Mindfulness of Breathing and Calm Insight Development

The development of **calm** and **insight** (*samatha* and *vipassanā*) are given in the Pāḷi Nikāyas as inseparable and integral factors toward the aim of Buddhist contemplative work. This dynamic is a contemplative balance given in the early texts as:

“…two things that should be developed.”

“There are these two things that persist connected together; **calm** and **insight**.”

The Vijjābhāgiya Sutta explains that when contemplative calm is developed, the mind is developed to the release of disquieting desires; whereby when *insight* into these is developed, the ignorance that leads to disquieting states is released through wisdom.

In the Kimsukopama Sutta it is the “swift pair of messengers” (*sīghaṃ dūtayugam*) that through the gatekeeper of mindfulness, informs consciousness of the “message of things as they actually are” (*yathābhūtaṃ vacanan’ītī*), an epithet for liberation – Nibbāna.

And **calm** and **insight** is considered to be “…the path leading to the *unconditioned*_” also an epithet for Nibbāna.

However, the early texts give little information on how these two can be identified in contemplative practice. To find this connection we need only to look for the context where these same factors are expressed, even if differently. In the *Connected Discourses on In and Out Breathing* of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, we find reference to just such an equivalent for calm and insight in contemplative work:

“…two things that should be developed.”

“There is, Ānanda, one condition, which when developed and practiced fulfills four conditions; and four conditions, which when developed and practiced fulfills seven conditions; and seven conditions, which when developed and practiced fulfills two conditions.”

... 

**Composure through mindfulness of in and out breathing**, Ānanda, is the one condition, which when developed and practiced fulfills the *four progressions of mindfulness*; the four progressions of mindfulness, when developed and practiced fulfills the *seven factors of wisdom*; the seven factors of wisdom, when developed and practiced fulfills *release through true knowledge*.”

Here in **mindfulness of in and out breathing** (*ānāpānasati*) we find one meditation practice which encompasses the calm stability of mental composure attained through breath-meditation, progressing through the development of the **mindful clear-knowing** of the *four progressions of mindfulness* (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*) – contemplation of the body, sensations, mind and mind-states – as these represent the framework where contemplative knowledge is developed. Contemplative knowledge then continues to refinement through
the seven factors of awakening (satta bojjhaṅga) – mindfulness, examination of phenomena, energy, bliss, serenity, composure and equanimity – culminating in liberating knowledge (vijjāvimuttim). This establishes mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati) as a contemplative practice that develops calm and insight through a complete pathway to Nibbāna.9 Because the structure of mindfulness of in and out breathing (hereafter referred to as ānāpānasati) in the Ānāpānasati Sutta10 supports the structure of the four progressions of mindfulness (hereafter referred to as satipaṭṭhāna) in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta11, the contemplative dynamic of the Ānāpānasati and Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas will be presented together below through the framework of the tetrads of the Ānāpānasati Sutta.12

**Breath Meditation:**

Ānāpānasati is arranged in four parts or tetrads (catukka). These tetrads mark the development of breath-meditation as it progresses through the pathway of mind development toward wisdom and peace: 1. Mindfulness of breathing to establish physical unity and calm; 2. Mental peace, well-being, examination and calming of mental activity; 3. Experience, detachment, composure and release of mental activity; and 4. Contemplation of impermanence, cessation and relinquishment of disquieting mind-states.

**Preliminary steps to breath meditation:**

Although the classic instructions were provisional to the monastic lifestyle of the original listeners, they are timelessly adaptable. Instructions for ānāpānasati begin with choosing a suitable place to practice, assuming the correct posture, establishing mental resolve and applying this to attentiveness of breathing as the initial object of contemplation. Thus the practitioner …

“… has gone to the wilderness, or has gone to the root of a tree, or has gone to an empty house, sitting crossed-legged, with body straight and keeping his mindfulness set forward13, with mindfulness, he breathes in; with mindfulness he breathes out.”14

In summary:

◦ Environment

Choosing of a place to practice is simply one that is as free of disturbances as possible.

◦ Posture

A posture that is conducive to attentiveness.
Mindfulness

The phrase *keeping his mindfulness set forward* gives emphasis to the resolve to practice, and serves as a description for the purpose of *mindfulness* (*sati*) in breath meditation. Because *sati* comes under *sarati* ‘to remember’ recollect or reflect, indicates that its function is to keep awareness to task with the object of the breath, and subsequently to expand to include all objects of contemplative examination. We find helpful description of contemplative mindfulness in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, where one abides contemplating the body, sensations, mind and mind-states, with ‘intense endeavour, attentiveness and mindfulness’ (‘ātāpī sampajāno satimā’). Here mindfulness and intense endeavour (*sati* and *ātāpa*) keep one to the task of the object, while attentiveness or clear-knowing (*sampajāna*) carefully examines everything in that condition which has arisen. In essence this is the utility of ‘mindfulness’ in Buddhist contemplative work, the benefit of which is given in what has been called the ‘refrain of insight’ in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*:

> “Thus he abides observing body in the body … (sensations of feeling in sensations of feeling … mind in mind … mind-states in mind-states …) internally; … externally; … both internally and externally; [he] abides observing the arising of phenomena … the fading away of phenomena … the arising and fading away of phenomena …

Therefore it is readily evident to his awareness thus – ‘this is body’ (these are sensations etc.). Thus there is bare knowledge and bare awareness, and one does not abide dependant on nor identifies with anything in this condition …”15

Here, *mindfulness* and *intense endeavour* has kept awareness to the task of examining a given condition, and *clear-knowing* very carefully examines what is going on in that condition. The result is a non-discriminative, clear knowledge and awareness of things as they are.

