



Samatha at Home (and elsewhere)

A newsletter for the Samatha Sangha: 18

Thursday 7th January 2021

www.samatha.org

Samatha at Home 18

Dear friends,

Happy New Year! The beginning of the year presents us with some mixed news – two new vaccines are now available and being rolled out, but in the meantime a new strain of the virus is spreading significantly faster and our health services are straining under the pressure. *Yīnyáng* indeed!

The parallels with the practice, dealing with mental defilements and the spread of the virus, have been remarked upon before, but at the moment they are particularly striking. The need to maintain discipline and deal with daily life in a mindful way applies not just to our development of our practice but to dealing with Covid-19 as well. In fact we can draw a comparison with the threefold training of *Sīla* (keeping precepts), *Samādhi* (concentration) and *Paññā* (wisdom). With *Sīla* we practise restraint in our daily lives to ensure the defilements do not get stronger and in maintaining our social distance, wearing a mask and regularly washing our hands we are practising restraint with regard to the virus, ensuring it does not overwhelm us. With *Samādhi* we calm the mind through breathing mindfulness (for instance) and thereby clear the mind of hindrances, developing skilful states and providing a firm foundation for further work. With the vaccine the virus is suppressed in a similar way and the way is cleared to returning to some semblance of normality. Finally, with *Paññā* the cause of the defilements is uprooted, the conditions for their arising eliminated. With the virus too, there is potential for us to finally eradicate it by denying it any footing to subsist and therefore remove the prospect of it spreading again. As with *Paññā*, this will almost certainly take a while, but it can be done.

In this month's issue we start with an obituary and tribute to our good friend Bill Wexler, who passed away on December 20th. He will be missed.

We follow with a series of articles and contributions on the four bases for success (*iddhipādas*) an excellent topic to explore in our current circumstances. The four *iddhipādas*, was the topic of a number of groups that met in October and November, and this month's issue draws from some of those contributions, with an introductory piece first. What is success, and how does it work? The contributions explore that a little more here. Many thanks to all those who contributed to the *iddhipāda* groups and those who posted contributions on the noticeboard which have helped inspire this month's issue.

We would also like to thank Chris Westrup and the Sowers, the group of teachers responsible for guiding direction in Samatha in the UK for three years, for their last-minute initiative to invite groups and individuals to take part in the twelve days of Christmas as a series of events. At short notice, people from different areas and age groups, gave talks, told riddles, set puzzles, danced, moved, and dreamed up adventures. There was always an underlying practice thread as well. Meetings went, in the end, to stillness, and most had a meditation. This exercise was greatly appreciated by many – as shown by the high number of participants each day. In the fun, silliness and seriousness of the talks and sometimes movements some unusually creative perspectives on the meditation practice emerged. The occasional quiet at some moments of this midwinter rest amidst the darkness was profound and satisfying: a sense of a twelve-day series at the end of the year and start of the new seemed to make a therapeutic circle for us.

Warm wishes, Guy and Sarah

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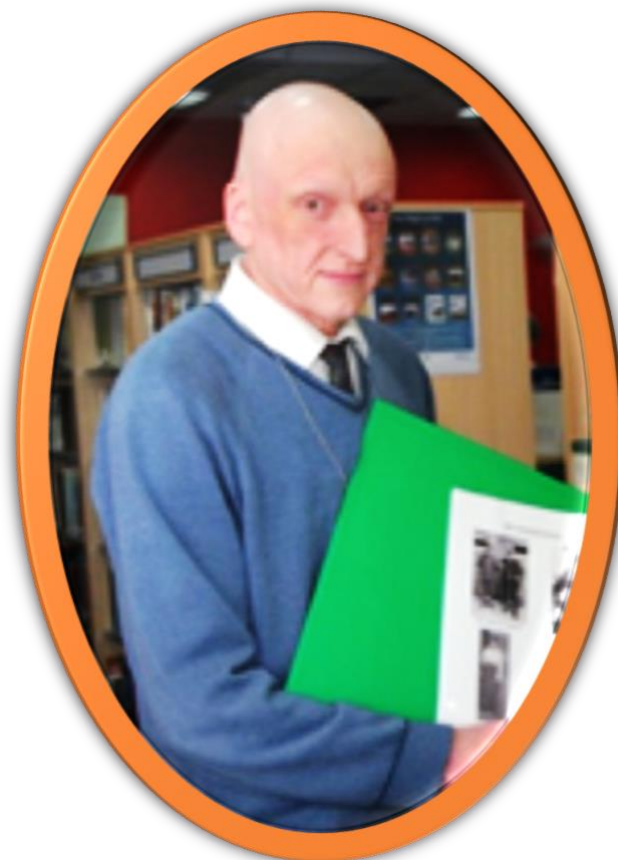
This month our video is the Story of the Golden Goose, which is another tale from the Jātakas, birth stories of the *Bodhisatta*. It tells of how the Golden Goose, the *Bodhisatta*, is befriended by a great King, of the Golden Goose's formidable powers, and how the King comes to learn about the Dhamma.

