

The Meaning and Significance of *kāyagatāsati* in Theravāda Buddhism

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Abstract

The contemplation on the body means being ardent of mindfulness with own self and as well as others the materials what constitutes the physical body. It is a great method of meditation contemplating on repulsiveness and loathsomeness that brings a great benefit of beings to know about the reality of the physical forms. One should accept and consider the reality that one's body is eventually subject to be changed. The body is made of the four materials. And this is instantly changeable. Consequently the death is inevitable so that one's mind should not suffer through worry, fear and anxieties. Moreover, one should remember and remind oneself that one day one's body will be decaying and dying subsequently. The mindfulness with contemplation on body teaches to be agreed with this condition of life smoothly.

The *kāyagatāsati* is a mindfulness which bears the wisdom that is able to extinguish afflictions and bring about mental purity and enlightenment. *kāyagatāsati* plays a very great role in the daily life of modern society. Because the human beings are running behind the worldly pleasures in today's world where there is less values of loving kindness, dignity, and full of intolerant and lack of trust. Here is the dukkha peoples fail to understand. The contemplation on body efficiently gives lessons of true nature of lives and ultimately bends to the Nibbāna.

Keywords: *kāya*, *sati*, body.

Introduction

The meditation on contemplation on body is very common practice in Buddhism. The foulness meditation aims to reduce the desires; greed, sensual pleasures and lust and to reduce attachment (*taṇhā*) for the body, along with all these associated problems that these arise to such as aversion, discontent, frustration, etc. it also aims to give one insight into the true nature of the body., i.e. unpleasant, disgusting, ugly, impermanent, suffering and non self. Once desire and lust for the body subsides, the mind tends to naturally calm down allowing for clear insight into the reality of the body and also all conditioned things.

In Buddha's time many monks attained arahatship by meditating on these impure parts. *Kāyagatāsati* develops *asubhasaññā* (notion of loathsomeness) on the body just as *asubhabhāvanā* does. This loathsomeness of the body leads to dispassion.

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the meditation on mindfulness of the body had never been practiced prior to the Buddha, nor does it appear within the scope of any of the other Indian religious systems. It is praised in various ways by the Buddha in different *suttas*, for example: There is one state, Monks, which, being developed and repeatedly practiced, leads to great religious emotion, great benefit, great freedom from bondage, great mindfulness and self-possession, the attainment of knowledge and insight, the happy state in this visible life, and the realization of the fruit of knowledge and release.

What is that one state? It is mindfulness of the body¹ and again:

“Those who do not enjoy mindfulness of the body do not enjoy deathlessness (*amata*); those who enjoy mindfulness of the body enjoy deathlessness. Those who have not enjoyed mindfulness of the body have not enjoyed deathlessness; those who have enjoyed mindfulness of the body have enjoyed deathlessness. Those who have neglected mindfulness of the body have neglected deathlessness; those who have not neglected mindfulness of the body have not neglected deathlessness.”²

¹The Book of the Gradual Sayings (*Anguttara-Nikāya*), F. L. Woodward (tr.), Vol. I, (PTS: London, 1979), p. 39.

²The Book of the Gradual Sayings (*Anguttara-Nikāya*), F. L. Woodward (tr.), Vol. I, (PTS: London, 1979), pp. 40-41.

The meaning of *kāyagatāsati*

One of the distinguishing features of the Buddha's system of meditation is the emphasis placed upon the physical body both as a foundation for practice and the means of experiencing and exploring reality. The body, the texts stress, needs to be well maintained and looked after; it then provides the basis by which the mind may be calmed; through sense impressions it provides the data for the cultivation of wisdom and it then continues, in daily life, to give a support whose care and well-being is of the utmost importance for the practice of meditation and development of insight. To this day most practices involve remembering to look after the bodily base as part of their preliminary instructions. They also recommend a careful return to everyday life and normal bodily activities after the meditation has finished,³

According to the Buddha, life is suffering (*dukkha*), caused by desire (*taṇha*). To end this suffering, desire must be ended. Death causes *dukkha* because of desire for life (*bhavataṇha*).⁴