What the practitioner has learned in the broader dynamic of mindful-awareness of the body with breathing continues as contemplative-knowledge progresses to the more refined conditions that follow. By developing contemplative knowledge through examination of one condition, it becomes evident that this way of knowing is applied to all conditions.

Ānāpānasati/Satipaṭṭhāna
(Mindfulness of In and Out Breathing & Progressions of Mindfulness Together)

First Tetrad:

> “Breathing in long, he knows ‘I am breathing in long.’ Breathing out long, he knows ‘I am breathing out long.’ Breathing in short, he knows ‘I am breathing in short.’ Breathing out short, he knows ‘I am breathing out short.’ ‘Experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Calming the bodily-
construct, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Calming the bodily-construct, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself.\textsuperscript{16}

The first tetrad has two distinct parts. One is establishing a direct ‘knowing’ (pajānāti) of the object of the breath; long and short. And the second is where one brings this to an ‘experience’ (paṭisaṃvedi) and ‘calm’ (passambhati) of the whole body with breathing. This tetrad represents what the utility of ānāpānasati brings to the contemplative experience; that the direct ‘knowing’ of breathing is meant to expand to assimilate experiences\textit{ with} breathing as an easeful and attentive contemplative dynamic.

In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, a brief simile is given with the section on ānāpānasati in that sutta:

“Just as a skilled lathe-worker or a lathe-worker’s apprentice; when making a long turn knows ‘I am making a long turn’ and making a short turn knows ‘I am making a short turn’, bhikkhus indeed just so, when a bhikkhu is breathing in long, he knows ‘I am breathing in long’; breathing out long, he knows ‘I am breathing out long’ … ‘Calming the bodily-construct, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself.”\textsuperscript{17}

This simile helpfully indicates that for success in ānāpānasati, the ‘mindfulness’ to be applied is just as directly attentive as to skilled tasks that require undivided attention for successful results.

The Ānāpānasati Sutta corresponds this tetrad with the first satipaṭṭhāna – the body in the body – “Thus I say this is a particular body of bodies; in this case of in and out breathing.”

As we read in the simile above, this\textit{ body of the breath} is established by knowing the breath as long or short etc. setting the parameter of examination to the qualities of breathing as to how the breath is experienced and feels as a total bodily experience. Then the breath as a bodily experience begins to arise and expand, at which point one becomes established in this awareness as a bodily experience\textit{ with} breathing that unifies into bodily calm. At this point the practitioner is now temporarily relieved physical and mental distress and is at the initial stage of mental-composure.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Second Tetrad:}

“‘Experiencing bliss, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Experiencing bliss, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Experiencing well-being, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Experiencing well-being, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Experiencing the mental-constructs, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Experiencing the mental-constructs, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Calming the mental-construct, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Calming the mental-construct, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself.\textsuperscript{19}
The Ānāpānasati Sutta corresponds this tetrad with the second satipaṭṭhāna – sensations of feeling in sensations of feeling – “Thus I say this is a particular sensation of feeling of sensations of feeling; in this case thoroughly inclining the mind to in and out breathing.”

In the first tetrad one attains a physical unity and calm with the breath, and this calm gives rise to a euphoric feeling as physical and mental distress subsides. In the second tetrad this euphoria is represented here as bliss (pīti), which is also accompanied by pleasant feelings as a sense of well-being (sukha). Even though the vibrancy of pīti and sukha are pleasant, they are also unstable and if attached to and will lead to frustration when they change and subside. However at this point the pathway of contemplative work will lead to quieter states, whereby maintaining an examination of these as mere ‘mental-constructs’ (cittasaṅkhāra), the vibrant nature of pīti and sukha will subside and the mind will begin to ‘calm’ (passambhati).

The practitioner now has attained stable awareness of the mind and sensate experience. As we find in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the instruction is to thoroughly examine how the mind rises to sensations of feeling, first by identifying them as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, and then as to whether these are sensually attached or not. These phenomena are examined impassively, without discrimination and are not ascribed any conceptual meaning. Even though a sensation may be pleasant or unpleasant, without the imputation of meaning to the experience as satisfying or dissatisfying, the event subsides sustained by calm awareness.

**Third Tetrad:**

“‘Experiencing the mind, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Experiencing the mind, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘With a contented mind, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘With a contented mind, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘With a composed mind, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘With a composed mind, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Releasing the mind, I shall breathe in.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Releasing the mind, I shall breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself.”