You can view the video by clicking on the link below:

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/492104332>

All previous issues of Samatha at Home can be found at: www.samatha.org/samatha-at-home

Remembering Bill



Many samatha meditators will have been saddened to hear of the death of Bill Wexler, a longstanding practitioner, living in Lowestoft and part of the East Anglia sangha.

This is what David Hall, on behalf of the East Anglia sangha, wrote the day after his death on December 20th:

Our good friend Bill Wexler died last night at his home in Lowestoft. He'd been ill for some time and had recently spent some weeks in a local hospice.

Bill became involved with Samatha in the mid-70s when he was studying Ancient History and Archaeology at Manchester University. He then spent 13 years working in various record shops around Manchester before training as an archivist in Dublin. From there he went to work for the Suffolk County Council archives, first in Ipswich and then in Lowestoft. He retired in 2012.

Some of you will remember Bill from his work on the Management Group, others will remember him from Ajahn Maha Laow's *Mahāsamaya Sutta* Chanting Group that travelled to Thailand. For years Bill would often join the Cambridge group for their meetings, this would require two train journeys, an overnight stay, and then a 7am train journey back to Lowestoft. After he became ill Bill would attend our groups via Zoom.

Alongside his Samatha activities, Bill explored body work: Karate in Manchester, then Tai Chi, and in recent years he had become a teacher within the Feldenkrais Guild. His biography can be found here:

<http://www.feldenkrais.co.uk/profile.php?id=247>

He knew so much about the body and about how to find stillness and peace within. He was very gentle and his quiet wisdom taught us so much.

With metta

East Anglia Sangha

This all echoes with my own memories of Bill. I met him in Manchester when he was involved in the early days of the centre there. He had a certain gravitas in his bearing and in everything he did. On a meditation week he took once he thought carefully about everyone concerned, took pains that the week would go well for them, and ensured everyone could talk freely about any problems they might have come up for them. The whole week for him was a serious and kindly process of finding out what the problems were, and then addressing them with deliberation and method. And then, when it got too serious, he would suddenly make a deeply funny joke, and his eyes and everyone else's lit up.

This is what he said in his bio information for the bodily movements he taught:

Some people teach because they are naturally good at something; others because they are not, and have had to work things out from first principles. I'm in the second category, "born clumsy", and studying movement with fascination and longing.

But he clearly mastered the physical base well. He struck a deep bass note just in what he was, that exuded reassurance. On one chanting tour he came on in Thailand, the group sat after the chant as a very large assembly of listeners were invited to ask questions. Our photos and names were on the front of the chanting sheet. A very serious man at the back rose and said: "I would like to ask Mr Bill Wexler a question. Sir, why did you come to Buddhism?" It was clear that the man had seen him, related to him immediately as someone whose words he could trust and looked up his name on the sheet: it had to be Bill that answered the question. Bill responded with his customary care and deliberation; the man, satisfied, clearly felt he had met a kindred spirit. He was at one time chairman of the management group, and did a considerable amount of work on archives and historical records concerning Greenstreete. We had some zoom meetings with Bill in his last weeks: he was still the same, facing the problems and difficulties ahead with steady aplomb and his characteristically dry humour. We will miss him.

Iddhipāda Groups: The four bases of success

A new year: and we have the benefit at the start of this one with contributions from the various online groups that have been meeting over the last few months. Francis Beresford originally set this project in motion, but it is now set this managed by a coordinating group of teachers. The first series was on the five faculties followed by the four right efforts earlier in 2020. The latest set, to which this issue is devoted, was on the four *iddhipādas*, the bases of success. It is not a list that is usually explored in detail; not much is ever written about it, though the four are in the thirty-seven factors contributing to awakening (*bodhipakkhiyādhamma*). So it was adventurous for so many groups to be formed to explore these alone. All feedback suggests the groups were very popular, lively and, in particular, companionable. In a year that has seen new ways of working, long-term groups online have really blossomed. They just seemed to answer a lockdown need. In all, these groups have given a chance for people in various stages of lockdown, at all levels of meditation experience, to practise together, chat about the things they really wanted to, and apply the teachings in living situations. And people from many countries were involved too – a first for us all.

The articles start with a general discussion and introduction to the *iddhipāda*, and after that the contributions from the *Iddhipāda* Noticeboard the groups set up for themselves. Thank you for the generosity of some of the participants. There has been a bit of light editing, for consistency. We could not include all the material for logistic reasons, as some of the video and audio did not travel, but we have tried with most.

