

A Presentation on the

*Four Close Placements
of Mindfulness*



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In order to engage in the practice of the Four Noble Truths, impermanent phenomena are thoroughly investigated through the general and specific characteristics of the four aspects of the close placements of mindfulness on the body, feelings, the mind and on phenomena.

In order carefully to investigate the many paths of impermanent phenomena, there are:

1. The close placement of mindfulness on the body
2. The close placement of mindfulness on feelings
3. The close placement of mindfulness on the mind
4. The close placement of mindfulness on phenomena

There are eight divisions to this final analysis of the four close placements of mindfulness:

- A. Observed objects
- B. The way to perform this meditation (page 3)
- C. Purpose of this meditation (page 5)
- D. Entity (page 6)
- E. Divisions (page 6)
- F. Boundaries (page 6)
- G. Etymology (page 6)
- H. Demonstrating that the close placements of mindfulness of the Mahayana are superior (page 7)

(A) Observed Objects

The close placements of mindfulness have four observed objects:

(1) the body (2) feelings (3) the mind (4) phenomena

- I. Close Placement of Mindfulness on the Body is of three types:
 - 1.1 The outer body refers to forms other than the body, including sounds, smells, tastes and tactile objects.
 - 1.2 The inner body refers to the five sense powers such as the eye sense power.
 - 1.3 The body that is both outer and inner refers to the sense bases of the five sense powers.

2. Close Placement of Mindfulness on Feelings is of three types:
 - 2.1 Pleasant feelings, or feelings of happiness
 - 2.2 Unpleasant feelings, or feelings of suffering
 - 2.3 Neutral feelings

3. Close Placement of Mindfulness on the Mind is of six types:
 - 3.1 Primary consciousness of sight
 - 3.2 Primary consciousness of sound
 - 3.3 Primary consciousness of smell
 - 3.4 Primary consciousness of taste
 - 3.5 Primary consciousness of touch
 - 3.6 Mental primary consciousness

4. Close Placement of Mindfulness on Phenomena is of three types:
 - 4.1 All mental factors other than feelings
 - 4.2 Non-associated compound phenomena [i.e. all impermanent phenomena other than matter and consciousness]
 - 4.3 All permanent phenomena

Asanga's *Compendium of Knowledge* (Abhidharmasamuchchaya) states: "If it is asked what the observed objects of the close placements of mindfulness are, they are the body, feelings, the mind and phenomena."

The reasons for positing these four as the observed objects are so that the immature will abandon overt clinging to:

1. The body as being the abode of the self.
2. Feelings as being the basis for the self's experience.
3. The mind as the impermanent phenomenon that is the self.
4. Phenomena as the self of the thoroughly afflicted class, such as attachment, and the completely pure class, such as faith.

Also, Asanga's *Compendium of Knowledge* (Abhidharmasamuchchaya) states: "The impermanent phenomena that are:

1. The abode of the self.
2. The basis of the self's experience.
3. The impermanent phenomenon that is the self.
4. The impermanent phenomenon that is the self of either the thoroughly afflicted class or the completely pure class."

(B) The Way to Perform this Meditation

There are two ways to meditate on the four close placements of mindfulness, that which is shared and that which is unique.

I. The shared, or common way to meditate on the four close placements of mindfulness is to investigate both the general and specific characteristics of the body, feelings, the mind and phenomena.

Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Knowledge* (Abhidharmakoshakarika) states: "Meditation on the close placements of mindfulness is done through complete investigation of the two types of characteristics of the body, feelings, the mind and phenomena."

Moreover, the **general characteristics** are:

1. Impermanent
2. Suffering
3. Empty
4. Selfless

They are explained as general characteristics since they are pervasive qualities applied to particular bases. That is to say:

1. All compounded phenomena are impermanent
2. Contaminated phenomena are in the nature of suffering
3. All phenomena are empty and
4. All phenomena are selfless

Vasubandhu's *Auto-Commentary to the Treasury of Knowledge* (Abhidharmakoshabhashya) states:

"The specific characteristics of the body, feelings, the mind and phenomena are their individual entities.

The general characteristics of the body, feelings, the mind and phenomena are everything that is compounded is impermanent, all phenomena that are contaminated are in the nature of suffering, all phenomena are empty, and all phenomena are selfless."

Thus, the **specific characteristics** are their individual entities, namely:

1. with respect to the body, the entity of elements and composites of the elements
2. with respect to feeling, the entity of experience,
3. with respect to the mind, the entity of observation, and
4. with respect to phenomena, the individual entity of each mental factor, and so forth.

These examples are merely indicative.

2. There are three unique, or uncommon ways to meditate on the four close placements of mindfulness, the observed object, mental engagement and attainment.

