

# Right Mindfulness

*samma sati*

Right Mindfulness is the seventh of the eight path factors in the Noble Eightfold Path, and belongs to the concentration division of the path.

## **The definition (the four frames of reference)**

"And what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself -- ardent, alert, & mindful -- putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves...the mind in & of itself...mental qualities in & of themselves -- ardent, alert, & mindful -- putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness..."

"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."

-- DN 22

## **Abandoning the wrong factors of the path**

"One is mindful to abandon wrong view & to enter & remain in right view: This is one's right mindfulness..."

"One is mindful to abandon wrong resolve & to enter & remain in right resolve: This is one's right mindfulness..."

"One is mindful to abandon wrong speech & to enter & remain in right speech: This is one's right mindfulness..."

"One is mindful to abandon wrong action & to enter & remain in right action: This is one's right mindfulness..."

"One is mindful to abandon wrong livelihood & to enter & remain in right livelihood: This is one's right mindfulness..."

-- MN 117

## **Abandon the unskillful, develop the skillful**

"Abandon what is unskillful, monks. It is possible to abandon what is unskillful. If it were not possible to abandon what is unskillful, I would not say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' But because it is possible to abandon what is unskillful, I say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' If this abandoning of what is unskillful were conducive to harm and pain, I would not say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' But because this abandoning of what is unskillful is conducive to benefit and pleasure, I say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.'"

"Develop what is skillful, monks. It is possible to develop what is skillful. If it were not possible to develop what is skillful, I would not say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' But because it is possible to develop what is skillful, I say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' If this development of what is skillful were conducive to harm and pain, I would not say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' But because this development of what is skillful is conducive to benefit and pleasure, I say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.'"

-- AN II.19

## **Like balancing a pot of oil on one's head**

"Suppose, monks, that a large crowd of people comes thronging together, saying, 'The beauty queen! The beauty queen!' And suppose that the beauty queen is highly accomplished at singing & dancing, so that an even greater crowd comes thronging, saying, 'The beauty queen is singing! The beauty queen is dancing!' Then a man comes along, desiring life & shrinking from death, desiring pleasure & abhorring pain. They say to him, 'Now look here, mister. You must take this bowl filled to the brim with oil and carry it on your head in between the great crowd & the beauty queen. A man with a raised sword will follow right behind you, and wherever you spill even a drop of oil, right there will he cut off your head.' Now what do you think, monks: Will that man, not paying attention to the bowl of oil, let himself get distracted outside?"

"No, lord."

"I have given you this parable to convey a meaning. The meaning is this: The bowl filled to the brim with oil stands for mindfulness immersed in the body. Thus you should train yourselves: 'We will develop mindfulness

immersed in the body. We will pursue it, give it a means of transport, give it a grounding, steady it, consolidate it, and undertake it well.' That is how you should train yourselves."

-- SN XLVII.20

### **Meditation on death**

"Mindfulness of death, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit & great benefit. It plunges into the Deathless, has the Deathless as its final end. Therefore you should develop mindfulness of death."

-- AN VI.19

### **Meditation on breathing**

"Mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, of great benefit. Mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, brings the four frames of reference to their culmination. The four frames of reference, when developed & pursued, bring the seven factors of awakening to their culmination. The seven factors of awakening, when developed & pursued, bring clear knowing & release to their culmination.

"Now how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to bring the four frames of reference to their culmination?"

"There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

"**[1]** Breathing in long, he discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, he discerns that he is breathing out long. **[2]** Or breathing in short, he discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, he discerns that he is breathing out short. **[3]** He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the entire body, and to breathe out sensitive to the entire body. **[4]** He trains himself to breathe in calming the bodily processes, and to breathe out calming the bodily processes.

"**[5]** He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to rapture, and to breathe out sensitive to rapture. **[6]** He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to pleasure, and to breathe out sensitive to pleasure. **[7]** He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to mental processes, and to breathe out sensitive to mental processes. **[8]** He trains himself to breathe in calming mental processes, and to breathe out calming mental processes.

"**[9]** He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the mind, and to breathe out sensitive to the mind. **[10]** He trains himself to breathe in satisfying the mind, and to breathe out satisfying the mind. **[11]** He trains himself to breathe in steadying the mind, and to breathe out steadying the mind. **[12]** He trains himself to breathe in releasing the mind, and to breathe out releasing the mind.

"**[13]** He trains himself to breathe in focusing on inconstancy, and to breathe out focusing on inconstancy. **[14]** He trains himself to breathe in focusing on dispassion [literally, fading], and to breathe out focusing on dispassion. **[15]** He trains himself to breathe in focusing on cessation, and to breathe out focusing on cessation. **[16]** He trains himself to breathe in focusing on relinquishment, and to breathe out focusing on relinquishment."  
MN 118

# Right Concentration

*samma samadhi*

Right Concentration is the last of the eight path factors in the Noble Eightfold Path, and belongs to the concentration division of the path.

## **The definition**

"And what is right concentration? There is the case where a monk -- quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful (mental) qualities -- enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation -- internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains in equanimity, mindful, & fully alert, and physically sensitive of pleasure. He enters & remains in the third jhana, and of him the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain -- as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress -- he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration."  
-- SN XLV.8

## **Purification depends on concentration**

"I tell you, the ending of the mental fermentations depends on the first jhana...the second jhana...the third...the fourth...the sphere of the infinitude of space...the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness...the sphere of nothingness. I tell you, the ending of the mental fermentations depends on the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception."  
-- AN IX.36

## **The four developments of concentration**

"These are the four developments of concentration. Which four? There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to mindfulness & alertness. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the ending of the effluents.

(1) "And what is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now? There is the case where a monk -- quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful qualities -- enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation -- internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains in equanimity, mindful & alert, and physically sensitive of pleasure. He enters & remains in the third jhana, and of him the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain -- as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress -- he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the development of concentration that...leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now.

(2) "And what is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision? There is the case where a monk attends to the perception of light and is resolved on the perception of daytime [at any hour of the day]. Day [for him] is the same as night, night is the same as day. By means of an awareness open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind. This is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision.

(3) "And what is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness? There is the case where feelings are known to the monk as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Perceptions are known to him as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Thoughts are known to him as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. This is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to mindfulness & alertness.

(4) "And what is the development of concentration that...leads to the ending of the effluents? There is the case where a monk remains focused on arising & falling away with reference to the five aggregates for

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sustenance/clinging: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its passing away. Such is feeling... Such is perception... Such are fabrications... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' This is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the ending of the effluents.

"These are the four developments of concentration."

-- AN IV 41

### **Noble right concentration**

"Now what, monks, is noble right concentration with its supports & requisite conditions? Any singleness of mind equipped with these seven factors -- right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, & right mindfulness -- is called noble right concentration with its supports & requisite conditions."

-- MN 117

### **What are you waiting for?**

"Rouse yourself! Sit up! What good is there in sleeping? For those afflicted by disease (suffering), struck by the arrow (craving), what sleep is there?"

"Rouse yourself! Sit up! Resolutely train yourself to attain peace. Do not let the king of death, seeing you are careless, lead you astray and dominate you."

-- Sn II.10

"Over there are the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings. Practice jhana, monks. Don't be heedless. Don't later fall into regret. This is our message to you."

-- SN XXXV.145