



Seven Awakeningfactors

- the equipment to overcome ignorance -

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Seven Awakeningfactors - the equipment to overcome ignorance

The Buddha taught seven qualities of mind as awakening factors:

- Mindfulness (*sati*),
- Investigation of states (*dhammavicaya*),
- Energy, effort (*viriya*),
- joy (*pīti*),
- tranquility (*passaddhi*),
- concentration (*samādhi*) and
- equanimity or impartiality (*upekkhā*).

The Buddha taught various sets of factors that are important to develop at certain times in order to achieve awakening. They are bundles of factors that have a specific function on the path. So some individual factors appear in several combinations.

Awakening from ignorance (*avijjā*) is the actual goal of the Buddha's teachings.

Ignorance is the cause of suffering and difficulties. It always leads to unwholesome actions and unwholesome thinking. It tries to disguise *dukkha*, difficulties, unsatisfactoriness. As a result, it often leads to inappropriate reactions to the result of previous unwholesome actions. The results of previous unwholesome actions come to us in the form of difficult situations as kammic results. Inappropriate reactions to them as renewed unwholesome actions often create a chain of new difficulties. Ignorance is like a dream or a fantasy state. It hides the true nature of the occurrences. The seven awakening factors (*bojjhaṅga*) are one of the groups of factors taught by the Buddha for attaining the goal of his teachings. They form the essential equipment for attaining awakening, the overcoming of ignorance. Overcoming ignorance brings liberation from suffering.

The first part of the word *bojjhaṅga* is derived from the word *bodhi*, which means awakening. The word Buddha is also derived from this word.

The second part of the word *bojjhaṅga*, *aṅga*, means limb or factor.

In the Saṃyutta Nikāya we find an entire chapter on the awakening factors.

These seven factors are mental factors (*cetasika*) that must be very strongly developed in order to attain awakening. If they are very strong, awakening takes place. Awakening does not come from somewhere, but has a cause and this is the strength of these factors. They are the cause that one of the paths can be attained. By attaining of the four paths, they become stronger and more effective from path to path. Paths (*magga*) is what the Buddha called the four stages in which awakening and thus liberation from suffering takes place. With the attainment of each path, mental defilements are cut off forever in the corresponding stream of consciousness. With the attainment of the fourth path, Arahatsip, all mental defilements are finally overcome. Every individual has a so called stream of consciousness (*viññāṇasota*) where births take place and kamma is created. This stream of consciousness consists of individual moments of consciousness that constantly arise and pass away. The awakening factors must occur persistently in the stream of consciousness for awakening to take place.

The awakening factors are the antidotes to the mental defilements, as well as the opposite. If they are very strong, mental defilements cannot occur in the stream of consciousness. At such times the mind is free. No suffering is created.

On the way to the final goal they are also important so that meditation happens satisfactorily and one can make progress, both in the direction of concentration (*samatha*) and in the direction of insight (*vipassanā*). They are necessary in order to see things as they really are in *vipassanā*

meditation. This is an essential prerequisite for awakening from ignorance.

They also contribute to a mindful, calm, satisfying life in the here and now, if one makes repeated efforts to strengthen them.

One can say that these awakening factors support every spiritual development process.

A mind in which the awakening factors are well developed is awake but calm, clear, powerful, focused, mindfully present and so ready for liberating insights that can reduce suffering and overcome it altogether.

These states of mind, the awakening factors, are of varying quality:

Mindfulness (*sati*) is never too strong. It balances all the other factors.

The next three factors in the usual list, namely investigation of states, energy and joy, are more stimulating, while the last three factors, stillness, concentration and equanimity, are more calming.

Each of these qualities helps to bring the mind closer to awakening. Mindfulness has a special meaning and position: It recognises which quality is currently present or absent, which factors prevent its presence and which awakening factors need to be strengthened.

One should learn and make an effort to recognise the awakening factors in one's own meditation practice. One should know how to strengthen and balance them. One should also be able to recognise and evoke them in everyday life. In a retreat there is the possibility to practise intensively with them. What one practises intensively becomes a habit. The more often and powerfully one practises in retreat, the easier it is to call them up in everyday life.

One should also be able to distinguish them well. Some meditators do not know exactly when the mind is concentrated, when it is mindful, when it looks at things wisely.

In order to stabilise the awakening factors in the stream of consciousness, it is helpful to recognise the hindrances¹ and to be able to distinguish between them:

To recognise the hindrances and to understand the relation between hindrances and awakening factors. The awakening factors first help to recognise the hindrances and the more they are developed, they help to prevent the hindrances from occurring. It is important to clearly find the hindrances in thought processes and to identify them as such.

When meditating, one's mental presence should be so far developed that the mind can recognise which quality of mind is present and strong and which still needs to be developed or strengthened.

One should also know ways and means to strengthen these qualities. One can also see by their strength and quality how well the meditation is developed.

Some people wish to enter the stream, the first stage of awakening, out of a kind of security wishing that they will not appear in lower suffering realms of existence after this life. This motivation could be connected with desire and wrong view of a person. What is wholesome and powerful is the motivation that one wants to overcome all mental defilements for the benefit of all beings. One of the basic spiritual defilements is ignorance. Ignorance always creates suffering for beings. All the suffering and difficulties we experience now are due to ignorance.

In the Sutta Nipāta, Uruga Sutta, the Buddha compares overcoming the mental defilements to skinning a snake. The awakening factors are a strong support for this skinning.

In another passage in the Pāḷikanon, the Buddha compares the awakening factors to water that flows. They must become strong and flow, i.e. at some point they must appear effortlessly and balance and complement each other.

Supportive for the development of the awakening factors are:

- Seclusion (*viveka*),
- passionlessness (*virāga*),
- cessation (*nirodha*) [of mental defilements]
- which results into letting go (*vossaggapariṇāmiṃ*).

¹ Hindrances (*nivarana*) to meditation are: Desire for sense objects, all kinds of aversion, laziness and sluggishness, restlessness and remorse and doubt.

Seclusion, both mental and physical, supports the development of the awakening factors. The ideal is when both types of seclusion can be practised. Physical seclusion means practising in a secluded, quiet place. Mental seclusion is most important. It involves seclusion from mental defilements and seclusion from sense objects.

Passionlessness means that the mind is free from lust.

Letting go is the opposite of clinging or grasping. Through mentally penetrating and analysing things and beings, letting go arises. Letting go becomes stronger and stronger through insight into the true nature of appearances during *vipassanā* meditation.

In the Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, we find some image-like comparisons given by the Buddha for understanding the awakening factors:

Awakening factors based on ethics

"Bhikkhus, whatever living beings there are which assume the four postures - sometimes walking, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting, sometimes lying down - all assume the four postures based upon the earth, established upon the earth. So too, based upon virtue, established upon virtue, a Bhikkhu develops and cultivates the seven factors of awakening." SN 46.11

Comparison of the awakening factors with rafters

"Bhikkhus, just as all the rafters of a peaked house lean towards the roof peak, slope towards the roof peak, incline towards the roof peak, so too, when a Bhikkhu develops and cultivates the seven factors of awakening, he flows towards Nibbāna, slopes towards Nibbāna, inclines towards Nibbāna." SN 46.7

Comparison of the awakening factors with the sun

"Bhikkhus, this is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, that is, the dawn. So too, Bhikkhus, for a Bhikkhu this is the forerunner and precursor of the arising of the seven factors of awakening, that is, good friendship. When a Bhikkhu has a good friend, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the seven factors of awakening." SN 46.12

"Bhikkhus, this is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, that is, the dawn. So too, Bhikkhus, for a Bhikkhu this is the forerunner and precursor of the arising of the seven factors of awakening, that is, wise attention. When a Bhikkhu is accomplished in wise attention, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the seven factors of awakening." SN 46.13

As the dawn rises before the sun appears, good friends and wise attention should be present to enable the awakening factors to rise.

Good friends and seclusion as a condition could be seen as a contradiction. Good friends are not to be seen here in the worldly sense of socialising with friends, but friends should be seen more as inner supporters and advisors on the inner path of liberation. Thus, in retreat, good, disciplined friends who practise together in silence are an important, good support for the development of the awakening factors. The Buddha greatly valued good friends on the path of awakening.

The English translation 'wise attention' refers to the Pāli term: *yoniso manasikāra*.

Yoniso also means origin, *manasikāra* literally means to make the mind. This means that wise attention is about shaping the mind to see things as they really are. This means seeing things not in their conceptual, compact appearance and designation, such as man, woman, car, house, etc., or as emotions, but in their ultimate realities with their characteristics and functions. Seeing things as ultimate realities means, as a first step, the distinction between body/matter and mind. The first stage of awakening, the stream-entry, can only be reached when the view of a compact 'I' has been completely abolished through analysis and one's own experience. Then one should further analyse both physical and spiritual parts of an event into their components according to elements, derived matter, types of consciousness and mental factors.

Through wise attention, the identification with emotions and compact, conceptual experiences is increasingly removed. This allows less suffering to arise, because the sensory impressions themselves are not the cause for suffering, but the compact view and the identification with a person who experiences them.

Wise attention also means seeing the universal characteristics of all conditionally arising phenomena: Impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anatta*). The untrained mind sees things as permanent, satisfying and assigns them to a self. This results in much suffering because this view does not correspond to reality.

The stronger the concentration, the more clearly impermanence becomes apparent, namely in the enormous speed of the arising and passing away of phenomena.

