

Ten Recollections

A Meditator's Tools: A Study Guide on the Ten Recollections

Introduction

Meditation is not simply a matter of bare attention. It is more a matter of *appropriate* attention, seeing experience in terms of the four noble truths and responding in line with the tasks appropriate to those truths: stress is to be comprehended, its cause abandoned, its cessation realized, and the path to its cessation developed. These tasks involve processes of thought, analysis, and memory — which means that these processes, instead of being enemies of meditation, are actually the means by which Awakening is attained.

The ten recollections are a set of meditation themes that highlight the positive role that memory and thought play in training the mind. They employ memory to sensitize the mind to the need for training, to induce feelings of confidence and well-being conducive for concentration, to keep the topics of concentration in mind, to produce tranquility and insight, and to incline the mind toward the deathless when tranquility and insight have grown sufficiently strong.

Strictly speaking, only seven of the ten are actually "recollections" (*anussati*): recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dhamma, recollection of the Sangha, recollection of virtue, recollection of generosity, recollection of the devas, and recollection of stilling. The other three are called mindfulness (*sati*) practices: mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, mindfulness of death, and mindfulness immersed in the body. However, the Pali words for mindfulness and recollection — *sati* and *anussati* — are intimately related. In the Pali Canon, *sati* does not simply mean awareness. It means the ability to keep something in mind; it is a function of the active memory. This point is clear in the Buddha's definition of the faculty of mindfulness, and it crops up again and again in the descriptions of these three mindfulness practices: mindfulness involves keeping particular themes or intentions in mind so as to induce mental states necessary for concentration, clear insight, and release. Thus all ten of these practices — the recollections and mindfulness practices — employ memory as an essential factor. For convenience's sake, it seems best to stick to the traditional label of "recollection" for all ten.

Unlike other sets of meditation practices, such as the four frames of reference (*satipatthana*) or the four sublime abidings (*brahmavihara*), the ten recollections do not have a single canonical discourse devoted to the entire set. Thus the way they interact and support one another has to be pieced together from many different discourses scattered throughout the Canon. The only place where they are listed as a set is in a series of ten short discourses in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, 1.287-296. These discourses suggest that all ten recollections function in the same way, for all are described in the same terms: "This is one thing that — when developed and pursued — leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding." From this formulaic statement, it might be concluded that all ten are equivalent and interchangeable, and that the choice of one theme over the others is simply a matter of personal preference.

However, other passages in the Canon indicate that this is not so. Each recollection plays a specific role in the practice, and all are needed to provide a complete and effective training for the mind. In this way, they are like the contents of a meditator's toolbox: a range of approaches that every meditator should master so as to respond skillfully to whatever issue arises in the practice.

Broadly speaking, the roles of these practices are these:

1) Mindfulness of death is meant to evoke a sense of *samvega* — a sense of dismay over the dangers and futility of human life as it is normally lived, with its ordinary defilements, and a sense of urgency in trying to find a way beyond those limitations. This sense of urgency further induces the quality of heedfulness in approaching the practice, which the Buddha said is basic to all skillful endeavors.

2) The first six recollections — of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, virtue, generosity, and the devas — are meant to induce a sense of joy and confidence (*pasada*) in the practice. The first two induce a sense of confidence in the practice itself; the last three, a sense of confidence in one's own worthiness to follow the practice; while the third theme — recollection of the Sangha — can induce both. The texts say that the joy and confidence induced by these practices can bring the mind to concentration and cleanse it of defilement, although they do not describe in any detail as to how far this cleansing goes or how it occurs. One passage in *Samyutta Nikaya* 47.10, however, suggests that these themes can perform this function as adjuncts to mindfulness practice.

3) Mindfulness of in-and-out breathing and mindfulness immersed in the body are the primary themes for developing tranquility and insight so as to lead to strong concentration in terms of the four jhanas, or absorptions; and they develop jhana in such a way that it gives added power to tranquility and insight in leading the mind to release (*Anguttara Nikaya*, 10.71).

Of all the meditation themes taught in the Canon, mindfulness of in-and-out breathing is treated in the most detail, and so it seems to have pride of place among the ten recollections. The Buddha himself, prior to his Awakening, apparently practiced this theme more than any other (*Samyutta Nikaya*, 54.8). After his Awakening, he frequently continued to practice it as well (*Samyutta Nikaya*, 54.11).

