



# EVAM ME SUTTAM This is how I heard it

by Patrick Kearney

## Week six: Summing up satipaṭṭhāna

### Introduction

During this course we have looked at how different interpretative communities read the Nikāyas. Among these are contemporary communities formed by the experience of modernity, practitioners who are attempting to apply the teachings found in the Nikāyas to their daily lives in the contemporary world. Locating ourselves within such a community, we can see that our reading is a form of practitioner criticism. We have sought to make sense of this alien literature firstly by acknowledging that it is not a literature at all, but a collection of oral performances. We have examined how these performances are both made up of and linked by patterns of repetition - lists of lists within lists. The lists function like tables in individual databases, and the teaching as a whole - the *dhamma* - functions as a relational database which exists, not within any given *sutta*, but as a network of relationships which underlies and unites all the *suttas*. Tracing the connections between items contained within different tables in a relational database gives us reports, which themselves are not the database but expressions of it. Similarly, each *sutta* is like a report generated by a specific trajectory traced within the network of the *dhamma*, and provides a unique expression of the underlying database which is the *dhamma*. So one aspect of reading a *sutta* is reading its position within this underlying structure of *dhamma*. The *sutta*'s meaning is, in a sense, its position within the network of *dhamma*, and this position is an expression of its relationship with all other *suttas*.

Recently we have focused on *suttas* which deal specifically with meditation practice, seeing the different ways in which these can be read, and asking what implications these multiple readings have for the ways in which we ourselves might practice the meditations taught in these *suttas*. Tonight we will continue our examination of Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, focusing on the fourth domain, that of the contemplation of phenomena (*dhammānupassanā*), and through this seek to bring together some of the themes we have examined during this course.

## Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M10) The domains of attention

### Contemplating feelings

“And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live contemplating feelings as feelings? Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling (*sukha vedanā*), a bhikkhu knows (*pajānāti*) he is feeling a pleasant feeling; when feeling a painful feeling (*dukkha vedanā*), he knows he is feeling a painful feeling; when feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*adukkha-(m)asukha-vedanā*), he knows he is feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.

When feeling a worldly (*sāmisā*) pleasant feeling, he knows he is feeling a worldly pleasant feeling; when feeling an unworldly (*nirāmisā*) pleasant feeling, he knows he is feeling an unworldly

pleasant feeling; when feeling a worldly painful feeling, he knows he is feeling a worldly painful feeling; when feeling an unworldly painful feeling, he knows he is feeling an unworldly painful feeling; when feeling a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he knows he is feeling a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling; when feeling an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he knows he is feeling an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.

**[Insight]** “So he lives contemplating feelings as feelings internally, or he lives contemplating feelings as feelings externally, or he lives contemplating feelings as feelings both internally and externally. Or he lives contemplating the nature of arising as feelings; or he lives contemplating the nature of ceasing as feelings; or he lives contemplating both the nature of arising and the nature of ceasing as feelings. Or his attention is established on “there is feeling,” to the extent necessary for understanding and reflexive attention. And he lives independently, not clinging to anything in the world. This is how a bhikkhu lives contemplating feelings as feelings.

## Contemplating mind

“And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live contemplating mind as mind? Here a bhikkhu knows wanting mind (*sarāga*) as wanting mind, and mind free from wanting as mind free from wanting. He knows angry mind (*sadosa*) as angry mind, and mind free from anger as mind free from anger. He knows confused mind (*samoha*) as confused mind, and mind free from confusion as mind free from confusion. He knows contracted (*saṅkhitta*) mind as contracted mind, and restless (*vikkhitta*) mind as restless mind. He knows exalted (*mahaggata*) mind as exalted mind, and unexalted mind as unexalted mind. He knows surpassed (*sa-uttara*) mind as surpassed mind, and unsurpassed mind as unsurpassed mind. He knows concentrated (*samāhita*) mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind. He knows liberated (*vimutta*) mind as liberated mind and unliberated mind as unliberated mind.