What gives success in meditation?

We could all do with a bit of success now: success does not have to be material or external, but can be something inside too. So, what is the secret? What are the four bases?

These factors are intriguing as they describe what it is that makes something, or someone, successful: in meditation, in progress on the path, and, it seems, in life too. It shows four ways one can succeed: in meditation, or any other sphere:

The first, *chanda*, is translated as wish-to-do or willingness.

The second is vigour or strength (*virīya*).

The third is consciousness (*citta*)

and the fourth is investigation (*vīmaṃsa*).

I used to find it a bit of a meaningless list on a page. And then I was in a group where we looked at them one week. Someone compared each one to different ways you could learn to play a musical instrument: with a cheerful willingness to do to it, despite mistakes; with hard work; with a sense of the poise or balance of sitting down on the stool and ‘becoming’ say, a piano player; and with constant investigation as to technique and how to improve.

All of these were needed at different times. This made the list feel alive. It became clear the four also show ways to approach meditation, perhaps varying on a daily basis. One of them is said to be dominant at a particular time. And perhaps some people have an innate gravitation towards one of them, as the way they like to get things done.

So how do they apply in meditation?

With sitting practice, as with other things, sometimes you feel like it and sometimes you don't. The first *iddhipāda*, wish-to-do, applies to those days when you catch a moment where you really feel like doing a meditation. These odd moments do happen, and it is worth just going for it, I find! Those are possibly the easiest and best days. Something in you knows where you are going and how to do it. *Chanda* is also the kind of willingness that can be there if you help someone whose car has broken down, or who needs a favour doing, or if you try a new sport for the first time. Sometimes, surprisingly, success comes, perhaps just because you have been willing just to give it a go.

The second basis of success, vigour or strength, is more a matter of discipline and hard work. This is success through being willing to put the graft in to do something properly. So it is, in a way, stronger than willingness in that it involves careful and sustained effort, even when the going is not easy. Discipline, hard work and dedication may be needed for success on this basis. Clearly there is an element of this for all of us in meditation. It is the hard work you have to put into anything to get it done well. Some people get to the top in life that way, with care into minutiae and the effort that goes the extra mile. This basis of success sometimes features as the theme in heroic dramas and fiction: it is the heroic struggle that conquers all the odds. In the *Mahājanaka* story (Jātaka 539), which was shown as a dance drama last year, the hero has to swim for seven days, but never gives up hope. Eventually, because of his work, the goddess of the sea notices him, and lifts him to 'his heart's desire'. It is a curious feature of the meditation that it is sometimes when we have put in the work, it is a matter of waiting for the 'goddess of the sea' to let the practice find its way: effort seems to work when it becomes effortless, and it is not 'me' who is doing it.

The third basis of success, *citta*, appears unusual. It refers to being of the right kind of consciousness for a situation. So, going into a difficult meeting, this basis produces the state of being in someone that will ensure the meeting goes in the right direction: a sense of the quality of their mind and heart, that affects everything they do; their bearing affects others. If riding a horse, it refers to the success based on someone who naturally feels at home on a horse, and who succeeds because of some innate horsemanship, or the capacity to 'rise to the occasion'. In meditation, it seems to apply to those days when the mind seems to find itself, and its nobility, during the meditation. The one who has this basis of success working is indeed said to be, at that time, one who is 'nobly born'. They do what they do with a sense of a kind of birthright, simply through what they are. Sometimes people given leadership roles find this happens when they did not expect it. Henry V for instance, in Shakespeare's plays, was a rowdy and roisterous Prince Hal before his father died. After he became king, overnight he himself 'became a king', and a good one: his consciousness, manner and bearing changed because of the nature of the role in which he found himself and his duty to others. The old habits just fell by the wayside as his

consciousness assumed a new role. His subjects responded immediately to the new Henry, because they felt him to be a new person. When people work with this base, their natures become such that they succeed just because they are the leader and find, through that, that they know how to behave and respond to others with authority. In the practice it is when you take responsibility. As I remember the late Bill Wexler once said about his driving: it was one of those things I could just do, once I knew I was the one in charge. Where such an attitude is there in practice, without a sense of 'self' for a while, interesting things become possible.