Another kind of wise observation is seeing cause and effect. We only encounter phenomena at the sense gates that are caused by previous actions. We do not have any experience at the sense bases that is not conditioned by previous actions at the same stream of consciousness.

Wise discrimination is another aspect of wise attention. This includes not continuing to think about all the objects that appear in the mind. Or that one even searches for objects of thought by looking around on the one hand or brooding on the other. Wise attention is supported when one can clearly choose which objects the mind takes for consideration and does not take in everything that just appears in the consciousness through external stimuli or inner memories. This means collecting the mind and not opening the senses too much.

Without this wise contemplation of things, the development of the awakening factors is not given.

Developing the awakening factors while listening to the *dhamma*

“When, Bhikkhus, a noble disciple listens to the Dhamma with eager ears, attending to it as a matter of vital concern, directing his whole mind to it, on that occasion the five hindrances are not present in him; on that occasion the seven factors of awakening go to fulfilment by development.”
SN 46. 38

The Buddha taught the awakening factors to two of his most advanced disciples, MahāMoggallāna and MahāKassappa, when they were afflicted with a serious illness. And they got well by hearing about the awakening factors. Presumably the awakening factors were well known to them, but not present as a practice at the time of the illness. So it can be assumed that the Buddha reminded them to practise them consciously.

Every moment of consciousness produces matter in our body. Hearing about the awakening factors can produce very wholesome consciousness, either associated with happy feeling and joy, or with supreme equanimity. Wholesome consciousness produces very pleasant, well-balanced matter. Thus, in the case of illness, this matter may relieve or even cure the illness. If one reflects with wholesome joy on the awakening factors and the high goal to which they lead, there is also a good condition for healing a disease. So too, when reading about the awakening factors corresponding wholesome consciousness arises and a disease can be healed or relieved. So when this article is taken with open, wholesome consciousness, the awakening factors are strengthened and the body is brought into a good, refreshed state.

About the individual awakening factors:

1. Mindfulness (*sati*)

Mindfulness is the most important factor for attaining awakening. In retreat, it is important to observe with *sati* all appearances in body and mind from the moment you wake up until the moment you fall asleep.

More details on Buddhist mindfulness can be found on the website cetovimutti-theravada.org under Bodhipakkhiya Dhamma.

Mindfulness in relation to the cultivation (*bhāvanā*) of these seven qualities means mindfully noticing and recognising the presence or absence of these qualities and finding out what promotes or hinders them.

2. Investigation of states (*dhammavicaya*)

The Pāli word *vicaya* is translated as: Investigating, exploring, discerning. The word comes from the verb *cināti*, which means to gather, accumulate or integrate. *Vi* as a prefix means diverse or special.

So one could say one accumulates something, namely knowledge or the *dhamma*. One gathers this knowledge through one's own investigation, based on one's own experience. This is how wisdom arises in the Buddhist sense. *Dhamma* means both thing, state and law and also teaching. In this case of investigation, one first investigates things (*dhammā*) and finds out more and more laws (*dhammā*) of life through one's own experience. Through repeated experience and close observation, one learns how the investigated things work together.

To do this, to investigate the things that make up our life, the wish and openness must first be present. Most people do not have this wish and therefore cannot understand more deeply. The ordinary mind is more preoccupied with external things than with looking within. A time of retreat, when one is with other people but practising noble silence together, is particularly favourable for this introspection. From the continuous investigation of all processes in body and mind with right mindfulness, profound knowledge can arise. These insights from one's own investigation can be very happy and lead to a deep inner contentment. Satisfaction can only come from seeing things as they really are. If one deludes oneself or blindly believes what others tell one or what one has learned at some point, one cannot be satisfied. In this way of examining oneself, humbleness arises naturally, without forbidding oneself anything.

The investigation is connected with a direct experience of all the phenomena we encounter, without rejecting anything, nor beautifying anything. It is the bare, dispassionate experience of the factors that make up our everyday lives.

It is important to clarify one's own motivation: Do I want to understand at all?

A determination (*aditthāna*) of what one wants to do in a retreat is very helpful at the beginning of a retreat. Spending the time of retreat in this way is also very valuable in improving the quality of life enormously in the here and now. A meditation retreat should not be for relaxation or, on the other hand to blindly or with worldly thinking want to achieve something, but for the detailed investigation of existence. This requires perseverance, patience and energy. Interest must also be present.

The power of this close looking and understanding lies in us as human beings. This is a great potential, which the Buddha found out through his own inner work. It does not come from a god, but from ourselves. We have to learn to develop it and use it.

In order to be able to examine things in the right way, it is useful to ask oneself the questions:

How do I see the things of my life?

How do I deal with the experiences at the sense bases?

Investigation and understanding is the Buddhist path to liberation from suffering. Suffering can only arise because we do not understand the things that happen within us and around us. Understanding leads to disenchantment, humility, modesty in one's needs. One no longer ascribes so much to things that they actually don't have, because one understands them. And so inner happiness arises independently of external things, which finally can never offer lasting happiness.

The more one investigates, the more profound the understanding becomes. Even all the things that seem to be done automatically, or where you think, 'I always do it in that manner', 'I need that', 'I am like that', should be investigated and examined closely. The first awakening factor, mindfulness, is a prerequisite for investigation. The more developed mindfulness is, the stronger is the ability to investigate with the corresponding insights. Mindfulness is the ability to experience things deeply. Clear understanding (*sampajañña*) as a result of accurate investigation is the ability to know with right view what one is experiencing. By examining things in the right way, wholesome consciousness arises, through which much strength, joy, happiness and tranquillity arise. If the wholesome consciousness is maintained for a longer period of time, inner peace is achieved.

This factor involves the development of wisdom. The Buddha taught that wisdom can be developed in three ways:

- by hearing the *dhamma*,
- by contemplating or reflecting on the *dhamma*.
- and through direct seeing and understanding in *vipassanā* meditation.

These three ways need to be developed in different life situations. The first two ways are supportive so that the third way can arise in *vipassanā* meditation.

The things (*dhamma*) are very close to us, we experience them continuously. Investigating the dhamma is not about exploring an abstract doctrine or imagining a philosophy, but about looking at our lives in a very clear manner: This includes happy situations, where we succeed, get what we want, but also difficult situations. If we examine them more closely and do not avoid them, the latter are not minor. Thus, it is only through close examination that the first noble truth, the truth of suffering (*dukkha*), is increasingly recognised. Without examining life closely, the wholesome wish for liberation from suffering can never arise.

The unpleasant or difficult states include: Boredom, fatigue, slenderness, restlessness, pain, failure, defeat, etc. It is only by examining them closely that this awakening factor can arise when they occur.

One should observe these things in the body as well as in the mind and refine this observation more and more through concentration. The untrained mind escapes and plans pleasant experiences in the future, dancing, good food, beautiful beach or remembers experiences from the past. If these escaping mechanisms occur, it is useful to take up the investigation, to see how the body feels. What occurred in the mind before the planning, what mood in one's mind led to the escape.

By avoiding difficulties, one can never be continuously happy and satisfied, because one again avoids the previously thought things that appear as body sensations in retreat during silent sitting. In this way, *samsāra* is created again and again.

Only when the ability to look closely and to examine without judging, to not run away from anything, is very well developed, can awakening take place, can suffering cease. The close looking without judging is beyond emotions like hope and disappointment.

To enable the close looking, to support the not running away, there are also certain rules for a retreat. Activities such as whispering, talking on the phone or looking up something on the internet usually arise from inner states that the mind does not want to look at, but which are an obstacle on the path to awakening. The things that cause distractive avoidance behaviour are the most important to look at. These things include both individual and general characteristics that existence brings. Energy and courage, as well as continuity, are needed for these reflections.

With appropriate observation, one usually meets *dukkha* easily. To investigate this exactly according to the five groups of existence (*khandha*) (1. body (matter), 2. feeling, 3. perception, 4. formations guided by intention and 5. consciousness) corresponds to the first noble truth.

This is how one practises investigating the *dhamma* again and again. In doing so, one comes to very elementary, simple things that make up our person and the whole world.

For accurate investigation, one must let go all concepts and investigate only the elementary things directly. This is possible only when mindfulness (*sati*) is strong.

With continuous investigation, we see that these elementary things ultimately have no substance.

The investigation proceeds at different levels depending on concentration and *sati* and becomes more and more refined with increasing concentration.

This awakening factor also understands how wholesome consciousness arises and can be developed and how unwholesome consciousness arises and can be avoided. The ability to distinguish between wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), i.e. to distinguish what is useful on the path of inner liberation and what is obstructive, also belongs to this awakening factor. With continuous investigation, it sees and understands the effects of wholesome and unwholesome consciousness. Wise attention directed to consciousness is conducive to the development of this awakening factor and to the increase and completion of this factor until awakening.

For the development of this factor it is supportive:

- To consult a teacher who knows the way;
- to avoid people who are not dedicated to spiritual development;
- to associate with insightful people;
- to ask questions;
- to keep one's surroundings (clothes, body and place of residence) clean.

The Buddha has taught to develop four paths of power (*iddhipādā*).

These are

- Path of power formed and accompanied by wish (*chanda*), concentration (*samādhi*) and striving (*padhāna*), (*chandasaṃādhipadhānaṣaṅkhārasamannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ*),
- path of power formed and accompanied by energie (*vīriya*), concentration (*samādhi*) and striving (*padhāna*), (*vīriyasamādhipadhānaṣaṅkhārasamannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ*),
- path of power formed and accompanied by consciousness (*citta*), concentration (*samādhi*) and striving (*padhāna*) (*cittasaṃādhipadhānaṣaṅkhārasamannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ*),
- path of power formed and accompanied by investigation (*vīmaṃsa*), concentration (*samādhi*) and striving (*padhāna*) (*vīmaṃsāsaṃādhipadhānaṣaṅkhārasamannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ*).

