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A Guide to the Perplexed:
The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Donald K. Swearer

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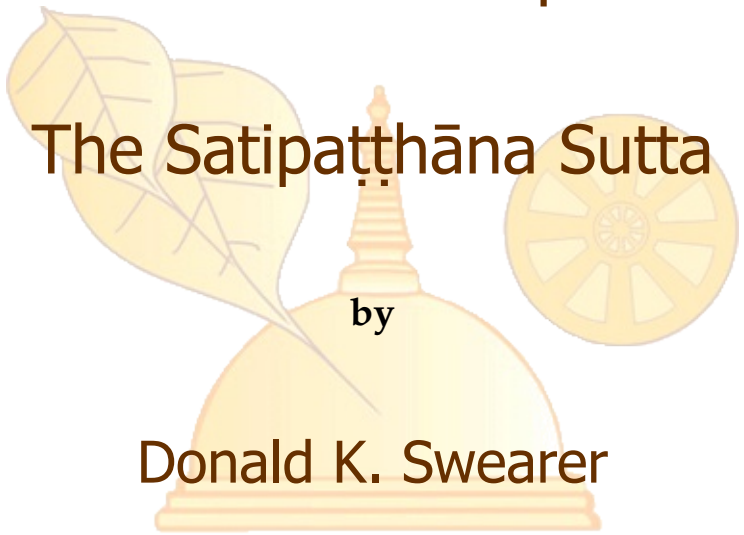

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

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The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

n Buddhism there are two fundamental types of meditation. One aims at the development of tranquility (*samatha*) through the means of trance states or meditative absorptions (*jhāna*); the other strives for insight (*vipassanā*) into the true nature of things. These two forms of meditation are by no means mutually exclusive; however, insight meditation has traditionally been considered the higher of the two forms. In particular, the revival of interest in meditation practice in Theravada Buddhist countries (e.g., Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand) in the modern period has focused on *vipassanā* or insight practice.

Insight meditation has been summed up by the phrase, "Be mindful!" or "Be mindful of your own mind." [1] Two crucial assumptions are made in this definition: that genuine awareness or mindfulness will lead to "enlightenment" or an understanding of things as they really are; and that one's ontic condition or state of being depends upon the mind. "Mind harbors all: the world of suffering and its origin, and also it's final cessation and the

path to it." [2] Buddhist meditation, then, offers the hope of insight not only in the sense of new knowledge but of new being. The promise is the oft heard phrase, "Know the truth and the truth will make you free." Knowledge and freedom presuppose each other, indeed, are necessary to each other, for the very reason that "enlightenment" and "new being" are two sides of the same coin.

"The heart of Buddhist meditation" is the development of mindfulness or awareness. The program of training in mindfulness is not arbitrary, but is based on one of the most popular texts in the Theravada or Pali canon known as the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, or the text on the foundation, arousing or setting up of mindfulness. Because of the significance of this text for all forms of Buddhist meditation, this essay is an attempt to interpret some of its more salient aspects. Several English translations of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta are readily available, [3] and those unfamiliar with the text may wish to consult one of them.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is, in essence, a paradigm for the attainment of insight (*vipassanā*) into the true nature of things through the vehicle of complete awareness (*sammāsati*). It offers a suggested program, at once both natural and logical, which anyone may profitably follow. There is nothing esoteric or magical about the practice of mindfulness. On the contrary, the Sutta epitomizes the Theravada concern for concrete instruction or the practical application of the principles upon which Buddha-Dhamma is based. Unlike certain forms of Buddhist meditation,

practice in mindfulness or awareness stresses simplicity in the extreme. No props are utilized. Chanting, visual symbols, or the burning of incense are all disavowed. Rather, meditation subjects include the most commonplace of objects and events—breathing, the body, the feelings, consciousness, and mental objects. The utterly unadorned nature of Satipaṭṭhāna illustrates one of the principal convictions concerning the Buddhist ideal: that the senses (including the mind) must be transformed for the truth to be perceived.