The Ānāpānasati Sutta corresponds this tetrad with the third satipaṭṭhāna – mind in the mind – with the admonishment “I do not say that there is mindfulness of in and out breathing if one who is inattentive and has forgotten mindfulness.”

In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, contemplations of mind in the mind reveal qualities ranging from the disquieting unwholesome roots of greed, ill-will and delusion, to more refined conditions conducive to wholesome states and peace. This is where one applies the direct knowledge (pajānāti) of sensations (vedāna), gained in the second satipaṭṭhāna – sensations that are pleasant, unpleasant, neither, with or without attachment – to know what dynamics of mental conditioning are present with these, whether good or bad.
With the calming of the ‘mental-constructs’ (*cittasaṅkhāra*) in the second tetrad, the mind is now no longer interrupted by the fluctuations of sensations. This makes clear examination of mental conditions possible.

Contemplation of the mind with breathing begins with ‘experiencing the mind’ (*cittapaṭisamvedi*). Pāḷi *paṭisamvedi* represents the simple active experience of what is pleasant or unpleasant. When *paṭisamvedi* is maintained with impartiality, a quality of contentment and satisfaction = acceptance (*abhippamodati*) arises, through which the oscillation between these two lends to the psychophysical composure of *samādhi*. It is through this stable and even process of examination that the easeful flow of release can occur.

**Fourth Tetrad:**

“Contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe in.” Thus he trains himself.  
“Contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe out.” Thus he trains himself.  
“Contemplating dispassion, I shall breathe in.” Thus he trains himself.  
“Contemplating dispassion, I shall breathe out.” Thus he trains himself.  
“Contemplating cessation, I shall breathe in.” Thus he trains himself.  
“Contemplating cessation, I shall breathe out.” Thus he trains himself.  
“Contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe in.” Thus he trains himself.  
“Contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe out.” Thus he trains himself.23

The fourth tetrad of *ānāpānasati* and its corresponding section of *satipaṭṭhāna* represents the most critical and nuanced stage of mindfulness contemplative endeavour. Contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassī*) is essential to the development of insight. Insight is built upon direct contemplative knowledge that cognitive sentient processes lack an inherent substantiality that could be designated as ‘I’ or ‘mine’.

In the Susīma Sutta24 it is described as ‘knowledge of the structure of phenomena, after which there is knowledge of Liberation” (*nibbāne ūnāna*).25 This is knowledge built upon contemplation of the three-marks of impermanence, dissatisfaction and no-self26. These ‘marks’ represent the condition of the five-bases of identification27 (*pañupādānakkhanda*), which are the scaffolding of sentient experience that are expressed through the interdependence of cognitive-processes28. It is these cognitive processes that are either in ignorance assumed as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ or are in wisdom are not sought as stable.

In the Meghiya Sutta29, Meghiya is advised to develop ‘perception of impermanence’30 for the removal of the ‘notion ‘I am’’.31

In the Mahāsuññata and Khemaka Suttas32 it is ‘contemplation of rise and fall’33 of the five-bases of identification, also for the removal of the ‘notion ‘I am’’.

And in the suttas presently discussed, the ‘refrain’ of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta34 gives ‘contemplation of the rising and fading away of phenomena’35, and the arising and passing away36 of the five-bases of identification. Here in the fourth tetrad of the
Ānāpānasati Sutta, ‘contemplating impermanence’ is to be applied to the fourth section of satipaṭṭhāna – contemplation of mind-states (dhammānupassanā).

Contemplation on impermanence, with varied pāḷi idiom spanning a range of Dhamma discourse, provides the same utility as stated in the above examples, aimed at eradicating the same set of problems. Attachment to conditions, with all of its resultant distress, is present only because these are made by an underlying personal identification with them. In the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, contemplation on impermanence is directed to the five-bases of identification, establishing that the physical form, sensations, their perception, intentions and overall cognition; is impermanent, and that as a result of impermanence these are dissatisfying. The knowledge attained with this realisation is that of “…what is impermanent, dissatisfying and of the nature to change is to be seen in truth with complete understanding as – ‘this is not mine, I am not this, this is not my ‘Self’.”

By direct knowledge of how conditions arise, and how attachment arises with them, the error of personal-identification with them is known. ‘Seeing thus…’ (Evaṃ passam…), the aspirant becomes ‘wearied of’ these cycles of personalising conditions. This ‘wearied of’ is with reference to the Pāḷi word nibbindati (nis + vindati), which literally means to ‘not find’ – and in the present context – to ‘not look for’. And it is this ‘not looking for’ that presents an interesting dynamic for how contemplative release of disquieting conditions occurs. When the instability of cognitive experience is seen through contemplation of impermanence, the vacuity of personalising them is also seen and one no longer seeks these conditions as substantial or personal, because these are understood as no longer relevant in light of things evident (yathābhūtaṃ). As a result of this understanding, when one no longer looks for these phenomena as personal, there is dispassion and one releases them.

Satipaṭṭhāna uses contemplation of impermanence through direct examination of whether a condition is present or not (atthi … natthi), or is arising or passing away (samudayo … atthagamo), or is dependently arisen or abandoned (paṭicca uppajjati samyojanam … pahānaṃ hoti).

