

初期佛教之四念處

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提要

本文探討初期佛教典籍中的四念處，以巴利文四部與漢譯四阿含為主要研究資料。

本文認為四念處可能原本是一般性的通則，適用於不同的修行方法。巴利文與漢譯的各版本《念處經》雖載有許多具體的修行方法，然而各版所載修行方法的種類彼此差異頗大，本文試圖從此經的成立與發展來了解其中的問題。本文探討經中常見的以四禪為中心的修行過程與四念處的關係。本文指出四念處中的身，受，心即為五蘊中的色，受，識三蘊，並討論為什麼只有此三蘊特別被聯繫到四念處。

The Four *Satipaṭṭhānas* in Early Buddhism

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I. Introduction

This essay is an attempt to explore the teachings on the four *satipaṭṭhānas* (establishments of mindfulness or foundations of mindfulness) in early Buddhism.¹ The principle sources for this essay will be the Pali *Nikāyas* and the Chinese translation of the *Āgamas*. The *Abhidhamma*, both Pali and Chinese versions, and the Pali commentaries will be utilised in aid of the understanding of this subject in the early Buddhist texts. It is worth exploring what the four *satipaṭṭhānas* originally refer to and which accounts could be regarded as the essential or earlier teachings on the four *satipaṭṭhānas*.

II. Various Versions of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*

As R. M. L. Gethin (1992a: 44) indicates, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* appear identical except for the addition in the latter of a detailed

¹ I would like to thank Professor Gombrich for his very helpful guidance and correcting my English. I would also like to thank Dr Sue Hamilton and Dr Eivind Kahrs for their useful suggestions. I am also grateful to the members of editing & reviewing committee of the *Satyābhisamaya: A Buddhist Studies Quarterly* for their valuable comments, which gave me an opportunity to improve this essay.

exposition of the four noble truths.² Both texts seem to be a composite of extracts from other texts. Masahiro Shimoda (1985: 545-6) shows that several passages in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* are found in other *suttas* in the *Nikāyas*. He argues that the accounts in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* are not necessarily related to the four *satipaṭṭhānas* and that they are common in early Buddhist texts. Gethin (1992a: 45) also notes:

these fourteen practices³ that can form the basis of *kāyānupassanā* draw on themes and stock passages that are found scattered throughout the *Nikāyas*. In effect, then, the various *Nikāya* elements that might constitute *kāyānupassanā* are brought together to give something of a summary account.

Gethin (1992a: 44-45) gives an account of the basic structure of the (*Mahā*)*satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as follows:

After the initial setting of the scene the discourse opens with what I call 'the *ekāyana* formula':

Ekāyana, bhikkhus, is this path for the purification of beings, for passing beyond sorrow and grief, for the disappearance of pain and discontent, for the attainment of the right way, for the realization of

² T. W. Rhys Davids (1910: 337) says: 'The *Dīgha* addition is interesting as containing a fragment of Old Commentary (as old as the texts) of which other fragments are found in the *Nikāyas*, and also in the *Vinaya*'. K. R. Norman (1983: 40) states: 'The addition uses a style of definition which is similar to that found in the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, and its unusually detailed character has led to the suggestion that it is perhaps a fragment from an early commentary which has crept into the canon (referring to Rhys Davids' statement cited above)'.

³ These refer to the practices described in the six sections of *kāyānupassanā* stated below, where the sixth section contains nine practices.

nibbāna—that is the four *satipaṭṭhānas*.⁴

This is immediately followed by the basic *satipaṭṭhāna* formula as stated at the opening of this chapter. The remainder of the *sutta* consists basically of a detailed description of the practice of *kāyānupassanā*, *vedanānupassanā*, *cittānupassanā* and *dhammānupassanā*; in other words each of the four parts of the basic formula is explained by way of example and subsequently expanded.

