and it becomes balanced. I've just gone through all of the different factors of enlightenment. And that's the way it works.

And that's the very thing that changes what the Buddha's teaching, that it changes the end result of the meditation because you're able to see everything as process when you're doing this. You don't see it as being a personal thing. Now, one of the things that I try to get you to remember to do, is to develop your sense of humour about yourself when you get caught, and you can laugh at being caught, then you're not caught anymore. "I'm mad. I don't like this. Ha Ha, look at that, my mind got caught again. Oh, it's only this anger. Nothing." So it changes your perspective from: "I am this." to "It's only that." It goes from being personal, big problem, "I got to fight with this." to "Well it's only this, it's only this feeling, nothing." Easy to let go of. See, that's the whole process of the seven factors of enlightenment.

You have joy right in the middle of that. Joy is your balancing factor. Joy helps you to have the perspective so that you don't get caught, and when you have joy, your mind is very light, and very alert, and very agile. So when your mind starts to get pulled down by a mental state, it's real easy to see that. So why do I want smile all the time? Why do I want you to laugh? Because it helps your mindfulness, it helps your investigation of all of your experience. The more you can smile, the more you can laugh, the easier it is to stay in balance. And the way you tell that you are progressing spiritually is that you stop laughing at things and you start laughing with them. You don't take things personally. When I hear somebody say something that's very true, the first thing that happens is I laugh. I can't help it. And I'm not laughing at anything. It's just true. "Ha ha, that was a good one."

It's joy arising.

So the whole thing with the enlightenment factors is they can be incredibly helpful when you have sloth and torpor. You need mindfulness, you need your investigation, you need your energy, and when you bring your energy up that joy will arise. When you have restlessness, you still need your mindfulness and your investigation, but you want to focus on tranquillity, on stillness of mind, on balance. So you can call up these different enlightenment factors as you need them, and that again is part of mindfulness because you're remembering, you're remembering to focus with a tranquil mind, or a joyful mind, whatever.

Now, the whole thing with right effort in the eight-fold path is really important to your practice. With your investigation, you have to be able to do this with a balanced kind of effort. Now, what is right effort? Right effort is seeing when your mind is unwholesome, letting go of that unwholesome state and relaxing, bringing up a wholesome state, and staying with that wholesome state. Now, let's look at the hindrances again. What are you doing when a hindrance arises? You're seeing your mind has an unwholesome state in it. You let go of that unwholesome state and relax. Now, you come back to your wholesome state, and you stay with your wholesome state; it's right effort. Effort and energy is not quite the same thing. You have to do it with a balanced kind of energy. If you try too hard, you're going to cause yourself to get restless. If you don't try hard enough, you're going to get sloth and torpor.

There was a student that I had in Malaysia; I'd just given a talk on how to make a determination when you're working with jhānas. So she went home and about a week later she came back to me and she said: "I'm very familiar with getting into the jhāna", and I'd known that. And she said: "Now, I can't get into the jhānas at all. What's the problem?" And I said: "What kind of determination are you making?" And she said: "Well, I'm making a determination to get into the first jhāna." And with that kind of determination, she was trying too hard. And the more she didn't get into the jhāna like she expected, the more energy and effort she put into it, and the more restlessness she had. And she never got into that state. So I said: "Well, let's change your wording on your determination. Let's make a determination that your mind can be peaceful and calm, and then see what happens after that. And with that determination, all of a sudden she was very easily getting into the jhāna. See, it can be a subtle thing, "Ah I don't feel like meditating today, but I guess I'd better." What happens when you sit with that kind of mental state?

BV: You know that one?

BV: You get restless. "I don't really want to be here doing it, but I feel like I should be, so I'm going to do it anyway." You have to let go of all of those kind of ideas.