**[Insight]** “So he lives contemplating mind as mind internally, or he lives contemplating mind as mind externally, or he lives contemplating mind as mind both internally and externally. Or he lives contemplating the nature of arising as mind; or he lives contemplating the nature of ceasing as mind; or he lives contemplating both the nature of arising and the nature of ceasing as mind. Or his attention is established on “there is mind,” to the extent necessary for understanding and reflexive attention. And he lives independently, not clinging to anything in the world. This is how a bhikkhu lives contemplating mind as mind.

## Contemplating phenomena

### Five hindrances

“And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live contemplating phenomena as phenomena? Here a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the five hindrances. And how does a bhikkhu live contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the five hindrances? When there is sense desire (*kāma-chandha*) in him, a bhikkhu knows there is sense desire in him; when there is no sense desire in him, he knows there is no sense desire in him. He knows the arising of unarisen sense desire, and the abandoning of arisen sense desire, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned sense desire.

When there is hatred (*byāpāda*) in him, a bhikkhu knows there is hatred in him; when there is no hatred in him, he knows there is no hatred in him. He knows the arising of unarisen hatred, and the abandoning of arisen hatred, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned hatred.

When there is stiffness-&-torpor (*thīna-middha*) in him, a bhikkhu knows there is stiffness-&-torpor in him; when there is no stiffness-&-torpor in him, he knows there is no stiffness-&-torpor in him. He knows the arising of unarisen stiffness-&-torpor, and the abandoning of arisen stiffness-&-torpor, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned stiffness-&-torpor.

When there is restlessness-&-remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) in him, a bhikkhu knows there is restlessness-&-remorse in him; when there is no restlessness-&-remorse in him, he knows there is no restlessness-&-remorse in him. He knows the arising of unarisen restlessness-&-remorse, and the abandoning of arisen restlessness-&-remorse, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned restlessness-&-remorse.

When there is doubt (*vicikicchā*) in him, a bhikkhu knows there is doubt in him; when there is no doubt in him, he knows there is no doubt in him. He knows the arising of unarisen doubt, and the abandoning of arisen doubt, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned doubt.

**[Insight]** “So he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena internally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena externally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena both internally and externally. Or he lives contemplating the nature of arising as phenomena; or he lives contemplating the nature of ceasing as phenomena; or he lives contemplating both the nature of arising and the nature of ceasing as phenomena. Or his attention is established on “there are phenomena,” to the extent necessary for understanding and reflexive attention. And he lives independently, not clinging to anything in the world. This is how a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the five hindrances.

### Five aggregates

“Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the five clung-to aggregates. And how does a bhikkhu live contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the five clung-to aggregates? Here a bhikkhu knows: ‘Such is material form (*rūpa*), such its arising, such its disappearance. Such is feeling (*vedanā*), such its arising, such its disappearance. Such is perception (*saññā*), such its arising, such its disappearance. Such are formations (*saṅkhārā*), such their arising, such their disappearance. Such is consciousness (*viññāṇa*), such its arising, such its disappearance.

**[Insight]** “So he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena internally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena externally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena both internally and externally. Or he lives contemplating the nature of arising as phenomena; or he lives contemplating the nature of ceasing as phenomena; or he lives contemplating both the nature of arising and the nature of ceasing as phenomena. Or his attention is established on “there are phenomena,” to the extent necessary for understanding and reflexive attention. And he lives independently, not clinging to anything in the world. This is how a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the five clung-to aggregates.

### Six spheres

“Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the six subjective and objective spheres. And how does a bhikkhu live contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the six subjective and objective spheres? Here a bhikkhu knows (*pajānāti*) the eye, he knows forms, and he knows the fetter (*saṃyogana*) that arises dependent on both. He knows the arising of the unarisen fetter, and the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned fetter.

