

Anusaya  
Exploring the Predisposition for Suffering

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“For whom no latent tendencies whatsoever exist;  
The root of un-skillfulness has been pulled out.

This bhikkhu has abandoned the near and far;  
As a snake sheds off the old.”<sup>1</sup>

The central aim of the Tathāgata’s discourses is compressed into the Four Noble Truths (4 NT), as these are directed to the cessation of suffering (Pāli *dukkha*) with reference to all mercurial nuance of dissatisfying experience. Established also in the discourses were contemplative practices designed to direct awareness to the causes of this *dukkha*, and to apply this awareness along a path of gradual training of direct knowledge which would lead to its cessation. Once on this journey the practitioner is aware of the *task to be made*<sup>2</sup>, firstly to realise what *dukkha* is (1<sup>st</sup> NT) and to direct contemplative awareness and knowledge built upon that realisation to knowing that craving (P. *taṇhā*) is the *cause of dukkha* (2<sup>nd</sup> NT) – ‘Whatever craving that leads to further becoming; connected with pleasure and lust enjoyed here and there, such as; craving for gratification of the senses, craving for becoming, craving for not becoming.’<sup>3</sup>. It is the mental processes that bear this craving that leads to further becoming and the continuance of dissatisfying experiences. And this is what the contemplative must directly know in order to relinquish *dukkha* entirely (3<sup>rd</sup> NT). And to see this *dukkha* and its cause directly – an empirical, sensate knowing, rather than conceptual – is the task of the Tathāgata’s contemplative methods for progressing along the path to the complete release of *dukkha* and peace (4<sup>th</sup> NT).

The challenge of this contemplative path is to tune-in to the trainings of *calm* and *insight*<sup>4</sup> (physical and mental composure in connection with mindfulness and clear-knowing of sensations and their objects) and bringing this to the task of discerning the mental tendencies which will arise with sensations and in turn give rise to craving and its unwholesome results. It is these mental tendencies which bear craving and all of its tentacles of intention that could be summed-up as the predisposition for *dukkha*.

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<sup>1</sup> “Yassānusayā na santi keci mūlā akusalā samūhatāse, So bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ urago jinṇamiva tacaṃ purāṇaṃ.” – Sn. 1.1.14

<sup>2</sup> “Therefore, bhikkhus, the effort to be made is ‘this is dukkha’; the effort to be made is ‘this is the arising of dukkha’; the effort to be made is ‘this is the cessation of dukkha’; the effort to be made is ‘this is the way of progress leading to the cessation of dukkha’.” (‘idaṃ dukkhaṃ ti yogo karaṇīyo, ‘ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo ti’ yogo karaṇīyo, ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodho ti yogo karaṇīyo, ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ti yogo karaṇīyoti’) – SN 5.12.4.1

<sup>3</sup> “yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatra tatrābhinandinī, seyyathīdaṃ: kāmataṇhā bhavataṇhā vibhavataṇhā”. Dhammacakkappavattanasuttaṃ – SN. 56.11

<sup>4</sup> Pāli *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Contemplative calm (*samatha*) is developed to quiet disruptive mind-states and desires, while insight (*vipassanā*) is applied to discern how these disruptive states are released through wisdom. (Vijjābhāgiya Sutta – AN. 2.31)



a catalyst to the presumption ‘I am’ and all that such would claim through the behaviors attached to the senses.

For the commoner not trained in contemplative practice, this predisposition is mere habit and rarely noticed. Simply put, one is of the habit to identify with sensate-experience as property of a stable point-of-view – *myself*.<sup>16</sup> And because the senses and their objects are unstable, this habit leads to frustration as one tries to prop-up the illusion of stability against ever-changing sensate and cognitive experiences. This in turn manifests as dissatisfaction, as *dukkha* in its various forms from mild agitation and angst, to profound mental distress.

For the contemplative this habit is redirected by the practice of mindfulness (P. *sati*) of these very same sensate events and attendant mental processes. Effectively, early Buddhist contemplative *mindfulness* is accomplished through a balance of ‘calm’ (*samatha*) and ‘insight’ (*vipassanā*). Calm sustains temporary release of disquieting mental states and through insight is developed the liberating wisdom of how the causes of these are abandoned.

In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta we read the instruction to abide ‘*with intense endeavor, attentiveness and mindfulness*’<sup>17</sup> when contemplating the objects of body, sensations, mind and mind-states. Here mindfulness and intense endeavour (*sati, ātāpa*) keep one to the task of the object, while attentiveness or clear-knowing (*sampajāna*) carefully examines everything in that condition which has arisen.

