

What Is Kāyagatāsati?

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An edited transcript of a YouTube video

[GDW 114 What Is Kāyagatāsati](#)

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Introduction

WHAT is kāyagatāsati? This is the most important thing that we have to learn in this workshop. It's not easy to understand what this is all about. As I said earlier if you have read Kāyagatāsati Sutta (MN 119), you'll wonder why we have to go through so much trouble looking at all this when in MN 119, everything is already listed for you. You just have to go there and pick up everything. They are all kāyagatāsati.

Now, this is not something so simple; for me it took many years, and you only have a few minutes to do that. I myself could not arrive at an answer until I read a PhD thesis written by one Taiwanese professor. But before I get there, let me go through the conclusions that I've reached step by step from scrutinising the extracts given in this section.

Kāya is not JUST the physical body

First I want to show you that kāya is not just the physical body as some of you have already pointed out, based on one sutta called the Kimśukopama Sutta (SN 35.198) on page 32 of your workbook.

Let's look at the simile that was given in this sutta. The simile is that the city with six gates is supposed to represent the kāya. Although it says in the beginning that kāya is the four great elements made by a mother and a father, subsisting on nutriment and so forth, when it talks about this city with six gates, it says this city has a gatekeeper who is supposed to be wise and competent and able to distinguish friends from foes. The gatekeeper also has a swift pair of messengers coming in from outside. They are allowed to go in by the gatekeeper. They can go into the city to the central square where the lord of the city is sitting. Since the gatekeeper allowed the messengers to go in, they are able to deliver the message of reality.

The Buddha then explained that this simile has the following significance: the city with six gates is supposed to represent kāya. It's not just the central

square, it's the city with six gates that represent the six internal sense bases, five of which are physical and one is non-physical.

The wise gatekeeper who keeps off strangers and admits the messengers is supposed to represent mindfulness which is non-physical. The central square is supposed to represent the four great elements which is of course physical, and we have the lord of the city which is consciousness and therefore non-physical. So you see, kāya is not just the physical body. Kāya comprises both physical as well as non-physical elements. We have also three other elements which are not part of the city: a swift pair of messengers which are supposed to represent samatha and vipassanā, then there is the message of reality which represents Nibbāna and finally the route by which they came, representing the Noble Eightfold Path. These three elements are not part of the city; they are outsiders.

From this simile we see that kāya does not necessarily mean the physical body, it's more than just the physical body. It comprises both physical as well as non-physical elements. It seems to include the whole personality, the whole sentient being.

Kāya is NOT the physical body

So, kāya is not just the physical body. Three other suttas attest to this. In Uppaṭipāṭika Sutta, it is said that pleasurable feeling in the body ceases without remainder when the yogi is in the third jhāna, yet he experiences happiness with the kāya. It is obvious here that kāya does not mean the physical body.

Then in Kiṭṭāgiri Sutta (MN 70) on page 36 in your workbook, we have “contacts with kāya” the immaterial attainments. The latter are the formless attainments which can only be attained after going beyond form which in turns means gone beyond physicality and beyond the five senses. That's when you attain the immaterial attainments. So, how can you have contact with the physical body when you have already gone beyond it? Again, this kāya does not refer to the physical body.

Next, there is the Kāyasakkhi Sutta (AN 9.43) on page 38, which talks about kāya witness or body witness. These are people who have attained the jhānas and the immaterial attainments. One who has attained the jhānas has

not gone beyond the body, not gone beyond the physical body; the five senses are still there. He can still be aware of what's happening at the five senses, although the mind is not affected by them. The mind is not distracted by the five senses. This is in the suttas.

However, when you reach the immaterial attainments, the āruppas, then you have gone beyond the five senses. This is stated very explicitly in the suttas. When you go beyond the five senses then what does the mind perceive? The answer is, the mind perceives the base of infinite space, the base of infinite consciousness, the base of nothingness, the base of neither perception nor non-perception. These are all immaterial, nothing to do with the five senses.

So, even someone who has attained to the levels of immaterial states, is called a kāyasakkhi, i.e. body witness but it's not the physical body because the physical body is no longer perceptible. So definitely, here it is not a physical body. It is the mental body.

Kāya refers to the person or 'subjective experiencer'

So, whether it is the jhānas or it is the immaterial attainments, the kāya does not refer to the physical body. Piecing this evidence together, we can come to a conclusion that the kāya actually refers to the person who experiences what is happening, or what is called the subjective experiencer.

To give an example, when you're doing open awareness, the five senses are aware of what's happening at the senses but the subjective experiencer is the one that is aware of seeing, of hearing, of smelling, of tasting, of feeling sensations with the body. It is the subjective experiencer that is reacting or responding to what is happening at these sense doors. When you talk about experiencing happiness with the kāya (or 'experiencing happiness with the body' as Bhikkhu Bodhi translates it), it actually means personally experiencing the happiness. *You experience happiness with the kāya* means 'you personally experience happiness'. So, the word kāya here means 'personally', it does not mean 'physically' and *to contact with the kāya* means 'to personally experience' and finally a *kāya witness* is 'a personal witness' not 'a body witness' as it has been translated.

To translate *kāya* as ‘body’ can be so misleading that it ties you down to your understanding of what *kāyagatāsati* can be because the word *body* has been so strongly embedded in our consciousness to mean the physical body, so the moment you see the word *body* you will automatically connect it with something to do with the physical body. However, you must understand, as can be seen in this context, that *kāya* does not necessarily mean physical body, it could mean more than just the physical body or it could even mean not the physical body.

Body in ‘anybody’, ‘everybody’ and ‘somebody’

This is very much like the English compound words *anybody*, *everybody*, *somebody*, right? When you say, “Anybody can sit here,” you're referring to the physical body, but when you say, “Anybody can have their own views and opinions,” you are referring more to the mental aspect. So, in this case, the word *body* actually means the person. ‘Anybody’ is any person, ‘somebody’ is some person and ‘everybody’ is every person. Hence, the word *kāya* is not just the physical body it refers to the totality of an individual.

Kāyagatāsati is NOT ānāpānassati

Let's now talk about kāyagatāsati. I want to start with showing you the evidence pointing to what kāyagatāsati is not.

First, kāyagatāsati is not ānāpānassati. Let's look at the source. This is in Ekadhamma on pages 28-29 in your workbook, AN 1.302 and 304. (See below.)

Ekadhamma (AN 1.296-297)

One Thing (AN 1.296-305 in NDB p 116)

296. "Bhikkhus, there is one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to nibbāna. What is that one thing? [1] Recollection of the Buddha. This is that one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment ... to nibbāna."

297. "Bhikkhus, there is one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to nibbāna. What is that one thing? [2] Recollection of the Dhamma....