All four paths of power are very useful for examining the objects of our life.

One of these four paths is consciousness (*citta*). *Citta* is the base of every process of cognition, the sustaining force for grasping an object. *Citta* is like the guide that leads someone to a known place. Consciousness (*citta*) is always accompanied by certain mental factors (*cetasika*) that specify it.

Consciousness can have different qualities, it can be kammically wholesome or unwholesome or kammically neutral. Here, of course, we are dealing only with wholesome consciousness. It has to be very strong in order to understand. It only becomes strong when one is determined and looks with wise attention at all the phenomena of life.

The function of *citta* is to realise the object. In meditation, the objects are the things that make up our lives in detail. If one can see them sharply and clearly, one can understand them. If one cannot see them clearly, one cannot understand them. So when the *citta* is strong, the cognitive faculty is also strong.

The path of power about developing *vīmaṃsa* is almost identical to *dharmavicaya*, the investigation of states.

Viriya is also one of the awakening factors and will be explained below.

The wish (*chanda*) for this inner work in seclusion must be strong. One must really wish to understand life. The wish of understanding should not be connected with any worldly desires for worldly success, for then it becomes unwholesome and does not bring the mind deeper into the objects. Desire arises and desire makes the mind restless and obscures the objects through the delusion accompanying desire.

The Buddha called this training of the mind *bhāvanā*. Just as in sport one trains muscles to achieve goals, in meditation one trains mental things.

This training of the mind does not end with a single recognition and attempt, but with repeated practice. This training is a crucial prerequisite for *vipassanā*. The wish for a profound understanding of life, to be constantly aware of it, gives strength to train the consciousness again and again.

To understand the true nature of phenomena, one has to analyse compactness again and again. For this it is helpful to ask oneself again and again: 'What factors are involved'. So one can practise when one drinks coffee, when one wants to use the mobile phone and also when one sits on the meditation mat.

If you start with simple things, it becomes easier and easier to understand more complex relationships.

The first step in developing this awakening factor is to distinguish body and mind. If one observes again and again in all activities what is the physical part, what is the mental part, it becomes clear through one's own experience that there are only physical and mental phenomena that make up our life.

One should also always explore the interaction of body - mind, mind - body:

The more one observes in this way, the more one also understands the conditional arising, which includes the law of cause and effect. You can see how the mind produces causes for suffering again and again with things that superficially seem to bring joy.

One should always observe neutrally, that is, without judgement, which bodily sensations produce which state of mind and vice versa.

If one practises again and again to bring back the complex world to the elementary physical and mental things through mindful observation and recognises their conditions, at some point one will also recognise the three universal characteristics: Impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anatta*) become clear. All conditionally arisen phenomena have these three characteristics. The more one experiences these three characteristics in one's own observation, the easier it is for the mind to let go of attachments and more and more tranquility, which is also one of the awakening factors, arises in the mind.

The knowledge of the three universal characteristics from one's own experience completes this awakening factor. Only through this knowledge from direct experience can awakening take place.

Awakening only takes place when *anatta* (*non-self*) is realised in three steps:

- First, one sees that the mind-created person consists only of materiality and mentality.
- The second step is that this materiality and mentality comes into being through conditions. There is no person behind it who creates or directs it.

- In the third step it becomes clear that all the individual physical and mental components have no firm substance, but are constantly coming into being and passing away.

“Abiding thus mindful, he investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it. On whatever occasion, abiding thus mindful, a Bhikkhu investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it - on that occasion the investigation-of-states awakening factor is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfilment in him.”

MN 118 Ānāpānasatisutta

“And what, Bhikkhus, is the nutriment for the arising of the unarisen awakening factor of investigation of states and for the fulfilment by development of the arisen awakening factor of investigation of states? There are, Bhikkhus, wholesome and unwholesome states, blameable and blameless states, inferior and superior states, dark and bright states with their counterparts: frequently giving wise attention to them is the nutriment for the arising of the unarisen awakening factor of investigation of states and for the fulfilment by development of the arisen awakening factor of investigation of states.” SN 46. 2

Only through repeated contemplation can this awakening factor be completed.

This awakening factor can finally only be completed through correct *vipassanā* meditation. All previous contemplations help to enable *vipassanā* to arise. Only through the insight stages of *vipassanā* meditation does this awakening factor become so strong that awakening can take place.

3. Energy (*virīya*)

In order to increase the wholesome, with the goal of awakening, energy is always necessary.

The nourishment for the awakening factor of energy is the rousing of oneself, the striving up to the point of intensive, tireless effort.

These are three stages, how energy has to be applied again and again for all projects, if one wants to reach a goal. In the beginning, one has to rouse oneself to do something at all. Then one has to make an effort and if one wants to achieve a great goal, such as awakening, one has to make a tireless effort and maintain a certain level of energy continuously. In the Pāli language, the word *ārambha*, which literally means to begin, is used for exerting oneself. What is meant here is that one begins with something in a practical way, and not only desires or considers it in one's mind. It also means that one not only hears about the *dhmma*, but begins to put what one has heard into practice in one's own thinking, speaking and acting.

Energy is the opposite of slackening. The mind tends to slacken. When this occurs, one must always quickly recognise this moment and bring up new mental energy.

This kind of wholesome energy is not to be confused with worldly busyness. It relates to increasing and refining the other awakening factors, such as *sati* (mindfulness) and *samādhi* (concentration).

To strengthen this factor for awakening, one should also ask oneself what one expends energy on in daily life. For example, in the context of unwholesome speech, the Buddha also talks about meaningless chatter. Such activities, which include the whole field of entertainment, be it television, videos or reading trivial stories, also require a lot of energy, which is then not available for meditation. Another area of everyday life that requires a lot of energy is planning for the enjoyment of extraordinary sense objects, which includes holidays, parties, shopping, etc. Today's means of communication and the constant flow of entertainment also require a lot of energy. Today's means of communication and the permanent being available that many people practise as a result also require a lot of energy. Here it is important to set priorities if one wants to walk the path of inner liberation in this life.

If one makes it often too comfortable for oneself, the mind tends to slacken.

Determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*) is very supportive for raising energy. It is useful to set times for meditation in everyday life and then stick to them. You can also set aside specific times in your daily life when you want to be particularly mindful. Setting aside specific times during the year for retreats is also very helpful to increase mental energy.

The more one practices, the more success can be seen. Positive experiences increase the energy to continue with the practice.

The search for sense objects, which has developed habitually in many people, is very exhausting and tiring, because unwholesome consciousness with the root craving arises in the process.

Dwelling in wholesome states of consciousness increases the energy for more and more wholesome things.

The raising of energy can also be supported by always remembering all that the Buddha achieved, from which we still benefit today. He taught tirelessly for 45 years until old age and in a brilliant way. He always tried to convey the teachings to different people in a new and convincing way. He slept a maximum of four hours at night. He also expended a lot of physical energy in spreading the teachings by walking long distances.

During meditation it is very important to keep balancing concentration and energy. If there is concentration for a long time without the application of energy at the right time, the mind becomes slack and tired and slowly falls away more and more from the object of observation. Here mindfulness (*sati*) is necessary to notice this slackening. Energy must then be expended to bring the mind close to the object again and to keep it there.

Sometimes it is often necessary to apply energy explicitly. Mindfulness must be sharpened to immediately notice the mind falling away from the object. Then the mind is brought back to the object with energy. These periods of concentration and application of energy are sometimes necessary in rapid alternation in order to develop satisfactory concentration. If the mindfulness is strong enough, a very alert, deep long-lasting concentration can then develop.

Our mind is not used to staying with one object for a long time. The untrained mind tends, on the one hand, to jump quickly and involuntarily from one object to another and, on the other hand, to fall into a sleep consciousness for a long time between the individual processes of cognition. Both must be avoided for effective *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation.

Viriya, as this awakening factor is called in the Pāḷi language, should not be translated as effort, for that rather implies an excess of energy, which would produce that mind and body become tensed. One can say endeavour or exertion of mental energy.

Another aspect of this awakening factor is courage. The Pāḷi word *virīya* is derived from the word *vīro*, which means hero. What is meant by this is that heroic mental strength must be applied to walk this path of liberation. The mind should approach the object without hesitation or shrinking. On the one hand, this requires energy, but on the other hand, it also requires courage to look at everything that arises in body and mind. One should look at it as it is, without beautifying it or rejecting it.

To participate in a retreat, to decide to do so, requires both energy and sometimes courage. It takes energy to look at the habitual patterns that may be accepted in our society and to transform them into the wholesome according to the Buddha's teachings.

Many participants are exhausted at first in retreats. It also takes energy to look at what has caused this exhaustion instead of falling into slackness. It is also good to look at how such conditions appear physically.

The Buddha speaks of 4 *padhāna* in the context of energy. *Padhāna* can be translated as strivings. These four are:

1. To overcome the unwholesome that has already arisen. In order to overcome it, one must first recognise it.

This means, for example, noticing craving in the mind, noticing it and then returning to the actual

object of meditation without getting involved in the craving.