Even still, one can have all of that and miss the point of contemplative endeavor, which is to see *how* to release unwholesome states. In the Sūda Sutta<sup>18</sup> we have the simile of the unskilful cook who, although skilled in preparation of various delicacies, fails to ascertain the likes of his master and is consequently not rewarded for his work. He is compared to an unskilful bhikkhu who, although he does abide ‘*with intense endeavor, attentiveness and mindfulness*’ in the objects of *satipaṭṭhāna*, his mind is not composed, the defilements of the hindrances are not abandoned; and so he consequently he does not attain a pleasant abiding here and now with mindful clear-knowing. The Tathāgata explains that this is because ‘*he has failed to ascertain the sign of his own mind*’.<sup>19</sup>

What is pivotal between the foolish and the wise in this simile is the quality of mental composure – *samādhīyati* passive of *samādahati* for the composed mind – which is a calm and collected condition in contemplative work. This *samādhīyati* establishes a stable base for *mindful clear-knowing* to fully intuit ‘*the sign of ones own mind*’. And this supports *mindful clear-knowing (satisampajāññāya)* of exactly what is present through a calm and stable balance; to see not only the presence of ordinary sensations, but also the mental habits and attendant states – wholesome or unwholesome – as to how these arise

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<sup>16</sup> This is not with reference to ‘I’ or ‘myself’ in the conventional sense, rather the notion of a stable continuity of being.

<sup>17</sup> Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN.10), Uddeso : ‘...ātāpī sampajāno satimā...’

<sup>18</sup> SN. 5.3.1.8. (47.8)

<sup>19</sup> ‘*sakassa cittaṣṣa nimittaṃ na uggaṇhāti*’ *Ibid.*

and what supports them. This reminds us that mental calm (*samatha*) and composure (*samādhi*) are an integral part of wisdom development toward release:

“And what, bhikkhus, is the development of composure, when developed and practiced, leads to *mindful clear-knowing*? Bhikkhus, it is when a bhikkhu knows the arising of sensations of feeling, knows their presence, and knows when they have vanished; he knows the arising of sense-perceptions, knows their presence, and knows when they have vanished; he knows the arising of thoughts, knows their presence, and knows when they have vanished.”<sup>20</sup>

We find this dynamic of observation mentioned in first para of what has been called ‘The Refrain of Insight’ throughout the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta:

“Thus he abides observing body in the body (or other objects respectively) internally; abides observing body in body externally; abides observing body in the body both internally and externally; *abides observing the arising of phenomena in the body; abides observing the fading away of phenomena in the body; abides observing the arising and fading away of phenomena in the body.*”<sup>21</sup>

Just as we find in the opening lines of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta we read the instructions for a contemplatives resolve ‘*with intense endeavor, attentiveness and mindfulness*’, likewise mental composure has the *four means of potency (catunnaṃ iddhipādānaṃ)*:

“Bhikkhus, there is a bhikkhu who has developed the means of potency possessed of intention of exertion toward *resolve, effort, will, examination* for (mental) composure.”<sup>22</sup>

Which gives the contemplative the ability to exercise the *four right exertions (catunnaṃ sammappadhānānaṃ)*:

1. the non-arising of evil, un-skilful states 2. the abandonment of evil, unskilful states that are arisen 3. the arising of un-arisen skilful states 4. the stability of arisen skilful states; for their clarity, abundance, fullness, development and fulfillment; for which he is *determined, exerts energy, engages his mind and strives.*”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Katamā ca bhikkhave samādhibhāvanā bhāvitā bahulikatā satisampajaññāya saṃvattati? Idha bhikkhave bhikkhuno viditā vedanā uppajjanti. Viditā upaṭṭhahanti. Viditā abbatthaṃ gacchanti. Viditā saññā uppajjanti. Viditā upaṭṭhahanti. Viditā abbatthaṃ gacchanti. Viditā vitakkā uppajjanti viditā upaṭṭhahanti. – AN 4.1.5.1. (4.41)*

<sup>21</sup> MN.1.1.10 (1.1): *Iti ajjhataṃ vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati. Bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati. Ajjhatabhiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati. Samudayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati. Vayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati. Samudayavayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati.*

<sup>22</sup> *Idha bhikkhave, bhikkhu chandasamādhīpadhānasāṅkhārasamannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ bhāveti, viriya ... pe ... citta ... pe ... vīmamsā ... pe ... – SN 5.7.1. 2. (51.2)*

<sup>23</sup> ‘...anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppādāya ... pe ... uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya ... pe ... anuppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya ... pe ... uppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ thitīyā asammosāya bhīyyobhāvāya vepullāya bhāvanāya pāripūriyā; chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati. – SN 5.7.2.3

When one directly experiences this, then the support of what is unwholesome is known, which gives a quality of disenchantment as one no longer wants what is revealed as false or contrived to the real. This disenchantment is Pāli *nibbindati* (*nis + vindati*), which means to ‘not find’, or in this context to *not go to* or *seek out* satisfaction (or anything else) in the fabrications which arise. This is mentioned in the second para of the Refrain as:

“Therefore it is readily evident to his awareness thus – ‘this is body (feelings, mind and mind-states)’. Thus there is bare knowledge and bare awareness, and one does not abide dependant on nor identifies with anything in this condition. Bhikkhus, thus it is a bhikkhu abides observing the body in the body.<sup>24</sup>