The Satipaṭṭhāna. Sutta is rooted in the assumption of the deluded condition of the ordinary worldling. Man, in his usual state of being, is led fundamentally astray about the nature of things—in particular, the nature of his own existence. He inaccurately and incorrectly attributes to his own life and the world around him a permanence which, in fact, is not there. This belief stems from ignorance (*avijjā*) produced by sensory fallacies. The fundamental fallacy of sensory knowledge is that of permanence. Driven by an ego-centric cluster of desires (e.g., greed, hatred, lust, ambition) the senses construct an artificial and unreal world. It is a world in which the "self" and "self"-satisfactions are of utmost importance. Threatened by anything which challenges place, status, and position, the senses perpetuate the illusion of a world in which there are "selves" living in a world of "things" with the capacity of guaranteeing happiness and bliss. Because of this delusion men are driven by ambition to destroy other men, and

nation wars against nation in order to establish position, prestige and power.

The Sutta assumes, then, that most of us live in an illusory or unreal world; not in the sense that the mundane or phenomenal world does not really exist but that it does not really exist as we perceive it. The purpose of Satipaṭṭhāna then, is to suggest a means or a way by which the true nature of things might be perceived. Such a task is not an easy one. Buddhist meditation is not mind-wandering reminiscing while contemplating a beautiful sunset. On the contrary, awareness meditation is a disciplined confrontation with the processes of life as they really are. It does not depend upon any outside stimuli, least of all the use of consciousness altering drugs. Satipaṭṭhāna minimizes or eliminates the sensory distortions controverting the truth about the nature of things. It aims to provide an objective understanding of self and world through an analytical method in a controlled environment. For the person who perseveres, the rewards of meditation are great; yet, one does not meditate to gain anything. One meditates simply to be able to see things as they are, and, hence to be as one really is.

If you were to select one of the most natural occurrences for use as a meditation subject, what would you choose? Such a subject should be readily available, easily employed and appropriate to any set of circumstances. After some reflection you would probably agree that our breathing fits all of these requirements, thereby, making an ideal

meditation subject. Indeed, in Indian religions the concept of breath has been an ubiquitous feature. In ancient mythological texts, the breath was referred to as a cosmogonic element and, hence, endowed with creative force. It is no wonder that on an individual level in Indian Yogic traditions the breath should also be looked upon as possessing creative power. In Hatha Yoga, the disciplining of respiration (*ānāpānasati*) is a specific exercise with the purpose of unifying the consciousness in order to penetrate levels of awareness unavailable to the ordinary man. [4] Buddhism, as part of the greater Indian religious tradition, is an inheritor of the important role of breath, especially in relation to Yogic or meditative techniques. Frequent references are made to mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) in Theravada Buddhist texts and an entire sutta of the *Majjhima-Nikāya* (No. 118) is devoted to this subject.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta begins, appropriately, with mindfulness of breathing. It is the specific exercise designed to produce awareness of the body and bodily processes. It is important to note that meditative awareness in Theravada Buddhism does not utilize the abstract or general as a means of controlling the consciousness or producing insight. Rather, the concrete and specific provides the locus of mental training. Instruction in bodily awareness, consequently, does not begin with the vague assertion that the meditator should contemplate the nature of the body as a physical organism. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta instructs the monk (*bhikkhu*) to go to a quiet place, bend his legs in a

crosswise position on his lap, keep his body erect and use his breath as a meditation object. “Mindful, he breathes in, and mindful, he breathes out; thinking, ’I breathe in long,’ understands when he is breathing in long; or thinking, ’I breathe out long,’ he understands when he is breathing out long; or thinking, ’I breathe in short,’ he understands when he is breathing in short; or thinking; ’I breathe out short,’ he understands when he is breathing out short. [5]

Consciousness of the breath through the simple exercise of attentiveness to long and short inhalations and exhalations produces a twofold result: a perception of the nature of the entire body and a calming of bodily activities. The incoming and outgoing of the breath accompanied by the rise and fall of the abdomen vividly illustrates the transient and fluctuating nature of the bodily organism. The activities of the body come into being and pass away time and again. There is obviously nothing inherently permanent about the physical body. Not only is there ongoing aging eventuating in death, but each moment of conscious life is an ebb and flow process as seen in the rise and fall of the breath.