2. To prevent the unarisen unwholesome from arising.

This means protecting the mind from unwholesome states of mind and that one does not consciously searches for objects for the senses, but clearly directs the mind towards a chosen object. This means, for example, in walking meditation, that one focuses the mind on the sensations in the feet and keeps the eyes lowered and does not look around. If one allows the mind to wander, sense objects very quickly come to one's consciousness which, if the mind is uncontrolled, cause craving and aversion. Thus a profound process of insight is repeatedly inhibited. The sense gates should therefore be protected by directing the mind towards a clear object.

In everyday life, unwholesome things very quickly enter the mind through contact with other people. Anger is a very common reaction to others, even if it is only small behaviour that does not meet one's own expectations. In order to prevent the unwholesome from arising quickly, it is very helpful to be familiar with the *Brahmavihārā* so that states of mind, such as anger, do not arise immediately.

3. To allow wholesome things that have not yet arisen to arise. This means that one should not let the mind being too open, but should always be aware of the object of the mind and choose it clearly. Some people love to let their minds wander, to daydream, to imagine fantasies. These are all mental behaviours that are not conducive to developing concentration or insight. A simple object that one can have with oneself at all times is to observe the in-breath and out-breath. Observing bodily sensations is also helpful in many situations, seeing them without adding anything to them.

If one is skilled in pure mindfulness with the ultimate objects at the sense gates, such as colours at the eye gate, sounds at the ear gate, smells at the nose gate or tastes at the tongue gate, one can also try to observe these objects in their actual appearance without adding anything to them.

4. To bring to perfection and maturity that which is wholesome and has already arisen. This developing of wholesomeness is very effective especially in retreat. If one does not engage in inner or outer distractions, the wholesome can be perfected to the point that *vipassanā* can arise.

These 4 types of effort require mental energy, because the untrained mind habitually flows with whatever arises and is unable to consciously direct the mind in one direction or another.

Very supportive for the raising of energy is engagement with the teachings, both the study of the *dhmma* and contemplation, and finally the formal practice of meditation.

Energy is also necessary to bear unpleasant things with patience or, furthermore, to develop equanimity. In sitting meditation, for example, this also refers to dealing with pain, which can occur again and again. It takes energy to look at these patiently in a wholesome way, rather than moving and shifting the body into a different position every time it feels uncomfortable.

Routined actions as well as routined thinking are often not conducive to understanding our existence. Here it always takes energy to interrupt routine or automatic processes of action and thinking and to look at and to analyse them.

The more energy one spends, the more one understands what makes up our life, the more a lasting wholesome, inner happiness arises, which in turn is a good basis for further arousing of energy.

Viriya is not blind action; on the contrary, it often requires more energy to accept things patiently than to intervene immediately.

An essential aspect is also perseverance, that is, the constant arousing of energy in pursuing a higher goal.

Energy in unwholesome consciousness becomes easily exhausted. Energy in wholesome consciousness produces more energy, it increases.

Energy can be strengthened by thinking about the benefits of being a human being:

- It is a rare opportunity to be born as a human being;
- it is even rarer to encounter the Buddha's teaching as a human being;
- one can contemplate on the benefits of meditation.

Also, energy is strengthened by avoiding lazy people, because laziness is contagious.

One should live with energetic people. Energetic in the sense that these people strive to live according to the dhamma and try to develop wholesomeness.

One can also reflect on unwholesome states of mind and contemplate on their unpleasant consequences.

One can contemplate on the fact that this life is limited and relatively short, and we do not know when it will end. This creates a sense of urgency.

One can make it a habit to spend energy on the wholesome. This means, for example, that whenever you don't have to actively think something, you observe a chosen clear object. The breath is always there. It is always a suitable object to focus the mind on. It is also an object that is easy to observe, and if one remains in pure observation, wholesome consciousness arises.

Body sensations are also a suitable object of observation at all times and in all positions. In the beginning, energy is necessary to direct the mind clearly, but if one stays with it and observes mindfully and without judgement, energy also arises. In this way, a sleepy mind can be awakened.

It is also helpful for raising energy to have a clear motivation and to check it again and again. Setting goals is also very helpful. However, if you don't reach the goal as quickly as you thought you would, you should not be frustrated or disappointed, but keep going. Frustration inhibits and takes away energy. Patience is a virtue that must be practised again and again, along with energy in all situations in life, in order not to fall into unwholesome consciousness.

Without a clear motivation, the result is weak. For example, some people go to a retreat with the attitude: 'Let's see how it is, ...'. This is no clear motivation. But if one has the wholesome, clear motivation to develop these awakening factors as an antidote to unwholesome states of mind for the benefit of all beings, that is a powerful motivation and it will have a powerful effect.

If it is difficult to raise energy at all and you do not have a clear object, it is good to focus attention roughly on the most prominent, clear object in body or mind, to note it and to observe how it develops. If you proceed in this way with interest, energy arises and more subtle things become clear. Joy arises when one observes with right view. Joy is supportive in order to continue to raise energy.

It is important to balance the energy. Too much energy leads to missing the goal, too little energy does not allow the mind to see the object clearly. One has to find the right amount of energy for oneself individually.

It is important to support the application of energy with compassion (*karunā*). Compassion is also a wholesome mental factor. The raising of energy should not be a struggle to achieve a goal, but a compassionate wishing and observing. If one exerts too much energy and does not achieve the expected success, it can be easy to give up and develop aversion to oneself or the practice. At this point, compassionate observation is always important. The wish 'may I be free from difficulties and suffering' and the acceptance of the present situation and the inner conditions is very helpful in order not to run away mentally or physically.

Another supportive factor to balance energy is confidence, which also includes devotion. When one practices devotionally and has faith in this inner path of liberation, a lot of energy arises, but the energy does not go into excess.

4. Joy (*pīti*)

The fourth awakening factor is joy. Joy is therefore also an important prerequisite for attaining awakening.

Joy is something existential. Most people are always looking for joy, for things that are pleasurable. Joy is a happy, uplifting state of mind.

Joy means to be glad or cheerful. It is a bright or cheerful mood, which is associated with well-being. It has to do with fulfillment and contentment. It arises from open interest in an object or joyful participation.

It can increase to enthusiasm or rapture.

Just as with energy, it is important to distinguish between wholesome and unwholesome joy. Here, of course, the awakening factor is only about developing wholesome joy.

This distinction is often not taken into account. Many people think that if something gives them joy, it must be good and wholesome.

Unwholesome joy only occurs in moments of consciousness that are connected with craving (*lobha*). Joy is also present in wrong view, which is always connected with the root craving. Wrong view includes all thoughts in which an ego is created. So ego-creation is joyful and probably why it is so popular. But it is unwholesome joy, which will create unpleasant, suffering results. Unwholesome joy can never lead to satisfaction because the things to which it relates are impermanent.

If one clings to joy in conditionally created things, quarrels can easily arise among people. One blames others for the loss of pleasure in things that are impermanent when they disappear. Addictive behaviour can also arise if one only holds on to external things that have inherent the nature of impermanence. The Buddha speaks of a troublesome state in the context of unwholesome joy. To avoid inner and outer conflicts, it is very important to learn what is wholesome and what is unwholesome.

When one practices *vipassanā* meditation and sees clearly the impermanence of all appearances, there is a letting go of addiction and searching for things that bring forth unwholesome joy. There is overwhelming wholesome joy when one sees the truth in *vipassanā* meditation, namely that all conditionally arising phenomena are impermanent. One experiences with one's own mind that the things that give many people short-term joy ultimately do not exist.

The unwholesome joy always has something to do with the object. The object must be attractive and pleasing to the person experiencing it. If the many objects that enter our consciousness every day are experienced as unpleasant, aversion very quickly arises.

This is not the case with wholesome joy. Wholesome joy does not depend on the object, but on the state of mind and the way of looking at it. When one experiences an unpleasant object at the sense doors, clearly as *dukkha* (unsatisfactory), without pushing it away or wanting to have it differently, mentally pleasant feeling arises with joy.

This kind of wholesome joy is what the awakening factor of joy is all about, which can occur for a very long time when there is appropriately skilful, wholesome (*kusala*) contemplation.

In meditation it is important to stay with the actual object and not to take the joy that arises through the wholesome consciousness as the object of craving. Then both concentration and insight are disturbed. Wholesome consciousness with joy produces very pleasant matter, which in turn produces pleasant feelings. These too should be considered as such and not craved for. Wholesome joy also occurs in *jhāna*. The corresponding consciousness also produces very pleasant matter. If one takes pleasure in it and desires it, or even practices *jhāna* with the motivation to enjoy this pleasant bodily sensation, one can destroy one's access to *jhāna* for a long time. In *jhāna*, wholesome joy and the matter it produces serve to maintain this state, to deepen concentration. When joy is taken as an object, the *jhāna* is interrupted.

After leaving the *jhāna*, one should examine the factors involved to understand them. Through this wholesome approach, new wholesome joy and corresponding pleasant matter arise.

Joy is felt in the heart where consciousness arises. Pleasant feeling in different parts of the body is

due to matter produced by consciousness with joy. Distinguishing these things is very important for the insight process in *vipassanā* meditation.

Joy makes the heart softer and more open. The brain becomes softer due to the matter produced by the consciousness accompanied by joy. The body becomes more flexible and lighter. Joy gives energy and refreshes.

We need less sleep, are fresher in body and mind and can often see our life from a completely different perspective when a lot of wholesome consciousness with joy occurs. Inner, wholesome joy only arises in an awake, active, yet still, clear mind. A mind exhausted by the search for outer satisfaction cannot find joy in meditation because the objects cannot be perceived clearly at all.