Here, in the fourth satipaṭṭhāna – contemplation of mind-states (dhammānupassanā) – mindfulness is directed to the rise and fall of mind-states; gaining knowledge of exactly how disquieting mental habits arise, how discernment into there nature causes their release, and through understanding their release one has secured their non-arising in the future. The attainment of their future non-arising is brought about when mindfulness is refined through the factors of awakening toward sustained release and equanimity.

Sub-section 1. of the fourth satipaṭṭhāna presents the problem of the five hindrances to be solved by the contemplative.

The ‘hindrances’ (nīvaraṇā) represent the manifest behaviors of the unwholesome roots of greed, aversion and delusion (lobha, dosa, moha). The five hindrances are the manner, through ignorance, that one has developed associations of meaning with sensate-events which are grasped and identified with as personal. These oscillate between each other, such that when there is strong sense-desire, there will be doubt and frustration when the
objects of that desire do not manifest, all of which can lead to doubts and depressive moods as well.

Having developed easeful release of the experience of mental conditions in the third tetrad, the practitioner is now fit to deal with the more nuanced habits and behaviors of the hindrances. Through careful examination of when such a state is present, when it is not present, the manner in which it arose, and the manner in which it has been abandoned; the sensate pathways through which these habits and tendencies arise become easier to discern.

Sub-section 2. brings forward the analysis of the hindrances by contemplating how they are rooted within the scaffolding of the five bases of identification.

The five bases form the composite of the individual. Pāli sakkāya (sa + kāya) = ‘with a body’ or ‘embodied’, represents the interaction of the physical and mental processes contained in the five bases. It is what is assumed in ignorance to be an integral, stable continuance of the individual, and so is called sakkāya-diṭṭhi – the ‘view of individuality’. Because this ‘view’ is an assumption that does not meet with the reality of instability and change inherent to physical and cognitive processes, there are the resultant mental habits of the hindrances with their behaviors, frustrations and mental distresses. However, by observing the arising and passing away of the five bases, the experience of the senses and cognitive processes are known to be impermanent and unstable, and the tendency to identification with them begin to break.

Sub-section 3. refines the analysis of the five bases through analysis of the six extensions of sensation\(^4^4\), as the range where the behaviors of the hindrances manifest.

Here the hindrances are examined as a bond or fetter (saṃyojana) that has arisen with the sense-extensions of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind and their respective objects. When these are known (pajānāti) in the manner they arise, they are abandoned and remain abandoned.

This is a practice of being completely present with what is sensed, as well as the mental dispositions attendant to it. The reading below provides an example of present-abiding with sensate cognitive processes where the fetters of the hindrances remain abandoned:

“Therefore, Ānanda, you should also bear (in mind) this wonderful and marvelous characteristic of the Tathāgata; He 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.”\(^4^5\)

Sub-section 4.: the seven factors of awakening (satta bojjhaṅga),\(^4^6\) represents the final pathway of calm and insight in balance with contemplative work.

These factors are called sambojjhaṅga as ‘factors’ (aṅga) of ‘perfected knowledge’ (sambodhi). And as factors of perfected knowledge, these direct the pathway of
contemplative knowledge gained through the *satipaṭṭhāna* to their perfection in the release of disquieting states.

The *seven factors of awakening*, just like the *four progressions of mindfulness*, is a progression, one lending to the next: Thusly ‘mindfulness’ of the breath and contemplative objects lends to the ‘careful consideration’ (*yoniso manasikāra*) within ‘examination of (mental) phenomena’; which lends to ‘energy’; the vibrancy of ‘energy’ lends to bliss etc …

The progression of the *seven factors of awakening* is as follows:

1) Having developed mindfulness of the body with breathing to such perfection that ‘…with intense endeavour, attentiveness and mindfulness …there is no bewilderment because this mindfulness is stable…’\(^{47}\), comes the fulfilment of the ‘mindfulness factor of awakening’ (*satisambojjhaṅga*).

2) Mindfulness now progresses to where “Abiding mindfully like this, he examines and investigates these phenomena with wisdom; engaged in a thorough search of it …”\(^{48}\) and comes to the fulfilment of the ‘examination of phenomena factor of awakening’ (*dhammavicayasammbojjhaṅga*).

The Kāya Sutta gives us the nutriment (*āhāra*), as the object of this ‘examination of phenomena’ as:

“…wholesome and unwholesome phenomena, blameful and blameless phenomena, inferior and superior phenomena and dark and light and their results…” \(^{49}\)

This essentially covers the range of mental-faculties given in the third *satipaṭṭhāna* and is an effective remedy to the problems of the hindrances in the fourth.