The awareness of the nature of the body accompanies a state of calmness resulting from the posture of a detached observer. Think for a moment what the consequences would be if every act you performed was done with conscious attention to every moment, feeling and thought. Such consciousness is not a procedure of rational investigation and conceptualization but simple awareness of everything occurring internally and externally, a conscious noting-

without-attachment of all mental and physical events.

As the Sutta on breathing-mindfulness in the *Middle Length Dialogs* makes evident, being aware of respiration and the mechanism of breathing is not only an exercise in and of itself. In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta attention to breathing is the first exercise designed to lead the meditator to insight. In this regard, it is seen as the initial step of a regular program of training and development. In the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, however, every aspect of the meditative process is accompanied by respiration-mindfulness, or, it might be put the other way around. Thus, contemplating the body, feelings, mind or mental objects is accomplished as part of awareness of the breath. For example, "Experiencing the mind, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; experiencing the mind, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself … Contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself; contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe out, thus he trains himself … " etc. [6] In sum, the text states that the perfection of the four foundations of mindfulness (i.e., body, feelings, mind or consciousness, and mental objects or ideas) is brought about through respiration-mindfulness.

In the Sutta we are investigating, respiration-mindfulness is only one aspect of other forms of bodily awareness. It is followed by even more analytical modes of observation in which every type of bodily activity is carefully scrutinized: "And further, bhikkhus, when he is going, a bhikkhu understands: 'I am going'; when he is standing he

understands: 'I am standing'; when he is sitting, he understands: 'I am sitting'; when he is lying down, he understands: 'I am lying down' or just as his body is disposed so he understands it." [7] The individual striving for insight is to clearly comprehend (*sampajāna*) every movement and act from "behind and stretching" to "wearing the shoulder cloak, the (other two) robes (and) the bowl" to "what is eaten, drunk, chewed and savored" [8] In sum, nothing one does is to go unnoted or unobserved. Acts which for the average person are subconsciously motivated become part of one's conscious life. All physical activity is understood in the sense that it is subject to bare awareness. Such scrutinizing does not mean that the mind endlessly involves itself in discovering reasons and motives for particular acts. Rather, the effort aims to eliminate the bondage of unreflective habituation through the development of a state of total, alert awareness.

Insight meditation, as we can see, places a high degree of confidence in the ability of the human mind to extract the individual from the throes of ignorance. Ignorance is attachment to sensory objects and a fundamental lack of understanding of the nature of sensate existence. According to the commentary on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, true awareness of the body and all its activities leads to only one conclusion: "There is the body, but there is no being, no person, no woman, no man, no soul, nothing pertaining to a soul, no 'I', nothing that is mine, no one, and nothing belonging to anyone." [9]

And again in more poetic form:

> Just as a ship goes on by winds impelled,
> Just as a shaft goes by the bowstring's force,
> So goes this body in its forward course.
> Full driven by the vibrant thrust of air,
> As to the puppet's back the dodge-thread's tied
> So to the body-doll the mind is joined
> And pulled by that the body moves, stands, sits.
> Where is the living being that can stand,
> Or walk, by force of its own inner strength,
> Without conditions that give it support? [10]

Insight meditation achieves, therefore, a full understanding of the conditions of existence. With that understanding the illusion of a self is eliminated.