However, mindfulness of in-and-out breathing and mindfulness immersed in the body play complementary roles on the path. To begin with, there is some overlap in the two, in that the first four steps of breath meditation are also listed as techniques in mindfulness immersed in the body. In addition, mindfulness immersed in the body — especially in its aspect as contemplation of the unattractiveness of the body — can handle strong defilements that in some cases do not respond to the tranquil concentration induced by mindfulness of in-and-out breathing (*Samyutta Nikaya*, 35.206). At the same time, mindfulness immersed in the body can sometimes induce strong feelings of disgust and revulsion that cause the mind to respond in unskillful ways. When this happens, mindfulness of in-and-out breathing can help dispel those feelings and replace them with a feeling of refreshment that helps the mind stay skillfully on the path (*Samyutta Nikaya*, 54.9). In this way, these two mindfulness practices work together to keep the mind balanced and on course.

4) Once the mind has been brought to a developed state of tranquility and insight — able to see even the pleasures of jhana as inconstant, stressful, and not-self — recollection of stilling is brought to bear so that the mind does not simply stay focused on the drawbacks of fabricated experiences. It does this by inclining the mind to the exquisite peace of the deathless, experienced through dispassion, cessation, and Unbinding (*Anguttara Nikaya*, 9.36).

When viewed in this way — starting with mindfulness of death and ending with a recollection aimed at Unbinding — the ten recollections illustrate the principle stated in *Anguttara Nikaya*, 6.19-20, that mindfulness of death has, as its final end, not death but the deathless.

The seven sections of this study guide are designed to flesh out this general outline. The material in each section is drawn from the Pali Canon and has been selected to provide more specifics as to the *how*, the *what*, and the *why* of each of these practices: how they function, what is supposed to be recollected in each of these themes, and why each recollection is useful in training the mind. In reading these sections, the following overview is useful to keep in mind:

Contents

1. The Ten Recollections
2. The First Six Recollections
3. More on Recollection of the Triple Gem
4. Mindfulness of In-and-out Breathing
5. Mindfulness of Death
6. Mindfulness Immersed in the Body
7. Recollection of Stilling

Section One. This section contains the only section of the Canon where the ten recollections are presented as a list. It also contains the Buddha's definition of the faculty of mindfulness, to show that "mindfulness" in his vocabulary means something similar to "recollection."

Section Two. This section covers the first six recollections as a set. Passages §§12-13 describe exactly what is to be recollected in these practices. §12 deals both with the qualities of mind that should be brought to these recollections — the five strengths of conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment — and the rewards of these recollections in terms of joy and increased concentration. §13 emphasizes that this increased joy and concentration can also lead to cleansing the mind of defilements; it also stresses that these recollections are a useful part of any uposatha practice: the practice by which lay people rest from their daily work on the full moon, new moon, and quarter moon days, devoting those days to listening to the Dhamma and training the mind in meditation. Passages §§14-16 indicate two other uses for this joy and concentration: cleansing the mind of fear and other unskillful thoughts while dwelling in seclusion, and relieving the mind and body of any feverish or unsettling feelings that would prevent mindfulness practice from yielding higher states of jhana.

Section Three. This section contains passages that aid in the recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, adding more detail to the standard passages for each of these recollections. Because these recollections are meant to be inspiring, it is helpful to know in more detail some of the inspiring attributes of their objects. Yet, because different people will find different aspects of these objects more or less inspiring at any particular time, this section cannot begin to cover the full range of passages that might be helpful in offering inspiration. Instead, they focus more on the basics.

In the case of the Buddha, this means focusing on his Awakening and the way he found it (§17). In the case of the Dhamma, this means focusing on the qualities of mind the practice of the Dhamma is meant to induce (§18) and on the manner in which the Dhamma is taught (§§19-22). In the case of the Sangha, this means focusing on how the Buddha's noble disciples were able to overcome inner and outer obstacles in the path. This last set of passages focuses on what honorable and admirable people they became, thus inspiring confidence in them. But it also focuses on the fact that they began their practice with weaknesses similar to — or even worse than — ours, and yet they were able to overcome those weaknesses using personal qualities that we all have in potential form. This latter consideration helps to inspire confidence in our own ability to follow the path as well.