For example, when, in any existence, the greed and craving connected with the eye finally ceases, the eye does not arise again; and so the oppression by the eye does not arise again. The ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind should be regarded likewise. And understands the real cessation of suffering is knowledge. This is the knowledge that sees right view regarding the cessation of suffering (*sammādiṭṭhi-ñāṇa*).⁵

Death is unavoidable result of the birth and in this way it is closely related with mindfulness of death. The Buddha addresses monks at Nadika again on mindfulness of death, which should be practised, he says, by thinking of ways that death may come. Here he uses physically explicit reminders: death by scorpions, snakes falls, choking and dysentery.⁶ The sutta differs from the treatment of death in the *Visuddhimagga* in that the one who will experience death is at first taken as oneself rather than other beings.⁷ The word for oneself

³Sarah Shaw, **Buddhist Meditation: An anthology of Texts from the Pali Canon**, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 140.

⁴S.v.420.

⁵Ledi Sayādaw (tr), **Maggaṅga Dīpanī: A Manual of the Path Factors**, (England: Association for Insight Meditation, 2000), p. 20.

⁶D.ii.290.

⁷Vism. IX 8–10.

(*me*) is used (*Bahukā kho me paccayā maraṇassa*).⁸ The language is stark and uncompromising in its description of the means of possible death. The image of the “head on fire” is used, presumably to arouse *saṃvega*, the sense of urgency associated with this practice. This text suggests considering the manifold possibilities of early death as a means of arousing energy, mindfulness and clear comprehension. If the monk reviewing (*paccavekkhamana*) knows that he has done what he should, however, the practice brings joy and gladness and leads to the deathless (*amata*): the wording suggests a weight towards the cultivation of *samatha*.

A verse in Dhammapada describes a young monk, who falls in love with Sirimā, a beautiful courtesan. Unexpectedly she died. Even when the King ordered the people to have a look at her corpse nobody cared to look at it. Showing the decaying and worm-infested body to the monks, the Buddha spoke on the loathsomeness of the body:

“Behold this beautiful body, a mass of sores, a heaped-up (lump), diseased, much thought of, in which nothing lasts, nothing persists.” (Dhp. 147)

During the Buddha’s time, people who wished to be purified thought out various kinds of asceticism and meditation methods. Some believed in extremes of self-mortification. Some believed in canine and bovine practices, and some believed in purification through holy water, Buddha was also a seeker of purification. He found out the proper way, purified himself first and then prescribed it to other beings.

“As he instructs others so should he act? Fully self-controlled, he could control (others); for one is difficult to control.” (Dhp. 159)

According to *Satipaṭṭhana sutta*, The Buddha spoken there can be no other ways for the purification of beings. This is the only way, the way of four foundation of mindfulness, *satipaṭṭhana*⁹ this is the direct way, the only way (*ekāyano maggo*) for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for reaching the noble path, for the realization of *Nibbāna*.¹⁰ The *Kāyagatāsati sutta* stresses the need for constant awareness of the body’s position, “When walking, the monk discerns, ‘I am walking.’ When standing, he discerns, ‘I am standing.’ When sitting, he discerns, ‘I

⁸ A.iii.307.

⁹ S.iii.144.

¹⁰ D.ii.231.

am sitting.’ When lying down, he discerns, ‘I am lying down.’¹¹ The *sutta* also outlines the practice of “reflections on repulsiveness of the body” (*patikulamanasikara*). In this practice a meditator reflects on various parts of the body (nails, hair, bodily organs, and fluids) and noting their impurity. The *sutta* also recommends meditation on the impermanence of the body and death by contemplating human corpses in various states of decomposition. “Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground - one day, two days, three days dead - bloated, livid, & festering, he applies it to this very body, ‘This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate’.”¹² The *sutta* then explains the attainment of the first four *rūpajhānas*, states of calm concentration reached through meditation.