The fourth basis of success, investigation (*vīmaṃsa*), is, by virtue of being last in the list, the highest and, in the end, perhaps the most successful in the long run. It applies to the investigative process involved in doing a job properly. If you investigate thoroughly how to redesign the garden, or to approach a house project, you will consider all details, and look to weather, circumstances and events that need to be factored in. This last *iddhipāda* has flexibility and the capacity to adjust to circumstances and take actions according to what is needed. In meditation it is the wisdom of the experience you acquire over time: you know what the best approach is on a particular day. In teaching others, it comes from experience in teaching different types of people and noticing that what works for one person might be different from what works for another. In sitting practice it may arise on those days when you have to explore and investigate as to how to go about the meditation: there is not, perhaps an obvious feeling at first. But investigation finds that, for instance, if you go for a walk first you can find the attitude needed at the time. This factor is of course necessary for our long-term meditation practice. There will be days when we do not feel like it, and where everything goes wrong. What is the most practical way of cheering oneself up and becoming mindful?

And when things are going right: how can I sustain and refine the practice when it is going well? It is interesting how in adventure stories it is so often investigation and examination that get the result, and that this is often shared, amongst the 'goodies', near the end of the story. *Vīmaṃsa* seems to work well in company. Some people are stuck in a cave, or in a terrible predicament, where they need to pool resources. So the characters work together, think together, trust each other, and then find a solution and a path ahead. In fact that seems rather like the work on the vaccine last year: or the whole achievement of group work.

Once it has been related to meditation, the list becomes meaningful. Some skills we succeed at we acquire simply through being willing to give them a go, some through hard work and dedicated practice, some through a sense of feeling one's way into the state of mind and body needed to do the job well, and some through a kind of empathetic investigation. What is needed for me and for others? What is appropriate for the moment? The fourth is certainly considered the highest and perhaps even the product of the others. But each can itself be a 'means to success'.

So what about the groups that have been discussing these factors? The success of these groups can, I think, be attributed to four features. It is possible you have already guessed what they are:

- a) Willingness, wish-to-do, *chanda*: a few people had a feeling they would like to get this project going; a surprising amount of people resonated with this. This good luck, in the rightly perceived moment, when there is wish-to-do, has seemed essential.
- b) Vigour, *viriya*: A great deal of work went into these groups. People had to commit to meetings and attend them all or as much as possible. They had to practice, and work at learning what was in some cases a new way of looking at the mind.
- c) Consciousness, *citta*: the consciousness and development in practice of those present made them work. Everyone in the groups had practised *samatha* for at least a year or so, and felt ready for working with other people. Discussions in the groups were based on relating the material to lived experience, and each of the groups met and practised together.
- d) Investigation, *vīmaṃsa*. These groups investigated a lot: what the texts say, what the list meant, their own observations of their practice and their experience of success – and failures – in daily life. They also listened to what other people had to say, with care and attention, and investigated that. The group experience of sifting through material, relating it to experience, communicating with others and listening to what others were saying all made the material come to life, as we see here. All of these seemed to work together, so that the product of the discussions felt truthful and applicable in daily life and practice, as well as fun sometimes.

The factors seem to show us what lies behind success in anything: a willingness to be open to the new and perhaps unfamiliar, and to put the work in that is needed at the time.



The *Iddhipāda* Noticeboard

In October and November 2020 seven groups of 7 or 8 meditators investigated the *iddhipādas* - the four bases of success - under the auspices of the Samatha Trust. They came from the UK, Europe, USA & Iran and met weekly for seven sessions on-line. Each week they investigated one of the *iddhipādas*, or some aspect of them, in their own lives and reported back to the group on what they had discovered. This noticeboard has posted contributions from the seven groups.

A list of further reading and references is given at the end.

A traditional simile for the four *iddhipādas*

The commentarial tradition includes a traditional simile for the *iddhipādas* of desire-to-act (*chanda*), effort or strength (*virīya*), mind (*citta*) or investigation (*vīmaṃsā*):

It is like the case of four ministers who, aspiring to a position, lived in close association with the king.

One was energetic in waiting upon [the king]; knowing the king's wishes and desires, he waited upon him night and day; he pleased the king and obtained a position. The one who produces transcendent dhamma with *chanda* as chief should be understood as like him.

Another, however, thought: 'I cannot wait upon the king daily; when a task needs to be done I shall please him by my valour.' When there was trouble on the borders he was posted by the king, and having crushed the enemy by means of his valour he obtained a position. The one who produces transcendent dhamma with *virīya* as chief should be understood as like him.

Another thought: 'Waiting upon the king, taking swords and arrows on the chest is burdensome. Surely kings grant positions to those of [good] birth. When the king grants [a position] to such a one he will grant it to me.' So relying solely on his possession of [good] birth, he obtained a position. The one who produces transcendent dhamma with *citta* as chief should be understood as like him.

Another thought: 'What need of waiting upon the king, and so on? I shall please the king by the power of my counsel.' Having pleased the king by providing counsel by means of his grasp of state craft, he obtained a position. The one who produces transcendent dhamma with *vīmaṃsā* as chief, relying on thoroughly purified *vīmaṃsā* should be understood as like him.