From mindfulness of breathing and conscious awareness of all forms of bodily activity, insight meditation then moves to examine the body in terms of its constituent parts. Our Sutta admonishes the meditator to reflect upon the parts of the body from the soles of the feet to the crown of the head, and with a characteristic explicitness delineates the body in terms of hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidney, heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs, stomach, bowels, intestines; excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, serum, saliva, mucus, synovic fluid, and urine. This list may offend some readers. Its purpose is, of course, not to paint an attractive picture of the body but to re-enforce the notion that the body is but a collection of

rather repulsive parts: What is there in the body worthy of attachment and desire? Nothing! The mindfulness of the monk is established with the thought that the body *simply exists*. In this manner "he lives independent and clings to naught in the world." [11] The text establishes two mutually interdependent tendencies in regard to mindfulness of the body: the analytical nature of insightful awareness and the reduction of attachment. The first tendency develops beyond the mere examination of the traditional thirty-two bodily parts. The meditator is instructed to consider the body as a composite of the four primary material elements of, earth, water, heat and air. This effort to reduce the body to component elements is an integral part of Theravada Buddhist psychology and philosophy. Other analyzes of the phycho-physical being include the five aggregates *khandha* (body, sensation, perception, consciousness and volitional constituents) and the six sense-bases (*āyatana*) not to mention the extensive analytical categorization found in Buddhist scholastic texts. [12]

The analytical process in which the meditator is involved while examining the body is itself training in controlling the mind. Definitions in this instance are limiting, not in a logically or linguistic sense, but as a mind-focusing exercise. It might be said that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta establishes a rigorous context for the mind rather than the usual one of undisciplined, uncontrolled and untrained mental responses to the human situation. Yet, the reduction of the individual to fundamental elements or constituent parts is

primarily intended to eliminate ego-attachment. If there is no ego or self, how can one be attached to it? The commentary elaborates this meaning with the following simile:

> "Just as if some cow-butcher or a cow-butcher's apprentice, a man who works for his keep, having killed a cow and made it into parts, were sitting at a four-cross-road, just so, a bhikkhu reflects by way of the (bodily) modes (or parts), on the body, in any one of the four postures thus: 'There are in this body the modes of extension (earth), cohesion (water), caloricity (heat) and oscillation (air).'"
>
> "The cow-butcher does not get rid of the cow-percept while feeding the cow, driving it to the place of slaughter, tying it and putting it up there, killing it, and even when seeing the dead carcass of the cow; not until he cuts it up and divides it into parts does the cow-percept disappear. To that butcher sitting (with the meat before him) after cutting up the cow, however, the cow-percept disappears, and the perception of flesh comes into being. To him there is not this thought: 'I am selling the cow; these people are taking away the cow.' But to him, indeed, there occurs this thought: 'I am selling flesh; these people indeed, are taking away flesh …'" **[13]**

Reduction of attachment to the body is furthered in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta by what are referred to as the eight

cemetery contemplations. These are descriptive pictures of the body in varying degrees of decay and dissolution after death-certainly not a very happy thought. The directness of this portion of the text needs no elaboration: “And further, O bhikkhus, if a bhikkhu, in whatever way, sees a body dead, one, two, or three days, swollen, blue, and festering, thrown into the charnel ground, he thinks of his own body thus: ’Verily, this body of mine too is of the same nature as that body, is going to be like that body, and has not got past the condition of becoming like that body.” [14] The remaining cemetery contemplations speak of the body being eaten by animals, as a skeleton held together by fleshy remains, and so on. Each of the descriptions varies slightly but consistently includes the refraining passages of internal and external contemplation of the body in terms of the cycle of origination and dissolution. Such contemplation aims at freeing the meditator from clinging to things in the world and producing a state of independence.

The term “independence,” which occurs again and again in the Sutta, is a most appropriate one. To a profound degree the practice of Buddhist meditation aims to bring into reality a new state of being characterized by total freedom. The old condition of existence, by way of contrast, was one of bondage, or in the terminology of Buddhism, clinging and attachment to the things of the senses It is in this context that the cemetery contemplations should be seen. In and of themselves they are repulsive, and, indeed, they are intended to be. They should, nevertheless, be read with the

thought in mind that one of the "Four Sights" motivating Siddhartha Gautama to begin his spiritual pilgrimage was a dead man. And it should also be remembered that the famous Buddhist formula descriptive of sentient existence, the cycle of Dependent Origination, concludes with old age and death. Thus it is that the concept of death prevails on many levels of Buddhist thought and should not be taken as especially startling in the context of *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