This brings a quality of lightness and a pleasant feeling as one moves on in contemplative work, applying this knowledge gained with disenchantment and release to anything that arises in the future. Thus one abides pleasantly with *equanimity* and *mindful clear-knowing* (*upekkhā, sati-sampajāna*) in the stability of mental composure; as investigation of conditions moves forward. Example of this is given in numerous discourses, where the proclivities of *dukkha* are investigated by the virtuoso of contemplative work; known in terms of its arising, how it arose, that is has ceased, how it has ceased, and the manner in which it remains ceased and does not arise again.<sup>25</sup>

Reflecting again on the example of the Sūda Sutta, the caution is given that if the training of mindful clear-knowing of the senses is not brought through mental composure, then discernment into the predisposition of *dukkha* cannot arise and the aims of the 4-NT cannot be met.<sup>26</sup> This is where Satipaṭṭhāna as a contemplative model is a progressive process when it is carefully examined through the calm and stable dynamic of mental composure cultivated through breath meditation. In this way the mind is seasoned by calm-restraint to know how the mere sensate events of seeing, hearing and the rest are experienced. This calm examination of phenomena within the conditionality of human experience cultivates awareness to then examine the more subtle phenomena of mental habits. And the purpose for this is the removal of the causes of all unskilful, unpleasant and dissatisfying mental intentions and behaviors.

When one has developed mindfulness for knowing the broader experience of breath meditation and sensations of feeling as basic pleasure and displeasure; then the training of how these are taken up by mental habits is applied to the more refined contemplations of mind-states which underlie and bear unwholesome nuances such as likes and dislikes which give rise to more complex unwholesome moods and intentions. When these are experienced with contemplative calm and mindful clear-knowing these will then quiet through release of them as no longer valid to a clear knowing of the real. This is realisation of the 4-NT in stride of ones practice. One of the earliest discourses refers to

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<sup>24</sup> *Atthi kāyoti vā panassa sati paccupaṭṭhitā hoti yāvadeva nāṇamattāya patissatimattāya. Anissito ca viharati. Na ca kiñci loke upādiyati. Evampi bhikkhave bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati. – MN.10*

<sup>25</sup> See for example: Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta MN. 1.1.10 (4.3) Contemplation on Mind-States – Section on Extensions & Atthinukhopariyāya Sutta SN.4.1.15.8

<sup>26</sup> “Bhikkhus, those who have neglected the four means of potency (for mental composure – *samādhi*), have neglected the Right Noble Way leading to the destruction of *dukkha*. – SN 5.7.1.2.

the 4<sup>th</sup> NT as the ‘path leading to the quieting (*upasama*) of *dukkha*’.<sup>27</sup> This occurs when there is direct knowing of the manner of arising, presence, and fading-away of these mind-states. When these are fully known as false, they are seen as useless, and then one no longer seeks them as valid.

This knowledge now acts as a template for anything that subsequently arises because these mind-states, although by content are different, are just fabrications of the same *predisposition* of mental habit.

To explore this nuance further, let’s reflect again on disenchantment (*nibbindati*) mentioned earlier, where one does not seek out satisfaction (or struggle) in mental fabrications. This term means that one no longer *goes to*; delights in, struggles with, nor even seeks pleasure in these mind-states. So when mental habits are not sought, where has one gone?

“Indeed this ignorance is a great delusion;  
Because of this one is well attached for a long time.  
But those beings gone to knowledge;  
Do not come to renewed existence.”<sup>28</sup>

This is what is meant by not turning the wheel of *samsāra*; one sees the turning of the foolish habits of attachment, releases them, and continues on with mindfulness.

“When a man follows craving he continues on for a long way.  
In the present or another existence, one cannot overcome this continuous cycle.

“Having known this disadvantage, that from craving is the coming into existence of *dukkha*; one is free from craving. Unattached, the bhikkhu wanders on mindfully.”<sup>29</sup>

[Khantijayo – 2011]

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<sup>27</sup> (731.) “*Ye ca dukkhaṃ pajānanti, atho dukkhassa sambhavaṃ; Yattha ca sabbaso dukkhaṃ, asesam uparujjhati; Tañca maggaṃ pajānanti, dukkhūpasamagāminam.*

“But whoever directly knows *dukkha*, and the coming into existence of *dukkha*, and where all *dukkha* entirely ceases; therefore directly knows the path leading to the quieting of *dukkha*.

Dvayatānupassanāsuttam Suttanipāta 3.12.

<sup>28</sup> 735. “*Avijjā hāyaṃ mahāmoho, yenidaṃ saṃsitaṃ ciraṃ; Vijjāgatā ca ye sattā, na te gacchanti punabbhava’nti.* – *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> 745. “*Tañhādutiyo puriso, dīghamaddhāna saṃsaram; Ithabhāvaññathābhāvaṃ, saṃsāraṃ nātivattati.*

746. “*Etamādīnavaṃ ñatvā, taṅhaṃ dukkhassa sambhavaṃ; Vītaṅho anādāno, sato bhikkhu paribbaje’ti.* – *Ibid.*