The basic *satipaṭṭhāna* formula is:

The four establishments of mindfulness. What four? Here, monks, a monk dwells contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, possessed of mindfulness, having removed covetousness and grief for the world. He dwells contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, fully aware, possessed of mindfulness, having removed covetousness and grief for the world. He dwells contemplating mind as mind, ardent, fully aware, possessed of mindfulness, having removed covetousness and grief for the world. He dwells contemplating *dhammas* as *dhammas*, ardent, fully aware, possessed of mindfulness, having removed covetousness and grief for the world.⁵

The detailed descriptions of the practice of *vedanānupassanā*

⁴ MN I, 55-56; DN II 290: *ekāyano ayaṃ bhikkhave maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā sokapariddavānaṃ samatikkamāya dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthagamāya ñāyassa adhigamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya, yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā.*

⁵ MN I, 56; DN II, 290: *cattāro satipaṭṭhānā. katame cattāro?idha bhikkhave bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ, vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ, citte cittānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ, dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ.*

(contemplation of feelings) and that of *cittānupassanā* (contemplation of mind) are much shorter and simpler than the other two. The detailed description of the practice of *kāyānupassanā* (contemplation of the body) can be divided into six sections:

- (i) mindfulness of breathing,
- (ii) the four postures,
- (iii) full awareness,
- (iv) foulness—the bodily parts,
- (v) elements,
- (vi) the nine charnel ground contemplations.

The detailed description of the practice of *dhammānupassanā* (contemplation of *dhammas*) is composed of five sections:

- (i) the five hindrances,
- (ii) the five aggregates,
- (iii) the six bases,
- (iv) the seven enlightenment factors,
- (v) the four noble truths.⁶

Lambert Schmithausen (1976) takes the basic *satipaṭṭhāna* formula, which he calls 'the short definition of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*', as a standard for judging the authenticity of other parts of these two texts. He assumes that the detailed description of the practice of *vedanānupassanā* and that of *cittānupassanā* have been passed down relatively unaltered in the Pali and other versions, because they agree best with the short definition of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, and because in

⁶ These headings are given in Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995: 145-8, 151-4.

these two cases the divergences among different versions⁷ are limited to inessential details. Then he proposes two criteria for deciding to what extent the components of the detailed description of *kāyānupassanā* and that of *dhammānupassanā* are authentic: one is the extent to which individual components have parallel versions in the teaching passed down through other schools; the other is the extent to which individual components fit in with the detailed description of *vedanānupassanā* and that of *cittānupassanā* and the short definition. Accordingly he argues that (i) the five hindrances, (iii) the six bases and (iv) the seven enlightenment factors in the detailed description of *dhammānupassanā* and (ii) the bodily postures in the detailed description of *kāyānupassanā* are authentic. He (1976: 251-2) points out that the remaining five sections in the detailed description of *kāyānupassanā* are either found elsewhere in the Canon as an independent exercise or as a component of another particular set of teachings (i, iii, vi), or can be reworkings of older materials (iv, v).

However, Schmithausen's explanation is far too brief: 'The explanations given for contemplation of feelings and of mind agree best with the short definition (B), which says that a monk constantly follows his feelings (or mind, as object of observation) with his contemplation' (1976: 247). This explanation is insufficient to show how they agree with the short definition. In addition, the short definition, which he uses as a criterion for judging the authenticity of

⁷ He uses six versions: 1) Pali version; 2) Chinese *Madhyama Āgama* (T 1, 582b 7 ff.); 3) Chinese *Ekottara Āgama* (T 2, 568a 1 ff.); 4) Pv 203,22-207,14; 5) ŚA 612 b 28-616 c 7; 6) ŚrBh 291, 5 ff.; 371, 7 ff.; 203, 4 ff.; 111, 11 ff.

the detailed descriptions of the four types of *anupassanā*, is not found in either of the Chinese versions of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*,⁸ whereas the occurrence of similar descriptions in different versions of the text (or teachings preserved by different schools) is an important support for the authenticity of these descriptions according to his argument. Moreover, the authenticity of the detailed description of *cittānupassanā* is doubtful. Shimoda (1985: 545) indicates that the same passage in the detailed description of *cittānupassanā* is found in other *suttas*,⁹ and that in these *suttas* it is a description of how an enlightened person understands the minds of other beings, while only the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* takes it as contemplation of one's own mind. I would like to point out that this passage itself does not specify whose mind is being contemplated; it runs as follows: 'A monk understands a mind with lust as a mind with lust. He understands a mind without lust as a mind without lust...with hatred... without hatred...'¹⁰ (The same is said of other pairs of mental states). Moreover, this passage should be meant to describe a method of practice, whereas in many other *suttas*¹¹ the same passage refers to a special power as an achievement, and it is always among a list of achievements.¹² As far as I know, in all contexts

⁸ The texts in the Chinese *Madhyama Āgama* (T 1, 582b 7 ff.) and *Ekottara Āgama* (T 2, 568a 1 ff.) mentioned above.