Translated by Rupert Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, pp 90-91
(There is further discussion of the simile in Rupert's book).

An enlightening realisation

To my surprise the most important thing that I learnt is not about the four bases of success but about people. The study and discussion brought home to me how different we all are in character and how various are our inner worlds. Approaching the end of the course I feel a real fondness to my fellow investigators which inspires me to have more, wider and deeper discussions about the things that really matter. Thank you to all who ran and participated in the course.

Early Morning Exercise

The neighbour's alarm winks at me in the dark morning
My feet settle in my shoes feeling the solid earth beneath
Limitless depths of wish to do stretch down across innumerable lifetimes

May I find the deepest, truest *chanda* at the moment of choice

In my belly *viriyā*'s fire burns neither too hot nor too cold
Ready to accelerate or enjoy the scenery as the road requires

May I find the appropriate flow of effort for each situation

Citta smiles kindly at all adversity from the centre of my chest
Naturalness like water cannot be grasped, just allowed to flow

May my heart be open, ready for the spontaneous thought from behind

Above the dark sky stretches to infinity
Wisdom like air is present but unknowable until we are touched by its breeze

May enquiry and good counsel arise whenever it is needed

Chanda, viriyā, citta, vimamsā,
Feet, belly, heart and head
Earth, fire, water and air
Opening up below, before, behind, above
Success is the right dhamma for the particular occasion – by day or by night
My feet settle again in my shoes and the neighbour's alarm winks, brighter than before

Looking for success

Success?
An interesting concept –
Easy to overlook,
Amidst the busy-ness
And unfinished to-do-lists.
It's thought provoking,
To consider life this way.
I like it – it feels good.
Makes me consider
What I'm getting right,
What I hold dear,
What I want to achieve,
How I can develop:
Physically,
Spiritually,
Emotionally,
Organisationally.

Chanda -
Starts me off,
Motivates
And shows me the way.

Viriya -
The engine room,
The power house,
Persevere,
Stick it out,
But know when to turn it off!

Citta -
Concentrated,
Clear,
Unambiguous,
Decisive.

Vimamsa -
Dig and delve –
What's happening?
Surprising results –
Shining a light on habits,
Embedded over decades;
Challenging me
To forge new pathways,

Better and fresher
To new successes.

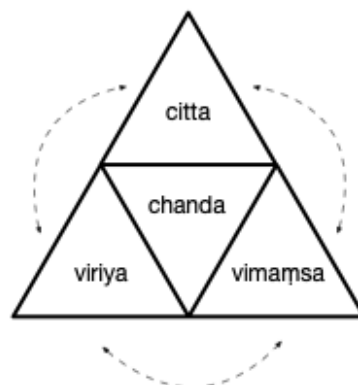
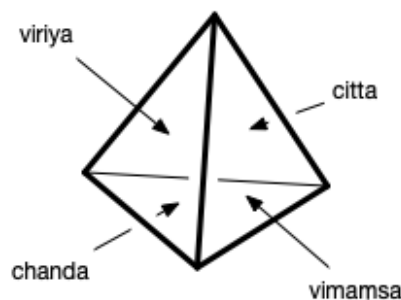
Thank you
To my wise companions
On the path!

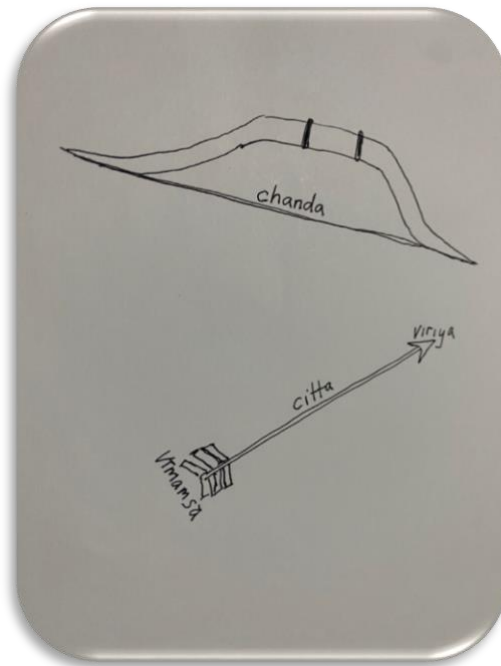
***Iddhipāda* tetrahedron**

Because the bases do not arise separately but rather together with one being slightly more dominant than the rest, I began to think of them as different facets of the same thing, always joined and interrelated. I started thinking about this geometrically, as a four-sided solid or three-sided pyramid: the tetrahedron. Each face might be one of the bases, and they connect with each other along the edges. In the illustration, *chanda* is the base of the pyramid. This might represent a case where *chanda* is leading; or you might say the endeavor rests on *chanda*; or *chanda* is at the center. But any of the bases could be in that central position at different times. Like rolling a four-sided die.