(298) [3] Recollection of the Saṅgha....

(299) [4] Recollection of virtuous behavior....

(300) [5] Recollection of generosity....

(301) [6] Recollection of the devas....

(302) [7] *Mindfulness of breathing....*

(303) [8] *Mindfulness of death....*

(304) [9] *Mindfulness directed to the body (kāyagatāsati)....*

(305) [10] Recollection of peace. This is that one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment ... to nibbāna."

The evidence shows that ānāpānasati and kāyagatāsati are mentioned separately, in [7] and [9] respectively. If you look at the list, you start off with recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dhamma, recollection of the Saṅgha and so forth. Each of these meditations don't overlap, they are separate meditations. So, if ānāpānasati is listed separately from kāyagatāsati then they are not the same. They cannot be the same as they are separate meditations.

This is also found in the next reference, the Aparāccharāsaṅghātavaggo, where they are again separately listed as (491) and (493).

Aparāccharāsaṅghātavaggo (AN 1.382-493-562)

Finger Snap (AN 1.394, 485-494 in NDB p 124, 128)

394 (1). “Bhikkhus, if for just the time of a finger snap a bhikkhu develops the first jhāna, he is called a bhikkhu who is not devoid of jhāna, who acts upon the teaching of the Teacher, who responds to his advice, and who does not eat the country’s almsfood in vain. How much more, then, those who cultivate it!”

485 (92)-494 (101).

[“Bhikkhus, if for just the time of a finger snap a bhikkhu]

(485) develops recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*)....

(486) develops recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*)....

(487) develops recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*)....

(488) develops recollection of virtuous behavior (*sīlānussati*)....

(489) develops recollection of generosity (*cāgānussati*)....

(490) develops recollection of the deities (*devatānussati*)....

(491) develops *mindfulness of breathing* (*ānāpānassati*)....

(492) develops mindfulness of death (*marāṇassati*)....

(493) develops *mindfulness directed to the body* (*kāyagatāsati*)....

(494) develops recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*) ...

[he is called a bhikkhu who is not devoid of jhāna,[§] who acts upon the teaching of the Teacher, who responds to his advice, and who does not eat the country’s almsfood in vain. How much more, then, those who cultivate it!]

[§] *Jhāna* is here used to mean meditation in general, not a specific meditative attainment, such as in 1st-4th *jhāna*.

Critique A of Kāyagatāsati Sutta (MN 119)

If you look in the Kāyagatāsati Sutta (MN 119), ānāpānassati is there included in all the 14 exercises of the kāyānupassanā of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10). Seems like anything that is connected to the body is included there.

Since the Buddha said in Ānāpānassati Sutta (MN 118) that the breath is one sort of body among bodies, it is in there. And then the four jhānas are also lumped together under kāyagatāsati because similes used to explain the jhānas always involve the body, such as joy permeating through the whole body like a spring coming out from a natural water body and so forth.

However, when I look at these two references from AN 1, they are not the same because ānāpānassati and kāyagatāsati are listed as separate meditations. This strongly suggests that kāyagatāsati is not ānāpānassati. In fact, it supports my belief that MN 119 is not an authentic discourse given by the Buddha. The two extracts shown above clearly show that ānāpānassati is not kāyagatāsati, even though in Kāyagatāsati Sutta, ānāpānassati is listed as number one among the different types of meditations classified as kāyagatāsati.

Kāyagatāsati is NOT asubhabhāvanā

In Ānanda Sutta and Rāhula Sutta, kāyagatāsati and asubhabhāvanā are separate elements, actually two different steps arranged in a different sequence in each sutta.

Ānanda Sutta (SN 8.4)	Rāhula Sutta (Sn 2.11)(KN 5.23)
1. <i>nimittaṃ parivajjehi, subhaṃ rāgūpasamhitam.</i> Turn away from the sign of beauty Provocative of sensual lust.	1. <i>saṃvuto pātimokkhasmiṃ, indriyesu ca pañcasu.</i> Be restrained by the Pātimokkha and in the five sense faculties.
2. <i>saṅkhāre parato passa, dukkhato mā ca attato.</i> See formations as alien, As suffering, not as self.	2. <i>sati kāyagatā tyatthu, nibbidābahulo bhava.</i> Let your mindfulness be directed to the body; be full of disenchantment [toward the world]
3. <i>nibbāpehi mahārāgaṃ, mā dayhittho punappunaṃ.</i> Extinguish the great fire of lust; Don't burn up again and again.	3. <i>nimittaṃ parivajjehi, subhaṃ rāgūpasañhitam.</i> Avoid the mark [of sensual objects], which is beautiful and connected with lust.
4. <i>asubhāya cittaṃ bhāvehi, ekaggaṃ susamāhitam.</i> Develop the mind on foulness, One-pointed, well concentrated;	4. <i>asubhāya cittaṃ bhāvehi, ekaggaṃ susamāhitam.</i> Develop your mind on the unattractive; [make it] one-pointed, well concentrated.
5. <i>sati kāyagatā tyatthu, nibbidābahulo bhava.</i> Apply your mindfulness to the body, Be engrossed in revulsion.	

They may not be so apparent because of the different English translations, but if you look at the original Pāḷi words in the table above, this distinction becomes obvious. They are not the same, they are not equated. Sometimes people tend to equate kāyagatāsati with asubhabhāvanā.

Restraint of the 5 senses followed by kāyagatāsati

In Rāhula Sutta, there is another important clue. The Buddha starts off with saying that the monk is restrained according to the Pātimokkha, then he talks about restraint of the five senses. Normally he would talk about restraint of the six senses but here, he only talks about restraint of the five senses. What happens to the sixth sense? The sixth sense is covered by kāyagatāsati. Hence, kāya in kāyagatāsati refers to the sixth sense, to the mind, the mental aspect of kāya.

Using this cue, it becomes obvious that kāyagatāsati is not the same as asubhabhāvanā since the former is related to the mind while the latter to the physical body.

Critique B of Kāyagatāsati Sutta (MN 119)

From the previous discussion, we can thus see that asubhabhāvanā is there among the list of meditations classified as kāyagatāsati in MN 119. Asubha is there in two forms. One is on the 31 parts of the body, contemplating the repulsiveness or loathsomeness of the 31 parts of the body, their disgusting nature. The other is the charnel ground contemplations, contemplating corpses at various stages of decay. This classification contradicts what is found here in Ānanda Sutta and Rāhula Sutta, which lists kāyagatāsati and asubhabhāvanā as two separate steps arranged in a different sequence in each sutta.

