

Right Mindfulness

In

Early Buddhism

The meaning of *satipaṭṭhāna*

*Satipaṭṭhāna* = *sati* + *paṭṭhāna* or  
*sati* + *upaṭṭhāna*?

*Parimukhaṃ satim̐ upaṭṭhapetvā*  
(MN 118)

*Upaṭṭhāna* is:

~~Foundation?~~

Standing near, establishing,  
application, focusing.

# The meaning of *satipaṭṭhāna*

~~Foundations of mindfulness~~

Establishings of mindfulness

Applications of mindfulness

Focuses of mindfulness

# The meaning of *sati*

Memory:

“Furthermore, a person is mindful (*satimā*). They have utmost mindfulness (*sati*) and alertness (*nepakka*), and can remember (*saritā*) and recall (*anussaritā*) what was said and done long ago.”  
(AN10.17)

## The meaning of *sati* (cont.)

Awareness:

“When they have ill will in them, they understand: ‘I have ill will in me.’ When they don’t have ill will in them, they understand: ‘I don’t have ill will in me.’”

(MN10)

*Sati* is memory + awareness

Good memory requires strong awareness, both in the act and in recalling the act.

Awareness includes the memory of what we are supposed to be doing.

## Definition of *satipaṭṭhāna*

The application of awareness and memory (= mindfulness) to four different areas.

The word “mindfulness” is suitably vague to cover both these areas.

## Degrees of mindfulness (*sati*)

“Mindfully they give up wrong  
speech and take up right speech

...

Mindfully they give up wrong  
action and take up right action ...”

(MN 117)



## Degrees of mindfulness (*sati*)

“  
...  
mindfulness and full awareness >  
sense restraint >  
the three kinds of good conduct >  
the four applications of mindfulness >  
”

...  
(MN 117)

## Degrees of mindfulness (cont.)

*Satipaṭṭhāna* is the most prominent kind of mindfulness in the *suttas*.

This is where mindfulness comes into its own, becoming fully established.

# Characteristics of *sati* in *satipaṭṭhāna*

Free of ill will and desire:

- Present
- Stable
- Clear
- Peaceful

# Place of *satipaṭṭhāna* on the path

Right effort >

Right mindfulness >

Right stillness

# 37 aids to Awakening

| 4 <i>sati-paṭṭhāna</i> | 4 right efforts | 4 factors of spirit power | 5 spiritual faculties | 5 spiritual powers | 7 factors of Awakening | Noble eightfold path |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Body                   | Overcome        | Desire                    | Confidence            | Confidence         | Mindfulness            | Right view           |
| Feeling                | Stop arising    | Energy                    | Energy                | Energy             | Scrutiny               | Right intention      |
| Mind                   | Give rise to    | Mind                      | Mindfulness           | Mindfulness        | Energy                 | Right speech         |
| Qualities              | Develop         | Scrutiny                  | Stillness             | Stillness          | Rapture                | Right action         |
|                        |                 |                           | Wisdom                | Wisdom             | Tranquility            | Right livelihood     |
|                        |                 |                           |                       |                    | Stillness              | Right effort         |
|                        |                 |                           |                       |                    | Equanimity             | Right mindfulness    |
|                        |                 |                           |                       |                    |                        | Right stillness      |

## Right effort, *sammāpadhāna*

“When they see a sight with their eyes, they don’t get caught up in the features and details. If the faculty of sight were left unrestrained, bad unskillful qualities of **desire and aversion** (*abhijjhādomanassā*) would **overwhelm** them (*anvāssaveyyum*). For this reason, they practice restraint, protecting the faculty of sight, and achieving its restraint.” (MN 27)

## Right mindfulness, *sammāsati*

“It’s when you meditate by observing an aspect of the body—keen, aware, and mindful, **rid of** (*vineyya*) **desire and aversion** (*abhijjhādomanassa*) for the world.” (MN 10)

## Right stillness, *sammāsamādhi*

“Having given up these five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇe pahāya*) ... they enter and remain in the first absorption (*jhāna*).” (MN 27)



## Place of *satipaṭṭhāna* on the path (cont.)

1. Restrain the sense faculties so that **desire and aversion** (*abhijjhādomanassā*) does not overwhelm you.
2. After getting rid of **desire and aversion** (*abhijjhādomanassa*), you practice meditation (*satipaṭṭhāna*).
3. After giving up the **five hindrances**, you attain *jhāna*.

## Right effort leading to *satipaṭṭhāna*

“When your morality (*sīla*) is well purified and your view is correct, you should develop the four applications of mindfulness three ways, depending on and grounded on morality (*sīla*).”  
(SN 47.3)

## *Satipaṭṭhāna* leading to *samādhi*

“The Buddha has described the four applications of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) for achieving what is skilful (*kusala*). . . .

When you practice the *satipaṭṭhānas*, you become rightly stilled (*sammā samādhīyati*) and rightly serene.”

(DN 18)

# The purpose of *satipaṭṭhāna*

Removes refined defilements

Gives rise to joy

Stills the mind

Anything else?

## *Satipaṭṭhāna* removes refined defilements

“In the same way, a noble disciple has these four applications of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) as tethers for the mind so as to subdue behaviors of the lay life, memories and thoughts of the lay life, the stress, weariness, and fever of the lay life, to end the cycle of suffering and to realize extinguishment.” (MN 125)

## *Satipaṭṭhāna* removes defilements (cont.)

“An astute, competent, skillful monastic meditates by observing an aspect of the body—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of desire and aversion for the world.

As they meditate observing an aspect of the body ... their corruptions (*upakkilesa*) are given up.” (SN 47.8)

## *Satipaṭṭhāna* gives rise to joy

Joy and bliss are mentioned  
a number of places in the  
*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

(MN 10)

Mindfulness of breathing  
(*ānāpānasati*) includes joy  
and bliss.

(MN 118)

## *Satipaṭṭhāna* gives rise to joy (cont.)

“You meditate observing an aspect of the body—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of desire and aversion for the world.’

When this stillness (*samādhi*) is well developed and cultivated in this way, you should develop it ... with joy (*pīti*) ... You should develop it with bliss (*sukha*).”

(AN 8.63)



## *Satipaṭṭhāna* stills the mind

“An astute, competent, skillful monastic meditates by observing an aspect of the body—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of desire and aversion for the world.

As they meditate observing an aspect of the body their mind enters *samādhi*.”  
(SN 47.8)

“Right effort, right mindfulness, and right stillness: these things are included in the category of stillness (*samādhi*).”  
(MN 44)

## *Satipaṭṭhāna* stills the mind (cont.)

“The four applications of mindfulness are the foundations of stillness (*samādhi*).”

(MN 44)

The vital conditions and supports of noble *samādhi* are: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and **right mindfulness**.

(MN 117)

Anything else?

“The four *satipaṭṭhānas* is the path to purify sentient beings, to get past sorrow and crying, to make an end of pain and sadness, to end the cycle of suffering, and to realize extinguishment.”

(MN 10)

## Tenfold path (AN 10.103)

Right view >

right purpose >

right speech >

right action >

right livelihood >

right effort >

right mindfulness >

right stillness >

right knowledge (*sammāñāṇa*) >

right freedom (*sammāvimutti*)

## Two “levels” of *satipaṭṭhāna*

*Satipaṭṭhāna* >

*samādhi* >

*satipaṭṭhāna* (= *sammāñāṇa*) >

*sammāvimutti*