“He knows the ear, he knows sounds, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both. He knows the arising of the unarisen fetter, and the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned fetter.

“He knows the nose, he knows odours, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both. He knows the arising of the unarisen fetter, and the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned fetter.

“He knows the tongue, he knows tastes, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both. He knows the arising of the unarisen fetter, and the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned fetter.

“He knows the body, he knows tangible objects, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both. He knows the arising of the unarisen fetter, and the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned fetter.

“He knows the mind, he knows phenomena, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both. He knows the arising of the unarisen fetter, and the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and he knows the nonarising in the future of the abandoned fetter.

**[Insight]** “So he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena internally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena externally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena both internally and externally. Or he lives contemplating the nature of arising as phenomena; or he lives contemplating the nature of ceasing as phenomena; or he lives contemplating both the nature of arising and the nature of ceasing as phenomena. Or his attention is established on “there are phenomena,” to the extent necessary for understanding and reflexive attention. And he lives independently, not clinging to anything in the world. This is how a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the six subjective and objective spheres.

### Seven factors of awakening

“Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the seven awakening factors. And how does a bhikkhu live contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the seven awakening factors? Here, when the attention awakening factor (*sati-sambojjhaṅga*) is present in him, a bhikkhu knows the attention awakening factor is present in him; or when the attention awakening factor is not present in him, he knows the attention awakening factor is not present in him. And he knows the arising of the unarisen attention awakening factor, and how the arisen attention awakening factor matures by development (*bhāvanā-pāripūrī hoti*).

“When the investigation-of-phenomena awakening factor (*dhamma-vicaya sambojjhaṅga*) is present in him, a bhikkhu knows the investigation-of-phenomena awakening factor is present in him; or when the investigation-of-phenomena awakening factor is not present in him, he knows the investigation-of-phenomena awakening factor is not present in him. And he knows the arising of the unarisen investigation-of-phenomena awakening factor, and how the arisen investigation-of-phenomena awakening factor matures by development.

“When the energy awakening factor (*virīya-sambojjhaṅga*) is present in him, a bhikkhu knows the energy awakening factor is present in him; or when the energy awakening factor is not present in him, he knows the attention awakening factor is not present in him. And he knows the arising of the unarisen energy awakening factor, and how the arisen energy awakening factor matures by development.

“When the rapture awakening factor (*pīti sambojjhaṅga*) is present in him, a bhikkhu knows the rapture awakening factor is present in him; or when the rapture awakening factor is not present in him, he knows the rapture awakening factor is not present in him. And he knows the arising of the unarisen rapture awakening factor, and how the arisen rapture awakening factor matures by development.

“When the tranquillity awakening factor (*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*) is present in him, a bhikkhu knows the tranquillity awakening factor is present in him; or when the tranquillity awakening factor is not present in him, he knows the tranquillity awakening factor is not present in him. And he knows the arising of the unarisen tranquillity awakening factor, and how the arisen tranquillity awakening factor matures by development.

“When the concentration awakening factor (*samādhi sambojjhaṅga*) is present in him, a bhikkhu knows the concentration awakening factor is present in him; or when the concentration awakening factor is not present in him, he knows the concentration awakening factor is not present in him. And he knows the arising of the unarisen concentration awakening factor, and how the arisen concentration awakening factor matures by development.

“When the equanimity awakening factor (*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*) is present in him, a bhikkhu knows the equanimity awakening factor is present in him; or when the equanimity awakening factor is not present in him, he knows the equanimity awakening factor is not present in him. And he knows the arising of the unarisen equanimity awakening factor, and how the arisen concentration equanimity factor matures by development.

**[Insight]** “So he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena internally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena externally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena both internally and externally. Or he lives contemplating the nature of arising as phenomena; or he lives contemplating the nature of ceasing as phenomena; or he lives contemplating both the nature of arising and the nature of ceasing as phenomena. Or his attention is established on “there are phenomena,” to the extent necessary for understanding and reflexive attention. And he lives independently, not clinging to anything in the world. This is how a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the seven awakening factors.