Nature of kāyagatāsati

Talking about the nature of kāyagatāsati, let's go back to the simile of the six animals in Chappāṇakopama Sutta (SN 35.247) where the Buddha said that kāyagatāsati is like a strong post or pillar. What does the strong post or pillar connote to you? It means something very firm, correct? Firm and steady. Then

in the simile of the most beautiful girl of the land in Janapadakalyāṇī Sutta (SN 47.20), kāyagatāsati is like a bowl brimful of oil. What does a bowl brimful of oil connote to you? It is something very fragile and yet very steady because the moment you're not steady, there will be a spill. That means, it's fragile and yet steady. This is the nature of kāyagatāsati—it can be steady, it can be firm, but it can also be fragile. We will see why later on.

Kāyagatāsati in the context of sense restraint

This becomes obvious in the context of sense restraint. In our second section we came to the conclusion that a prerequisite for sense restraint is kāyagatāsati. When you're established in kāyagatāsati, then you will be restrained in the senses, if you are not established in kāyagatāsati then you will not be restrained.

Let's look at this in context. The Buddha said in Gaṇakamoggallāna Sutta (MN 107) that having perceived anything with any of the six senses, one should not grasp at the signs or features. He was addressing the bhikkhus:

Having perceived anything with any of the six senses, do not be one who grasps at the signs and features. Otherwise, if unrestrained, one might be invaded, flooded by evil unwholesome states of longing and dejection or likes and dislikes.

This is what happens to the subjective experiencer. In other words, having perceived a sight with the eyes, if the bhikkhu grasped at the signs and features, he would be flooded by evil unwholesome states of longing and dejection, not the eyes. It's the person, the subjective experiencer, who would experience the consequence in the case of the other senses too—not the ears, not the nose, not the tongue, not the body, not even the mind.

KĀYA AS “**SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCER**”

Having perceived	with	he does not	Otherwise
a sight	the eyes	grasp at the signs or features.	he would be flooded by evil unwholesome states of longing and dejection.
a sound	the ears		
a smell	the nose		
a taste	the tongue		
a touch	the body		
something	the mind		



Gaṇakamoggallāna Sutta (MN 107) p18

At this point, there's probably a question burning in your mind: What's the difference between *mano* and *kāya*? Because in the slide, you can see this: “having perceived something with the mind.” The mind here is *mano*. *Mano* is a sense organ, just like the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue and the body.

Difference between ‘mano’ and ‘kāya’

First, let's be clear about what *mano* is. *Mano* is the sixth sense faculty that cognises anything at a very rudimentary level, for example a past event or a present sense experience.

Just now when you were practising meditation under my guidance, I asked you to anchor your mind to the five senses—Free and Easy, Touch and Go—in order to extract your mind from compulsive or obsessive thinking, daydreams and so forth. Although you try to anchor your mind to the five senses, still the mind runs off. Memories still pop up and you automatically identify things with them. All these things are going on in the mind spontaneously—that is the *mano*. What happens is that the *mano* recognises something which then stirs up a memory or brings forth an association with an object. This happens

even though I told you to maintain an unfocused awareness. The mind on its own accord will automatically go into this mode even though you don't purposely do it. That is the mano's job.

Kāya, on the other hand, is the mind that responds or reacts to what is cognised at the six senses. For example, a memory pops up. This particular memory is the manifestation of saññā or perception. This is spontaneous, you've got no choice, you can't control it, it pops up in the mano. The kāya will then come into play to either push it away, if it's an unpleasant memory, or try to build upon it, follow and pursue it if it's a pleasant memory so as to relive all the nice experiences you had.

In essence, the mind operates at two different levels. One is a very rudimentary level where the mind merely takes note of the inputs without involving volition. The other one is when it reacts or responds to what is perceived at the senses. I said to you just now, "Maintain a defocused or unfocused awareness of what's happening at your senses," but as you try to practise that, suddenly you hear a sound and you immediately recognise that it's somebody coughing. You don't have to think about it; it happens automatically. And then a thought may arise in you, "Hey, I'm not supposed to recognise that," and you stop thinking. That involves volition and that is kāya reacting to a stimulus. The cognisance of the first stimulus is mano, the reaction to it is kāya.

The question then is, "Why is this kāyagatāsati so important in sense restraint?" It's because you need to be able to catch your intentions so as to restrain them from grasping at signs and features. Where does the intention arise? In the mind, in the kāya. I asked you to lock your eyeballs in a fixed direction, in a single direction, don't move, and yet something catches your attention at the corner of your eye and then you turn to look. Then you realise too late, "I shouldn't have turned." That is because you didn't catch the intention. If you were sharp enough, the moment an intention arises you will know there's the intention to want to be curious to see, and then you can stop that intention: "Don't see, keep your eyes in one single direction." It is because you failed to catch the intention that you turned to see. This will become more obvious tomorrow because we are going to proceed to something else. Today, I asked you to lock your eyeballs in a fixed direction yet I see some

people moving their eyeballs around. Tomorrow you'll have to sit absolutely still, cannot fidget, cannot scratch. You have to stay absolutely still. That's the time when you'll learn to catch intentions. You'll see very clearly, the rise of the intention to want to move, to want to scratch and you have to restrain yourself from doing so. That is when you actually practise *kāyagatāsati*. You direct your attention to the *kāya*, the subjective experiencer.

Gratitude to Asst. Professor Kuan Tse-fu

I must express my gratitude to Dr Kuan Tse-fu, who is currently (2019) the assistant professor at the College of General Studies at Yuan Ze University, Taiwan. In 2012, at the recommendation of one of my monks, when I was preparing for my first sutta study with meditation workshop on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, I read a publication of his PhD thesis that was submitted to the University of Oxford in 2004. This book provides the key to understanding what *kāyagatāsati* (念至身) or *kāyassati* (念身 or 身念) is. Being a Chinese, it is easy for him to understand *kāya* as self or as the person because there is a Chinese word 本身 (*běnnshēn*) which means 'oneself'. The 身 (*shēn*) is the *kāya*, so for him it's easy, but for people who are not familiar with that, when you see the word *body*, you automatically think of the physical body. Yet I told you just now, that there are these English words, *anybody*, *somebody*, *everybody*, in which the 'body' in these words does not refer to the physical body. It refers to a person. So, it's the same. If *kāyagatāsati* is translated as "mindfulness directed at the body", it means mindfulness directed at the person. The person is the subjective experiencer.

We are now clear what *kāya* is and we know that *kāyagatāsati* is mindfulness of the person, mindfulness of the individual, the subjective experiencer.

What is sati?