⁹ DN I, 79 (it should be 79-80); I, 232 (it should be 233); MN I, 34; MN I, 69.

¹⁰ MN I, 59; DN II, 299: *bhikkhu sarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ sarāgaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti. vītarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ vītarāgaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti... sadosaṃ... vītadosaṃ...*

¹¹ E.g. DN I, 79-80; DN I, 233; DN III, 281; MN I, 34; MN I, 69; MN III, 12; MN III, 98; SN II, 121-122; SN II, 213; SN V, 265; SN V, 304; AN I, 255; AN III, 17-18; AN III, 280.

¹² This passage in the Chinese versions can also be found at other places in the *Āgamas* where it refers to a special power among a list of achievements. E.g. T 1, 553b; T 2, 776b.

except for the (*Mahā*)*satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, this passage is preceded by the sentence ‘He understands (or ‘May I understand’ or ‘I understand’ or ‘Do you understand’) the minds of other beings, of other persons, having encompassed them with [his (my, your) own] mind’,¹³ which makes it clear that this passage indicates the ability to understand others’ minds. Without this sentence the meaning of this passage would be very vague in that we cannot tell whose mind this passage refers to. The frequent occurrence of this passage preceded by the above sentence¹⁴ shows that the complete stock passage must include this sentence. Since different *Nikāyas* were handed down orally, and probably redacted, by different *bhāṇakas* (‘reciters’ or ‘preachers’),¹⁵ the fact that this ‘complete stock passage’ is found at so many places in all the four primary *Nikāyas* suggests that this ‘complete stock passage’ could belong to a very early stratum, or at least that it was accepted as essential by *bhāṇakas* of all these four *Nikāyas*. Therefore, the passage in the detailed description of *cittānupassanā* must originally refer to a special power as found at many other places, where it is always preceded by the foregoing sentence ‘He understands (or ‘May I understand’ or ‘I understand’ or ‘Do you understand’) the minds of

¹³ *parasattānaṃ parapuggalānaṃ cetasā ceto paricca pajānāti (or pajāneyyaṃ, or pajānāmi, or pajānātha).*

¹⁴ E.g. all the passages cited in note 11.

¹⁵ K. R. Norman (1983: 9) states: ‘We may deduce from the fact that versions of one and the same *sutta* or utterance in different parts of the canon sometimes differ, that the *bhāṇakas* responsible for the transmission of each text were quite independent, and were not influenced by the traditions of the *bhāṇakas* of other *nikāyas*’. Norman (1989: 34) says: ‘the *bhāṇakas* did not merely recite texts, but also added to their collections’. Oskar von Hinüber (1997: 25) also states that *bhāṇakas* may have been the redactors of the texts.

other beings, of other persons, having encompassed them with [his (my, your) own] mind'. The compilers of the *(Mahā)satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* borrowed this passage from the 'complete stock passage' in older texts, using it as a detailed description of *cittānupassanā*.

Therefore, Schmithausen's argument about judging the authenticity of components of the *(Mahā)satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* seems untenable. I will deal with this problem using a different approach in the next section.

III. A General Guideline for the Buddhist Practices

1

Just as the MN and DN contain the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* respectively, the SN too has a part called *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta*. Since different *Nikāyas* were transmitted by different *bhāṇakas*, ideas occurring in both the *(Mahā)satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta* are most likely to be earlier teachings on the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. Let us compare the contents of the *(Mahā)satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* with those of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta*. Only the following points are common to the *(Mahā)satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta*:

- 1) the *ekāyana* formula as stated by Gethin (1992a: 44) above. (e.g. MN I, 55-56; SN V, 141)
- 2) the basic *satipaṭṭhāna* formula as stated by Gethin (1992a: 45) above. (e.g. MN I, 56; SN V, 141)

- 3) the *samudayavaya* formula: he dwells contemplating the nature of arising in the body; he dwells contemplating the nature of vanishing in the body; he dwells contemplating the nature of arising and vanishing in the body... (The same is said of feelings, mind, and *dhammas*).¹⁶
- 4) the *sampajāna* formula, i.e. the section about full awareness in the detailed description of *kāyānupassanā*: he acts in full awareness when going forward and going backward; he acts in full awareness when looking ahead and looking behind; he acts in full awareness when bending back and stretching out (his limbs); he acts in full awareness when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl; he acts in full awareness when eating, drinking, chewing and tasting; he acts in full awareness when defecating and urinating; he acts in full awareness when going, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, speaking and keeping silent.¹⁷