The whole thing with the meditation is to make it fun, make it a game. Don't get over serious with it. I've been to way too many retreats and some of the retreats have been very long, three months and eight months, things like that, where I didn't see any of the yogis smile, the whole time because they were trying really hard. And I appreciate very much the effort they were putting in. I was doing the same thing; I didn't smile either, but I appreciate very much the effort that was being put in. But it was not quite the right kind of energy that they were using, or we were using, and mind tended to get "heavied out" and over serious. And then there's a subtle self criticism that happens because you feel like you're putting in the effort, you're putting in the energy, but you're not getting the progress that you think you should. So you put in a little bit more, and a little bit more, and you don't have any progress in your meditation.

Now, I was with a Vietnamese monk, that had been at that meditation centre a year before I got there. And he was putting in so much effort, I mean he was stale. You know, when I used to play basketball we'd get to a place where we played it so much that we needed to have a break from it. And he wouldn't take a break, even of a day or two, just to let all of the pressure go and just kind of kick back and relax for a little while. In the time I was there, he finally got to - this was the vipassanā that I was practicing at the time - he finally got to the second insight knowledge. In a year and a half. Yeah. Because he was trying way, way too hard.

The whole thing with the meditation is learning how to adjust the amount of energy you're putting in. As you go deeper into your meditation, you have to adjust in more and more subtle, little ways. And it gets incredibly interesting, especially when your mindfulness is sharp because you see, if you put in just a taste too much effort, too much energy, your mind starts tending towards the restlessness. So you back away from that and your mindfulness says "Ok, now we're in balance again" then you say: "Oh maybe that was . . . I need to take a little bit less." And you get a little bit dull, and it's always different. Every time you sit, you have to judge the amount of energy that you're using so that you can stay in balance. Gets to be a real fun experience.

And again, the real difference between people practicing meditation in Asia and people practicing meditation in this country, as I'm teaching it anyway, is in Asia the people are very light naturally, and they like to fool around, and they like to chit chat and they like to laugh, and have lots of food, and that's a wonderful existence for them. Then they get to the meditation centre, the teachers there have to be tough, they're really coming down on them all the time. I saw one monk, that he was supposed to be doing a very intensive meditation, and the teacher caught him laying down sleeping in a room. And he grabbed him by the ear, and picked him up, and scolded him the whole time, and made him go sit. He had to sit in front of the teacher. **But we don't need that in this country;** we don't need tough teachers.

We need teachers that say: "Hey, you're trying too hard, back off." Your balance has got to be good. And the way we do things with our "always trying for perfection" and "always putting as much effort in to be as successful as we can be", we have to be told: "Back off a little bit!" You need to get into your joy more. Because we're so goal oriented we'll kill ourselves to get to Nibbāna, and it just don't work that way. The enlightenment factors have to be in perfect balance in order to attain Nibbāna. And that means having joy in balance with all the others. Ok, we'll go back now to the five aggregates...

MN: 38. "Again, monks, a monk abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging.

BV: Now, this is an interesting statement: "the five aggregates affected by clinging." Depending on your mindfulness, the five aggregates may or may not be affected by clinging. If a feeling arises and you see it right then and you let it be and relax, no clinging will arise. If your mindfulness isn't so sharp then clinging can arise. What is clinging? Again, that's where your opinions, your concepts, your thinking about, your stories, and your strong grabbing onto the belief that these are you, the personal nature of things.

MN: And how does a monk abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging? Here a monk understands: 'Such is material form, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is feeling, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is perception, such its origin, such its disappearance; such are the formations, such their origin, such their disappearance; such is consciousness, such its origin, such its disappearance.'

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

BV: It's being aware of the aggregates as they arise and letting them be. How do you see the origin, what is the origin of feeling? Tricky question if you don't know about Dependent Origination, but if you do know about Dependent Origination, you say: "The cause of feeling is contact." With contact as condition, feeling arises. And it's that way all the way through the five aggregates. So it always comes back to the Dependent Origination and how that arises, how that changes, how it fades away.

Now, we'll get into the six sense bases...