Let's now discuss what *sati* is. Mindfulness is a translation for the Pāli word *sati* which is actually a noun of the verb *sarati*, to remember. In the whole of the Pāli language, there is only one single verb for 'to remember' and that is *sarati*. So, the noun of *sarati* is of course remembrance. And what does remembrance connote to you? Remembrance means awareness of a past

object or event. You remember something from the past, not the present, not the future; but nowadays mindfulness is popularly understood to be focusing on the present moment, i.e. it's supposed to be present-moment-awareness.

Current popular understanding of mindfulness

It is now universally understood as present-moment-awareness and it has gained a lot of popularity throughout the whole world. It has pervaded all aspects of human endeavour, not only in spiritual pursuits but also in sports, education, politics, in the corporate world, even in the military, everywhere.

The reason why it's so popular is: it works, it's effective. You know, there are some corporations which are willing to give an additional 20 minutes to their staff after their lunch break to do meditation. When you meditate for 20 minutes, what will happen to you? You will be more efficient and there will be improvement in your work. It's worth giving the extra 20 minutes for the break. It works and that's why it's so popular. However, does this practice contradict the original definition of sati as awareness of a past object? How can we reconcile this apparent contradiction?

Original vs popular meaning of mindfulness

Indeed, this puzzled me for many years, just as the word kāyagatāsati was a puzzle to me in the earlier years when I was a young monk. In the latter case, as I said above, it was Professor Kuan Tse-fu's book that gave me the breakthrough. It enabled me to get the key point to understand what kāyagatāsati is.

Asian translations of sati

With regard to sati, what puzzled me was how the word is translated to mean. In all the three Buddhist countries, Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka, sati is translated to mean 'to remember' in their respective language. It's only the English translation that has it as 'present-moment-awareness.' In Chinese, it is represented by the word 念 (niàn) which has the character for heart (心) in it and above the heart, the character for now, present or current (今). So, it's 'present-moment-heart.' Some scholars explain that to mean 'the heart in the present moment.'

The way it is explained is still a bit puzzling. One of my monk friends knows a Chinese scholar in Australia who is well versed in ancient Chinese and the etymology of these Chinese characters. I got my friend to check it with him.

Interpretation of the Chinese character for sati

The explanation given is that the 'present' (今) that is on top of the 'heart' (心), doesn't mean that the heart is in the present moment, it means "to bring a past object to the presence of the heart".

Actually, chanting in Chinese is 念经 (niànjīng), and it is to recite from memory. Reciting from memory means to recall from the past to the awareness of the present. I've been doing a lot of research on this and I have come to the conclusion that there are actually four very important aspects of mindfulness that are of great usefulness for both worldly and spiritual pursuits.

4 Rs of mindfulness

I call them the four Rs of sati. These are:

- Remember
- Recollect
- Remind
- Retrospect.

You'll notice that all these are related to past objects.

Remember

Remember here refers to remembering information while collecting it. For example, right now you are listening to me. While you're listening to me, you try to memorise or remember what I tell you. I see many of you writing down notes on your books or on your workbooks. When you write notes, that's not mindfulness. During the Buddha's time there was no paper for you to write, there were no recorders. Everything was through the mind.

The Pāli word for 'to teach' is *vāceti* which means to cause to speak. What does that mean? It means in the old days, you had to first memorise what the teacher taught you. You memorise first and understand later. The teacher will give you all this string of words for you to memorise first. Memorise them by

heart then come back, sit in front of the teacher and recite what you have remembered. After you are fluent in that then the teacher will explain the meaning to you.

That was how I learned traditional Pāli grammar and it was very difficult. Normally, we have to understand first before we memorise, right? In the old days, it was the opposite, you memorise first and understand later. You can see young sāmaneras in Thailand or Myanmar who can recite the whole Abhidhammatthasangaha by heart but they don't always know what it means.

I'm sure that some of you also have a regular routine of chanting. You chant every evening or weekly and you do so with a chanting book in front of you. You've been chanting for donkey years but you never made a point to memorise the verses. If there comes a day when you misplaced your book, then what happens ? No chanting, correct? It's because mindfulness is something intentional, you must have the intention to remember. It does not happen spontaneously. It requires deliberate effort. We may describe it as deliberate memory and that is mindfulness.

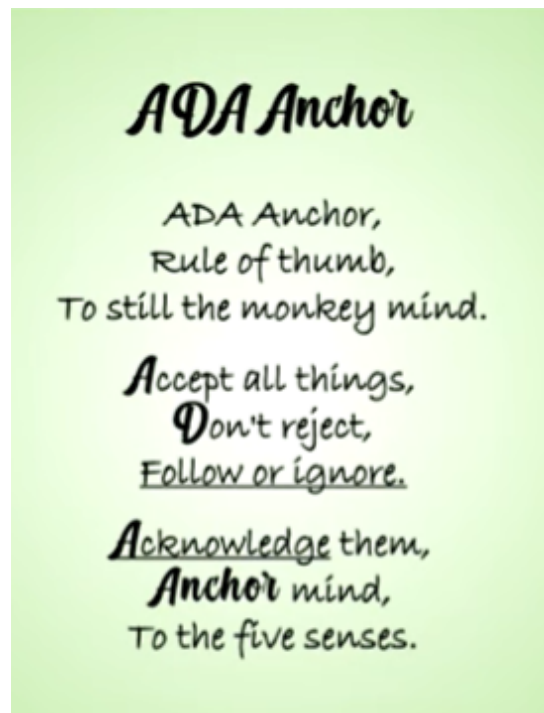
Similarly, for students studying for their exams, when they read their textbooks, they cannot read them in the way they read newspapers. With newspapers, you just have to understand what you read and after that just put them aside. You don't make a point to remember what you read. But with textbooks, it's different. You have to make sure that you memorise the main points, so that when it comes to exam time you are able to recollect those points to answer the questions.

Recollect

I just said recollect—this is our next R. In order to be able to recollect, you must have remembered that which you want to recollect. If in the first place, you did not bother to remember then it will be difficult to recollect. Let's say I give you instructions on how to meditate. You just listen and listen, but do not make a point to memorise or to remember what I told you. Once you get out of this hall, that's it, you cannot meditate properly because you have not memorised my instructions and can't recollect them.

During my mindful hiking retreats, when the participants listen to my talks or my instructions, nobody is allowed to take notes. After the talk, there will be a group discussion among the participants. They will have to try to recollect what I have said and then do a presentation.

They also have to memorise those Dhamma Rhymes that I recited to you, like ADA Anchor, and so forth.



If you just write them down, what for? If you forget where you put your phone or your notebook, you'll find that you can't remember, then how to practise? So, you have to put them in your heart, not in your notebook. Remember and then you can recollect.