The experience of death in Buddhism plays a double role as it does in other religious traditions. There is, on the one hand, the notion that physical death is the characteristic par excellence of mundane existence. On the other hand, however, there is the idea that death is the entrance into new life. For example, one of the prime attributes of the initiatory rite de passage is the reenactment of a symbolic death scene prior to admittance to full membership into the tribe or society; certainly the act of submersion in Christian baptism was intended to symbolize not only moral purification but dying to an old way of life and entrance into the new life of the church, the body of Christ, and in the Buddhist tradition the use of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* as a funeral breviary or the Zen notion of the "great death" experience prior to enlightenment all offer evidence of the positive role the symbol of death plays in differing religious experiences around the world. In this regard it is significant to note that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, while a manual for meditation, was also used as a death-bed discourse. Thus, although the text describes the death of the physical body in

gruesome detail, the course of training the Sutta prescribes is one of death to the life of attachment and bondage and rebirth in a mode of existence characterized by perfect freedom.

Earlier we referred to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as a paradigm for insight meditation practice. Within the body of the text itself, the elaboration of the mindfulness of the body which we have just outlined is something of an implicit model for other forms of awareness meditation. You will recall that these include awareness of the feelings, the mind or consciousness, and mental objects or ideas. None of these receive the extensive treatment given to the mindfulness of the body, perhaps, as we have suggested, because the form of mental investigation has already been established. The three remaining meditation subjects taken together constitute the non-corporeal or non-material aspects of existence designated by the rubric, *nāma* (lit. name). Hence, one of the earliest references in the Pali texts to the structure of individuality is *nāma-rūpa* (lit. name and form) or corporeality and non-corporeality. The term eventually comes to be identified with the formula of the Five Aggregates used to describe the components of a human being. The contemplation of feeling (*vedanā*) is described by the commentary on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as the easiest of the non-material subjects of mindfulness. In the Sutta it is categorized into three kinds or classes: pleasurable, painful, and neutral (or neither pleasurable nor painful). The discourse in the commentary is worth quoting at some

length:

> "… the Blessed One speaking of the non-material or mental subject of meditation speaks by way of feeling. While expounding by way of sense-impression or consciousness the subject of meditation does not become clear. It seems dark. But by way of feeling it becomes clear. Why? Because of the clearness of the arising of feeling. Indeed the arising of pleasant or painful feeling is clear. When pleasant feeling arises spreading through and flowing over the whole body making one to utter the words: 'Ah 'tis joy', it is like causing one to eat fresh clarified butter cooled in very cold water a hundred times after being melted again and again, also a hundred times; it is like causing one to be massaged with an emollient oil with a hundred pieces; and it is like causing one to be cooled of a burning fever with a thousand pots of cold water."
>
> "When painful feeling arises spreading through and flowing over the whole body making one to bewail with the words: 'Alas, what woe', it is like the applying on one of a heated plowshare; it is like the sprinkling upon one of molten copper; and it is comparable to the hurling into dried grass and trees, in the forest, of bundles of wood firebrands."
>
> "Thus the arising of pleasant or painful feeling becomes clear, but the arising of neither-pleasant-

nor-painful feeling is dark, and unclear. The neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling becomes clear to one who grasps it methodically thinking: 'At the disappearance of pleasure and pain, by way of contrariety to the-pleasant and the unpleasant, is the neutral neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling.'"

"To what is it comparable? To a deerhunter following the hoofmarks of a deer which midway having gone up a flat rock is fleeing. The hunter after seeing the hoofmarks on the hither and thither side of the rock, without seeing any trace in the middle, knows by inference: 'Here the animal went up and, here, it went down; in the middle, on the flat rock, possibly it went through this part.'"

