

# *Reality and the Four Close the Placements of Mindfulness*

## *A Summary of the Sixteen Aspects of the Four Noble Truths and the Four Close Placements of Mindfulness*

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### **Purpose for Meditating on the Four Close Placements of Mindfulness**

*The Middle Length Discourses [of the Buddha]:*

Bhikkhus, this is the [only way] for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of Nibbana, namely, the four foundations of mindfulness<sup>1</sup>.

*Maitreya's Discrimination of the Middle Way and the Extremes:*

Because being the pernicious state,  
 Because being the cause of craving,  
 Because being the basis,  
 And because being non-obscuration,  
 Are the entry into the four truths,  
 Meditate the close placements of mindfulness<sup>2</sup>.

The reasons for meditating in such a way is to engage into what is to adopted and rejected with regard to the Four Truths. Through meditating close placements of mindfulness of bodies, you will understand that the appropriated pernicious state of the contaminated body is the entity of suffering. Because pleasant and unpleasant feelings are the causes of cravings which desire nonseparation and separation and since, considered from the point of view of results, cravings are the principal origin of suffering, through meditating close placements of mindfulness of feelings, you will act to abandon them. Through meditating close placements of mindfulness of minds, the basis of self-grasping, the mind, is analyzed as impermanent and so forth, thereby stopping the conception of that. Then, due to the absence of fear of the annihilation of the self, you will actualize cessation. Through meditating repulsiveness and close placements of mindfulness of phenomena you will understand that all thoroughly afflicted phenomena are incompatible, and all pure phenomena are antidotes for that<sup>3</sup>.

| Object of Observation | Reasons for Meditating                                                                                                                        | Purpose Related to the Four Noble Truths |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Bodies                | To understand that the appropriated contaminated body is the entity of suffering                                                              | To realise true sufferings               |
| Feelings              | To abandon craving caused by pleasant and unpleasant feelings, the origin of suffering                                                        | To abandon true origins                  |
| Minds                 | To stop self-grasping by realizing that the mind, its basis, is impermanent; fear of annihilation is overcome and cessation can be actualized | To actualise true cessations             |
| Phenomena             | To understand that all thoroughly afflicted phenomena are incompatible and all pure phenomena are antidotes for that                          | To engage in true paths                  |

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Manual of Insight*, Mahasi Sayadaw, Vipassana Metta Foundation Translation Committee, Wisdom Publications, 2016

<sup>2</sup> *A Presentation of the Close Placements of Mindfulness* by Gyalwa Chogyi Gyaltzen (*Rgyal ba chos gyi rgyal mtshan gyis brtsom pa' dran pa nyer bzhag bzhugs*). Translated into English by Jampa Gendun relying on previous versions, undated.

<sup>3</sup> Idem

## Sixteen Aspects of the Four Noble Truths<sup>4</sup>

### THE FOUR ASPECTS OF THE TRUTH OF SUFFERING

| ASPECT TO BE MEDITATED | MEDITATION CENTERS ON THE THOUGHT THAT THE CONTAMINATED PHYSICAL & MENTAL AGGREGATES ARE:                                | MEDITATION COUNTERACTS THE MISPERCEPTION OF:              |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. IMPERMANENCE        | Impermanent because they are produced occasionally (i.e. they do not exist forever).                                     | the Five Contaminated Aggregates as Permanent.            |
| 2. SUFFERING           | In the Nature of Suffering because they are under the outside influence of contaminated actions (karma) and afflictions. | the Five Contaminated Aggregates as Pure and Pleasurable. |
| 3. EMPTINESS           | Empty because they are devoid of a supervisory self that is a different entity from them.                                | a Permanent, Partless and Independent Self.               |
| 4. SELFLESSNESS        | Selfless because they do not exist as an independent self.                                                               | a Self-Sufficient Substantially Existent Self.            |

### THE FOUR ASPECTS OF THE TRUTH OF ORIGIN

| ASPECT TO BE MEDITATED | MEDITATION CENTERS ON THE THOUGHT CONTAMINATED ACTIONS AND ATTACHMENT ARE: | MEDITATION COUNTERACTS THE MISPERCEPTION THAT:                     |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. CAUSE               | Causes because they are the roots of suffering.                            | Suffering is causeless.                                            |
| 2. ORIGIN              | Origins because they again and again produce suffering.                    | Suffering is caused by only one cause.                             |
| 3. STRONG PRODUCTION   | Strong Producers because they produce suffering with great force.          | the nature of things is permanent but their states are changeable. |
| 4. CONDITION           | Conditions because they act as the cooperative conditions of suffering.    | Suffering is created under the supervision of a deity.             |