Definitions of the Term *Kāyagatāsati*

1) *anussati* – (Sk. *anusmṛti*, fr. *anu* + *smṛ*, cp. *sati*) means remembrance, recollection, thinking of, mindfulness,¹³ and contemplation¹⁴. A late list of subjects has given in *Saṅgītisutta* to be kept in mind comprises six *anussatiṭṭhānāni*, viz. *buddhānussati*, *dharmānussati*, *sanghānussati*, *sīlānussati*, *cāgaānussati*, *devatānussati*, i. e. proper attention to the Buddha, the Doctrines, the Community, to morality, charity and to the gods.¹⁵

2) *kāya* - means group, heap, collection, aggregate, body¹⁶ or may either, lit: accumulation. It refers to the physical body (*rūpa-kāya*) or to the mental body (*nāma-kāya*). In the latter case it is either a collective name for the mental groups (feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness), or merely for feeling, perception and a few of the mental formations (*nāma*), e.g. in *kāya-lahutā*, etc. *Kāya* has this same meaning in the standard description of the third absorption (*jhāna*), “And he feels joy in his mind or his mental constitution (*kāya*)”, and of the attainment of the eight deliverances (*vimokkha*); “having attained the eight deliverances in his mind, or his person (*kāya*).” - *kāya* is also the fifth sense-organ, the body-organ; *āyatana*, *dhātu*, *indriya*.¹⁷

¹¹ I. B. Horner, **The Final Fifty Discourses (Uparipaṇṇāsa)**, (Oxford: PTS, 1999), p. 130.

¹² M.iii.88.

¹³ Pāli English Dictionary, PED, pp. 112-113.

¹⁴ Nyanatiloka, **Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), p. 43.

¹⁵ D.iii.207.

¹⁶ PED, p. 488.

¹⁷ Nyanatiloka, **Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines**, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

3) *kāyagatāsati* - ‘mindfulness with regard to the body’, refers sometimes¹⁸ only to the contemplation on the 32 parts of the body, sometimes¹⁹ to all the various meditations comprised under the contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), the first of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), consisting partly in concentration (*samādhi*) exercises, partly in insight (*vipassanā*) exercises. On the other hand, the cemetery meditations (*sīvatthika*) mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*²⁰ is nearly the same as the 10 contemplations of loathsomeness (*asubhabhāvanā*). Of *Visuddhimagga*²¹ whereas elsewhere the contemplation on the 32 parts of the body is called the reflection on impurity.²²

The Significance of *kāyagatāsati*

One who is devoted to control of the senses should keep all evil thoughts out of his mind and be unremitting in his effort to be on the alert remembering the teaching of the Buddha on diligence (*appamāda*), and also keep his thoughts directed on grasping the meaning of the *Dhamma*, by study of, and reflection on it. In that way the ardent disciple makes use of all his contacts to help the ripening of his wisdom. For bringing about that state of wisdom the yogi has to give attention to the practice of mindfulness and full awareness, Mindfulness is required in all effective contemplation. Through full awareness one learns to do everything with deliberation and not on the spur of the moment. Mindfulness belongs to the aggregate of concentration of the Noble Path; it has to be highly developed before success in *jhāna*, meditation, that is aloof from sense-desires, and other evil states of mind, can be achieved. When contemplatives are weak in remembering what should be remembered at the proper time their mindfulness is ineffective and full awareness of what is fit to be done, is not present. Then they also lack wise consideration, which is necessary for overcoming adventitious defilements, and are assailed by passion.

Kāyagatāsati is a meditation subject which was never before practised except when the Buddha appeared, and I outside the province of any of the founders of sects. It has been praised by the Blessed One in various ways in different suttas thus:

¹⁸Vism VIII, 2.

¹⁹M.ii.99.

²⁰M.i.55.

²¹Vism VI.