Remind

Remind is the next R. Nowadays there are many Buddhist institutions where you can go for a course of study, either for a diploma in Buddhist studies or a BA, MA or PhD. Say, you have a fantastic memory and you do very well. However, if you don't remind yourself to put into practice what you have learned, all that learning will not do you any good. You've to remind yourself to practise. Reminder is also sati. "To Remind yourself" means you know something from the past and you're supposed to put that personal

knowledge into practice. So, you remind yourself to practise it. That reminder is sati.

Retrospect

The final R is retrospect. I'm using the word retrospect in a very literal way, not the way it is used nowadays. Nowadays when you use the word retrospect, there's a tinge of regret involved. For example, "In retrospect I shouldn't have said that, it was a nasty thing for me to say that" is an expression of regret. However, I'm not using it that way. I use it in a very literal sense based on how the word retrospect is made up of. It's from two Latin words *retro* and *spect*. *Retro* means back and *spect* means look, so retrospect means "to look back". You look back at what had happened; what had happened is something in the past which can be a distant past, an intermediate past or just an immediate past. For example, if you recollect your past lives, that is also sati: *pubbenivāsānusati*, recollecting past life. That is the distant past. That is also retrospect, you are looking back at the past.

Difference between recollect and retrospect

Both recollect and retrospect are about pulling out a memory from the memory store. The difference between them is that in recollecting, you recollect something which you had deliberately remembered but not so in the case of retrospect. A very good example is from something that happened to one famous meditation teacher by the name of Sayadaw U Tejaniya from Myanmar. He grew up in the Burmese culture so when he was a layman, he used to go in and out of the monastery learning and practising meditation as a temporary monk with his teachers. When he was practising as a temporary monk or when on retreat, he was very serious, very intense but when he was out of the temple back to lay life, he was just as intense in enjoying all the pleasures of the senses and all the vices of the world. One day he got himself so drunk he couldn't remember what he did when he was dead drunk. Then while at a retreat doing meditation the memory of what he did popped up in him. He could remember that he was drunk and he could recall every single thing that he did at that time. He was drunk but now he could remember because of retrospection. His mindfulness was very powerful and he could

see what was happening then. He did not deliberately remember what he did at that time but it was saññā that automatically registered that event. I told you about saññā or perception.

2 functions of saññā

Saññā or perception, has two automatic functions. It will recognise something if it had been perceived before. Secondly, if it is something brand new, it will register it. It is registered in the mind and when your mindfulness is strong enough then you can bring it back even though you did not deliberately try to remember it at the time.

What actually is ‘present-moment-awareness’?

When you talk about present-moment-awareness, it is the awareness of your present activities, of what you are doing right now. What you're doing right now can be experienced through the five senses which are always in the present because they can only take objects in the present. You can see something right in front of you, but if what you saw last night is not in front of you right now, your eyes cannot see it at this very moment. What you heard last night, if you didn't record it on your device, you also cannot hear it with your ears at this moment.

So, if you are trying to be aware of what's happening in the five senses you are as present as you can get but actually when you try to take note of what happened in the five senses, they are already in the immediate past. This is because the eyes see first and then mindfulness becomes aware of what the eyes had just seen, pain arises in the body first and then only mindfulness is aware of the pain, correct? Even more obvious—a thought arises first and then mindfulness is aware of the thought. A reaction happens first and then mindfulness is aware of the reaction. In general, mindfulness is looking back into the past. This is the job of mindfulness. It could be the immediate past, the intermediate past or the distant past. The examples above are of course describing the immediate past. Nowadays, the way it is usually used, present-moment-awareness actually refers to the retrospective mindfulness that looks back at the immediate past. So now, if we combine the two, we get kāyagatāsati.

Kāyagatāsati = mindfulness of the 'subjective experiencer'

Kāyagatāsati or kāyassati, both mean mindfulness or retrospective awareness of the subjective experiencer. You're looking back at the subjective experiencer to see how it is reacting or responding to what's happening at the senses.

The eyes see something but you don't guard the eyes, you cannot guard the eyes because the eyes are a result of past kamma. You can only guard your reaction or response to what you see, that's the only thing you can guard. You can't guard what you perceive through the senses, you can only guard your reaction, your response to what is perceived at the senses, including the sixth sense the mind. The response or reaction is carried out by the subjective experiencer. What you can do is to cut it off immediately the moment you notice that the subjective experiencer is going to grasp at the signs or the features and move on to another object. If you don't guard that kāya, don't guard that subjective experiencer, you wouldn't know it and it's already grasping the object; it's already making a story. That's why when I gave you instructions for guided meditation, I said, "Ask yourself a simple question, 'What's the mind doing?'" That's kāyagatāsati, you are looking back at what the mind is doing.

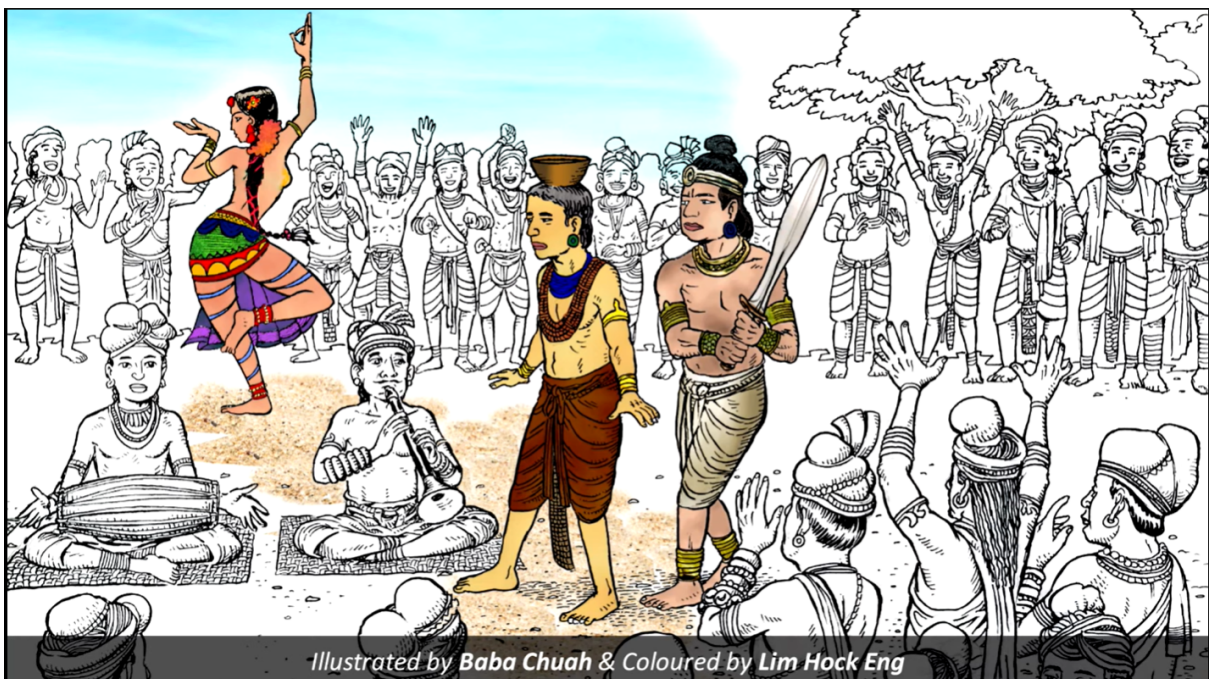
Nowadays I qualify that, by saying, "When you ask the question, bear in mind ADA Anchor, Free and Easy, Touch and Go." Many years ago when I started to teach BUDMAS retreat in Bandar Utama, I would just say, "Ask yourself: 'What's the mind doing?'" One yogi came in the afternoon, during the interview and told me she was sitting there for one hour, having a lot of fantasies and videos going on in her mind. I asked her, "What did you do?" She replied, "I just watched them because you asked me to see what the mind is doing mah, so I watched the video lah, the whole one hour I was making the video, my own video with all those imagination and fantasies in my mind." So, now I have to qualify: "Not just ask the mind what it is doing, but remember ADA Anchor, Free and Easy, Touch and Go." I've mentioned this Dhamma Rhyme a moment ago. Let's get it to sink in.