We can find that the first three formulae are all general guidelines without any detailed explanation of the practice of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. The fourth will be discussed later. In fact, neither in the Pali *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta* nor in its equivalent in the Chinese

¹⁶ E.g. MN I, 56, 59, 60 ; SN V, 183: *samudayadhammānupassī (vā) kāyasmim viharati, vayadhammānupassī (vā) kāyasmim viharati, samudayavayadhammānupassī (vā) kāyasmim viharati...*

¹⁷ E.g. MN I, 57; SN V, 142: *abhikkante paṭikkante sampajānakārī hoti, ālokite vilokite sampajānakārī hoti, sammāñjite pasārite s. h., saṅghāṭipattacīvaradhāraṇe s.h., asite pīte khāyite sāyite s. h., uccārapassāvakamme s. h., gate ṭhite nisinne sutte jāgarite bhāsīte tuṅhībhāve sampajānakārī hoti.*

translation of the *Samyukta Āgama* (Chapter 24) is there any detailed explanation of the practice of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* except the above-mentioned 4) *sampajāna* formula and the following *suttas*:

- a) *sutta* 10 (*sūtra* 615), which will be discussed later
- b) *sutta* 35

The contents of other *suttas* (*sūtras*) are mostly comprised of the benefits of the practice of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, its importance, its attributes and its relation with *sīla*. Consequently, an examination of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta* and the possibly earlier teachings preserved in the (*Mahā*)*satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* shows that almost all the statements concerning the four *satipaṭṭhānas* are general guidelines or information other than how to practise them. As indicated by Gethin and Schmithausen, many of the detailed and concrete methods of practice described in the (*Mahā*)*satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* are borrowed from other contexts. Not all of them are originally meant for the four *satipaṭṭhānas*.¹⁸

2

The *ekāyana* formula is found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the first, eighteenth and forty-third *suttas* of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta*. As Gethin (1992a: 59) points out, in the

¹⁸ E.g. the detailed description of *cittānupassanā* discussed above, and the practice 'with teeth clenched and tongue pressed against the palate, restraining mind with mind' found in the detailed description of *kāyānupassanā* in the Chinese *Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra* (T 1, 582c). J. Bronkhorst (1993: 1) points out that the latter is one of the practices which the Buddha, before his enlightenment, tried out and then discovered to be fruitless (MN I, 242).

four primary *Nikāyas* the formula describing the *ekāyana-magga* is only applied to the *satipaṭṭhānas*.¹⁹ He also discusses the possible meanings of *ekāyana* in this context. He is in favour of interpreting it as 'going alone' and 'going to one' (Gethin, 1992a: 64). Although he has already considered the passage in the Bṛh 2.4.11 (Gethin, 1992a: 61), I would like to suggest an alternative interpretation of *ekāyana-magga* based on that passage. Here *ekāyana* means a 'point of convergence' (Olivelle, 1998: 68-69). Likewise, the *ekāyana-magga* could imply that the four *satipaṭṭhānas* constitute the path which is a converging point for various types of practice. This interpretation is actually in accordance with his statement that 'As for the *Nikāyas*, there is a sense in which, of the seven sets, the four *satipaṭṭhānas* are the most versatile and universally applicable.... with the four *satipaṭṭhānas* we have the nearest thing in the four *Nikāyas* to basic general instruction in Buddhist "[meditation] practice" or *yoga*' (Gethin, 1992a: 65-66). This interpretation of *ekāyana-magga* can also explain why the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta* and the possibly earlier teachings found in the (*Mahā*)*satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* only contain general guidelines with very limited concrete descriptions of how to practise. As a guideline, the four *satipaṭṭhānas* are to be applied to various sets of practices, or cover these practices.

¹⁹ However, in the Chinese SĀ this formula is found to refer also to other sets of practice such as the four *iddhipādas* (T 2, 147b), and mindfulness of the *Buddha*, *dharmā*, *saṃgha*, morality, giving and gods (T 2, 143c-144a).