²²Ñyanatiloka, **Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980)

“Bhikkhus, when one thing is developed and repeatedly practised, it leads to a supreme sense of urgency, to supreme benefit, to supreme liberation from bondage, to supreme mindfulness and comprehension, to the attainment of insight and vision, to a happy life here and now, to the realization of wisdom, emancipation and fruition. What is that one thing? It is mindfulness occupied with the body.”²³

And again:

“O bhikkhus, they who savour mindfulness occupied with the body savour the deathless; they who do not savour mindfulness occupied with the body do not savour the deathless. They who have made the effort in mindfulness occupied with the body have savoured or enjoyed the deathless, have not neglected, have not missed it. Those who have made no endeavour in mindfulness occupied with the body have not savoured the deathless, have neglected and missed it.”²⁴

An understanding of the essential meaning of *sati* may be gained by contemplation its function on those occasions when its role is clearly distinguishable from that of other *dhammas*, most notably in the practice called *satipaṭṭhāna*. On such occasions the function of *sati* may be summarised as follows:

“The primary feature of the working of *sati* is that it prevents the mind from drifting. It does not allow mental states to pass by unheeded. It prevents the mind from becoming agitated and restless. It is attentive, as if keeping its eyes on each impression that passes into consciousness and then bearing down on it. When one wishes to concentrate on a particular object, it maintains one’s attention fixedly upon it, not allowing the object to drift away or disappear. By means of *sati*, one keeps placing the mind on the object, or recollecting it, not allowing oneself to let it slip from the mind. There is a simile likening it to a pillar, because it is firmly embedded in its object, or to a gate-keeper, because it watches over the various sense-doors through which sense-datas pass, inspecting all that enters.”²⁵

²³Dr. Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced Level) Volum I**, (Yangon: International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, 2001), p. 31.

²⁴Dr. Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced Level)**, Volum I, (Yangon: International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University 2000), p. 31.

²⁵Phra Dhammapitaka (P. A. Payutto), **Sammāsati an Exposition of Right Mindfulness**, *op. cit.* pp. 15-16.

In the Buddhist path of practice, there is great emphasis on the importance of *sati*, as evidenced in the Buddha's saying that *sati* is required (i.e. should be employed) in every situation. *Sati* is also compared to salt, which must be used in every curry, and to a prime minister, who must be involved in every branch of government. *Sati* may either restrain the mind or support or sustain it, depending on the needs of the situation.

When considering in to the features of *sati*'s functioning as mentioned above, one will see the benefits aimed at in training in *sati* to be as follows:

1. The maintenance of the mind in a required condition by the monitoring of the cognitive process and the stream of thought, accepting only that which is conducive to it and barring all that which is not and thus, by channelling and stilling the thought-stream, facilitating the attainment of *samādhi*;

2. The enabling of the body and mind to dwell in a state which might be called 'self-sufficient' by virtue of the sense of spaciousness, relaxation and well-being intrinsic to it regardless of external circumstances- a state wherein one is prepared to face any experience that might occur and to deal effectively with all of one's affairs;

3. The ability, in the state of *samādhi*, to guide the cognitive process and the stream of thought and to alter or expand the fields of their activities in various dimensions;

4. The ability to take hold of a meditation object and, as it were, to lay it down in front of the mind so that subsequent investigation by the wisdom-faculty may proceed with optimum clarity as a basis on which wisdom can be developed and brought to perfection;

5. The purification of all volitional actions of body, speech and mind and liberation from compulsive indulgence in defilement and subjugation to craving and clinging, and the informing (in combination with *sampajāṇa*) of one's actions with wisdom, and entirely purified logic.

The fourth and fifth benefits listed here are the goals of an advanced stage of development, and may be obtained only through a specially prescribed method of practice that, according to our definition of *sammāsatī*, is the four *satipaṭṭhāna*.²⁶

²⁶Phra Dhammapitaka (P. A. Payutto), *op. cit.* pp. 17-19.