The Kāya Sutta continues …

“…by giving much careful consideration to these is the nutriment for the arising of the unarisen examination of phenomena factor of awakening…”\(^{50}\)

3) This examination of phenomena with ‘careful consideration’ (*yoniso manasikāra*) lifts the cloud of delusion that false projections would cast over the mind. It is at this point that the mind begins to break free of the hindrances, and with these lifted, there is a sense of stimulation as the mind awakens to the clarity of things as they actually are. This sense of stimulation is explained as ‘untiring energy’ (*viriyaṃ asallīnaṃ*) thus:

“And so it is, for one that examines and investigates these phenomena with wisdom; engaged in a thorough search of it; untiring energy is taken up … at that time that bhikkhu has taken up the energy factor of awakening”\(^{51}\)
The Kāya Sutta gives us description of this energy (*viriya*) as a range of cognitive faculties (*dhātu*) possessing resolve (*ārambha*), exertion (*nikkama*) and endurance (*parakkama*), indicating the phases of initiative in contemplative work.

Unwavering energy bears up the resolve to abandon the hindrances and cultivate wholesome states. This is essentially synonymous with the right exertion (*sammāvāyāma*), sixth of the eightfold path, where one ‘…through mental exertion, actively takes up and upholds with endeavour and resolve…’ to abandon what is unwholesome and develop what is wholesome etc. In the Pamādavihāri Sutta this is accomplished by vigilance (*appamāda*) and restraint (*saṃvutassa*) of the senses at their objects, whereby the mind is not stained (*vyāsiñcati*) by them at their cognition.

At this point in mindfulness endeavour the aspirant finds inspiration and motivation in practice. As energy (*viriya*) arises, the burden of the hindrances lifts as mental shadow gives way to light. An example of this is where the Buddha gives recollection of his training while yet an ordinary being intent upon awakening (*bodhisatta*):

“…neither my body nor my eyes became exhausted; and without clinging identification – my mind was liberated from unwholesomeness.”

In the pathway of contemplative work, the maturity of the energy factor of awakening now gives way to a bliss free from the burden of the senses. As we continue with the Pamādavihāri Sutta:

“With the mind not stained, delight is born; with delight, bliss is born…”

4) “For one who has taken up energy, there arises bliss not of the flesh. Bhikkhus, at whatever time a bhikkhu has taken up energy and there arises bliss not of the flesh; at that time that bhikkhu has taken up the bliss factor of awakening …”

Having arisen to its fulfilment, contemplative energy begins to diffuse into a sublime state of mental bliss (*pīti*) as the burden of the five hindrances is released. This condition then further diffuses into a serenity of both body and mind as the faculties shed the tension and burden of sensually attached hindrances.

The Sāmaññaphala Sutta of Dīgha Nikāya tells us that with the five hindrances abandoned, bliss is preceded by *pāmojja*, a kind of delight or happiness:

“Seeing that the five hindrances have been abandoned within himself, delight is born. With delight, bliss is born.”

The Nirāmisa Sutta mentions that non-carnal bliss is born from contemplative seclusion, and the Pīti Sutta describes this bliss of seclusion as the absence of the oscillation between mundane pleasure, displeasure, mental happiness and distress.
Bliss then further refines into serenity of body and mind as the vibrancy of contemplative energy and bliss merge into more rarefied and quiet states leading to release. Referring again to the Sāmaññaphala Sutta:

“With a blissful mind, his body becomes serene.”

5) “For one whose mental faculties are blissful; even so the body is calmed, even so the mind is calmed … at that time that bhikkhu has taken up the serenity factor of awakening.”

The Kāya Sutta gives ‘serenity of body and serenity of mind’ as the nutriment (āhāra) and object for the fulfilment of the ‘serenity factor of awakening’.

Here, the separation from the hindrances thus gained settles the mind and body into a peaceful condition. In the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta:

“With tainted mind-states abandoned, purified mind-states increase. One enters and abides in the development to fulfilment of wisdom, having seen this realisation for oneself in this very condition; there is delight, bliss, serenity, mindful clear-knowing and a pleasant abiding.”

We find this confirmed with helpful reference again to the Pāmādavīhāri Sutta, where the support for contemplative serenity is based on restraint at the senses, where the ‘mind is not stained’ (cittaṃ na vyāśiṇcati) by their respective objects, that is, the mind is no longer affected by what is sensed. The serenity factor of awakening discussed here gives way to the next factor of mental ‘composure’ (samādhi); as we read in the Pāmādavīhāri Sutta continues:

“…with the body serene there is an easeful experience, with the mind at ease it is composed …”

6) “For one whose body is serene and pleasant, the mind is collected together. Bhikkhus, at whatever time a bhikkhu’s body is serene and pleasant, and the mind is collected together; at that time that bhikkhu has taken up the composure factor of awakening …”

The bond of the hindrances having been broken at the ‘examination of phenomena factor of awakening’ is secured through the factors of bliss, serenity and composure that have followed:

“Seeing that the five hindrances have been abandoned within himself, delight is born. With delight, bliss is born. With a blissful mind, his body becomes serene. With the body serene, there is an easeful feeling. With the mind at ease, there is composure.”