#### Four noble truths

“Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the four noble truths. And how does a bhikkhu live contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the four noble truths? Here a bhikkhu knows as it actually is (*yatābhūtaṃ pajānāti*): ‘This is *dukkha*,’ he knows as it actually is: ‘This is the arising of *dukkha*,’ he knows as it actually is: ‘This is the cessation of *dukkha*,’ he knows as it actually is: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.’

**[Insight]** “So he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena internally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena externally, or he lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena both internally and externally. Or he lives contemplating the nature of arising as phenomena; or he lives contemplating the nature of ceasing as phenomena; or he lives contemplating both the nature of arising and the nature of ceasing as phenomena. Or his attention is established on “there are phenomena,” to the extent necessary for understanding and reflexive attention. And he lives independently, not clinging to anything in the world. This is how a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena in terms of the four noble truths.

#### Conclusion

Truly, bhikkhus, whoever practises these four domains of attention like this for seven years can expect one of two results: either perfect insight here and now (*ditṭhe dhamme aññā*); or, if a touch of clinging remains, the state of non-return (*anāgāmitā*).

Forget about seven years! Whoever practises these four domains of attention like this for six years can expect one of two results: either perfect insight here and now; or, if a touch of clinging remains, the state of non-return.

Forget about six years! Whoever practises these four domains of attention like this for five years ... four years ... three years ... two years ... one year, can expect one of two results: either perfect insight here and now; or, if a touch of clinging remains, the state of non-return.

Forget about one year! Whoever practises these four domains of attention like this for seven months ... six months ... five months ... two weeks, can expect one of two results: either perfect insight here and now; or, if a touch of clinging remains, the state of non-return.

Forget about two weeks! Whoever practises these four domains of attention like this for seven days can expect one of two results: either perfect insight here and now; or, if a touch of clinging remains, the state of non-return.

This is why it is said: “This way, the four domains of attention, is for the one purpose of purifying beings, overcoming sorrow and lamentation, destroying pain and grief, attaining the right path, and realising *nibbāna*.”

This is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

## Comment

### A brief note on *vedanā*

Before looking at the fourth domain, that of the contemplation of phenomena, we can briefly examine one important reading of Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, that of S. N. Goenka. Here we will focus on his view of the Sutta in the introduction to his *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta: The Great Discourse on the Establishing of Awareness*.

To explore the truth about ourselves, we must examine what we are: body and mind. We must learn to observe these directly within ourselves. Accordingly, we must keep three points in mind: 1) The reality of the body may be imagined by contemplation, but to experience it directly one must work with *vedanā* (body sensations) arising within it. 2) Similarly, the actual experience of the mind is attained by working with the contents of the mind. Therefore, in the same way as body and sensations cannot be experienced separately, the mind cannot be observed apart from the contents of the mind. 3) Mind and matter are so closely inter-related that the contents of the mind always manifest themselves as sensations in the body. (vii-viii)

The essential move that Goenka makes is to equate *vedanā* (feelings) with *kāya* (body) by reading “feelings” as “body sensations.” This is an unusual interpretation. Usually “feelings” are read as the hedonic aspect of any and every experience, either physical or mental. The mind is deeply programmed to automatically classify all experience as being either pleasant (*sukha*), painful (*dukkha*), or neither-painful-nor-pleasant (*adukkha-(m)-asukha*). If while meditating, for example, I feel strong sensations of pressure in the legs as I sit on my cushion, I am impelled to classify these sensations in some way, most likely as painful. This sense of the painfulness or pleasantness of sensations is not the sensation itself, but something added to the sensation. Sounds are physical experience; but two people may experience the same sounds (a rock concert, for example) differently. One experiences them as pleasant; the other as painful. The qualities of pleasantness or painfulness are not inherent in the sounds themselves, but in our response *to* the sounds. This response is feeling (*vedanā*).