The Practice of *kāyagatāsati*

How does a monk remain focused on the body in & of itself? According to the Buddha:

“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. Breathing in long, he discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, he discerns that he is breathing out long. Or breathing in short, he discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, he discerns that he is breathing out short. He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the entire body and to breathe out sensitive to the entire body. He trains himself to breathe in calming bodily fabrication and to breathe out calming bodily fabrication.”²⁷

A bhikkhu, with keen confidence who wants to practice *kāyagatāsati*, should go into solitary retreat in a favourable place and review his body, up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair and contained in the skin as full of many kinds of fifth thus:

“In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidney, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, bowels, intestines, stomach, excrement, brain, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, lubricant (in bonejoints) and urine.”²⁸

A beginner who wants to undertake *kāyagatāsati* should approach a good friend and qualified teacher to learn this meditation. The teacher should tell him the sevenfold skill in learning and the tenfold skill in giving attention.

²⁷Rathanasara, K. (tr), **Mahasatipaṭṭhāna Sutta**, (Singapore: Education & Dhamma Propagation Subcommittee), pp. 71-72.

²⁸Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced Level)**, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 32.

The Sevenfold Skill in Learning (*Uggahakosalla*)

The practice of contemplation of the body includes sevenfold skill in learning (*uggahakosalla*), as follows.²⁹

1) Verbal Recitation

Kāyagatāsati consists in giving attention to repulsiveness. Even if one is master of the *Tipiṭaka*, the verbal recitation should still be done at the time of first giving attention to it. For the meditation subject becomes evident to some through recitation, as it did to the two elders who learned the meditation subject from **Mahā Deva**, the elder residing at Malaya.³⁰

2) Mental Recitation

The mental recitation should be done just as the verbal recitation. For the verbal recitation is a condition for the mental recitation, and the mental recitation is a condition for the penetration of the characteristics of foulness.

3) The Colour

The colour of the head hairs, etc., should be defined.

4) The Shape

The shape of the head hairs, etc., should also be defined.

5) The Direction

In this body, upwards from the navel is the upward direction, and downwards from it is the downward direction. So the direction should be defined thus: this part is in this direction, etc.

6) The Location

The location of this or that part should be defined thus: this part is established in this location, and so on.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

7) The Delimitation

There are two kinds of delimitation: delimitation on by parts which are alike in nature, and delimitation by dissimilar parts. Herein, delimitation by similar parts should be understood in this way: this part is delimited above and below and around by this. Delimitation by dissimilar parts should be understood in this way: head hairs are not body hairs, nor are body hairs head hairs.

Tenfold Skill in Giving Attention (*Manasikāraḥkosalla*)

There is tenfold skill in giving attentions (*manasikāraḥkosalla*) as following.

1) Following the Order

From the time the recitation begins attention should be given to follow the serial order of the 32 bodily parts without skipping. For just as when someone who has no skill climbs a staircase of 32 steps using every other step, his body gets exhausted and he falls without completing the climb, so too, one who attends to the thirty-two parts leaving out every alternate part becomes exhausted in his mind and does not complete the development since he fails to get the enjoyment that ought to be got with successful development.³¹

2) Not Too Quickly

And when he gives attention to follow the serial order, he should do so not too quickly. As a man who undertakes a journey of three *yojanas*, without noting the path to take and the path to avoid, goes back and forth a hundred times and, though he comes to the end of the journey, it is only with frequent questionings. So, he who attends too quickly may accomplish the meditation, but it is not clear and consequently carries no distinction, that is, he cannot attain *jhāna*. Therefore he should not attend too swiftly.

3) Not Too Slowly

And as ‘not too quickly’, so also ‘not too slowly’. As a man, who wants to do a three league journey in one day, if he loiters on the way among trees, rocks, pools, etc. does not finish the journey in a day and needs two or three to complete it, so too, if a meditator gives his attention to the meditation subject too slowly, he does not get to the end, nor does he attain *jhāna*.

³¹ Mehm Tin Mon, *Samatha (Advanced Level)*, *op. cit.* Vol. 1, p. 35.