"Like the hoofmark at the place of going up the arising of pleasurable feeling becomes clear. Like the hoofmark at the place of descent the arising of painful feeling becomes clear. Like the grasping through inference of the part traversed over the rock by the deer is the laying hold of the neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling methodically with the thought: 'At the disappearance of pleasure and pain, by way of contrariety to the pleasant and the unpleasant, is the neutral neither-pleasant-nor painful feeling!'" [15]

This lengthy exposition provides an insight into the nature of commentarial literature with its somewhat scholastic, analytic flavor and the extensive use of description, analogy

and simile. It does not, however, provide much practical information in regard to the way in which the feelings might be used as a subject of mindfulness. A consistent interpretation by such contemporary meditation teachers as Sobhana Dhammasudhi of Thailand is not to let feelings entering the consciousness become obstructive to attentive awareness. In order to overcome persistent, interruptive feelings, it is sometimes necessary to use them as temporary meditation subjects themselves. As Dhammasudhi frequently insists in his lectures to Western meditators, in insight meditation everything is to be understood for what it really is. Therefore, if a meditator is bothered by pleasurable or painful feelings, rather than trying to reject or dismiss them, he should become aware of what they are, their arising and passing away.

Such awareness of non-corporeal meditation subjects readily leads to a conclusion which forms an important part of Buddhist teaching, namely, the interdependence of mind and body. For example, Western student meditators report that meditation postures are difficult. Often the lotus or half-lotus position proves to be very painful, especially in the beginning days. Obviously, the feeling of pain is not an isolated or independent phenomenon, but is directly related to discomfort in sitting in an unaccustomed posture for long periods of time. Some students discover that being aware of the feeling of pain seems miraculously to alleviate it or ease the source of pain. In ordinary parlance today we might refer to such a phenomena as the power of mind over

matter, but from the Buddhist viewpoint it is an illustration of the interdependence of the mental and the material. A familiar analogy employed by the commentator, Buddhaghosa, makes the point as follows:

> "… a man born blind and a stool-crawling cripple wanted to go somewhere. The blind man said to the cripple, 'Look, I can do what should be done by legs, but I have no eyes with which to see what is rough and smooth.' The cripple said, 'Look, I can do what should be done by eyes, but I have no leg with which to go and come.' The blind man was delighted, and he made the cripple climb upon his shoulder. Sitting on the blind man's shoulder the cripple spoke thus, 'Leave the left, take the right; leave the right, take the left.'"
>
> "Herein, the blind man has no efficient power; he is impotent; he cannot travel by his own efficient power, by his own strength. And the cripple has no efficient power; he is impotent; he cannot travel by his own efficient power, by his own strength. But there is nothing to prevent their going when they support each other. So too, mentality has no efficient power; it does not arise or occur in such and such functions by its own efficient power. But there is nothing to prevent their occurrence when they support each other." **[16]**

The interdependence of the mental and the material has

more far-reaching consequences than the possibility of dispelling pain by being aware of the feeling of the pain. It indicates the Buddhist concern for the whole man. To some, Buddhist meditation may seem, in its own way, to be overly cerebral. That is, it appears to be primarily mental training. Although such an interpretation is not without justification, it is also obvious that the successful meditator has been able to train his body to sit for long periods without undue discomfort. On a higher level, Buddhist meditation teachers both past and present insist that only a person of high moral character will be able to focus his attention and train his mind to a sufficient degree to gain true wisdom. Also, and perhaps most significantly, the meditator who has gained genuine insight is a changed person. There is a definite moral dimension to the practice of insight meditation even though the state of enlightenment transcends moral categories. The freedom gained by one who has penetrated to the truth of the nature of things has an ontic significance with profound implications for a person's attitudes and the way he acts.

The third meditation subject discussed in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is *citta*—mind, consciousness or, perhaps, thought. Here the text follows a now familiar pattern of delineation: "Here, O bhikkhus, a bhikkhu understands the consciousness with lust, as with lust; the consciousness without lust as without lust; the consciousness with hate, as with hate; the consciousness without hate as without hate; the consciousness with ignorance as with ignorance; the

consciousness without ignorance as without ignorance; the shrunken state of consciousness as the shrunken state; the distracted state of consciousness as the distracted state; the state of consciousness becomes great as the state becomes great; the state of consciousness does not become great as the state does not become great; the state of consciousness with some other mental state superior to it as the state with something mentally higher; the state of consciousness with no other mental state superior to it as the state with nothing mentally higher; the quieted state of consciousness as the quiet state; the state of consciousness not quieted as the state not quieted; the freed state of consciousness as freed; and the unfreed state of consciousness as unfreed." [17]