The nourishment for wholesome joy is right view. When one sees the things of the world not in their concepts but in ultimate realities, wholesome joy arises. If one can then see with deeper concentration that these ultimate realities are not permanent, further joy arises, which is strong but subtle. It is subtle because only with subtle awareness can the impermanence, or insubstantiality, of things be seen.

Other practices that strengthen and nourish wholesome joy are:

- With confidence in the Buddha's teaching, the practice of *Buddhanussati* meditation, contemplation of the qualities of the Buddha,
- the practice of *Dhammanussati* meditation, contemplating the qualities of the teaching,
- and the practice of *Saṅghanussati* meditation, contemplating the qualities of the noble community.

Other objects which, according to the commentaries, are suitable for evoking wholesome joy are:

- The contemplation of one's own letting go by generosity (*cāgānussati*),
- contemplation of the devas (light beings), and
- contemplation of peace.
- Avoidance of rough people and intercourse with loving people is also conducive to developing wholesome joy.
- Joy can also come from reflecting on inspiring teachings.

One can make the mind inclined to wholesome joy by dwelling more and more in the wholesome.

- Joy also arises persistently when one has no expectations but continuously practices pure awareness (*sati*) close to the object.

Deep joy can be experienced on the path of inner enquiry into existence:

- In continuous mindfulness (*sati*) and clear understanding (*sampajañña*),
- in insight meditation,
- in deep states of concentration, in full absorption concentration (*jhāna*) and also in neighborhood concentration.

Deep joy can also arise from the practice of three of the four immeasurables, also called *Brahmavihārā*. With the *Brahmavihārā mettā* (kind benevolence), *karunā* (compassion) and *muditā* (sympathetic joy), pleasant feeling and joy always arise, both in neighborhood concentration and in full *jhāna* concentration. Joy also arises in everyday thought and action when these wholesome states of mind are cultivated purely, that is, unmixed with mental defilements.

Joy is also a *jhāna* factor. This means that in the first and second *jhāna* this awakening factor is strengthened.

Joy (*pīti*) is sustained when the obstacles are suppressed for longer, that is, in states of *samādhi*, deep concentrated calmness.

Joy in meditation can only arise when there is interest in meditation, when the mind approaches this practice enthusiastically.

Wholesome joy (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*) arise from bodily seclusion, mental peace and wholesome states of consciousness. These factors can neither be developed nor felt if one

socializes or in a cosy environment with others. They are very subtle and need concentration to be perceived.

True joy, accompanied by wholesome consciousness and happy feeling, is independent of external circumstances. It is not dependent on being loved, being praised, receiving gifts, being successful, receiving joyful news, seeing, hearing, tasting or smelling something pleasant, seeking pleasure and fun. These types of pleasure are more of a short-time high feeling that soon fades away and we have to seek a new external object to maintain happiness and joy. As a result, the search and craving for external objects and the search for appreciation from outside becomes stronger and stronger. The mind becomes more restless and the strength for meditation is lacking.

In SN 12.23 Prerequisite - Upanisa Sutta, the Buddha says that the prerequisite for joy is enthusiasm (interest, cheerfulness) (*pāmojja*). And joy (*pīti*) is the prerequisite for tranquility.

Joy is an important factor on the path of inner liberation.

*"Whenever one clearly sees with right mindfulness
the arising and vanishing of the groups of existence,
one achieves joy and enthusiasm,
this has been understood as [the way] to the deathless."*
Dhammapada 374

*"Having the taste of solitude and
the taste of perfect peace [of Nibbāna] drunken,
one has no fear and no evil,
one drinks the taste of dhamma-joy."*
Dhammapada 205

AN 5.176 Rapture

"Then the householder Anathapindika, accompanied by five hundred lay followers, approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, and sat down to one side. The Blessed One then said to the householder Anathapindika. [and his retinue]:

'Householders, you have presented robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicines and provisions for the sick to the Sangha of Bhikkhus. You should not be content merely with this much, [thinking]: 'We have presented robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicines and provisions for the sick to the Sangha of Bhikkhus.'

Therefore, householders, you should train yourselves thus: 'How can we from time to time enter and dwell in the rapture (pīti - joy) of solitude (viveka)?' It is in such a way that you should train yourselves.'

When this was said, the Venerable Sariputta said to the Blessed One: 'It's astounding and amazing, Bhante, how well that was said by the Blessed One. Bhante, whenever a noble disciple enters and dwells in the rapture of solitude, on that occasion five things do not occur in him.

- (1) Pain (dukkha) and dejection (domanassa) connected with sensuality do not occur in him.*
- (2) Pleasure and joy connected with sensuality do not occur in him.*
- (3) Pain and dejection connected with the unwholesome do not occur in him.*
- (4) Pleasure and joy connected with the unwholesome do not occur in him.*
- (5) Pain and dejection connected with the wholesome do not occur in him.*

Bhante, whenever a noble disciple enters and dwells in the rapture of solitude, on that occasion these five things do not occur in him.'

'Good, good, Sariputta! Sariputta, whenever a noble disciple enters and dwells in the rapture of solitude: [The Buddha repeats in full the entire statement of the Venerable Sariputta, down to:] . . . on that occasion these five things do not occur in him.'"

5. Tranquility – *passaddhi*

Through wholesome joy, body and mind become quiet.

The mind can thus come to a rest, i.e. it rests in one place in meditation instead of wandering around.

Tranquility brings clarity of mind. The restless mind is not clear, cannot think clearly and stay with one object for a longer time.

Tranquility (*passaddhi*) can also be described as serenity, contemplation, clarity, inner peace, stillness.

Tranquility is compared in the scriptures to the cool shade of a tree in the burning heat of the sun.

Tranquility has the task of bringing the consciousness and the accompanying mental factors calmly and without disturbance, without trembling, to the object.

Tranquility only occurs in wholesome consciousness.

The opposite of tranquility is restlessness. Restlessness always occurs in unwholesome consciousness. Unwholesome consciousness, rooted in craving, aversion and delusion, can therefore never calm the mind and thus never grasp the object clearly.

This tranquility or stillness in meditation is not to be confused with sleepy rest. Some meditators think they can stay with the object for a long time, feeling calm and rested, but there is no real progress in meditation. In this case, the mind falls too long into sleep consciousness (*bhavaṅga*) between each cognitive process of consciousness. The mind is thus slowed down. The object is not perceived clearly enough.

This state is pleasant and is often practised in relaxation training, but it is not suitable for Buddhist mind training, which is about a clear, cognitive mind. The awakening factor of tranquility is an alert, clear, but quiet state of mind.

To strengthen this active stillness, as opposed to sleepy stillness, it is important to keep the mind close to the object. This closeness to the object is achieved by strengthening the mental factors *vitakka* and *vicāra*, initial and sustained application of the mind, and of course by applying energy.

According to the ancient commentaries, this mental factor is strengthened by:

- Eating suitable food,
- staying in a pleasant climate,
- calm surroundings,
- pleasant posture,
- balanced energy,
- avoidance of restless people and people who move a lot and fast,
- dealing with people of a calm nature,
- the corresponding inclination,
- developing the wish for tranquility and always trying to achieve it.

Modesty and humbleness are also supportive, because then there is not so much to plan and gain. Many needs make the mind restless. It plans to get all that one desires. Many needs also cause worry about losing or not getting all that one has achieved. Worry is always associated with restlessness.

Supportive for tranquility, as for all awakening factors, is *viveka*, seclusion. One can distinguish between mental and physical seclusion. For meditation, both are ideal together. Mental seclusion is achieved through wholesome states of mind. Seclusion develops itself strongly in *jhāna*, because then the mind takes only one object for a long time and is secluded from sense objects.

In the Milindapañha the king Milinda asks the monk Nagasena why the Buddha still sought seclusion. The monk replies that seclusion has many advantages. He lists 28 advantages. These include:

- Seclusion gives protection,
- obstacles cannot easily arise,
- prolongs life,
- gives strength,
- keeps away the evil,
- removes a bad reputation,
- brings honour,
- frightens away unwillingness,
- awakens zeal
- takes away fear,
- strengthens self-confidence,
- dispels sluggishness,
- strengthens willpower,
- makes craving, aversion and delusion vanish,
- destroys conceit,
- restrains the many thoughts,
- makes the mind collected,
- makes the mind flexible,
- awakens serenity,
- makes the mind set,
- creates profit,
- makes adorable,
- creates enthusiasm,
- creates joy,
- from joy comes stillness and happiness,
- from this state one can see things as they are,
- leads to the suspension of rebirth,
- grants one the full fruits of asceticism.

Tranquility is also supported if one does not search around so much for sense impressions. The eyes kept downwards is very helpful to keep the mind calm.

Today's means of communication are not necessarily helpful in developing seclusion and mental peace. If one wants to strengthen this awakening factor, one must also carefully deal with these means of communication in everyday life.

In the Book of Ten of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, AN 10.2, the Buddha gives a list of how wholesome qualities of mind arise based on each other.

The list is as follows:

Remorselessness (*avippaṭṭisāra*) arises from ethical conduct (*sīla*),

Enthusiasm (*pāmojja*) arises from remorselessness,

joy (*pīti*) arises from enthusiasm,

tranquility (*passaddhi*) arises from joy,

happiness (*sukha*) arises from tranquility,

concentration (*samādhi*) arises through happiness,

seeing and understanding things as they really are (*yathābhūtañāṇadassana*) arises through concentration,

disenchantment and dispassion (*nibbidāvirāga*) arise through seeing and understanding according to reality,

liberation through seeing and knowing (*vimuttiñāṇadassana*) arises through disenchantment.

