

53 Paths to Freedom: The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. An Overview

January 17th, 2019

Links to the texts and Anālayo's book are listed at the end of this outline.

Why is our non-Buddhist group going to study a famous Buddhist text?

- Modern mindfulness is based on it
- One of the most universal and widely studied *suttas* of the Pali Canon (early Buddhist writings)
- It's got really good instructions
- There is no religiosity in it. It is not a theological statement
- Appropriate manual for meditators who would like some guidance

Historic context

- Not a word-for-word teaching of the Buddha
- Many bare-bones versions in the Pali Canon
- Many expositions of individual elements found throughout the Canon
- *Satipatthana Sutta* compiled later from various early texts
- No doubt what the Buddha taught, but systematized and elaborated into the famous *sutta*
- Two “complete” versions, the same except for a more detailed exposition of the 4 Ennobling Truths: the *Satipatthana Sutta*, and the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*. (*Maha* means “greater” or “large”).
- Commentaries came as much as 1500 years later by scholarly monks, expand on interpretation.
- I'll be leaning heavily on Bikkhu Anālayo's book: *The Satipatthana: The Direct Path to Realization*.
- I will use different translations so that we don't get caught up in words.

Read the beginning of the *Satipatthana*

The misleading name

- Detailed instructions on how to apply mindfulness to various areas of experience for the purpose of reducing suffering.
- Translations:
 - *Sati-upatthana*, found in the *suttas* (Pali texts)
 - compound of “awareness” or “mindfulness,” and “placing near” (literally) or “attending” or “being present.” Therefore, “attending to with mindfulness” or “having mindfulness present” in these four areas of experience.
 - *Sati-patthana*, found in the commentaries
 - change of one letter changes meaning from a verb to a noun: to “cause” or “foundation.”
 - linguistic study suggests that the latter is in error.
 - Therefore, this passage is about the activity of being mindful, with examples from 4 experiential realms of how to do that, not about four things you have to do in order to have mindfulness.

Content overview

- Four general frames: body, feeling tone, mind, *dhammas* (*hindrances, factors, etc*)
 - Subdivisions
 - 53 individual techniques
 - ultimately one continual form of practice in which each technique builds on the others

Structure

- Direct Path:
 - "This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of Unbinding — in other words, the four frames of reference."
 - (see talk given on January 24th)
- Definition:
 - "Contemplating, dilligent, clearly knowing and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world."
 - See talk given on January 26th)
- Technique/Refrain pattern
 - topics for remainder of the year
- Conclusion

Online resources

Satipatthana, The Direct Path to Realization Book by Anālayo <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/Anālayo/direct-path.pdf>

Thannissaro Bikkhu translation Satipatthana <https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.010.than.html>

Piya Tan translation of Mahasatipatthana <http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/13.2-Mahasatipatthana-S-d22-piya.pdf>

Vipassana Research Institute (Goenka) translation of Mahasatipatthana <https://www.tipitaka.org/stp-pali-eng-parallel.shtml#0>