Section Four. This section covers the practice of mindfulness of in-and-out breathing. It includes passages that discuss the conditions that enable this practice to give quick results (§29), and passages that go into detail as to how rewarding those results can be (§§30, 32, 33, 40). Central to this section are the repeated references to the sixteen steps that comprise the Buddha's approach to mindfulness of in-and-out breathing:

"[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' [3] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' [4] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication [in-and-out breathing].' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

"[5] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.' [6] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.' [7] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication [feeling and perception].' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.' [8] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.'

"[9] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.' [10] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in gladdening the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out gladdening the mind.' [11] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in steadying the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out steadying the mind.' [12] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in releasing the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out releasing the mind.'

"[13] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.' [14] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on dispassion [*literally*, fading].' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.' [15] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on cessation.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on cessation.' [16] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.'"

These sixteen steps show that the Buddha did not regard this practice simply as a preliminary to other, more advanced practices. These steps cover the entire path leading to full release. As §31 shows in its presentation of these steps, mindfulness of breathing does not simply mean staying with the breath in the present; it involves training the mind to develop a range of skills with each in and out breath.

The irony of these sixteen steps is that even though they are the Buddha's most detailed meditation instructions, the Canon leaves unanswered a number of important questions concerning them. The most prominent question concerns how the sixteen steps are related to one another. Are they meant to be sequential, or can they be developed in a non-sequential way? Should the meditator try to cover all sixteen, or is it enough to focus on just one of the four tetrads making up the sixteen? And in either case, how is this done?

Different passages suggest different answers to these questions. The suttas that present the sixteen steps without further explanation seem to indicate that all sixteen steps are to be followed, and in a sequential way. Passage §30, however, equates each of the tetrads with a frame of reference, and then goes on to state that each frame of reference is sufficient to fulfill the seven factors for Awakening, which in turn lead to full release. This suggests that it's enough to focus on any one of the tetrads. But in either case, the suttas don't explain how one step leads to another. Perhaps this lack of explanation was an intentional part of the Buddha's teaching style, forcing his students to make discoveries on their own. But it can be helpful to share a few thoughts on the matter based on what the suttas, taken together, seem to suggest.

§49 indicates that the steps are meant, among other things, to lead to the jhanas. Thus the practice of the sixteen steps, in one way or another, should relate to the practice of jhana. And there are at least two possible ways in which this can happen: one based on following the path of all sixteen steps, and the other based on following the path of one of the tetrads.

First, taking the path of all sixteen steps:

Steps 1 and 2 involve two of the factors of the first jhana, directed thought and evaluation: directing one's thoughts and attention to the breath in and of itself in the present, at the same time evaluating it as one begins to discern variations in the length of the breath. Some modern teachers maintain that the factor of evaluation here also includes taking one's observations of short and long breathing as a basis for adjusting the rhythm of the breath to make it as comfortable as possible. Because the first level of jhana must be based on a sense of pleasure, this advice is very practical.

The remaining steps are willed or determined: one "trains oneself," first by manipulating one's sense of conscious awareness, making it sensitive to the body as a whole (step 3). Then one can begin manipulating the bodily sensations that become apparent within that full-body awareness, reducing them to a single sensation of calm by letting "bodily fabrication" — the in and out breathing — grow calm (step 4). As the breathing grows calm, it allows for easeful sensations of rapture and pleasure to grow prominent.

A comparison between the stages of breath meditation and the similes for the jhanas (§49) suggests that steps 5 and 6 — being sensitive to rapture and pleasure — involve making these feelings "single" as well, by letting them suffuse the entire body, just as the bathman kneads the moisture throughout his ball of bath powder. With bodily fabrications stilled, mental fabrications — feelings and perceptions — become clearly apparent as they occur (step 7), just as tuning a radio precisely to a certain frequency eliminates static and allows the message sent by the radio station broadcasting at that frequency to become clear. These mental fabrications, too, are calmed (step 8), a step symbolized in the similes for the jhanas by the still waters in the simile for the third jhana, in contrast to the spring waters welling up in the second. What remains is simply a sense of the mind itself (step 9), corresponding to the level of fourth jhana, in which the body is filled from head to toe with a single sense of bright, radiant awareness.