The Kāya Sutta gives ‘the sign of calm and the sign of unity’ as the nutriment (āhāra) and object for the fulfilment of the composure factor of awakening.
The role of the *composure factor of awakening* makes secure the attainments gained through the *factors of awakening* thus far, just as the calm unity of composure with breathing secures and makes stable the aspirant’s contemplative examination through the four *satipatthāna*. Thus, with the sign of *calm* and *unity* the composure factor of awakening is fulfilled, and the impartial yet watchful dynamic of equanimity begins to assimilate the arising and passing away of phenomena. As we read in the *Pamādavihāri Sutta*:

“…with the mind composed, phenomena become visible…”

7) “Abiding with the mind collected together like this, he looks on well with evenness. … at that time that bhikkhu has taken up the *equanimity* factor of awakening…”

Equanimity (*upekkhā*) is where the unity of vigilance and composure are brought together. It is a non-discriminatory vigilance of all points of reference.

Here the contemplative endeavour brought through the factors of awakening is unshakable. As the last line of the text we have been reading in the Pamādavihāri Sutta states:

“…with phenomena visible, one is considered ‘one dwelling vigilant’. ”

With the fulfilment of the equanimity factor of awakening, the process of *release through true knowledge* toward liberating peace can emerge as these *seven factors of awakening* are now brought into alignment.

“By abandoning both sense-attachment and mental-distress;
Rejecting dullness and pushing away worry.

“Equanimity and mindfulness are completely pure,
With examination of phenomena to the fore.
This, I say, is liberating-knowledge –
The destruction of ignorance.”

*Release through true knowledge* is secured as the perfection of wisdom. Serenity, composure and equanimity stabilize the contemplative knowledge gained through mindful examination of phenomena – knowledge that the body and phenomena of the mind are conditioned, unstable and without enduring substance – so that the dynamic of ‘*seeing in true wisdom as it actually is*’ can arise.

In the Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta we read that a person whose mind is developed in this way is no longer overwhelmed by mental phenomena, and is said to be *one established in the four foundations* (*caturādhiṭṭhāno*) of the contemplative viz. wisdom, truth, abandoning and peace:
“Established like this, imaginings do not overcome; for one not overcome by imaginings is said to be a ‘peaceful sage’; where wisdom is not neglected, truth is secured, abandoning is developed and one trains for peace.”

When this awareness is supported by equanimity ‘clean and pure, soft, malleable and bright,’ any object that falls within its range will be assimilated through wisdom steadily. When wisdom develops in this process, one knows that all things, even refined states of contemplative absorption (jhāna), are merely conditioned and thus are impermanent, dissatisfying if clung to, and without lasting substance. This is the arising of wisdom and the final release of attachment to the objects of psychophysical conditionality:

“He does not make fabrications or form ideas about becoming or non-becoming. By not making fabrications or forming ideas about becoming or non-becoming, he does not attach to anything in this world.”

This is the release that brings liberating peace – Nibbāna.

“When he is not attached, he is undisturbed. When he is undisturbed, he has become completely stilled within.”

[Khantijayo – 2011]

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1 “katame dve dhammā bhāvetabbā? samatho ca vipassanā ca. ime dve dhammā bhāvetabbā.” – DN. 34.3
2 “tassime dve dhammā yuganandhā vattanti – samatho ca vipassanā ca.” – MN.149

“Bhikkhus, there are two states conducive to contemplative-knowledge, which two? Calm and Insight. Bhikkhus, when calm is developed, what is the benefit of this undertaking? The mind is developed. When the mind is developed, what is the benefit of this undertaking? Desire is abandoned. Bhikkhus, when insight is developed, what is the benefit of this undertaking? Wisdom is developed. When wisdom is developed, what is the benefit of this undertaking? Ignorance is abandoned. Bhikkhus, defiled by desire, the mind is not released; defiled by ignorance, wisdom does not develop. Bhikkhus, therefore with the absence of desire there is the mind-release; with the absence of ignorance there is wisdom-release.” – A.N. 2.31
4 Kimsukopamasuttam (Discourse on ‘What is the Kimsuka Tree Like?’) – SN. 35.204 (PTS. pp.192–195)

“Bhikkhus, I will give a teaching on the unconditioned, and on the path leading to the unconditioned, listen to this. What, bhikkhus, is the unconditioned? Bhikkhus, it is the destruction of desire, the destruction of anger and the destruction of delusion, this, bhikkhus, is what is said to be the unconditioned. And what, bhikkhus, is the path leading to the unconditioned? Calm and insight. This, bhikkhus, is called the path leading to the unconditioned. – SN. 43.2
In the Anāpānasati Sutta we are given little new information as to how the four progressions – seven factors – and knowledge-release are applied and developed in tandem with breath-meditation. But what they imply is how liberating contemplative knowledge (vijjāvimutti) is developed in conjunction with the mental-composure of samādhi. Because anāpānasati is the basis of mental-composure (samādhi) and fulfills the four progressions of mindfulness (cattāro satipaṭṭhāna), the seven factors of awakening (satta bojjhaṅga) and knowledge-release (vijjāvimutti); it thus represents the three trainings (tisso sikkhā: DN.3.10, AN.3.2.4.9. & 10) of virtue, mind and wisdom (virtue, sīla, is a given prerequisite for contemplative work, and so is implied in the undertaking); and the three bodies of classification (tayo khandhā saṅghāti) of the 8-fold path – all in one contemplative method.