In our group discussion, it was suggested that that might be a fun way to playfully engage with the bases. Build the die out of paper, roll, and whatever it lands on try working from that base.

**Tetrahedron of *iddhipādas*
(folded and unfolded)**





The *iddhipāda* formula as a form of practice

May my wish to do, effort, the naturally skilful mind and good counsel be neither be neither too slack nor too vigorous and neither inwardly restricted nor outwardly scattered.

As before so behind, as behind so before.
As below so above, as above so below.
As by day so by night, as by night so by day,.

May my heart be open and uncovered and my mind luminous and aware of brightness

Food for the path

Deep longing
Action
Keeping going
Am I still going in the right direction?

What a privilege to be part of a group exploring the *iddhipādas*! This teaching is so active and relevant to us in every moment of our lives. Reflecting upon life it can be seen that everything we have done or achieved is a result of this process.

They greet you every morning, it's just after 5, I have already got out of bed, made a cup of tea, started writing this and a few other things besides. On reflection we can see them in the things that are the long haul, lifetime achievements, in work, in raising children, in meditation.... the things we do week after week, month after month, year after year, sometimes we are 'successful' but 'done/doing the very best we can' is enough.

They are present in the small day to day things we do. I have a favourite aubergine bake recipe that I have been making for a couple of years now. It's very simple, and I still use the same ingredients. Every time I make it, it is better than the last time. I started by following a recipe but it's now been tweaked it so much (proportions, cooking time, choice of particular ingredient) that it is no longer just a meal but a feast! In the times when you may be able to visit my house again, I may even cook it for you!

During the time of the group the bare rooted raspberries arrived to be planted, for the third time. There were raspberries here when we moved in, so they will grow here, but they needed replacing. They have been replanted twice and failed, not sure why. This year we have tried a different supplier, made sure there is plenty of grit, enough water, not too much, spoken encouraging words to them. We won't know till next summer whether they will produce the canes and the fruit we long for... perhaps if you visit in a couple of years you may have a bowlful after your aubergine bake!

We see the process in others too, the course ran over the time of the American election of Joe Biden.... what an interesting example! The period of the search for a coronavirus vaccine.... not quite there yet....

In our meditation practice as in every other part of life, we have a goal. However, we need to put most of our attention on the path, keeping the love we have for the practice alive, attending to the small steps, just sitting down every day, being creative and open to what we need to do next, making those small adjustments and then looking at the whole picture, taking a step back and reassessing. Aubergine bake is lovely but perhaps I need to have a curry! Feeding the practice as we do ourselves with delicious meals along the way.



The four bases of success

The study of the *iddhipāda* has given an opportunity to review the whole of life under the four headings of *chanda*, *virīya*, *citta* and *vīmaṃsa*. It is interesting to look at the origin of one's passion and how it is supported by sustained effort giving rise to the energy and momentum to strengthen and purify one's mind to attain one's final goal. I see life as a process of experience evolving towards the attainment of the final goal of every human being, whatever it be.

Reflections on some insights during the in-depth study of the *iddhipāda*

Four yellow tulip flowers grown from bulbs from Amsterdam represent elements of *rūpa*

CHANDA

PASSION to grow and cultivate - a skilful activity

VIRIYA

EFFORT to protect and maintain

CITTA

ENJOY the beauty and fragrance

VĪMAṂSA

The final product- the bloom grown out of natural elements of Earth, Water, Wind and Space, representing the TRANSFORMATION and IMPERMANENCE of all RŪPA.



Luminous mind

The mindful awareness of the open
Unhampered Nature's beauty,
creates and develops a brightened luminous mind.
All hindrances cleared, with no ripples
On the lake;
Stillness pervading, with still water surface;
Reflecting, the scenery of the
blue sky and clouds,
Above and below the surface of the water;
On a bright sunny morning, the luminous mind.



The Four Foundations of Psychic Power (*iddhipāda*)

Arguably, the four bases of success or roads to power constitute, in subject matter, the themes behind very popular book titles: these are among the most sought after ingredients by men and women throughout history. The stuff of religion, popular biographies, autobiographies, and “how to” books. This may make the subject attractive, though they all sound a little less transparent than many other similar lists. In *samatha* meditation the four implies the means to develop the capacity to wield psychic power or at least, mental powers represented by qualities of the four *jhānas* and their various attributes.

Among the more difficult to understand of the four are *citta* (heart/mind) and *vīmaṃsa* (investigation/discrimination). The twentieth-century figure, Gurdjieff, pointed out in his various writings (when speaking on different subjects, Essentuki, 1918) that *chanda*, or desire, or what he termed ‘will’, is never as strong as we imagine it to be. It should be stronger still, though perhaps in a larger context than the sort of ruthless ambition that spurred the fictitious Lady Macbeth, or the drive that motivated Amundsen to reach the South Pole first. In my mind, this *chanda* is different from faith.