### THE FOUR ASPECTS OF THE TRUTH OF CESSATION

| ASPECT TO BE MEDITATED | MEDITATION CENTERS ON THE THOUGHT THAT A SEPARATION WHICH IS A TOTAL EXTINGUISHMENT OF [CONTAMINATED] ACTION AND AFFLICTION IS: | MEDITATION COUNTERACTS THE MISPERCEPTION THAT:                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. CESSATION           | a Cessation because of being a state of having abandoned suffering.                                                             | there is no liberation from cyclic existence.                                                                                                                         |
| 2. PACIFICATION        | a Pacification because of being a state of having pacified an affliction.                                                       | certain contaminated states are liberation (e.g. the Jaina's assertion that there is a place of liberation on top of the world that is like an upside-down umbrella). |
| 3. AUSPICIOUS HIGHNESS | Auspiciously high because it is a separation which is in the nature of benefit and bliss.                                       | there is a liberation that is superior to the cessation of suffering.                                                                                                 |
| 4. DEFINITE EMERGENCE  | definite emergence because it is a separation from suffering such that it will never return.                                    | liberation, once attained, is reversible.                                                                                                                             |

<sup>4</sup> Charts of the Sixteen Aspects from Geshe Kelsang Wangmo, Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, undated.

## THE FOUR ASPECTS OF THE TRUTH OF PATH

| ASPECT TO BE MEDITATED | MEDITATION CENTERS ON THE THOUGHT THAT A BODHISATTVA PATH OF SEEING REALIZING SELFLESSNESS DIRECTLY IS: | MEDITATION COUNTERACTS THE MISPERCEPTION THAT:                                                                |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. <b>PATH</b>         | a path because it causes one to proceed to liberation.                                                  | there are no paths of liberation from cyclic existence.                                                       |
| 2. <b>SUITABILITY</b>  | suitable because it is a path which serves as an antidote to affliction.                                | the mind realizing selflessness directly is not a path of liberation.                                         |
| 3. <b>ACHIEVER</b>     | an achiever because it directly realizes the nature of the path unmistakably.                           | paths such as worldly concentrations, undergoing asceticism of the five fires, etc., are paths of liberation. |
| 4. <b>DELIVERANCE</b>  | a deliverer because it is a path which eliminates suffering and delusion irreversibly.                  | there is no total eradicator of suffering.                                                                    |

### Objects of Observation<sup>5</sup>

There are four objects of the close placements of mindfulness: bodies, feelings, minds, and phenomena. There are three bodies: the outer body of forms that are not bases of the sense powers such as sound; the inner body of the five sense powers such as the eye sense power; and the body that is both outer and inner such as the forms that serve as bases of the sense powers (i.e., the sense organs). There are three feelings: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. Minds refer to primary consciousness (such as eye consciousness and so forth). And phenomena refer to all mental factors that are not feelings and all non-associated compositional factors and unproduced phenomena.

*Compendium of Knowledge* states:

What are the objects of observation of the close placements of mindfulness: bodies, feelings, minds, and phenomena?

The reason why these four are posited as the objects of observation is so the immature will abandon grasping at the bodies as the dwelling place of the self; the feelings as the source of enjoyments of the self, the minds as the thing which is the self, and phenomena such as attachment as afflicting and faith as purifying the self.

*Compendium of Knowledge* states:

The thing which is the dwelling place of the self, the bases of resources for the self, the thing which is the self, and things which afflict and purify the self.

### Manners of Meditation<sup>6</sup>

There are two manners of meditation: common and uncommon. The first manner, common, is done by investigating both the general and specific characteristics of bodies, feelings, minds, and phenomena.

*Treasury of Knowledge* states:

One should meditate the close placements of mindfulness by thoroughly investigating the two characteristics of bodies, feelings, minds, and phenomena.

Moreover, impermanence, suffering, empty, and selfless are the general characteristics. They are explained as general characteristics since they are pervasive qualities applied to particular bases. That is to say: all products are impermanent; all that is contaminated is suffering; and all phenomena are empty and selfless.

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<sup>5</sup> This section is taken from: A Presentation of the Close Placements of Mindfulness by Gyalwa Chogyi Gyaltsen (*Rgyal ba chos gyi rgyal mtshan gyis brtsom pa' dran pa nyer bzhag bzhugs*). Translated into English by Jampa Gendun relying on previous versions, undated.

<sup>6</sup> Idem

*Commentary to 'Treasury of Knowledge'* (states):

Their specific characteristics are their individual entity. The general characteristics are that all products are impermanent; all that is contaminated is suffering; and all phenomena are empty and selfless.

Hence, the specific characteristics with regard to the bodies are the bodies' elements and evolutes; with regard to feelings the entity of experience; with regard to minds the entity of observer; and with regard to phenomena such as the mental factors, each has its own entity. The above examples are merely indicative. The second manner of meditation, uncommon, has three parts: objects of observation, mental engagement, and attainment. The first, objects of observation: Hearers and Solitary Realizers observe only their own bodies and so forth, while Bodhisattvas observe the bodies of both themselves and others. The second, mental engagement: Hearers and Solitary Realizers mentally engage impermanence, and so forth, while bodhisattvas meditate on the non-observable sign of phenomena. The third, attainment: Hearers and Solitary Realizers meditate solely to be free from the contaminated body and so forth, whereas Bodhisattvas do not meditate for the sake of freedom or non-freedom from that, but in order to achieve a non-abiding nirvana.