Goenka first equates “feelings” with “physical sensations,” and then adds that, because of the dependent relationships between mind and body, mental events always manifest themselves within the body. From there it is a small step to claim that *satipaṭṭhāna* practice consists entirely in the detailed observations of physical sensations, and that this alone is the true “technique” of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā*.

### Structure of the Sutta

We have looked at how some *suttas* demonstrate a form structured by verses and chorus, and how this can be linked to a temporal structure of diachronic and synchronic relationship. Does Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta demonstrate these forms? Firstly, is there a diachronic structure to this *sutta*? The text has twenty-one verses, but there seems no indication that these indicate a diachronic progression, a linear series of exercises that are expected to be done in the order indicated. Certainly the commentary does not read the *sutta* this way, and none of our practitioner critics

attempt such a reading. This is in marked contrast, for example, to Buddhadāsa's reading of *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, where he sees the four tetrads, divided into sixteen aspects of *ānāpānasati*, to indicate a fixed progression of the practice from stage one to stage sixteen. And certainly a central theme of *Ānāpānasati Sutta* is that of meditation "progress" in the sense of the practitioner undergoing a process of maturity, fulfilment or completion (*paripuṇṇatā*) through successive stages of awakening. But *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, in contrast, does not appear preoccupied with stages of progress, although it is, in the conclusion, concerned with the issue of time.

The closest we get to a sense of a diachronic structure is in the first verse, which deals with the contemplation of breathing - *ānāpānasati*. The text here is the same as the first tetrad in *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, and the commentary reads it in the same way, as meant to indicate the development of concentration up to the level of *jhāna* in order to provide a foundation for insight (*vipassanā*). This clearly indicates a diachronic process. Even though some communities would disagree that concentration up to the level of *jhāna* is necessary as a foundation for insight, all would agree that some degree of concentration is necessary, and this first verse could be read as indicating the development of that concentration, using the breath as the meditation object. However, there is no indication that the other twenty verses are listed in some sort of chronological or progressive order. The use of the breath as the preliminary object, and the repetition of the first tetrad of *Ānāpānasati Sutta* (or, conversely, the repetition of the first verse of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in *Ānāpānasati Sutta*), links the two *suttas* and the practice outlined in each. Here we have a synchronic hypertext connection between the distinctive trajectories offered by two *suttas*. Depending on which direction the practitioner chooses to proceed, either *Ānāpānasati Sutta* or *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* could provide an appropriate guide.

Alternatively, we could see the structure of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as constituted by twenty-one units of verse-chorus. Rather than presenting a linear or progressive model, the practitioner can enter into the practice of the *Sutta* in any of these twenty-one verses, or move from any one verse to any other, in any trajectory that seems applicable. The (literary) choice of which verse the practitioner will locate herself corresponds to the (practical) choice of which aspect of experience is clearest to her meditative attention, now. Each verse-chorus unit can be read as displaying both a diachronic and synchronic aspect. Whatever aspect of experience is chosen as meditation object entails a diachronic progression from less to more concentration, and from one aspect of the object to another. For example, if one is contemplating the four elements of earth, water, fire and air, one would both develop one's concentration on any given element over time, and move from one element to another over time. But the chorus provides a synchronic balance to this practice. Whatever the object, and whatever one's relationship to the object, the practitioner learns to perceive and contemplate its impermanent nature, and from there undertake the entry into emptiness - "There is *this*." And both impermanence and *this* are available, now, in any aspect of experience.

In addition, each chorus contains an analytic and synthetic structure. The analytic structure is indicated by the basic principle of the *Sutta*, applied to each aspect of experience: the practitioner contemplates *just this* as *just this*.

Here a bhikkhu, surrendering desire and grief regarding the world, lives contemplating body as body, ... feelings as feelings ... mind as mind, ... phenomena as phenomena, ardent, clearly understanding and attentive.