Energy or strength is one of the commonest attributes cited in the 37 Factors of Enlightenment. It is probably important to emphasise that doing things slowly and methodically may be better than trying to rush to a goal or worrying about not having enough stamina or virility. As Lance Cousins once put it, “experienced meditators know the importance of a coffee [break]”.

As for *citta*, nine species of this are summarised in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and its cognates. It represents types of mind, the more skilful the better in the context of success. Ven Thanissaro’s translation of this as “intent” is somewhat off-putting in his fairly comprehensive *Wings To Awakening* (revised, 2013), though it wouldn’t be the first of his off-piste type renderings and a useful way of looking at it. The commentarial version suggests that it means the power of “being who you are” or perhaps forceful in a cultural sense, implying the least level of action and the most from being itself – maybe like the power exerted by a person or object of beauty. So a little speculation is possible.

Another off-piste rendering for *citta* is ‘being’, an idea that is used by Eckhart Tolle in books like *The Power of Now* (2005). Fortunately, this too has been covered in the suttas that take off the gloss of the rich commentarial tradition that represents *citta* as both ‘good counsel’ and ‘being who they are’.

Vimamsa is probably the most mysterious. Although it means ‘investigation’ or ‘examination’, it may represent the fifth factor in Aryan concentration, as it is described in one sutta. One to four of the factors are represented as the four *jhānas*. The fifth could be found when the meditator ‘reviewing’ the object of recollection, ‘attended to it well, sustained it well, and penetrated it well with wisdom’ (AN 3.28; Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Graduated Discourses of the Buddha*, page 649). Ven Thanissaro calls this object ‘a theme of reflection, well in hand’ (Ven. Thanissaro *ibid*). So a good rendering that comes to mind is ‘consideration’ for this kind of examining. This also wraps up and includes the three former qualities: Sarah Shaw suggested that in many such lists, the terminal one includes or encompasses the others, particularly in say, lists of four, such as the four foundations of mindfulness. The quality that does this is much emphasized in the texts. Wisdom perhaps best describes it or, as Thanissaro terms it, ‘discrimination’.

In answer to a question on why he was quite successful, Lance Cousins raised each of his arms up in turn at a public lecture with ‘concentration’ and ‘effort’. Both of these are part of the triad of qualities in each of the *iddhipādas*, and maybe be the basis of *citta* and *vīmaṃsa*.

In *An Experiment in Mindfulness* (1960: page 109), E.H. Shattock bemoans the power of clock time on our lives. This is to highlight how daunting it is to exert *virīya* against real or imposed deadlines. Our experience of life in four dimensions is quite different from the time of the clock. But what about other means of success or getting things without seeming to need these four? This is something that is warned about quite a lot from many sources. Most of us don’t mind getting reduced items from supermarkets that give you the same oomph at much less cost. Perhaps many of the following qualities, that don’t seem encapsulated by the *iddhipādas*, actually do belong to it at some level, in a skilful context:

1. Success by chance. Quite a lot of success or failure seem to rely on external factors without much control. Napoleon famously said that he wanted lucky generals. Both the Titanic disaster and Scott of the Antarctic’s failure may be put down to freak weather or destructive kammic effects. Despite this, examples of success may be explained away as skill rather than luck, though there are many who attribute certain forms of success to luck alone.
2. Success by being crazy? The ‘think different’ principle works in modern art and becomes influential, with people in arts or sciences who go against the grain.
3. Success with the assistance of others such as other people or even God or gods. This is a feature of ancient and modern myths and stories. Everyone calls for this: the dual principal in Japanese of *jiriki* and *tariki* (self-help and help from others).
4. Success by taking a break or having a dream.

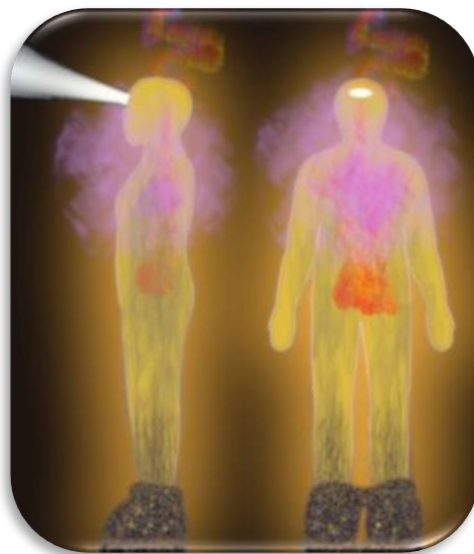
The Buddha contextualised success in its many forms. He talked about developing these four qualities as very important for escaping from suffering. As for me, if in doubt, I just try and be generous to others in a wholesome way because it seems so hard to be truly generous to oneself! Jesus was chided while he died on the cross for why he couldn't seem to save himself (this comment is based on films). His success was not of that kind.