The phrase ‘…keeping his mindfulness set forward…’ (‘pañidhāva parimukham satīṃ upaṭṭhapetvā so satova assasati, sato passasati’) has been interpreted differently by Vipassanā traditions. The ambiguity lies with how parimukham is translated, where the Mahāsi tradition gives (samathā – and refined in the Nikāyas (ibid.) as wisdom-development (paññā bhāvīyati) for the elimination of ignorance. Thus anāpānasati is synonymous with calm and insight (samathā ca vipassanā).

Because this paper is concerned with how mindfulness of in and out breathing works with the framework of desire. And because it directs mindfulness to be developed through the four progressions of mindfulness and refined in the seven factors of awakening to knowledge-release (vijjāvimutti), it thus contains the conditions of insight (vipassanā), also defined in the Nikāyas (ibid.) as wisdom-development (paññā bhāvīyati) of the four progressions of mindfulness, the subsections 2-6 on body-contemplation (viz. iiryāpatha, sampajāna, paṭṭikālamanasikāra, dhātumanasikāra, navasivathika) in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta will not be referred to as these are not connected with breath-meditation.

Because this paper is concerned with how mindfulness of in and out breathing works with the framework of the four progressions of mindfulness, the subsections 2-6 on body-contemplation (viz. iiryāpatha, sampajāna, paṭṭikālamanasikāra, dhātumanasikāra, navasivathika) in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta will not be referred to as these are not connected with breath-meditation.

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Passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati. Passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati.” – M.N. 10:1.1

18 The first stage of mental-composure or contemplative ‘concentration’ (samādhi) is mentioned in the Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga) as access-concentration (upacārasamādhi) (Path ~ VIII, 9, 220). Although this term is not found in the Nikāyas, it does not conflict with the definitions of concentration (samādhi) or absorption (jhāna) practices found in the early texts when cross-referenced where the 1st tetrad of ānāpānasati and the 1st jhāna are concerned.


21 Yasmiṃ samaye bhikkhave, bhikkhu cittapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati, cittapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati, abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati, abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati, samādahaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati, samādahaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati, vimocayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati, vimocayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmīti sikkhati – ibid.

22 “Nāhaṃ bhikkhave, muṭṭhassatissa asampajānassa ānāpānasatibhāvanaṃ vadāmi.” – MN. 118

23 Yasmiṃ samaye bhikkhave, bhikkhu aniccānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, aniccānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati, virāgānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, virāgānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati, nirodhānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, nirodhānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati, paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati, paṭinissaggānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati – ibid.

24 SN. 12.70

25 “…dhammatthitiñāṇaṃ, pacchā nibbāne ñāṇan’ti” – ibid.

26 anicca, dukkha, anattā

27 paṭiccasamuppāda (aka – Dependent Arising)

28 Udāna 4.1

29 anicasaññā bhāvettabā

30 asmi māna

31 MN. 122, SN.22.89


“Thus he abides observing mind-states in mind states internally; abides observing mind-states in mind states externally; abides observing mind-states in mind states both internally and externally; abides observing the arising of phenomena in mind-states; abides observing the fading away of phenomena in mind-states; abides observing the arising and fading away of phenomena in mind-states.


“Therefore it is readily evident to his awareness thus – ‘these are mind-states’. Thus there is bare knowledge and bare awareness, and one does not abide dependant on nor identifies with anything in this condition. Monks, thus it is a monk abides observing mind-states in mind states of the five hindrances.
Yampaṁ paññaṁcām, dukkhaṁ vipariṁṇāmadhammaṁ… – ibid.

‘… netaṁ mama, neso'hamasmi, na me so attā'ti evametaṁ yathābhūtaṁ samappaññāya daṭṭhabhāṁ.’

– ibid.

The phrase ‘I am not this’ (P. neso'ham asmi) is a direct refutation in the first person, punning on ‘Thou art that’ (Sk. tat tvam asi), an epithet for the ātmān established in the Upaniṣads as the creator dynamic of Brahman, and the underlying sustaining principle of all conditions created by it.

Ibid.

nīvaraṇa = ‘hindrances’ with reference to the five hindrances (pañca nīvaraṇa) viz. 1. sensual desire (kāmacchanda) 2. ill-will (byāpāda) 3. apathy and dullness (thīṇa-middha) 4. agitation and worry (over wrong-doing) (uddhaccakukkucca) 5. uncertainty and doubt (vicīkicchā).

Pāli saḷāyatana viz. [the] eye interdependent with objects; ear interdependent with sounds; nose interdependent with smells; tongue interdependent with tastes; body interdependent with sense of contact; mind interdependent with mind-states (cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe… sotañca paṭicca saṭṭhe… gāndhe… jīvañca paṭicca rāsē… kāyañca paṭicca dhāme).

“Tassimaṁ sato viharanto taṁ dhammaṁ paññāya pavicinato, pavicayato, parivimmamśaṁ āpajjato. – ibid.