MN: 40. "Again, monks, a monk abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases. And how does a monk abide



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

BV: Sound familiar? Not much? Hindrance. So it's when eye hits colour and form, eye consciousness arises, the meeting of the three is called eye contact. With eye contact as condition, eye feeling arises; with eye feeling as condition, eye craving arises; with eye craving as condition, clinging arises. So when eye hits colour and form, that consciousness arises, there will be a feeling that arises; pleasant, painful, neither painful nor pleasant. If at that time you see and relax, then no fetter will arise. If your mindfulness is not sharp enough, that fetter will arise. And what happens, you start thinking about what you're seeing, and you start thinking: "Ah, I like this and this is really good." And "Oh, I remember when there was another one that was just like that down the road." And all of a sudden you're out in lala land a thousand miles away. That's the way these distractions work.

One time I was in, I think it was Malaysia at the time, I'd been really starting to become familiar with Dependent Origination. And I thought that it would be real interesting to see if I could eat some mango, which I truly love, without any craving in it. So I picked up a piece of mango, and I put it in my mouth, and I noticed the taste, and I noticed how that different tastes arise, and I started chewing it, and there was a very pleasant feeling, and I went "Now, the craving", and then I saw the craving. And so I relaxed, said: "Ok, I got to do this again, I didn't see it clearly enough." So I picked another one up, and I went through this whole process again, and I said: "That craving was really fast, I didn't see the start of it, I got to do it again." And I wound up eating a whole bowl of mango, but I didn't do it from a clinging mind, I did it from an investigative mind because I wanted to see exactly where and when this craving arose and how it arose. And when I got down to the last piece: "Well ok, I might as well do it one more time", I actually saw that when that feeling arose, and I relaxed, there wasn't any craving. That was a revelation, right there! This is wonderful stuff.

And you can do this with all of the six sense bases. You can do it with the eye and form, the ear and sound, the nose and smell, the tongue and taste, the body and sensation, and mind, and mind objects. You can see these things. Takes a lot of practice to be able to see them, but the thing that's most important is your interest. If you take one of the sense doors, and play with just that sense door for a day or two days, and see if you can catch the feeling arising and relaxing right then; "Wow, that's really something." It's a real interesting process to go through. Don't

recommend it with food too much because you get full and you wind up getting fat. "Yeah, let me try another one of those." Ha Ha.

BV: The fat Buddha is not the Buddha. I'll let you have this story. He was a cousin of the Buddha and he looked very similar to the Buddha, and people kept on thinking that he was the Buddha. So what he did was he started eating more so he would look differently. And the Chinese - he wound up travelling quite a bit - and he was an arahat, and the Chinese found out about him through the Mahayana that he was a fat arahat, and they started calling him the Fat Buddha. Now, anything in China, any person that's fat is considered very, very happy. Because they have all kinds of diseases and worms and stuff, and nobody is ever fat in China. So they take this - the Buddha's cousin - and they say: "He's the Buddha, and he's happy." And that's why they like him so much. And they give him, sometimes they give him just a great smile, and looks like he's laughing. That wouldn't be the deportment of the Buddha, not the kind of smiles they give him, that sort of thing.

Anyway, we get to the last part of the mind objects as mind objects.

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

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

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

“There being the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor in him ... There being the energy enlightenment factor in him ... There being the rapture enlightenment factor in him ... There being the tranquillity enlightenment factor in him ... There being the concentration enlightenment factor in him ... There being the equanimity enlightenment factor in him, a bhikkhu understands: ‘There is the equanimity enlightenment factor in me’; or there being no equanimity enlightenment factor in him, he understands: ‘There is no equanimity enlightenment factor in me’; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen equanimity enlightenment factor, and how the arisen equanimity enlightenment factor comes to fulfilment by development.