It is often so easy to make pigeons successful: just feed them when they come up to you while you snack.

Image of a body

This could be considered a snapshot of the early stage of a practice when the four *iddhipādas* are fairly active.

I will not say how the individual *iddhipāda* relate to the image but you could gently bring each one to mind while looking at the image.



Citta has a complex face....

Citta has a complex face, I don't know why.

Vimamsa is perfected; the blue spiral.

Viriya is the rather overenthusiastic and possibly overworked red square/circle.

Chanda, just a straightforward, optimistic bright heart!

A Haiku

This came during the week we worked on *citta*. I went back to Swami Vivekananda's book on Raja Yoga (1966), where he translates *citta* as "mindstuff". Here's the haiku:

The mindstuff wavers

Yet breathing, poise and vigour,

Steady can hold it.

Reflections of working in an *iddhipādas* group during lockdown

I have got a lot out of working in the group over the past seven weeks and learnt more about the four *iddhipādas*, myself and the other people in my group. I think the most important thing for me was that it gave a focus to the week and got me away from the routine of life in the lockdown.

The only thing that I felt was missing was a feeling of connection with other groups working on the same material. Looking at this notice board gave that connect. A great idea! I think another way round that lack of connection would be to hold a short meeting at the start and end of the seven weeks, just to practice together. Everyone would not be able to make the meeting but they could practise at that time or keep the meeting in mind. The meeting could even be recorded and put here on the notice board for a few weeks. Maybe something to think about if this exercise is to be repeated.

Random thoughts

As is often the case with the practice, one goes into a group thinking one knows what a word like "success", or "vigour" or "investigation" means. But then one discovers that meaning is different than experiencing. This gap between what something means and how it actually is to experience is an interesting place to explore.

Iddhipāda Practice

May my chanda/viriya/citta/vīmaṃsa be neither too slack nor too vigorous and neither inwardly restricted nor outwardly scattered.

As before, so behind; as behind, so before.

As below, so above; as above, so below.

As by day so by night; as by night so by day:

May my heart be open and uncovered and my mind luminous and aware of brightness

This became quite an important ritual almost a dance as an introduction to my sitting practise for while and it felt something like this:

May my wish-to-do, my chanda, be neither too slack nor too vigorous

I close my eyes and feel the desire, the taste of it ,
swirling and forming until it nestles like a small furry thing in winter sleep

May my viriya, my best effort be neither inwardly restricted nor outwardly scattered

Hand over heart, I form a fist, and claw to contain and squeeze that dormant creature -
then throw my hands upwards as it swirls and blows in the wind

May my citta-heart-mind be as before so behind, as behind so before

As below so above, - as above, so below

Arms snake out to reach behind, above, below, before - gathering the gossamer web and
winding it around me,

I scoop below my feet and sweep upwards high into the sky, then down into the planet
and beyond

May my vimaṃsa, my wisdom, be as by day, so by night; as by night, so by day

Eyes wide open I look into the morning light then close my eyes to sense the dreams

May my heart be open and uncovered

And my mind luminous and aware of brightness

Hear heart – take courage, distant chants intoning good will all around

Thus may the lobe of dukkha dissolve like mist on a summer's morn

Some references for further reading

Textual sources

- *Samyutta Nikāya* – Part V *Mahāvagga* (The Great Chapter), Book 7 (No 51 in Bhikkhu Boddhi's translation).
- *Vibhaṅga* – *Book of Analysis*, PTS edition 431–465.
- *Paṭisambhidāmagga* – *Path of Discrimination*, Treatise XXII.

Modern explanations, talks and accounts

- *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* – R.M.L Gethin – Oneworld, p. 81–103 (a very comprehensive modern explanation and account of the four)
- *Wings to Awakening* – Thanissaro Bhikkhu –
<https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/wings/part2.html#part2-d>
- *Requisites of Enlightenment* by Ledi Sayadaw
<http://www.aimwell.org/A%20Manual%20of%20the%20Requisites%20of%20Enlightenment.pdf>
- Ajahn Punnadhammo – *The Four Iddhipāda Revisited*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXFJ5YqVllw>
- Ajahn Thanissaro – *Talks on the Iddhipādas*
<https://www.audiodharma.org/series/16/talk/1840/>
- Ajahn Sundara – *Iddhipāda talk*
<https://www.amaravati.org/audio/iddhipāda-power-success>