Atthi... kāmacchanda paviceyya dhammam ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke a bhijjhādomanassaṁ, upaṭṭhitassa tasmiṁ samaye sati hoti

So.. sato viharanto taṁ dhammaṁ paññāya pavicinato, pavicayato, parivimmamśaṁ āpajjato. – ibid.

Attī... kusalaśaktī dhammam ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke a bhijjhādomanassaṁ, upaṭṭhitassa tasmiṁ samaye sati hoti

Sāmaññaphalasuttaṁ

‘… satta bojjhaṅgo tasmiṁ samaye bhikkuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti. Pañcassa ṭhānāni tasmiṁ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti.’

‘… satta bojjhaṅgo tasmiṁ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti. Pañcassa ṭhānāni tasmiṁ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti.’

So... sato viharanto taṁ dhammaṁ paññāya pavicinato, pavicayato, parivimmamśaṁ āpajjato. – ibid.

John, monks, before my awakening, while I was still a bodhisatta, not yet fully awake, was intent on abiding in this abode. And while I was intent on abiding in this abode, neither my body nor my eyes became exhausted; and without clinging identification – my mind was liberated from unwholesomeness. – SN.54.8

‘… tassa bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti…’

‘… bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti…’

‘… bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti…’

‘… bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti…’

‘… bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti…’

‘… bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti…’

‘… bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, bhikkhuno āraddho hoti…’

Yampissa kāmāpasamhitam dukkhaṁ domanassaṁ, tampissa tasmiṁ samaye na hoti. Yampissa kāmāpasamhitam sukhaṁ somanassaṁ, tampissa tasmiṁ samaye na hoti. Yampissa akusalaśāpasamhitam dukkhaṁ domanassaṁ, tampissa tasmiṁ samaye na hoti. Yampissa akusalaśāpasamhitam sukhaṁ somanassaṁ, tampissa tasmiṁ samaye na hoti. Yampissa kusalaśāpasamhitam dukkhaṁ domanassaṁ,
tampissa tasmiṃ samaye na hoti. Yasmiṃ bhante, samaye ariyasāvako pavivekaṃ pītim upasampajja viharati. Imānissa pañca ṭhānāni tasmiṃ samaye na honūti. – AN.5.176

61 Pītimanassa kāyo passambhāti. – DN.2

62 “Pītimanassa kāyopi passambhāti. Cittampi passambhāti. Yasmān samaye bhikkhave, bhikkhuno pītimanassa kāyopi passambhāti, cittampi passambhāti, passaddhisambojjhaṅgo tasmiṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti …” (MN. 118)

63 SN.46.2

64 kāyapassaddhi, cittapassaddhi – ābhid.

65 “Sankilesikā ceva dhammā pahiyaṃ, vodāniyā dhammā abhivaḍḍhissanti. Paññāpāripūrīṃ vepullattaṅca diṭṭheva dhamme sayam abhiṅnā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharissanti. Pāmujjaṅceva bhavissati pīti ca passaddhi ca sati ca sampajāṅkiteva sukho ca vihāro.” DN.9 – Poṭṭhapādasuttaṃ PTS p. 196

66 passaddhākāyo sukhaṃ vediyaṃ, sukkhino cittam samādhiyaṃ – SN. 35.80

67 Passaddhākāyassa sukkhino cittam samādhiyaṃ. Yasmān samaye bhikkhave, bhikkhuno passaddhākāyassa sukkhino cittam samādhiyaṃ, samādhisambojjhaṅgo tasmiṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti. (MN. 118)


69 abyaggā [a + vyagga]: ‘not distracted’, a unity

70 samathanimittaṃ abyaggenimittaṃ – SN.46.2

71 samāhite cittte dhammā pātubhavanti – SN.4.1.10.4

72 “So tathāsamāhitam cittam sādhakaṃ ajjhupakkhitā hoti. … upekkhāsambojjhaṅgo tasmiṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti.” – MN. 118

73 ‘dhammānaṃ pātubhāvā appamādavihāritveva sāнакham gacchati’ – SN.4.1.10.4 (35.80)

74 Vijjāvimutti – S.N. (54.13)

75 Pahānaṃ kāmacchandanaṃ
Domanassānaṃ cubahyam,
Thinassa ca panudanam kukkuccanam nivāraṇam.

Upekkhā sati sāmsuddham dhammatakkapurejāvanam,
Aññā vinokkham pabrūmi avijjāya pabhaddanam. (Suttanipāta 5.13 – Udayasuttaṃ)

76 yathābhūtam sammapaṅnāya daṭṭhabbaṃ


78 parisuddhā pariyoṭṭā madu ca kammāṅkā ca pabhassarā ca – ābhid.

79 anicca, dukkha, anattā

80 ‘So neva taṃ abhisāṅkaroti, nābhisaṅketayati bhavāya vā vibhavāya vā. So anabhisaṅkaronto anabhisaṅketayanto bhavāya vā vibhavāya vā na kīci loke upādiyati.’ – ābhid.

81 Anupādiyam na paritassati, aparitassam paccattamyeva parinibbāyati. – ābhid.