4) Warding off Distraction

He must ward off temptation to drop the meditation subject and to let his mind get distracted among the variety of external objects. For if not, just as when a man has entered on a none foot wide cliff path, if he looks about here and there without watching his step, he may miss his footing and fall down the toweringly high cliff, so too when there is outward distraction, the meditation subject gets neglected and deteriorates. So he should be mindful of it, warding off distraction.³²

5) Surmounting the concept

The name-concept beginning with ‘head hairs, body hairs’ must be surmounted and consciousness established on the repulsive nature of the bodily parts. For just as when men find a water hole in forest in a time of drought, they hang up some kind of signal such as a palm leaf there, and people, guided by the signal, come to bathe and drink, but when the path has become plain with their continual traffic, there is no further need of the signal for the people to bathe and drink where whenever they want, so too, when repulsiveness becomes evident to him as he is giving his attention to the meditation subject through the name-concept ‘head hairs, body hairs’, he must surmount the concept ‘head hairs, body hairs’, and establish consciousness on the actual repulsiveness.

6) Dismissing Any Parts Which do not Appear

In giving his attention to the bodily parts he should eventually leave out any parts which do not appear to him. For when a meditator gives his attention to head hairs, his attention then carries on till it reaches the last part, i.e., urine, and stops there; and when he gives his attention to urine, his attention then carries on till it arrives back at the head hairs and stops there. As he persists in giving his attention thus, some parts appear to him and others do not. He should work on those that have appeared till only two remains and one appears clearer. He should arouse absorption by again and again giving attention to the one that has appeared thus.

7) As to Absorption

It should be understood that absorption is brought about in each one of the body parts.

³²Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced Level)**, *op. cit.* Vol. 1, p. 36.

8-10) As to Three Suttantas

The three Suttantas, namely, *Adhicitta*, *Sītibhāva* and *Bojjhaṅgakoṣalla*, should be understood for the purpose of yoking energy (*vīriya*) with concentration (*samādhi*).³³

The demonstration of walking meditation of the 1st and 2nd stages has been given in appendix A. The 3rd, 4th and 5th stages have been given in appendix B. Demonstration of walking six stages has been given in appendix C, and demonstration of sitting and lying meditation has been given in appendix D.

Benefits of Contemplation on Body

The meditator who is devoted to this mindfulness occupied with the body is a conqueror of boredom and delight; the boredom in meditation and the delight in sense pleasure cannot conquer him. He lives, subduing boredom as it arises. As it described by Dr. Mehm Tin Mon:

“He is a conqueror of fear and dread, and fear and dread do not conquer him. He lives, putting down fear and dread as they come up. He can bear major and minor pain, heat and cold, hunger and thirst, insect bites and scorpion sting blames and abuses. He can endure rough and severe pain, undesirable and unbearable pain, arisen bodily feeling that are menacing to life. He can develop four *rūpāvacara jhāna* based on the colour aspect of head hairs, bones, blood, urine, etc. he can also attain supernormal powers. As he attains the perception of loathsomeness on the living body, he can well suppress his sense desire to live happily and to progress quickly in insight meditation.”³⁴

According to the *kāyagatāsati sutta* these benefits has been divided into three parts categorially according to its level of experience.

Mundane benefits

1. One becomes a conqueror of discontent and delight.
2. One becomes a conqueror of fear and dread.
3. One bears unpleasant experiences of body & speech.

³³Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced Level)**, *op. cit.* Vol. 1, pp. 37-38.

³⁴Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced Level)**, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 60.

4. One obtains at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four *jhānas*.

Supramundane benefits

5. One wields the various kinds of supernormal power.
6. One hears both kinds of sounds, the divine and the human.
7. One understands the minds of other beings.

The three liberating insights

8. One recollects one's manifold past lives 1st insight Gotama attained under the Bodhi Tree: The resolution of the past; understanding suffering.

9. One understands how beings pass on according to their actions 2nd insight Gotama attained under the Bodhi Tree: the resolution of the future; understanding *kamma*.

10. One enters upon & abides in the deliverance of mind 3rd & final insight Gotama attained under the Bodhi Tree: Liberation in the present the abandoning of the defilements cause of suffering realization of cessation (*nirodha*) and unbinding (*nibbāna*).³⁵

Besides these benefits of *kāyagatāsati* there is many more benefits which can be obtained in our daily life generally with practice of general meditation as follows.

