

[The 4 Foundations of Mindfulness \(MahaSatipattana Sutta\)](#) is one of the most important sutras in Buddhism.

More importantly, it is the *key to Vipassana/Insight Meditation or Vipassana-Kammatthana*, which whenever put into practice, would result in proper fruitions according to what the Buddha described.

At least once in one's life or as a human being, one should have an opportunity to read this Sutra, so one would understand the direct and fruitful path that would lead one to enlightenment and spiritual liberation, without wasting valuable time of one's life investing in other unproven techniques that would lead one to nowhere.

Vipassana (Pali) or Vitassana (Sanskrit) means *Insight development into seeing the true nature of things as they truly are. Vipassana/Insight development is unique to Buddhism.* It arises from developing one's mind with **Mindfulness (Sati) and Self-Awareness or Conscious Awareness (Sampajanna)**, through direct and unbiased observation, bare attentiveness, or pure perception of one's body and mind, **without 'craving'(Tanha) and 'concept' (Ditthi)**, i.e., void of 'sneaky' thoughts (embedded with greed, hatred, and delusion), *therefore, not clinging to anything, freeing oneself from suffering*

Kammatthana or Meditation means mental exercise or ground for mental culture under certain frameworks or guidelines.

For **Insight Meditation**, such mental exercise is done through direct self-observation or self-monitoring (*without anticipation, indulgence, or intervention*) on the **4 guided frames or 'foundations' of one's own Body, Feeling, Mind, and Mental Phenomena** (which are basically 'Body' and 'Mind' or 'Name' and 'Form') to gain Mindfulness and Self-awareness or Conscious Awareness.

Scientifically, through **Insight Meditation**, *the cultivated mind equipped with self-awareness would be operating at 38- 90 Hz or cps in the gamma range, at times at 100+ Hz in the hyper-gamma range, and rarely up to 200+ Hz or lambda range, capable of catching one's own thought, which operates at a slower rate of 12 – 38 Hz in the beta range, as it arises. This will allow one to see the true nature of things as they truly are with pure perception, without being trapped in the biased thought (embedded with the 3 poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion). One would witness the continuous ever-changing nature that all phenomena exist, endure for a while, and eventually cease to exist, as a norm. Nothing is worth clinging to, and by letting go, without holding on or clinging to anything, one would unburden and free oneself from suffering, dis-ease, stress, conflict, unsatisfactoriness and unhappiness.*

On the contrary, **Samatha-Kammatthana** or *tranquility/concentration meditation* focusing the mind on a single theme or an object to strengthen the mind, e.g., a color disc, etc., would lead to tranquility, yet it narrows the mind to concentrate only on the object of meditation, therefore not allowing Self-Awareness or Conscious Awareness to arise and function. In general, such mind would be totally suppressed, operating at 0.25 -0.4 Hz in the epsilon or sub-delta range, not swift enough to catch one's own thought which runs at a faster rate of 12 – 38 Hz in the beta range. Therefore, such practice is incapable of gaining Intuitive Wisdom to free oneself from suffering , as being trapped in the biased thoughts.

The Buddha laid down the guidelines for practicing Insight Meditation in this Sutra, to cultivate Mindfulness and Self-Awareness (or Conscious Awareness which is the basic form of Wisdom), and be mindfully aware of all phenomena that arise in one's body and mind. Through embedding one's mindfulness at the 4 Foundations of Body, Feeling, Mind, and Mental Phenomena, and observe them unbiasedly, one would gain Self-Awareness or Conscious awareness in seeing the true nature of life, body and mind, as they truly are. One would see that in reality, they keep changing all the time, arising, enduring, and ceasing continuously. they all basically follows the **3 Universal Marks or Characteristics of Existence (Tilakkhana) of Impermanence, Imperfection, and Selfless in nature.**

In this Sutra, The Buddha pointed out

- How the Mind functions, through Mental Activities of Feeling, Perception, and Thought Formation. One would come to understand the **4 Ultimate Realities (Paramattha-Dharma) of Mind, Mental Activities, Form, and Nirvana**, which form the basis of life (Mind, Mental Activities, Form can be witnessed by the worldly, but Nirvana can only be witnessed by the Arahants – the fully enlightened ones).
- How the **6 Sense Spheres** functions, with the Inner spheres of *eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind* interact with the Outer spheres of *sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts*.
- How the **5 Aggregates** of *Form, Feeling, Perception, Thought Formation, Consciousness* function, and when embedded with **Clinging/attachment**, they become '**suffering**' (**the First Noble/Ultimate Truth**).
- How the **Cause of suffering (the Second Noble/Ultimate Truth)** arises, through '*biased perception*' (*Sanna-Cetana*) instead of '*pure perception*' (*Sanna*) or nonjudgmental awareness, it turns into '**Craving**' (**Tanha**).
- How the **End of suffering (the Third Noble/Ultimate Truth)** occurs, through **pure perception**, with mindful awareness, preventing the mind from being trapped into biased perception.
- How one can tread the **Middle Path/Noble Eightfold Path (the Fourth Noble/Ultimate Truth)** towards the **End of suffering**.
- How **Mental Obstacles** prevent one from attaining Samadhi or steady mind.
- How the **7 Factors of Enlightenment** function in freeing one from suffering.
- How the **4 Noble/Ultimate Truths** are realized.

Therefore, this **MahaSatipattana Sutta** or **the 4 Foundations of Mindfulness Sutra** is the **Heart of Buddhism**, as it is basically the "**Theory and Practice of Buddhism.**"

Kongsak Tanphaichitr, M.D.

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