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

44. “Again, monks, a monk abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths. And how does a monk abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths? Here a monk understands as it actually is: ‘This is suffering’;

BV: Now, when you’re looking at Dependent Origination, they don’t use the word suffering. They’ll use the word ignorance and then they’ll go to formations, and then they’ll say consciousness and then they’ll say mentality and materiality. They go through all of the different links of Dependent Origination, and instead of saying suffering they will say each one of those different links.

MN: he understands as it actually is: ‘This is the origin of suffering’;

BV: Now, you can say suffering or you can say one of those links.

MN: he understands as it actually is: ‘This is the cessation of suffering’;

BV: suffering or the one of those links.

MN: he understands as it actually is: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’

BV: That’s the eight-fold path.

MN: 45. “In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects externally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects both internally and

externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind-objects their nature of arising, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their nature of vanishing, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their nature of both arising and vanishing. Or else mindfulness that 'there are mind-objects' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

That is how a monk abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths.

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

BV: Now, it's final knowledge here and now, he's talking about becoming an arahat. Or if there's a trace of clinging, then becoming a non-returner, which is an anāgāmī. Well, this doesn't say anything about the first two stages of enlightenment does it? Why? You don't necessarily need to practice meditation in order to experience becoming the first stage or the second stage of enlightenment. These are stages that have to do with your understanding, and seeing Dependent Origination through your own understanding. You don't have to practice meditation at all. Sariputta didn't practice meditation at all when he became a sotāpanna. When he became a sotāpanna, Venerable Assaji came and he said: "Tell me the essence of the teaching." And Venerable Assaji, he just said two lines: "The Tathāgata said: 'Everything that arises'; as soon as he heard that he became a sotāpanna. And then Venerable Assaji said: "Everything arises from a cause." That was the first part of the statement. The second was: "And the Tathāgata said: "Everything ceases"; I can't remember it exactly. Anyway, when Venerable Sariputta heard just the first two lines, he became a sotāpanna because his understanding was so good, he just needed a little clue; but he heard all four lines. He goes walking around and Moggallāna sees him and he said: "Hey, you've had some kind of experience. Tell me what it is." So Sariputta says these four lines to Moggallāna and he becomes a sotāpanna. It has to do with your understanding.

And there's a lot more experiences like that. The banker, Anāthapindika, he just went to the Buddha and the Buddha gave him a discourse, he became a sotāpanna. The chief female supporter, Visākha, when she was eight years old, she went to the Buddha, he gave a discourse, she became a sotāpanna. You don't have to practice meditation to become a sotāpanna. It depends on your understanding. And again, what you think and ponder on that's the inclination of your mind. That's the little hint I'll give you about that. And it's the same with sakadāgāmī, the second stage of enlightenment. Now, the only way you're going to become an anāgāmī or an arahat

is through the practice of meditation; you have to be able to see much more deeply the links of Dependent Origination.

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

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

"Let alone half a month, monks. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven days,

BV: How long is your retreat? Still got time!

MN: one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

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

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

BV: So, does anybody have any questions, comments, statements. Anything? Yes?

S: What is a sotāpanna?

BV: Sotāpanna means a person has experienced the first stage of enlightenment. When that happens their mind becomes pure enough, that they will not break a precept for any reason, on purpose. And that's the way you test whether you become a sotāpanna or not, actually. Try to say something that's not true, your mind will not go, it won't go there, just won't do it. And according to the text in the suttas, it says that when you become a sotāpanna, the most lifetimes that you will experience in the future is seven. You come back seven times. Sakadāgāmī is the second stage of enlightenment; it's called a once-returner. And that means that they

will come back to the human form one more time before they become an arahat and get off the wheel. An anāgāmī is someone that is reborn in a special kind of Brahma-loka; there's five or six of those. And there they will live for an incredibly long time, and become an arahat, and before they die, and they will get off the wheel of samsāra. You become an arahat, it means that there is no more returning to any realm.

Now, Nibbāna, what is it? I won't talk about it, because I can't.