Once this stage is reached, one can now turn one's attention to consolidating one's mastery of concentration. This is done by reviewing the various levels of jhana, focusing not so much on the breath as on the mind as it relates to the breath. This develops a sensitivity to the different ways in which the mind can be brought to the desired state for gaining greater tranquility or insight. For instance, if it needs to be gladdened (step 10), one can gladden it with refreshing breathing or with any of the inspiring recollections (see §16). If it needs to be steadied (step 11), one can develop full-body awareness and calm any disturbances that can be detected in terms of bodily or mental fabrication. In the process of mastering these skills, one also begins to grow sensitive to the different factors from which the mind can be released (step 12) as it goes through the different levels of jhana — for example, releasing it from sensuality by taking it to the first jhana, releasing it from directed thought and evaluation by taking it from the first jhana to the second, releasing it from rapture by taking it from the second level to the third, and so forth (§§38-39). One comes to see that, although the breath feels different on the different levels of jhana, the cause is not so much the breath as it is the way the mind relates to the breath, shedding the various mental activities surrounding its single preoccupation.

The mastery of concentration developed in steps 9-12 provides an excellent chance to develop discernment into the pattern of cause and effect in the process of concentrating the mind, in that one must master the causal factors before gaining the desired results in terms of gladness, steadiness, and release.

This insight into cause and effect provides the basis for insight, the ability to see events in the mind simply as events, arising and passing away as part of a chain of causes and effects that also arise and pass away.

Realizing the inconstancy and unreliability of the events in this pattern (step 13) gives rise to the realization that they are also stressful and not-self: neither "me" nor "mine," but simply instances of the first noble truth of suffering and stress. When this discernment goes straight to the heart, there occurs a sense of dispassion for any craving directed at them (step 14, which corresponds to the duty of abandoning the second noble truth) and an experience of their fading away and cessation (step 15, the third noble truth). Finally, one relinquishes attachment not only to these events (step 16), but also to the discernment that sees through to their true nature (thus abandoning the fourth noble truth that, now that it has been fully developed, has completed its tasks). This brings the seven factors for Awakening to completion in a state "dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go," where "letting go" would appear to be equivalent to the "relinquishment" in step 16. When one is able simply to experience the act of relinquishment, without feeling that one is "doing" the relinquishing, one stands at the threshold to total release.

In this interpretation of the sixteen steps, the first two tetrads constitute the stage of familiarizing oneself with the potentials of concentration that can be attained by focusing on the breath, the third tetrad constitutes the stage of gaining insight to the patterns of cause and effect through mastering the concentration, and the fourth tetrad constitutes the stage of bringing the mind to a point of relinquishing all activity, even the activity of the path. These three stages correspond to the three stages of frames-of-reference practice described in detail in *The Wings to Awakening*.

As for the interpretation in which each of the four tetrads is regarded as sufficient for full release, this is best understood by first looking at the underlying pattern of the seven factors for Awakening, which each tetrad is said to fulfill. The seven factors begin with mindfulness established on a particular frame of reference: the body in and of itself, feelings in and of themselves, the mind in and of itself, or mental qualities in and of themselves. This is followed by analysis of qualities (*dhammas*), which not only perceives the chosen frame of reference in terms of dhammas, but also how these dhammas may be skillful or unskillful (§35).

Then follows persistence, which — as right effort — abandons the unskillful qualities and develops the skillful ones, leading to the factors of rapture, calm, concentration, and equanimity. Thus the general pattern consists of (1) focusing on a particular frame of reference, (2) seeing it as dhammas, and (3) dealing with those dhammas in a skillful way so as to bring about calming and peace.

This is precisely the pattern followed in each of the four tetrads. As one stays focused on the breath as one's basic theme to the point of giving rise to jhana, one has the choice of viewing the events of the developing concentration in terms of any one of the four frames of reference: the body (corresponding to the first tetrad), feelings (corresponding to the second), the mind (corresponding to the third), and mental qualities (corresponding to the fourth). As long as one's practice is skillful, events will develop in line with the above pattern regardless of the chosen frame. Thus each tetrad provides a particular perspective on these events, as they relate to the corresponding frame of reference.

The first tetrad shows how the development of breath concentration registers in terms of the body. In steps 1 and 2, one becomes sensitized to the breath in terms of its length. In step 3, one becomes sensitive to the breath as a whole-body process (this corresponds to the full-body awareness described in the similes for the jhanas). In step 4, this full-body awareness enables one to see the breath as a process fabricating the experience of the body. This in turn inclines one to allow that fabrication to grow calm (step 4), creating feelings of rapture, pleasure, and ultimately, equanimity. According to §38, this can lead — in the fourth jhana — to the absolute stilling of the in-and-out breath, as the oxygen needs of the body decrease when the mind reaches a firm stillness.

