

# The Seven Factors of Awakening

In the areas of the first two tetrads, where you are mostly exploring physical and mental objects and processes, it can be very helpful to review a meditation session in the light of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. As your practice deepens and you become more familiar with states of non-separation or at least less separation between you the subject and the object of your contemplations, you'll find that it is more helpful to review in the light of the Seven Factors of Awakening.\* A healthy human being who is abiding in a state of easeful presence and bright awakeness will have all seven active and balanced. There are three dynamic factors, three passive factors and one that balances active and passive.

|                        |               |                        |
|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| <i>dynamic factors</i> | ≈ AWARENESS ≈ | <i>passive factors</i> |
| Investigation          |               | Tranquillity           |
| Joy                    |               | Absorption             |
| Energy-effort          |               | Equanimity             |

## 1 Awareness - Sati

(pronounced *sah - ti*)

Nowfulness

In reviewing, ask yourself, how much mindfulness, was present. Alternately you could ask how much heartfulness or nowfulness or basic attentiveness was present. In particular, to what degree were the Four Foundations of Mindfulness present (awareness of body, feelings, mind

\* The Seven Factors of Awakening are also known as 'The Seven Factors of Enlightenment' or in Pali, *Sambojjhanga*

states and phenomena). Sati is the most important of the seven. If you don't have this one well established, you won't know if the others are present or not.

## 2 *Investigation - Dhammavicaya* (pronounced *dha - ma - wichai - a*)

Curiosity

Dhammavicaya means investigation of dharma. Here, dharma refers to 'truth', 'phenomena' or 'laws of nature'. This is the curiosity factor, the degree of question or engaged interest/exploration. To what degree was the active investigating mind present? This is not referring to a specific verbal question but to a quality of wide open, probing curious engagement. How strong was your question, or did you just float aimlessly through the session waiting for something to happen?

## 3 *Joy - Pīti* (pronounced *pee - tee*)

Flowing energies

In the process of awakening you will inevitably experience joy. *Pīti* is very physical, ranging from tinglings or prickings of the skin, to moments of pleasure in parts of the body, through to waves of carry-you-away ecstasy. This is really an awareness of the flowing energies of the organism. Flow always has a pleasurable flavour. Blocked energies always have a quality of dissatisfaction or even pain. In reviewing the meditation ask yourself how much joy or *pīti* was present.

## 4 *Energy-Effort - Viriya* (pronounced *wi - ree - ya*)

There are four ways of applying energy or effort that are essential for awakening.

### The Four Efforts

- Make effort to recognise and understand an unwholesome state when it is present. An unwholesome state is anything that takes you away from wholeness, in other words, towards fragmentation. This first effort is to recognise the fragmenting, the unwholesome trends in your being, at the very moment they arise.
- Make effort to drop them immediately or to bring them to an end. Through the first effort you will begin to understand the conditions that support an unwholesome state and will therefore be more able to avoid them in the future. An example of this in meditation is when you recognise verbalisation as an unwholesome trend. You know it will lead you into the path of the five hindrances so without indulging it, you immediately drop it and come back to the meditation object.
- Make effort to recognise a wholesome trend in your being when it is present. Wholesome is anything that moves you in the direction of wholeness. In our culture we seem to be quite accomplished in identifying a wide range of unwholesome states but not so good at acknowledging what supports our growth and happiness.

- Make effort to support wholesome states when they are present and to encourage their arising in the future.

When reviewing, ask yourself how well you worked with these four efforts.

## 5 *Tranquillity - Passadhi*

(pronounced *pa - sah - dhi*)

Easeful presence

Review the degree of tranquillity, calm or easeful presence. For beginners this will usually correspond to the presence or lack of verbalisation. As the gross levels of verbalisation decrease there will be increasing discrimination as to the quality or texture of calm that is present throughout the entire body/mind.

## 6 *Concentration - Samadhi*

(pronounced *sa - mah - dhi*)

Union,  
absorption,  
centeredness

It may surprise you to read that concentration is considered to be a passive factor, especially when you picture the furrowed brows and the serious grimace of the concentrating face. It's true that you might work hard, trying unsuccessfully to concentrate, but think of times when you are really concentrated. How much effort is there then? Recall some of the times you have been totally absorbed in a book or immersed in some craft work. The traffic is roaring by or someone comes in and speaks to you and you don't even hear them. How much effort did it take to do that? Concentrate means con (with) plus centrate (centre). In other words, you're centered. You are concentrated when you are with the centre, when you

are solid and grounded in the present moment. In reviewing ask yourself how much union, absorption, centeredness or groundedness was present.

## 7 *Equanimity - Upekkha*

(pronounced oo - pek - ka)

Mind of serenity

Other words for this are 'evenmindedness' or 'serenity'. In this state one is not ruffled by the 'eight worldly winds' of concern about praise and blame, pleasure and pain, loss and gain, fame and notoriety. This mind of equanimity sits squarely in the centre of experience with all the senses open, seeing and appreciating the whole. In reviewing, ask yourself how much equanimity or evenmindedness or serenity was present.

## ~~Working With Difficult States~~

### ~~General Approach~~

~~There are three ways of working with any difficulty or distraction that arises in meditation. Try the first. If that doesn't work, then try the second. If that doesn't work, go to the third.~~

Acknowledge it

~~1. Simply acknowledge the distraction and stay with the meditation exercise. See the 'distraction' as part of the arising mandala of experience and continue the exploration in easefulness.~~