The practitioner is awake and present to whatever is happening. The mind is still, and in this stillness she watches whatever presents itself to her, making no judgement, not holding on to anything, not pushing anything away. She sees this-experience-right-now as just this-experience-right-now, without adding anything extra. Over time, she sees the flow of experience as a series of present events: just this, right now; followed by just this, right now; followed by just this, right now. By staying with one central reference point as meditation object, such as the breath, the practitioner becomes more sensitive to it. She knows it as it is, now; and she knows it as it changes over time. She also know the workings of the mind as it gains and loses awareness of the object, as

awareness itself changes over time. She discovers *aniccatā*, impermanence, change, the discontinuity of experience.

From there, the object which changes over time moves from foreground to background, and the fact of change itself moves from background to foreground. The practitioner is no longer contemplating *x*, which arises and ceases, but arising and ceasing itself, which is here instantiated in *x*. From contemplating an object and noticing that it arises and ceases, the practitioner contemplates arising and ceasing itself, noticing that this universal process - which is both internal/subjective and external/objective - manifests in and as this particular object. And it doesn't matter which object, which aspect of experience, the practitioner is contemplating. The process of arising/cessation is true for any and every experience, and so the insight/chorus is repeated for every verse.

So he lives contemplating *x* as *x* internally, or he lives contemplating *x* as *x* externally, or he lives contemplating *x* as *x* both internally and externally. Or he lives contemplating the nature of arising as *x*; or he lives contemplating the nature of ceasing as *x*; or he lives contemplating both the nature of arising and the nature of ceasing as *x*. Or his attention is established on "there is *x*," to the extent necessary for understanding and reflexive attention. And he lives independently, not clinging to anything in the world. This is how a bhikkhu lives contemplating *x* as *x*.

## Contemplation of phenomena

Returning to the question of structure, the Sutta is divided into four domains. As we saw last week, each domain can be read as representing *either* an aspect of experience which can be used as the object of attention (*sati-paṭṭhāna*), *or* as the act of establishing attention itself (*sati-upaṭṭhāna*). If a domain is an area of experience where we can establish attention, does this mean that we can divide our experience into four distinct areas - body, feelings, mind and phenomena? While this geographical division works for the first three domains, it breaks down at the fourth. Here, *dhammas*, "phenomena," can be read as referring to *paṭiccasamuppanna dhammas*, "dependently arisen phenomena," or simply the "dependently arisen." For the Buddha, all phenomena (*dhammas*) other than *nibbāna* are dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppāna dhammas*); they are instantiations of the universal principle of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). They arise and cease, and so are impermanent, and they arise and cease because of the influence of other phenomena, and so are dependent upon other phenomena. Their existence depends on other phenomena; they have no identity apart from the network of relationships that condition their arising, manifestation and cessation.

To contemplate phenomena is to contemplate the workings of this network of conditional relationships as it appears in one's experience, now. This network of conditional relationships is the *dhamma*, reality itself, so to contemplate phenomena (*dhammas*) is to contemplate reality (*dhamma*), and reality is available - is *only* available - in whatever object of meditation is appearing here and now. So all of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice is the contemplation of phenomena - when, in that moment, it is clear to the practitioner that both the object being contemplated (*sati-paṭṭhāna*), and the contemplation itself (*sati-upaṭṭhāna*), are just phenomena.

So, for example, the last aspect of the contemplation of phenomena is that of the four noble truths.

Here a bhikkhu knows as it actually is: 'This is *dukkha*;' he knows as it actually is: 'This is the arising of *dukkha*;' he knows as it actually is: 'This is the cessation of *dukkha*;' he knows as it actually is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.'

Here the *object* of meditation is the arising and ceasing of *dukkha*. But to see *anything* in terms of its arising and ceasing is itself right view, one of the wisdom aspects of the path. (See Sāriputta's explanation in M9, *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta*), and is the contemplation of phenomena, as we have seen

above. So right view *is* the contemplation of phenomena, and one can have right view of body, feelings and mind.