ADA Anchor

ADA anchor means,

Accept all things
Don't reject, don't follow, don't ignore
Acknowledge, and
Anchor your mind to the senses.

She wasn't doing that, she was following what the mind was doing. So, in order to restrain the senses, you have to have *kāyagatāsati*, you must be mindful of how the mind is reacting to what is being experienced through the senses. That is why *kāyagatāsati* is a prerequisite for sense restraint. If you cannot see what's happening to your mind, how are you going to restrain your senses? A very good example is the man who was entrusted with carrying the bowl, full to the brim with oil. If he were to just pay attention to the bowl all the time, and there's a pothole in front of him, he would stumble and fall and that would be the end of his life.



So that's why the Buddha said, "He will not stray outward." He will not stray outwards means inwardly, he is watching his mind: how his mind is reacting to what's happening at the senses. The moment the mind gets curious, he must immediately curtail it. Don't follow the intention to look. For example, he is bearing the bowl on his head and if he has open awareness, he's aware of things around, not just the bowl on his head. On the other

hand, if he just pays full attention to the bowl, he may miss noticing a pothole in front of him and that's finished for him. He has to carry the bowl (on his head) and yet also be aware of what's happening around him. Furthermore, he also has to watch how the mind is reacting. The mind is working so fast, you think it's all simultaneous but it's not. It's moving so fast from one object to another.

Why kāyagatāsati can be firm yet fragile

It's so fast. In trying to restrain the senses, you actually have to look back. It may be a split second earlier but the sequence of what happens requires you to actually look back so that you will be able to restrain the senses. You have to catch the mind and know that it's reacting so that you can stop it from grasping at the signs and features; only then will you be able to restrain it. Otherwise, if you don't watch the subjective experiencer, you'll be caught in no time, you'll be dragged in, you'll be part of the story, right?

So, that's why the Buddha gave the similes of a bowl brimful of oil as well as the one about a strong pillar or post. It can be very fragile and yet it can be very firm. If you can do it well enough, it's very firm. You've to keep watching your mind all the time so that the moment it's going to go off you can catch it. If it's firm, it will not go off. But if you're careless then very easily you'll get dragged into the story. That's why it is also very fragile.

Defocused vs focused open awareness

What I've been teaching you so far is unfocused or defocused open awareness except for one part where I taught you *Point and Shoot, Hit and Run*. That is for people who are sleepy. That is not defocused, but focused open awareness. Focused in the sense that you focus on an object; open in the sense that you move from one sense to another. You don't stick to one single sense. When you go back to your daily life, you have to look at the situation.

There are situations where you can practise defocused open awareness and these are when you are in a safe, secure environment. For example, you are sitting on your balcony overlooking the forest or in a safe park with your eyes open and you hear all these sounds of nature—that's the time when you

can practise defocused open awareness. Another good place for you to practise defocused open awareness is when you're in a shopping mall. Suppose you want to shop for a certain item. You just have in mind that item that you want to buy. You go into the mall, but you don't look left or right. Practise defocused open awareness and you won't be distracted or lured by all other bargains by the side as you walk toward your destination. Yet another place to practise defocused open awareness is when you are a passenger in a car. Somebody is driving and you don't have to pay close attention to the traffic. You can just practise open awareness. Just open up your awareness to all your senses and see what's going on, especially what's going on in the mind, how is the mind reacting to what's happening.

However, there are times when you need to practise focused open awareness. Like when you're crossing a road, you can't afford to practise defocused open awareness, or when you're driving a car. You have to use your discretion—when it's required to be focused then you do focused open awareness. Focused open awareness is like what that man is doing when he's carrying that bowl full to the brim with oil. He is focused on the bowl and yet he's open towards what's happening around him. He cannot trip or fall, he cannot afford to be distracted by other things. Thus, in order not to be distracted you have to watch internally how the mind is reacting and curtail all those intentions (to grasp at the signs or features) instead of following them.

Unusual nature of mindfulness in Kiṃsukopama Sutta (SN 35.198)

Before I end this session, I want to point out the unusual nature of mindfulness that is given in the simile in the Kiṃsukopama Sutta, where the Buddha said that mindfulness is like a wise gatekeeper who keeps out strangers and admits acquaintances. Now, here it is a very unusual inclusion of wisdom in mindfulness. “The gatekeeper posted there would be wise, competent, and intelligent; one who keeps out strangers and admits acquaintances.” The wise gatekeeper is supposed to represent mindfulness and wisdom as well.

Usually, mindfulness and wisdom are two separate elements. They are not the same, just like ānāpānassati and kāyagatāsati are not the same. They are separate. For example, in this common phrase sati-sampajañña, mindfulness and clear awareness (or mindfulness and clear comprehension), sati is mindfulness and sampajañña is a part of wisdom.

Then we have the five spiritual faculties, which are:

1. faith
2. effort
3. sati (mindfulness)
4. samādhi
5. paññā (wisdom).

You see that number 3 (sati) and number 5 (paññā) are separate elements.

Lastly, we have the seven factors of awakening:

1. sati
2. dhamma investigation
3. effort
4. rapture
5. tranquility
6. samādhi
7. equanimity.

Again, you can see number 1, sati, and number 2, dhamma Investigation, are two different things: sati is mindfulness and dhamma investigation is a form of wisdom.