Inner silence is disturbed by many thoughts.

It is essential to give up attachment to one's own thoughts in meditation, to simply let them pass by, not to identify oneself with them. Thoughts mostly revolve around 'I'. So one keeps creating someone who doesn't actually exist.

One can also observe thoughts like a neutral observer. Then one sees how fleeting they are and that they don't really belong to anyone, but come and go.

There is an interaction between the state of mind and the body. Consciousness with the mental factor tranquility produces calm matter, that is, matter in our body with a calm air element. When the body becomes more still in this way, and the elements are balanced, the body is also a basis for more stillness in the mind.

In MN 19, the Buddha says that even wholesome thoughts lead to exhaustion, so he prefers to turn to concentration:

"As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of non-cruelty arose in me. I understood thus: 'This thought of non-cruelty has arisen in me. This does not lead to my own affliction, or to others' affliction, or to the affliction of both; it aids wisdom, does not cause difficulties, and leads to Nibbāna. If I think and ponder upon this thought even for a night, even for a day, even for a night and day, I see nothing to fear from it. But with excessive thinking and pondering I might tire my body, and when the body is tired, the mind becomes disturbed, and when the mind is disturbed, it is far from concentration.' So I steadied my mind internally, quieted it, brought it to singleness, and concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind should not be disturbed."

It is around this awakening factor, which involves the mind becoming still, that the whole Buddhist practice - Nibbāna is ultimate stillness - actually revolves. Nibbāna is the only goal of the Buddha's teaching. In order to get there, one must always strengthen this awakening factor in particular.

In the Mettā-Sutta Sn 1.8 it is well described which states of mind lead to calmness of mind, even to the highest peace:

- One should be skilful,
- sincere, very sincere,
- accessible, gentle, without pride,
- frugal, content with what one gets,
- easy to take care of,
- not much busy, not needy,
- peaceful with regard to sense impressions,
- mature in wisdom,
- not rude and not demanding among human beings,
- not committing the slightest offence which wise men would condemn.

6. Concentration - *Samādhi*

Samādhi means both calmness and collection of the mind, and also focusing of the mind. When the mind is calmly collected and focused, a totally peaceful state of mind arises.

"And what, Bhikkhus, is the nutriment for the arising of the unarisen awakening factor of concentration and for the fulfilment by development of the arisen awakening factor of concentration? There are, Bhikkhus, the sign of serenity, the sign of non-dispersal: frequently giving proper attention to them is the nutriment for the arising of the unarisen awakening factor of concentration and for the fulfilment by development of the arisen awakening factor of concentration."

SN 46. 2

Samādhi is a state of deep mental and physical relaxation through one-pointedness. Discursive, associative thinking ceases completely. The mind is completely absorbed in the object of concentration. Mind and object become one. The mind is in a completely clear and awake state. Thus a deep purification of the mind takes place, the fogging through delusion is cleansed so that wisdom can be developed.

In *samatha* meditation, *samādhi* can be achieved through neighborhood concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) and through full concentration or *jhāna* concentration (*appanā samādhi*). In *samatha* meditation, the mind is focused on only one object. In *vipassanā* meditation, *samādhi* also arises, but here with changing objects.

Insight meditation or mindfulness practice without sufficient concentration remains superficial and does not lead to ultimate liberation from suffering. Through concentration, one develops a collected, peaceful, calm mind as a prerequisite for the development of wisdom in insight meditation.

There are two approaches to insight meditation, that of mental absorptions (*jhānā*) developed through concentration meditation, and that of developing concentration through mindfulness of various objects in body and mind. The first approach, is also very conducive to the second, the development of general correct mindfulness. At the same time, general mindfulness is necessary to develop concentration according to *samatha* meditation (cf. MN 107 Ganaka Moggallāna Sutta). Concentration and general mindfulness thus support each other. To practise insight meditation with the goal of awakening, one does not need to be able to attain mental absorptions (*jhānā*).

However, it is a much more comfortable and easier path if one is skilled in attaining the absorptions (*jhānā*). In *jhāna*, this awakening factor, *samādhi*, is particularly strengthened. Insights are also clearer and more stable with good *samādhi*. The knowledge gained from direct seeing is more comprehensive. The more comprehensive the knowledge, the better and easier it is to live with the *dhmma* (the teaching).

Real deep *samādhi* for *vipassanā* meditation is difficult without *jhāna* practice. Real *vipassanā* meditation can only be attained with deep *samādhi*. In very many *suttā*, the Buddha explains the path via *jhāna*-concentration, from the fourth *jhāna* or the fourth non-material realm to *vipassanā* meditation. Once one has reached the fourth *jhāna* and knows the insight levels of *vipassanā* meditation, one knows why the Buddha taught in this way:

The deeper the concentration, the deeper the insights. With deep concentration, one can experience another dimension of direct understanding.

The state of mind, after successful *samatha* meditation, ready for *vipassanā* meditation, is repeatedly described by the Buddha in the teachings as:

- *parisuddho* pure,
- *pariyodāto* clear,
- *anaṅgaṇo* free from blemishes,
- *vigatūpakkilese* free from the finest impurities,
- *mudubhūto* soft,
- *kammaṇiyo* workable,
- *ṭhito* stable,
- *āneñjappatto* unshakable.

If one wants to experience the blessing of Nibbāna in this life, which is ultimately also an experience of deep *samādhi*, it is very helpful to be able to attain *jhāna*-concentration. The aim of the Buddha's teaching is to dwell in emptiness for a long time, for this *samādhi* is an absolute prerequisite.

In the Pāḷikanon, the Buddha taught 40 objects for *samatha* meditation, based on which one can practise *vipassanā* meditation. With some one can achieve *jhāna*-concentration, with some only

neighborhood concentration.

To achieve *sammā samādhi*, right concentration according to the noble eightfold path, which is equivalent to this awakening factor, the mind must be completely free of discursive thinking for a long time. The mental factor *ekaggatā* must be strongly developed.

In the Paṭisambhidamagga it is said: The *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation should be understood with the meaning of one taste with direct knowledge. The tying together (of *samatha* and *vipassanā*) should be understood with the meaning of unsurpassability through direct knowledge.

*"Without wisdom there is no jhāna,
without jhāna there is no wisdom,
he who has jhāna and wisdom,
he is near to Nibbāna."*

Dhammapada 372

With different objects of *samatha* meditation, different mental skills are developed (*bhāvanā*). When one observes the breath in the mouth-nose area, one practices sharpening the mind strongly to a small spot. When one practices *Kasiṇa* meditation, one develops different mental skills, such as allowing the mind to become wide and yet focused, and expanding the object. Practising *Brahmavihārā*, one wholesomely focuses the mind on one or many beings. Practising four-elements meditation turns the mind to different objects in the body. All these different ways of developing *samādhi* are supportive for satisfying *vipassanā* meditation. They also favour wieldiness (*kammaññatā*) and proficiency (*pāguññatā*) of the mind, which are good prerequisites for skilful *vipassanā* meditation and wise thinking in everyday life.

Samatha meditation is also a protection against over-intellectualising the *dhmma*. There is often a tendency to do this. One must be careful that too much only intellectual engagement with the *dhmma* does not lead to doubt and arrogance. Without deep concentration, one cannot understand what the Buddha meant by his statements in many *suttā*. With the fourth *jhāna*, one can achieve *abhiññā* - these are not super-normal powers used to perform miracles, but to practise *vipassanā* meditation correctly. The Buddha instructs in many *suttā* to use *abhiññā* to see appearances as *anicca* (impermanent), *dukkha* (unsatisfactory) and *anatta* (non-self). Such a developed mind sees things very differently than the ordinary thinking mind can imagine.

The development of the factor *samādhi* serves to:

- The development of concentration, single-pointedness (*ekaggatā*),
- purification of the mind from the five hindrances,
- inner stability, because the mind is not scattered,
- the persistent contemplation of a chosen object,
- the development of stillness, tranquillity of mind. This stillness is an active state of mind, not to be confused with sleepy stillness.
- The possibility of dwelling long, uninterruptedly in wholesome states of mind, accompanied by happiness and joy or sublime equanimity,
- the possibility of attaining subtle states of mind, which are necessary to investigate subtle things (*dhmmā*) in *vipassanā* meditation,
- the production of pleasant matter, resulting in physical relaxation. Deep relaxation takes place physically and mentally. This is also a good prerequisite for *vipassanā* meditation, because one can sit well and for a long time without complaints.
- The strengthening of the ability to make decisions through a clear choice of objects,
- clear orientation of the mind. In this way, one learns to be really present in other activities as well.

- The attainment of humbleness through inner joy and happy feeling independent of external objects,
- the strengthening of perseverance and patience, steadfastness, determination, clarity, purposefulness,
- experience, not mixed with emotions, memories of the past and desires for the future,
- to let consciousness free from habitual ways of thinking and reacting arise on the path of mental purification through concentration. Therefore, the ability to concentrate is an important prerequisite for knowledge from direct vision.

Whenever the mind is clearly directed in a wholesome way towards an object of contemplation, be it a *samatha* object, such as the breath or the white colour, or be it a *vipassanā* object, an object in body or mind, this awakening factor is strengthened.