The second tetrad shows how the development of breath concentration registers in terms of feelings. In steps 5 and 6, one becomes sensitive to feelings of rapture and pleasure as they begin to manifest in the course of developing concentration: first in a gentle way, then in stronger ways. In step 7, this sensitivity allows one to see the impact that these feelings have in fabricating the mind, together with the perceptions (mental labels) that allow for one to maximize this sensitivity and its impact in the first place. This in turn inclines one to allow these feelings and perceptions to grow calm (step 8). An example of calming feeling would be abandoning rapture for equanimity.

An example of calming perception would be to perceive the body as a full energy field, rather than as a solid mass, thus making it easier for the in-and-out breathing to grow still. According to §38, this step-by-step process of calming can lead through the jhanas and into the formless states, culminating in the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling.

The third tetrad charts the development of breath concentration in terms of the mind. In step 9, one simply becomes sensitive to the state of the mind's awareness as it focuses on the breath in the present moment. In response to that sensitivity, one can use the breath to induce desired states in the mind. If the mind needs gladdening (step 10), one can breathe in ways that induce rapture and pleasure. (If this can't be accomplished with the breath, §16 suggests using any of the recollections that will produce the desired effect.) If the mind needs steadying (step 11), one can bring it to strong states of jhana by developing a strong, full-body awareness, and by allowing both bodily fabrication and mental fabrication to grow calm. As concentration develops, one can release the mind (step 12) from the affliction of sensuality by bringing it into jhana, and from the "afflictions" of the lower jhanas (§§38-39) by bringing it to the higher jhanas. This process of release, if it involves only the jhanas, is temporary, but if it leads to the release of Unbinding, it is total and permanent.

The fourth tetrad describes the development of breath concentration in terms of mental qualities (dhammas). To be sensitive to mental qualities, one first has to be sensitive to their arising and passing away. Thus the first step is to look for their inconstancy (step 13), to see when they arise, *how* they arise; when they pass away, *how* they pass away. As one is developing concentration based on the breath, one has to watch both for the inconstancy of the unskillful qualities that block concentration — the hindrances — and for the skillful qualities that nurture it: the factors for Awakening (§34). In seeing the hindrances simply as events, one can pull away from them, weigh their allure and drawbacks, and develop dispassion for them (step 14). Because one feels dispassionate toward them, one no longer participates in fabricating them. Thus they cease (step 15). On this preliminary level, however, the cessation is temporary, and lasts only as long as concentration can be maintained.

However, the practice of dealing with the hindrances in this way strengthens the first three factors for Awakening: mindfulness, analysis of qualities, and persistence. In watching these factors as events, one focuses on their inconstancy with a different agenda in mind: instead of trying to develop dispassion for them immediately, one tries to understand the causal factors behind their arising and passing away so that the factors for Awakening can be brought into being more often and maintained for longer periods of time (§34). This process, combined with the continued absence of the hindrances, allows one's concentration to grow stronger and more solid.

As one attains the higher jhanas, one is in a position to change tactics. One can now view the lower jhanas in terms of their inconstancy so as to induce dispassion for them, too (step 14). This tactic can be applied to higher and higher levels of jhana as one's powers of concentration and insight advance. Here again, the sense of dispassion at first leads only to temporary cessation (step 15). But as this process continues, there come stages of realization in which various hindrances and fetters are totally relinquished once and for all (step 16), yielding the ultimate in calm and release.

Thus in this interpretation, each of the four tetrads of mindfulness of in-and-out breathing charts the way in which meditation progresses as seen from a particular point of view. They all touch on the same process — with the same three-step dynamic of (1) sensitizing, (2) viewing as dhammas, and then (3) calming — showing how this process appears simultaneously from different frames of reference. In the course of one's practice, one is likely to shift among all four of these frames of reference, for they are all interrelated. For example, in gladdening the mind, one focuses on the breath to calm bodily fabrication, and on feelings of rapture and pleasure as means of inducing gladness. In becoming sensitive to the entire body, one naturally notices mental qualities that interfere with whole-body awareness, and mental qualities that nurture it. However, as the practice develops, individual meditators will tend to focus on one frame more than the others. The four tetrads show how, regardless of the chosen frame, all four frames can simultaneously be brought into line with the basic pattern of the seven factors for Awakening.