Development of *Kāyagatāsati*

To develop meditation on *kāyagatāsati* it should directly refers to the meditation on thirty-two parts of the body, one should first re-establish the fourth *ānāpāna jhāna* so the light of concentration is bright, brilliant, and radiant. One should then use the light to try to discern the thirty-two parts of the body, one at a time. The thirty-two parts of the body are twenty parts with predominantly the earth element, and twelve parts with predominantly the water element.

³⁵M.iii.88.

The twenty earth-element parts should be discerned in four sets of five;

I	II	III	IV
head hairs	flesh	heart	intestines
body hairs	sinews	liver	mesentery*
nails	bones	membrane	gorge
teeth	bone marrow	spleen	faeces
skin	kidneys	lungs	brain

* Membrane: The white, net-like membrane that separates the different sections of flesh throughout the body. Mesentery: the fastenings of the bowels; GORGE: undigested food, contents of the stomach. Synovia: unctuous fluid, oil in the joints.

The twelve water-element parts should be discerned in two sets of six:³⁶

I	II
bile	tears
phlegm	grease
pus	saliva
blood	snot
sweat	synovia
fat	urine

Development of the Foulness Meditation

In four guardian meditation the second protective meditation is foulness meditation (*asubha-bhāvanā*) on a corpse. To develop it one should re-establish the fourth *ānāpāna*, or white *kasina* *jhāna*, so the light is bright and clear. Then use the light to visualize the foulest corpse of one's own sex that you remember seeing, use the light to see the corpse exactly as it was when one really saw it in the past. When it is clear, make it appear as repulsive as possible, concentrate on it, and note it as, 'repulsive - (*paṭikkūla*, *paṭikkūla*).³⁷ Concentrate on the object of the repulsiveness of the corpse until the *uggahanimitta* (taken-up sign) becomes the *patibhāga-nimitta* (counterpart sign). The *uggahanimitta* is the image of the corpse as one really saw it in the past, and is a hideous, dreadful, and frightening sight, but the *patibhāganimitta* is like a man with big limbs, lying down after having eaten his fill.

³⁶Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw, **Knowing and Seeing**, 4th Ed., (Singapore: Pa-Auk Meditation Centre, 2010), p. 57.

³⁷Here the meaning of *asubha* is foulness, and *paṭikkūla* (repulsiveness) is its synonym.

Continue to concentrate on that *nimitta*, until one reach the first *jhāna*, and then develop the five masteries.³⁸

Development of the Element Meditation

In the *pāli* texts, there are two ways to develop four-elements meditation: in brief and in detail. The brief is for those of quick understanding, and the detailed for those who have difficulty with the brief one, the Buddha taught the brief method in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta*.³⁹

A bhikkhu review this very body, however it be placed or disposed, as consisting of just elements, thus:⁴⁰ “There are in this body just

1. The earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*)
2. The water element (*āpo-dhātu*)
3. The fire element (*tejo-dhātu*)
4. The wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*)

Conclusion

If one wishes to gain thorough understanding of a phenomenon, the necessary method used is contemplation. Without contemplation, one cannot see things as they really are. If the objects give us real results and benefits for the practice leading to enlightenment, we should remember the thought and practice of mindfulness. *satipaṭṭhāna sutta* very briefly summarizes the four contemplations. Contemplation of body is the premium; it is the observation of the activity of the body or gestures or movements of body. It is divided into six objects and comprises fourteen types of practice. The range of the body contemplations embraces the mindfulness of the breaths, awareness of the postures, clear comprehension of the various activities, analysis of the body into its anatomical parts, analysis of the body into its basic elements; and the contemplation of the various stages of the body’s decay and repulsiveness after death. Beginning with the mindfulness of the breathing, it is systematically followed by the four postures, full awareness, foulness of the bodily parts, four elements, four absorptions, the progress of the practice through mindfulness of the body, and finally the benefits highly expected by the mindfulness of the body.

³⁸Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw, *Knowing and Seeing*, *op. cit.* p. 92.

³⁹D.ii.9.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

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