The text does not say that the meditator who is aware of lust, hatred, ignorance, smallness, mental inferiority, agitation or bondage should feel guilty for such thoughts or that he should make an immediate effort to eliminate them through sheer dint of will. Indeed, to become embroiled in the agony of guilt for failing to think only the right thoughts is itself a form of attachment to be overcome. The Sutta simply instructs the meditator to be conscious of these negative qualities as well as of positive traits. From the Buddhist viewpoint, lust, hatred and ignorance could be overcome through the awareness that they exist. It must be remembered that the Buddhist assertion about the power of awareness is made within the context of the practical discipline of attentive, insight meditation practice.

The last section of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta deals with the

topic of *dhamma*, one of the most elusive terms in Buddhism. In this context it carries the meaning of mental objects or, as translated by T.W. Rhys Davids, "ideas." The ideas which the Sutta discusses in this rather lengthy section include some of the fundamental teachings of Theravada Buddhism: the five *nivāraṇas* or hindrances (i.e., sensuality, anger, sloth and torpor, agitation and worry, doubt), the five aggregates of grasping (i.e. material form, sensation, perception, volitional elements, consciousness), the *āyatanas* or sense bases, the seven factors of enlightenment and the Four Noble Truths. In and of themselves these formulae offer a near synopsis of Buddhist teachings. In one sense, it is precisely the truth of these teachings which the Buddhist meditator comes to understand. Yet, in another sense, these teachings as stated are merely mental objects, ideas of which one is to be aware but not attached. If one achieves true insight the ideas as formulated are not differentiated from the awareness of them. They are ultimately, therefore, not *dhamma* in the denotation of mental objects but *Dhamma* as the truth. "Know the truth and the truth shall make you free." To know the truth in the fullest sense, is to be the truth. It is not to know a set of propositions or to memorize a few formulae. Insight meditation aims at nothing less than making the truth and me one. It is not an easy task although some may have more aptitude and ability than others—or should we say, more intuitive insight.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta sets forth a means to gain enlightenment: It does so through describing the application

of *sati* or awareness to four aspects of human life-body, feelings, consciousness and ideas. The importance of this particular method can hardly be exaggerated and its place in the Buddhist scheme of meditation training is forever guaranteed. For those who merely read the text there is no personal validation that its claims are true. The Buddha admonished his followers to accept no teaching, even his own, without testing, and we must be similarly admonished in order to test the truth of the Buddha's claim:

> "This is the only way, Bhikkhus, for the purification of beings; for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbāna, namely, the four arousings of mindfulness." **[18]**

Notes

1. Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (London: Rider & Co., 1962), 79.
2. Ibid.
3. Acknowledgment is made to Soma Thera's translation of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and commentary published as *The Way of Mindfulness* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1967) and Nyanaponika Thera's discussion of Satipaṭṭhāna in *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*. See also *The Foundations of Mindfulness*, trans. by Nyanasatta Thera in The Wheel 19.
4. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom,* trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 56.
5. *The Way of Mindfulness,* trans. Soma Thera (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1967), 1.
6. *Mindfulness of Breathing,* trans. Ñāṇamoli Thera, 2nd ed. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1964), 7.
7. *The Way of Mindfulness,* 7.
8. Ibid., 3.
9. Ibid., 51.

10. Ibid, 56.

11. Ibid, p. 2.

12. See *Compendium of Philosophy*, trans. Shwe Zan Aung (London: Luzac & Co., 1963).

13. *The Way of Mindfulness*, 100.

14. Ibid., 5.

15. Ibid., 107–108.

16. Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification*, trans. Ñāṇamoli Thera (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society), 691.

17. *The Way of Mindfulness*, 9–10.

18. Ibid., 1.

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