7. Equanimity – *upekkhā*

Equanimity is an active state of mind. It is a very elevated state with a clearly defined wise view. The wise view involves contemplating cause and effect: No experience we have, arises without a cause in our own stream of consciousness. Happiness arises from wholesome actions. They bring pleasant objects into our field of experience as an effect. Unpleasant feelings that express themselves in sadness, depression, fear etc. arise from unwholesome actions. Unwholesome actions bring undesirable, unpleasant objects into our field of experience.

Equanimity is to be developed towards both pleasant and unpleasant situations in order to overcome both attachment and aversion. Equanimity is an unshakable state, no matter what one encounters. It is based on a wise way of looking at things.

The wise view of actions and their corresponding causes leads to complete responsibility for our actions. Thus, developing equanimity is a strong support for taking responsibility for our actions. One cannot create equanimity through pure wanting or having. The more wisdom is developed in the mind, the more equanimity arises, both towards beings as *Brahmavihārā* and towards things. When, through one's own wise contemplation, one finds out more and more how attachment to all that is beautiful and lovely and aversion to all that is unpleasant, always creates suffering, equanimity arises.

At the subtlest level of our stream of consciousness, 'equanimity as an awakening factor' (*bojjhaṅgupekkhā*) is that equanimity which is characterised by keeping the middle ground with regard to the factors of the mind that have arisen together. Thus, no factor can fall into excess or deficiency.

The word *upekkhā* is composed of the prefix *upa* and the verb *ikkhati*. The prefix *upa* means to, directed towards or near something and also expresses an approach to an object. The verb *ikkhati* means to see. This gives the meaning: to look at something. A neutral vision is meant here.

There is another Pāli word that can be translated as equanimity: *tatramajjhataṭṭā*. This literally means 'standing there in the middle'. Here, the emphasis is more on mental neutrality and impartiality.

Equanimity is the attitude of impartiality towards all beings and all things encountered at the sense doors.

However, equanimity is not to be confused with indifference. On the contrary, equanimity is an antidote to indifference. Indifference makes one hard, dull and closed. Indifference is disinterested. Equanimity, on the other hand, is awake and interested in the well-being of beings. Equanimity is

like a neutral observer.

The same applies to all phenomena. Equanimity is an expression of neutrality. Its function is to see things impartially, to reduce attraction and aversion or to prevent them from arising at all.

Equanimity (*upekkhā*) can also be called serenity or harmony.

Equanimity makes the mind stable and unshakeable. This makes it possible to get through difficult situations without despair, fear or being involved in other unwholesome states.

The mind is clear because equanimity avoids entanglement. The mind is still and can therefore see things more clearly as they are at the moment. This can lead to constructive action, free from emotional entanglements and distorting perceptions through memories.

Through equanimity, the mind is immune towards dramas that may occur within as well as to dramas that may appear on the outside.

Equanimity is not accompanied by happy feeling, but it can be described as a blissful state of mind because it is so quiet and stable. Because of the impartial attitude, aversion cannot appear. Thus, when equanimity is well developed, unpleasant mental feelings do not appear in the stream of consciousness.

In the Mahāmaṅgalasutta, the well developed equanimous state is described as follows:

*"A mind that is not shaken by worldly phenomena,
the mind that is free from sorrow, stainless, and secure
this is the highest blessing."*

Sutta Nipāta 2.4.

In MN 103, What do you think about me? - Kinti Sutta, the Buddha describes several instances of how Bhikkhus should behave towards others when disagreements arise.

When a Bhikkhu has committed a breach of the rules, the Buddha makes several suggestions on how to speak wholesomely about it without getting into trouble oneself and without hurting the other person. However, if one notices that talking and thus supporting the other person is not possible, he says the following:

"Then it may occur to you, Bhikkhus: 'I shall be troubled and the other person will be hurt; for the other person is given to anger and revenge, and he is firmly attached to his view and he relinquishes with difficulty; and I cannot make that person emerge from the unwholesome and establish him in the wholesome.' One should not underrate equanimity towards such a person."

Equanimity in *samatha* meditation means that the mind fixes the *nimitta* in a balanced way. It is neither too joyfully excited, nor disclined, nor distracted. Without judgement, the mind returns to the object of meditation again and again, after having wandered from it.

In the Visuddhi Magga, an ancient commentary on Buddhist meditation, the following supporting factors for the awakening factor equanimity (*upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*) are mentioned:

1. equanimity towards beings;
2. equanimity against things (formations);
3. avoidance of people who have affection for beings and things;
4. associating with people who have equanimity towards beings and things;
5. the corresponding inclination.

The third and fourth *jhāna* are described in the *suttā* in the following manner:

"Again, with the fading away as well of rapture, a Bhikkhu abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he enters upon and abides in the third jhāna, on

account of which noble ones announce: 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.'

"Again, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, a Bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the fourth jhāna, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness (sati pārisuddhiṃ) due to equanimity."

(MN 77)

Although the third *jhāna*, is accompanied by the pleasant feeling of happiness, *somanassa*, equanimity is strongly developed. It is not the feeling (*vedanā*) equanimity (*upekkhā*), but the mental factor equanimity, also called *tatramajjhataṭṭā* or *jhānupekkhā*, that appears strongly here due to the depth of concentration. *Tatramajjhataṭṭā* means 'being in the middle'. Although happiness occurs, the mind does not deviate in this deep concentration, but remains constantly centred on the object. That is, there is happiness, but the mind does not move away from the object of meditation to enjoy the happiness, because then the *jhāna* would be interrupted.

Equanimity is also very strongly developed in the non-material *jhānā*.

Thus, abiding in *jhāna* is a good way to develop this awakening factor, as well as all the others.

Equanimity is a subtle state of mind with a profound view that can also be experienced in *vipassanā* meditation. In the high state of insight *saṅkharupekkhā ñāṇa*, which has developed from previous insights, one no longer experiences suffering. Phenomena, including one's own body, become very subtle. One sees only the passing away of conditionally arisen phenomena. The mind remains in a state dominated by equanimity, because the nature of the inner and outer phenomena has been experienced so clearly in the previous stages of insight that no expectations, no desire and no aversion arise any more.

No complaints occur at this level of insight. The mind can remain concentrated and calm with the objects of observation for a very long time. Mindfulness is present without effort. One can perceive very subtle relations. There is now neither desire for nor concern or sorrow about the phenomena, the mind dwells equanimously, neutrally and peacefully towards all phenomena with strong mindfulness. One sees only the passing away of phenomena, now in a very subtle way. But one neither finds pleasure in the phenomena, nor does one have to turn away from them.

This accomplished equanimity of the highest level of insight is the bridge to path consciousness, to the moment of awakening. It is the highest mindfulness, because full development of mindfulness (*sati*) culminates in equanimity.

In MN 152, *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*, The Development of the Faculties, the Buddha gives the following comparison with equanimity among other comparisons:

"Just as raindrops on a slightly sloping lotus leaf roll off and do not remain there, so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily, and equanimity is established."

Udāna 4.8 Sundarī

*"Like elephants in battle,
The unrestrained people fight with words.
But, must a Bhikkhu hear rude words,
let him not be disturbed in his equanimity!"*

General comments on the awakening factors:

SN 46.4 Practices - Vattha Sutta.

Just as a king changes clothes according to desire and occasion, Sāriputta tells, he can dwell in an awakening factor according to wish.

And he thus practices *vipassanā* and *paṭiccasamuppāda*:

SN 46.4 Clothes - Vattha Sutta

“Whichever of these seven factors of awakening I want to dwell in during the morning, I dwell in that factor of awakening during the morning. Whichever I want to dwell in during the middle of the day, I dwell in that factor of awakening during the middle of the day. Whichever I want to dwell in during the evening, I dwell in that factor of awakening during the evening. ‘If, friends, it occurs to me, ‘(Let it be) the awakening factor of mindfulness,’ it occurs to me, ‘It’s measureless’; it occurs to me, ‘It’s fully perfected.’ While it persists, I understand, ‘It persists.’ If it abates in me, I understand, ‘It has abated in me for a particular reason.’ ...’

‘If, friends, it occurs to me, ‘(Let it be) the awakening factor of equanimity,’ it occurs to me, ‘It’s measureless’; it occurs to me, ‘It’s fully perfected.’ While it persists, I understand, ‘It persists.’ But if it abates in me, I understand, ‘It has abated in me for a particular reason.’”

When to develop which awakening factors:

SN 46.53 Fire - Aggi Sutta

*“... On an occasion, Bhikkhus, when the mind becomes sluggish, it is untimely to develop the awakening factor of tranquillity (*passaddhi*), the awakening factor of concentration (*samādhi*), and the awakening factor of equanimity (*upekkhā*). For what reason? Because the mind is sluggish, Bhikkhus, and it is difficult to arouse it with those things.*

Suppose, Bhikkhus, a man wants to make a small fire flare up. If he throws wet grass upon it, and wet cowdung, and wet timber, and sprays it with water, and scatters soil over it, would he be able to make that small fire flare up?”

“No, venerable sir.”

“So too, Bhikkhus, on an occasion when the mind becomes sluggish, it is untimely to develop the awakening factor of tranquillity, the awakening factor of concentration, and the awakening factor of equanimity. For what reason? Because the mind is sluggish, Bhikkhus, and it is difficult to arouse it with those things.”

“On an occasion, Bhikkhus, when the mind becomes sluggish, it is timely to develop the awakening factor of investigation of states, the awakening factor of energy, and the awakening factor of rapture (joy). For what reason? Because the mind is sluggish, Bhikkhus, and it is easy to arouse it with those things.