4 qualities of a wise man in Vassakāra Sutta (AN 4.35)

Four lesser known qualities of a wise man can be found in Vassakāra Sutta.

Vassakāra was a Brahmin and the minister of King Ajātasattu who was the son of King Bimbisāra. One day he approached the Buddha and made this pronouncement that a person who possesses four qualities is a wise man. He is:

1. knowledgeable
2. mindful, with the ability to remember things that were done or said long long ago
3. skilled in his job
4. quick-witted.

Quick-witted here is a form of wisdom and is separate from sati. So even though he was a Brahmin he recognised the importance of mindfulness for worldly application. Mindfulness is a very important element not only in spiritual pursuits. In your daily life, whether you're a student or an employee you still need mindfulness, you still need to remember, to recollect, to remind and retrospect.

The usefulness and importance of kāyagatāsati

Let's now look at the last two chapters of Aṅguttara Nikāya, Book of Ones, Chapters 19 and 20. I've extracted the main points from these two suttas.

The first one says that:

“Even as one who encompasses with his mind the great ocean includes thereby all the streams that run into the ocean, just so, whoever develops and cultivates kāyagatāsati includes all wholesome qualities that pertain to true knowledge (vijjābhāgiyā)”

So, it seems kāyagatāsati is something very inclusive. When you practise open awareness, you're looking back at how the mind is reacting to what's happening at the senses. That is kāyagatāsati.

Kāyagatāsati can be samatha and/or vipassanā

What is this vijjābhāgiyā? What are these wholesome qualities that pertain to true knowledge? You can find this in AN 2.30 which says that the dhammas pertaining to true knowledge (vijjābhāgiyā) are samatha and vipassanā.

So, when you practise kāyagatāsati, you are practising samatha and vipassanā. What you have learned today is only samatha. You have not gone on to vipassanā yet. Today, when I asked you to anchor your mind to the five senses, you're not doing any investigation. You are just anchoring the mind to prevent the mind from getting caught up in compulsive or obsessive thinking or daydreaming. Actually, you had a taste of it today, when I asked you to lock your eyeballs in one single direction, When you do that, you begin to notice how the mind is reacting, you begin to notice intentions although you're a bit slow, you cannot catch the intentions, you follow them and only later you realise that you shouldn't have followed the intentions. Tomorrow, we are

going on to another step, instead of just locking your eyeballs in one fixed direction, you're going to sit absolutely still and you will learn to see even more intentions. And that's when we can start to practise vipassana, to investigate to see how things are connected with one another, how things arise due to cause and condition and are subject to the three characteristics.

In AN 6.294 the dhammas pertaining to true knowledge are given as a list of six types of perceptions and these are all more vipassanā in nature:

1. impermanence
2. suffering in the impermanent
3. not-self in the suffering
4. detachment
5. abandonment
6. cessation

We continue with the others.

Kāyagatāsati when developed & cultivated, leads to:

- (576) a strong sense of urgency
- (577) great good
- (578) great security from bondage
- (579) mindfulness & clear comprehension
- (580) the attainment of knowledge & vision
- (581) a pleasant dwelling in this very life
- (582) realisation of the fruit of knowledge & liberation

So, you can see that many things can be achieved just by practising kāyagatāsati.

When developed & cultivated:

- (583) the body becomes tranquil, the mind becomes tranquil, thought and examination subside, and all wholesome qualities that pertain to true knowledge (vijjābhāgiyā) reach fulfilment by development.
- (584) unarisen unwholesome qualities do not arise and arisen unwholesome qualities are abandoned
- (585) unarisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen wholesome qualities increase and expand

- (586) ignorance is abandoned
- (587) true knowledge arises
- (588) the conceit 'I am' is abandoned
- (589) the underlying tendencies are uprooted
- (590) the fetters are abandoned

When developed & cultivated, leads to:

- (591) differentiation by wisdom
- (592) nibbana through non-clinging.

When developed & cultivated, penetration of:

- (593) numerous elements occurs
- (594) the diversity of elements occurs
- (595) analytical knowledge of numerous elements occurs.

Kāyagatāsati can lead to the four stages of enlightenment.

When developed & cultivated, it leads to realisation of:

- (596) the fruit of stream-entry
- (597) the fruit of once-returning
- (598) the fruit of non-returning
- (599) the fruit of arahantship

and the obtaining of various types of wisdom.

When developed & cultivated, leads to:

- (600) the obtaining of wisdom
- (601) the growth of wisdom
- (602) the expansion of wisdom
- (603) greatness of wisdom
- (604) diversity of wisdom
- (605) vastness of wisdom
- (606) depth of wisdom
- (607) a state of unsurpassed wisdom
- (608) breadth of wisdom
- (609) abundance of wisdom
- (610) rapidity of wisdom
- (611) buoyancy of wisdom
- (612) joyousness of wisdom
- (613) swiftness of wisdom

(614) keenness of wisdom

(615) penetrativeness of wisdom

Nibbāna cannot be attained without practising kāyagatāsati

This is chapter 20, and in this chapter the deathless here is a synonym for Nibbāna. It seems that in order to achieve Nibbāna, to attain Nibbāna, one has to practise kāyagatāsati. This seems to be quite mandatory according to what is found in this chapter.

AN 1 Chap 20 - The Deathless

(616) ... they do not partake of the deathless who do not partake of kāyagatāsati. They partake of the deathless who partake of kayagatāsati.

(617) ... the deathless has not been partaken of by those who have not partaken of kāyagatāsati.

(618) ... they have fallen away from the deathless who have fallen away from kāyagatāsati.

(619) ... they have neglected the deathless who have neglected kāyagatāsati.

(620) ... they are heedless about the deathless who are heedless about kāyagatāsati.

(621) ... they have forgotten the deathless who have forgotten kāyagatāsati.

(622) ... they have not pursued the deathless who have not pursued kāyagatāsati.

(623) ... they have not developed the deathless who have not developed kāyagatāsati.

(624) ... they have not cultivated the deathless who have not cultivated kāyagatāsati.

(625) ... they have not directly known the deathless who have not directly known kayagatāsati.

(626) ... they have not fully understood the deathless who have not fully understood kāyagatasati.

(627) ... they have not realised the deathless who have not realised kāyagatāsati.

Atthinukhopariyāya Sutta (SN 35.153)

There is one sutta in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, in the discourses connected with the six sense bases, called Atthinukhopariyāya Sutta (translated as, “Is There a Method”). In this sutta the Buddha asked the bhikkhus if there was a method, apart from faith, liking, hearsay, intellection, or reasoned acceptance of another's view, by means of which a bhikkhu could attain Arahantship.