2.1 Observed object

- Hearers and solitary realisers observe their own bodies, feelings, mind and phenomena only.
- Bodhisattvas, however, observe their own bodies, feelings, mind and phenomena and those of all other beings too.

2.2 Mental engagement

- Hearers and solitary realisers mentally engage in meditation on impermanent, suffering, empty and selfless.
- Bodhisattvas, however, meditate on non-observable signs of phenomena.

2.3 Attainment

- Hearers and solitary realisers meditate to attain freedom from their contaminated bodies, feelings, mind and phenomena only.
- Bodhisattvas, however, do not meditate to become free or not free from their contaminated bodies, feelings, mind and phenomena, but rather to attain non-abiding nirvana.

(C) Purpose of this Meditation

The purpose of meditating on the four close placements of mindfulness in such a way is to practise what should be adopted and what should be abandoned in relation to the Four Noble Truths.

1. Through meditating on the close placement of mindfulness on the body:
you will know that suffering is the entity of the appropriated negative state of the contaminated body.
2. Through meditating on the close placement of mindfulness on feelings:
you will strive to abandon pleasant and unpleasant feelings which are the cause of cravings, desiring either to be separated or not separated and when considered from the point-of-view of their results, are the primary origin of suffering.
3. Through meditating on the close placement of mindfulness on the mind:
analysing it as being impermanent, suffering, empty and selfless, you will overcome clinging to the basis of self-grasping – the mind. Moreover, due to the absence of fear of the eradication of the self, you will actualise cessation.
4. Through meditating on the close placement of mindfulness on phenomena:
you will understand that all thoroughly afflicted phenomena are of the discordant classes and all completely pure phenomena are antidotes to them. Knowing that these very antidotes are the methods for turning away from harm, you will cultivate them and thereby engage in the practice of the Four Noble Truths.

Maitreya's *Discrimination of the Middle and the Extremes* (Madhyantavibhaga) states:

“Because of the appropriate negative state, because of the cause of craving,
Because of the basis, and because of non-confusion,
You will engage in the Four Noble Truths
Through meditating on the four close placements of mindfulness.”

(D) Entity

The definition of a close placement of mindfulness is:

An exalted wisdom engaged in practising a path included in mindfulness and wisdom, having investigated the general or specific characteristics of any of the four: body, feelings, mind and phenomena.

Asanga's *Compendium of Knowledge* (Abhidharmasamuchchaya) states:

“If it is asked what the entity of the close placements of mindfulness is, it is wisdom and mindfulness.”

Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Knowledge* (Abhidharmakoshakarika) states:

“The close placements of mindfulness are wisdom.”

(E) Divisions

When a close placement of mindfulness is divided there are four:

1. Close placement of mindfulness on the body
2. Close placement of mindfulness on feelings
3. Close placement of mindfulness on the mind
4. Close placement of mindfulness on phenomena

(F) Boundaries

The boundaries of the close placements of mindfulness are from the path of accumulation through to the buddha ground.

(G) Etymology

Through wisdom, mindfulness is closely placed on the observed object, meaning it does not forget the observed object, and is thus called a “close placement of mindfulness”.

(H) Demonstrating that the Close Placements of Mindfulness of the Mahayana are Superior

Meditating on the Mahayana close placements of mindfulness is superior in fourteen ways to meditating on the Theravada close placements of mindfulness.

1. Your aim is the Mahayana.
2. You rely on wisdom.
3. They act as antidotes to the sixteen wrong ways of engaging in the practice of the Four Noble Truths.
4. You engage in meditation on the Four Noble Truths.
5. You observe the body, feelings, the mind and phenomena of yourself and others.
6. You mentally engage the body, feelings, the mind and phenomena as being empty of true existence.
7. Freed from a contaminated body, you will attain one that is uncontaminated.
8. They are concordant with the practices of the six perfections.
9. They are compatible with compassionately caring for hearers, solitary realisers, and so forth.
10. You will understand the body to be like an illusion, feelings to be like dreams, the mind to be like space and phenomena to be like clouds.
11. You will, in accordance with your intentions, be reborn in cyclic existence as a wheel-turning king and so forth.
12. You will naturally have sharp faculties through meditating on the close placements of mindfulness.
13. Your meditations will not be affected by mentally engaging, and so forth, in the Theravada.
14. You will achieve nirvana without remainder.

Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras states:

“Since the meditation on the close placements of mindfulness by the wise is incomparable in these fourteen ways, it is extraordinary in comparison to others.”

Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras states further:

“The fourteen points are: reliance, antidotes, in accordance with, engagement, observation, mental engagement, attainment, the superiority of meditation, accords with followers, complete understanding, rebirth, greatness, supremacy, meditation, and perfect achievement.

“As these are merely illustrations, they should be understood from other, more extensive explanations.”