Regardless of which of these two interpretations one follows — and it is possible in practice to follow both — mindfulness of in-and-out breathing is obviously a method in which tranquility and insight develop in tandem.

As §37 shows, tranquility is a matter of allowing the mind to settle and become unified; insight, a matter of regarding experience in terms of fabrications. In the Buddha's practice of mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, the mind is brought to stillness and unity through watching the breath — and its attendant feelings and mind-states — in terms of fabrication, and allowing those fabrications to grow calm. Calm is thus attained through insight, insight through calm. Perhaps it was because this method progresses in such a balanced way that the Buddha used it as his preferred theme of meditation, and taught it more frequently and in more detail than any other.

Section Five. This section covers mindfulness of death. As the passages collected here show, the Buddha taught this topic not to induce a feeling of depression or hopelessness, or a sense of sentimental nostalgia for the beauties of the world.

He taught it to encourage heedfulness, a sense that a great deal needs to be done in training the mind, and that not much time remains to do it. Thus mindfulness of death fosters an appreciation of what human life offers the opportunity to *do*. What is valuable about life is not the pleasures that can be experienced, but the skillful mental qualities that can be developed.

Death is not the end, but a transition, and the transition will be easy or difficult depending on the qualities one has built into one's mind. Because there is no way of knowing when death will come, one should focus each day on which skillful qualities of mind most need developing, and which unskillful ones most need abandoning. Mindfulness of death is thus an excellent practice for ordering one's priorities.

As §§42-45 point out, today may be one's last day in this life. What remains to be done? Some ideas are offered by §46, which point out the mental traits that lead one to fear death, and §§47-48, which point out the traits by which death leads to rebirth. If one focuses on lessening and eradicating these traits, one's mindfulness of death can actually lead to the deathless.

Section Six. This section covers mindfulness immersed in the body. Passage §47, in discussing how the body is a theme for both mindfulness practice and jhana practice, illustrates a consistent theme in the suttas: that there is no sharp divide between mindfulness and concentration practices, and that mindfulness is intended to lead to jhana.

It also contains the most complete discussion of the methods of this practice, along with its rewards.

In addition to the benefits listed in this sutta, however, other passages list other benefits as well: mindfulness immersed in the body helps in overcoming lust (§51), pride based on one's appearance or race (§50), and fear of death (§46). It also provides a solid basis for restraint of the senses (§§42-43).

Passage §33 points out that one of the practices listed under this heading — contemplation of the unattractiveness of the body — can lead to unskillful mental states that are best cleared away by turning to mindfulness of in-and-out breathing. People who resist the theme of unattractiveness tend to focus on this passage, citing it as proof that the perception of unattractiveness is a dangerous and unhealthy meditation theme. However, §54 points out that some strong defilements will respond only to this theme. And there is nothing inherently unhealthy about focusing on the unattractiveness of the body. Instead of fostering an unhealthy negative image of the body — in which other people's bodies are attractive while one's own is not — it fosters an accurate perception of aspects of the body that are often ignored, and yet which are unattractive in everybody. This sort of negative image is thus healthy, in that it helps cure the mind of its blind infatuations. Thus the two themes of breathing and unattractiveness are best practiced together, as complementary tools in one's meditative repertoire, to be mastered and honed so that they will be ready for use whenever needed.

Section Seven. As mentioned above, the recollection of stilling — the topic of the final section — guarantees that mindfulness of death does not stop at the topic of death, but leads to the deathless. It also ensures that tranquility and insight do not stay focused on fabricated experiences, but incline to the unfabricated.

Passage §57 shows the ideal stage in the practice for this recollection: when one has mastered jhana and begun to see even its refined pleasures as inconstant, stressful, and not-self, this recollection helps to turn the mind in the direction of what lies beyond tranquility and insight: total Unbinding. As this passage points out, if — after utilizing this recollection — one still regards Unbinding as an object of passion, one's Awakening will not be complete. This is why the Buddha taught that all dhammas — not just fabricated ones — are to be seen as not-self, so as to overcome this passion.

But when Unbinding is fully experienced not as an object, but as the end of objects, insight and tranquility are no longer needed for the purpose of liberation, and can be used instead simply as pleasant means of abiding until the end of one's life (see §40), when "all this" — the experience of the senses — "grows cold right here." (*Iti 44*)

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