Well, it's an unconditioned state, and how can you talk about an unconditioned state with conditioned words?

And I get into conversation with monks, and we might sit around for four or five hours trying to define what the word Nibbāna means, and what the experience is. And we always come up with the same answer: "I don't know."

We're trying to figure out more closely what it really... what is that? And in the Anguttara Nikāya there's one sutta that says: 'The way to look at an arahat is this: if I go down to the beach, and I make a castle, and a wave comes and takes it all away, all of those little pieces of sand are still there, but they're not ever going to be put together in the same way again'. So you can say that the glue that holds the aggregates together is ignorance and craving. When you don't have ignorance and craving. then when the body dies, there is no more holding together of these things. Where does it go, what does it do, your guess is as good as mine. I don't know. But the Buddha did describe it as a kind of happiness. But even that is kind of . . . I mean what a relief, not ever having to see lust arise in your mind for anything, ever again! Or what relief you have from never having to experience anger at anything, for any reason; never having those experiences again. There's real relief there - that's a kind happiness - and it's the same with all of the different fetters.

S: What's 'magga' and 'phala'?

BV: That's path and fruition.

S: What's fruition?

BV: Fruition, it's the fruit of the experience. When there is talk about the Sangha, and it says that there's eight different kinds of individuals that are worthy of gifts, and worthy of respect, and praise, and all of this kind of thing. When it's talking about these eight kinds of individual, it is: a sotāpanna, and a sotāpanna with fruition; a sakadāgāmī, a sakadāgāmī with fruition; an anāgāmī, an anāgāmī with fruition; an arahat, an arahat with fruition. It's a different experience than the initial

experience of Nibbāna that you can experience. It happens sometime after the initial experience.

According to Abhidhamma, which I definitely do not agree with, they say that there's seventeen different parts of a thought moment, and seven of those thought moments are javana moments. You experience Nibbāna in either the first javana moment, or the second javana moment, or the third javana moment. And you experience the fruition in the fifth javana moment, or the sixth javana moment. So they're saying in a thought moment, you're going to have the experience of the path and the fruition. But who would ever be able to see something like that, or know something like that? Why would they talk about eight different kinds of individuals? That doesn't make sense. What I have seen is that people can have the initial experience of Nibbāna, of deep understanding and seeing Dependent Origination, and then sometime in the future, they will have another experience of that where there's more clarity in seeing Dependent Origination, and understanding of Dependent Origination, and that's the fruition that occurs. And that happens with every stage.

There is one sutta that it kind of confirms the fact that if you have the initial experience of Nibbāna, and you just let your mind go back and do the things that it always does in the same way, that you can actually lose that experience, and lose the benefit, and never have the fruition. So you have to be careful. You have to, once you have the experience of Nibbāna, you need to very, very closely watch all the sense doors, keep your precepts exceptional, be very careful with your awareness or you could lose that attainment. Until you have the fruition, you don't really have that personality change. When you have the fruition, the personality changes, and it is really there. But there are suttas that talk about... you have to still be careful; you still have to be careful until you have the fruition. And then you don't need to be careful any more, you already... you are careful; you don't have to think about it anymore.

Ok, let's share some merit then.

May suffering ones, be suffering free  
And the fear struck, fearless be  
May the grieving shed all grief  
And may all beings find relief.

May all beings share this merit that we have thus acquired  
For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.



May beings inhabiting space and earth  
Devas and nagas of mighty power  
Share this merit of ours.

May they long protect the Buddha's dispensation.

Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . .

**Footnote 1:** Vinaya Pitaka Mahavagga I.23.5

'Whatever phenomena arise from cause:  
their cause  
and their cessation.

Such is the teaching of the Tathagata,  
the Great Contemplative.'"

The full story translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/vin/mv/mv.01.23.01-10.than.html>Mv  
1.23.1-10

PTS: Horner vol. 4, pp. 52ff.

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