Suppose, Bhikkhus, a man wants to make a small fire flare up. If he throws dry grass upon it, and dry cowdung, and dry timber, and blows on it, and does not scatter soil over it, would he be able to make that small fire flare up?”

“Yes, venerable sir.”

*“So too, Bhikkhus, on an occasion when the mind becomes sluggish, it is timely to develop the awakening factor of investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), the awakening factor of energy (*virīya*), and the awakening factor of rapture (*pīti*). For what reason? Because the mind is sluggish, Bhikkhus, and it is easy to arouse it with those things.”*

“On an occasion, Bhikkhus, when the mind becomes excited, it is untimely to develop the awakening factor of investigation of states, the awakening factor of energy, and the awakening factor of rapture. For what reason? Because the mind is excited, Bhikkhus, and it is difficult to calm it down with those things.

Suppose, Bhikkhus, a man wants to extinguish a great bonfire. If he throws dry grass upon it, and dry cowdung, and dry timber, and blows on it, and does not scatter soil over it, would he be able to extinguish that great bonfire?”

“No, venerable sir.”

“So too, Bhikkhus, on an occasion when the mind becomes excited, it is untimely to develop the awakening factor of investigation of states, the awakening factor of energy, and the awakening factor of rapture. For what reason? Because the mind is excited, Bhikkhus, and it is difficult to calm it down with those things.”

“On an occasion, Bhikkhus, when the mind becomes excited, it is timely to develop the awakening factor of tranquillity, the awakening factor of concentration, and the awakening factor of equanimity. For what reason? Because the mind is excited, Bhikkhus, and it is easy to calm it down with those things.”

“Suppose, Bhikkhus, a man wants to extinguish a great bonfire. If he throws wet grass upon it, and wet cowdung, and wet timber, and sprays it with water, and scatters soil over it, would he be able to extinguish that great bonfire?”

“Yes, venerable sir.”

“So too, Bhikkhus, on an occasion when the mind becomes excited, it is timely to develop the awakening factor of tranquillity, the awakening factor of concentration, and the awakening factor of equanimity. For what reason? Because the mind is excited, Bhikkhus, and it is easy to calm it down with those things.

But mindfulness, Bhikkhus, I say is always useful.”

As we see here:

There are three factors that stimulate the mind, have a stimulating effect, and three that calm the mind, have a sedating effect. Mindfulness, the seventh factor, is never in excess or deficiency, one should constantly strive to develop and strengthen this mental factor. It is the basis for the development of the others. In *samatha* meditation it constantly reminds the object.

When the mind is inclined to sluggishness, fatigue and sleepiness, one should develop the three awakening factors of investigation of things (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*) and joy (*pīti*), as these are uplifting. One should not strive for the three awakening factors (*bojjhaṅga*) of tranquillity (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) at this time, because these calm the mind.

The awakening factors as medicine

In the Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, there are several *suttā* describing the healing power of the seven awakening factors.

These *suttā* are still recited today both in monasteries and in households in Theravāda Buddhist countries as a protective *suttā* (*paritta*). Sick people are not always able to read for themselves or, even if they know these awakening factors, to call them up in the mind. When they hear the voice of another person reciting these factors, it can be a great inspiration, bring forth great joy, which, as described in the ancient Pāli scriptures, can lead to spontaneous healing. Wholesome consciousness combined with happy feeling and joy produces very pleasant matter in the body. This loosens up the entire body and thus contributes to healing. A prerequisite for this powerful healing potential, however, is confidence in this path of liberation from suffering as taught by the Buddha.

In the Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta Nikāya of the Saṃyutta Nikāya SN 46.14 it is described how one of the Buddha's disciples, Mahākassapa, an arahat, was seriously ill. He was lying in the Pippali cave near Rājagaha. The Buddha was also staying in Rājagaha at that time. One evening the Buddha went to him and asked him if he was feeling better. Mahākassapa can only report that his illness is increasing, he is in great pain. The Buddha then explained to him that he had taught the seven awakening factors. He explained that these, when developed and cultivated, lead to direct knowledge, to awakening, to Nibbāna. He listed all seven. It is reported that Mahākassapa

delighted in the Buddha's discourse, that he recovered from his illness and became well.

In the next sutta of the same Saṃyutta (SN 46.15), the same story of MahāMoggallāna is described. He too was ill and was cured by a discourse of the Buddha on the awakening factors.

And the next sutta tells how even the Buddha, when he was ill, was healed by hearing about the awakening factors. One of his disciples, Mahācunda, visited the Buddha. The Buddha asked Mahācunda to recite the awakening factors for him. The Buddha was also healed by hearing about the awakening factors that lead to Nibbāna.

Hearing about the awakening factors certainly triggers much wholesome joy in someone who can appreciate their great potential. But in all three suttā, they are mentioned as a remedy to finally become free from all suffering, as a remedy to attain Nibbāna. This is such a pleasant prospect that these suttā could spontaneously cure physical illnesses.

SN 46.77 –88 The River Ganges etc.

“Bhikkhus, just as the river Ganges flows, slopes, and inclines towards the east, so too a Bhikkhu who develops and cultivates the seven factors of awakening flows, slopes, and inclines towards Nibbāna.”

Today, a lot of health care is recommended. The development of the seven awakening factors is a very good combination of mental factors to avoid diseases.

Even if a physical disease cannot be cured and leads to death, they form an important basis for dying peacefully and in wholesome consciousness. Only wholesome consciousness near the moment of death leads to the reappearance of a new being in happy circumstances.

Just as a physical illness often requires hospital and convalescent stays for healing, the stable development of these awakening factors as healing medicine also requires a secluded, intensive treatment time, which can be found in meditation centres during retreats.

The ultimate goal of the Buddha's teachings, Nibbāna, is ultimate healing from all diseases because all mental defilements have been overcome. By overcoming all mental defilements, there can be no more renewed existence. Existence inevitably brings disease. Real healing from illness and health care can therefore only happen through work on one's own mind.

The awakening factors as a practice to develop and experience happiness within oneself

The entire Buddha's teachings have the goal of liberation from suffering. This path entails letting go more and more of the outer search for happiness. This letting go does not happen through aversion and frustration, but through a profound understanding of the things and beings towards which people untrained in the Dhamma direct their search for happiness.

The cultivation of the awakening factors in all situations of life is an important tool to follow this path of liberation.

In everyday life, if one is mindful of the factors involved in body and mind as often as possible, these factors will be strengthened each time. Mindfulness lets the mind plunge into the observed object. If one then understands it as an ultimate reality or with its universal characteristics, the factor of investigating things is strengthened. In order to practise in this way, energy is always necessary, because the untrained mind follows its habitual patterns of thinking and reacting. Joy arises when one continues to practise in this way. Tranquility, equanimity and concentration also develop when one makes repeated efforts in this way to see and understand things clearly in their true nature. In doing so, one does not become entangled in sorrowful emotions and the path to ever deeper insight is paved.

In the same way, the awakening factors are strengthened when one practices *Brahmavihārā* as an attitude towards beings: through *mettā* (loving kindness), joy, tranquility, mindfulness, energy and

concentration arise in one's own mind.

Through *karunā* (compassion) these factors also arise. If one sees clearly the suffering of beings and recognises this more and more as a characteristic of existence through repeated practice, the awakening factor *dharmavicaya* (investigating things) is strengthened even more.

In the practice of *muditā* (sympathetic joy), the awakening factor joy (*pīti*), supported by *muditā*-joy, is particularly strengthened. But also tranquility, mindfulness, energy, concentration and equanimity are strengthened.

If one wishes to strengthen equanimity (*upekkhā*) in particular, the practice of *Brahmavihārā* equanimity is especially suitable. Through equanimity, the mind becomes very quiet and the understanding of phenomena (*dhamma-vicaya*) grows.

Also when difficulties and inappropriate behaviour and thinking are repeatedly contemplated in retrospect in everyday life, the understanding of life and the development of the awakening factors grows.

Regular days, weeks or months of retreat are, however, indispensable in addition to everyday practice in order to bring these necessary factors for awakening to maturity.

The Buddha's teachings do not contain anything mystical, but with correct practice they do contain a spiritual dimension that people living today cannot experience in everyday life.

SN 46.56. Abhayo - Abhaya Sutta

In this sutta, a conversation between the Buddha and Prince Abhaya is presented:

"But, venerable sir, what is the cause and condition for knowledge and vision? How is it that knowledge and vision are with cause and condition?"

"Here, prince, a Bhikkhu develops the awakening factor of mindfulness, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in relinquishment. With a mind that has developed the awakening factor of mindfulness he knows and sees things as they really are. This is a cause for knowledge and vision; it is in this way that knowledge and vision are with cause and condition. ...

"Again, prince, a bhikkhu develops the awakening factor of equanimity, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in relinquishment. With a mind that has developed the awakening factor of equanimity he knows and sees things as they really are. This too is a cause for knowledge and vision; it is in this way that knowledge and vision are with cause and condition."

"What is this Dhamma exposition called, venerable sir?"

"These are called factors of awakening, prince."

"For sure they are factors of awakening, Blessed One! For sure they are factors of awakening, Sublime One! One who possesses even a single factor of awakening would know and see things as they really are, not to speak of one who possesses seven factors of awakening. The bodily fatigue and the mental fatigue that I experienced from climbing the mountain Vulture Peak have subsided. I have made the breakthrough to the Dhamma."