When we accept something, we usually do so because of one or a combination of these elements. For example, faith: because you're Buddhists, you have faith in the Buddhist scriptures, right? If you're a Christian you would have faith in the Bible. It's based on faith. There are some aspects of Buddhism which you cannot verify yourself, for example the law of kamma. How can you verify the law of kamma? The Buddha said that kamma means intention. There are billions and trillions of intentions that arise and pass away from moment to moment and every intention is kamma. How are you going to calculate your karmic returns or your karmic debts? That's impossible. No one can do that. You can only accept it on faith. Buddhists believe in past life, in future lives, in rebirth. How do you know that you had a past life? How do you know that you have many lifetimes before? You cannot verify for yourself. For most Buddhists, it's also a matter of faith in accepting it.

On a more worldly perspective, suppose you are sick and you go to see a doctor. The doctor gives you various tests and then he prescribes some medicine for you. You take the piece of paper, go to the pharmacy, get the prescribed drugs and you take them. How do you know that this doctor is not a quack? It's because you have faith in him, right?

Some time ago people said that cholesterol was bad for your body, you should not take too much cholesterol, you should not take palm oil, you should not take this or that. People used to eat two or three eggs a day, then they said you should not eat eggs. Too much cholesterol, too much fat. But now, there's a change of opinion. They say it's not exactly right that cholesterol is bad. Dietary cholesterol is not significant in heart disease. That means you can eat your eggs. Well, who do you trust? If you like eggs, you trust those people who say eggs are good for you, right?

So, it's based on our faith. A lot of times you read all these things on the internet, from the news: this person says this, that person says that. How do you know it's true? You don't really know but you do know that many of these newspapers and media are controlled by political parties and governments. They control the information and there's no way that you can really know whether it is true or not. You just accept out of faith.

Next, liking. Sometimes people just accept things because they like them. For example, you go to listen to a dhamma talk and then people ask you whether you like the teachings? You answer yes, I like the teachings. Why? Because the monk is handsome 😊. So out of liking you can just accept whatever that appeals to you. People say, love is blind, it's also another aspect of liking. You just accept it because of love.

Then hearsay. We Chinese are good at that. From young, we have been practising this filial piety, praying to our ancestors, doing 'cheng beng' and all that. When we were young, you were never allowed to question. They never explained why you had to do this or that. They said it was your tradition. You just had to follow, never mind that it's just hearsay. You have to accept it because this is your tradition to do so, no question.

Intellection. This one is for intellectuals. Some people are by nature more inclined to intellectualise. They like to think a lot, they like to theorise. For example, we have this mystery of MH370 that disappeared and nobody knows where it went to. Nobody has come up with any solid information of what happened. Say, you're such an intellectual, you may have your own theory and you come out saying it must be like that, it cannot be any other way. You accept it out of your own intellectualisation.

Reasoned acceptance. You have a friend who is not as intellectual as you. He doesn't think so much but he's also a thinker, he listens to you and says, "Yeah, what you say sounds very reasonable," and then he accepts your theory. This is a reasoned acceptance of somebody else's view.


In general, we accept things based on one or a combination of these approaches to get on in life. As a Buddhist, you would accept what the Buddha says. You accept what the monk says, accept what the scriptures say. But, how do you know whether what the scriptures say are actually the Buddha's words? You don't know, you accept them out of faith. So, how much

value can you place on the usefulness of these approaches in the context of attaining arahantship? Is there an alternative method to guide us along the right path?

Is there a method?

The Buddha says, yes, there is. There is a way and what is it? It's very simple.

WATCHING THE SUBJECT LEADS TO ARAHANTSHIP

 *SN 35.153 - Is There a Method*

Is there a method by means of which a bhikkhu—
apart from

1. faith
2. liking
3. hearsay
4. intellection, or
5. reasoned acceptance of (another's) view,

can attain arahantship? Yes, there is. And what is that?

Having perceived anything with the 6 senses, he knows, with right wisdom, whether or not there is greed, hate or delusion internally.

The key is: “Having perceived anything with the six senses, he knows with **right wisdom**, whether or not, there is greed, hate or delusion internally.”

This is actually watching the subjective experiencer. You're watching how the mind is reacting to what is perceived through the six senses, whether there's greed or there's no greed, whether there's anger or no anger, whether there's liking or there's disliking. Whatever it is, you know what's happening in the mind but you know with **right wisdom**, that's the key word here.

Importance of right view when practising kāyagatāsati

A lot of people can practise kāyagatāsati, they can look back at what's happening in their mind, but they may not get the benefit if they do so with a wrong view. For example, you notice that you have a nasty comment about somebody and then suddenly you realise it and say to yourself, “Hey I'm

supposed to be a Buddhist, supposed to be a good Buddhist, how can I have such a nasty comment,” and you chide yourself for having the nasty comment. That is a wrong view, because you think that comment belongs to you. The comments, the judgements, whatever that goes on in our mind, don't belong to you, they are the products of causes and conditions.

It's because of your past conditioning and because of the present circumstances, that's why such things arise but it's not within your ability to see that. You don't see the cause and conditioning. You can't see the not-self nature by which this arises and because you can't see it, you have this wrong view. So even if you know that there is greed, hatred and delusion in you when your senses come into contact with the respective object but if you still have a wrong view, then it won't lead you to arahantship.

Thus, right view is very important. When practising *kāyagatāsati* or introspective mindfulness, while watching how the mind is reacting to what's happening it must be done with the right view, right wisdom. “It's not mine, not me, not my self”—this is the right view. Even if you are very intelligent, very creative, doing something that nobody else has come up with, it's nothing to be proud of; that is a product of cause and condition. If you are very stupid, cannot remember instructions; it's nothing to be ashamed of, that's the way it is, also due to cause and condition. Not me, not mine, not myself, but a product of cause and condition. However, you cannot simply say, “In that case just let anything happen; never mind”. Apart from having the right view, it's also necessary to apply the right effort.

Importance of right effort when practising kāyagatāsati

Right effort means abandoning what is unwholesome and preventing what is unwholesome from arising—this is the first pair. The second pair is: arousing the wholesome if it has not yet arisen and then maintaining and developing it to fulfilment once it has arisen. This is the right effort.

If you notice that a nasty comment has popped up in your mind, regard that as “not me, not mine, this nasty comment came about because of past conditioning and present circumstances”. And, because you know that it is unwholesome, you should not pursue it, you should abandon it. This is applying the right effort. You must combine right view with right effort when

you practise kāyagatāsati. Introspective mindfulness by itself is not enough, you need to apply both the principles of right view and right effort.

So, what are you waiting for? Start practising kāyagatāsati right now,