Notice that in this fourth domain, each instance of the contemplation of phenomena as phenomena is introduced as “a bhikkhu lives contemplating phenomena as phenomena *in terms of x*.” The practices in the other domains are expressed simply as the contemplation of *x*, but in this domain, the practitioner is concerned with the contemplation of phenomena as phenomena in terms of *x*. This indicates that the object of contemplation is not *x* as such, but the place of *x* within, and as an instantiation of, a network of relationships. The object of meditation is not an object, but a relationship; not an identity, but a process. And to see something as process is to see it as empty of self, as simply a manifestation of emptiness (*suññatā*) and not-self (*anattā*). This is awakening.

## Time

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta ends with advice of the question of time and its relationship to the practice. This is very unusual in the *suttas*, which are generally not concerned with the issue of how long it takes to complete the meditation training. Of course, to raise the issue of time is to introduce the issue of diachronic progression. The Buddha answers the question: How long does it take? He starts the bidding at seven years, and brings it down to seven days. One feels he could have brought the bidding down still more, the implication being is that time is not the issue. The notions of time and diachronic progress over time have been introduced in order to subvert them. Beneath the diachronic we sense the synchronic.

What will be attained within time are either the final or the penultimate stages of awakening, “either perfect insight here and now; or, if a touch of clinging remains, the state of non-return.” This echoes Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta (M52), which we read in week three. In that *sutta* we have a similar structure of verses and chorus, where the verses provide a diachronic progression through successive stages of concentration and the chorus provides a synchronic insight through seeing the formed and constructed nature of any given experience.

He considers this and understands it in this way: ‘This *x* is formed (*abhisankhataṃ*) and volitionally created (*abhisancetayitaṃ*). But whatever is formed and volitionally created is impermanent, subject to cessation.’ Standing upon that, he attains the destruction of the taints. But if he does not attain the destruction of the taints, then because of that desire for *dhamma*, that delight in *dhamma*, with the destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes one due to reappear spontaneously (in the pure abodes) and there attain final *nibbāna* without ever returning from that world.

In both Aṭṭhakanāgara and Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta we have a concern with the relationship between progress over time and insight in this present moment. There are different aspects of this relationship. Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta draws a clear cross-section across any given experience, showing its constructed nature in this moment. Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta shows the impermanence and contingency of any given experience. Each aspect entails the other. If a phenomenon is impermanent and subject to change, then it must be formed and constructed; if a phenomenon is formed and constructed, it must be impermanent and subject to change. The nature of being formed and constructed is synchronic and immediate; the nature of being impermanent and subject to change implies time, for change is alteration over time. So in Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, where the focus is on impermanence, time surfaces as an issue. But even here, as we have seen, the aspect of immediacy is just beneath the surface. This process can be completed in any time - in this time.

In Udāna 1.10 we find the story of Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth, who demanded the teaching from the Buddha and received this reply:

Then, Bāhiya, here is how you should train:  
In the seen, there will be just the seen;  
In the heard, just the heard;

In the sensed, just the sensed;  
 In the known, just the known.  
 In this way you should train yourself.

When for you there is, in the seen, just the seen;  
 In the heard, just the heard;  
 In the sensed, just the sensed;  
 In the known, just the known;  
 Then you are not by that.  
 When you are not by that,  
 Then you are not there.  
 When you are not there,  
 Then you are neither here nor beyond, nor in between the two.  
 Just this is the end of suffering.

Bāhiya was instantly awakened to “perfect insight here and now,” “the destruction of the taints,” and is revered by the tradition as the student of the Buddha who was fastest in attaining awakening. This verse provides the same function as the chorus in Aṭṭhakanāgara and Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. It is a *sutta* stripped down to its essentials, just one performance of chorus. And, like the choruses above, it shows the essentially synchronic nature of insight.