COORDINATING THE PARAMIS

Even though they are listed individually, the Paramis function cooperatively, mutually reinforcing the effects on a person’s flow of conscious experience. The integration of this perfecting process is fostered by what are termed *sambojjhanga*, the Seven Awakening Factors, most specifically *mindfulness, investigation of mental phenomena, energy/Right Effort, concentration* and *equanimity*. The Awakening Factors of *joy* (buoyant awareness) and *tranquility* manifest as the process of Awakening matures over time and practice.

The function of *mindfulness* is to be presently aware of the dynamic interactions between circumstantial conditions and the ways the mind draws on previous memories that may or may not be emotionally potent, and the skillful application of *investigation* and *Right Effort*, coordinated with *concentration*, generates the balance between energy and attention known as *equanimity*; these factors support the perfecting of the individual Paramis and their interactive coordination.

In discussing this coordinating process, I want to refer again to the ebook “The Perfections Leading to Enlightenment *by Sujin Boriharnwanaket, t*ranslated by Nina van Gorkom”, with emphasis on the Epilogue, pp. 189, with quotes about the “defilements” of each Parami. After these have been listed, the ways the Seven Awakening Factors foster the perfecting and coordinating of the Paramis will be discussed.

First, the Parami of **dana (generosity or giving):** *“Taken separately, discriminating thoughts (vikappa) over gifts and recipients are the defilement of the perfection of giving.”* The word *vikappa* is translated as *consideration* or *attribution as regards the appropriateness of an action,* and is motivationally similar to skeptical doubt. As the practice of dana is perfected, the motivations of generous action is less and less affected by selfishness. In this context, selfishness relates to believing that generosity is rewarding to one’s reputation. The liberated motivation of dana emerges from the absence of duality, that is, letting go of any sense of a separate self that needs to admired or acknowledged.

Regarding the Parami of **sila (virtue)**, the defilement is regarded thusly: *“Discriminating thoughts over beings and times are the defilement of the perfection of virtue.”* In the case of sila, discriminating thoughts refer to one’s bias regarding virtue, (Being able to practice virtue with preferred personalities such as family, while unable with those who are regarded as unworthy. Alternatively, a bias towards circumstantial virtue, that is, being kind in church, but unvirtuous in business settings)

Regarding the Parami of **nekkhamma (renunciation)**, the defilement is regarded thusly: *“Discriminating thoughts of delight in sense pleasures and existence, and of discontent with their pacification, are the defilement of the perfection of renunciation.”* In the various 12-step traditions, this defilement would be termed “white-knuckling”, that is, forcing oneself to deny acting out regarding a pleasurable experience. As this Parami is perfected, the seductive quality of sense desire is reduced by samadhi/passadhi, that is, the degree of stability/tranquility of the flow of energy and attention. The potency of craving and clinging fades away as liberation awareness increases.

Regarding the Parami of **panna (wisdom)**, the defilement is regarded thusly: “*Discriminating thoughts of "I" and "mine" are the defilement of the perfection of wisdom...”.*  As long as there is the consideration of “I, me or mine”, wisdom is misperceived; only when understanding the nature of craving and clinging, cause and effect, or the karmic consequences of one’s actions us thoroughly understood experientially can wisdom be perfected.

Regarding the Parami of **viriya (energy)**, the defilement is regarded thusly: *“Discriminating thoughts leaning to listlessness and restlessness, (are defilements) of the perfection of energy”*. This relates to the balancing of the sympathetic (activating) and parasympathetic (tranquilizing) functions of the human nervous system. As long as “I” am balancing the systems, the factor of viriya is imperfect.

Regarding the Parami of **khanti (patience)**, the defilement is regarded thusly: “*Discriminating thoughts of oneself and others, (are defilements) of the perfection of patience”* Impatience emerges from the “I, me, mind” misperception. To the extent that one perceives life in a non-dualistic way, patience is normal, as there is no urgency about the nature of experienced reality.

Regarding the Parami of **sacca (truthfulness)**, the defilement is regarded thusly: “*Discriminating thoughts of avowing to have seen what was not seen, etc., (are defilements) of the perfection of truthfulness”*. The degree to which a person, through craving and clinging, distorts reality intentionally for advantage is a defilement.

Regarding the Parami of **adhitthana (determination)**, the defilement is regarded thusly: “*Discriminating thoughts perceiving flaws in the requisites of enlightenment and virtues in their opposites, (are defilements) of the perfection of determination”.* The function of ignorance is to misperceive and dismiss the value of perfecting the Seven Awakening Factors; in this regard, the ability to accurately investigate and discern the danger of unvirtuous self-state organization is disabled (the Awakening Factors will be listed below during the exploration of coordinating and perfecting the Paramis).

Regarding the Parami of **metta (lovingkindness)**, the defilement is regarded thusly: “*Discriminating thoughts*

*confusing what is harmful with what is beneficial, (are defilements) of the perfection of lovingkindness”*. The antithesis of lovingkindness is aversion/ill-will. This misperception is resolved through clear awareness of the distress and confusion caused by aversion/ill-will and the substitution of benevolent intention. As the process of awakening is perfected, there is an absence of any misperception regarding the inappropriateness of aversion/ill-will (There will still be aversion to unwholesome self-state organizations, but it will be “autocorrected” through the perfection of renunciation).

Regarding the Parami of **upekkha (equanimity)**, the defilement is regarded thusly: “*Discriminating thoughts over the desirable and undesirable, (are defilements) of the perfection of equanimity”.* This defilement represents the inability to apply the Seven Awakening Factors sufficiently to bring balance between energy and attention, as described above.

Coordinating The Paramis

How do the sambojjhanga cooperate to foster the perfected dynamic balancing of energy and attention? A key understanding of the Awakening Factor of upekkha is beneficial. It is important to remember that the function of this Parami is to balance energy and attention. Balancing energy means that the degree of emotional motivation is not too strong (restlessness, impulsive desire or aversion/ill-will), or too weak (sloth and torpor, immobilizing doubt). Balancing attention means not too much conviction (regarding pleasant or unpleasant thoughts), or too much skepticism (skeptical doubt).

**Mindfulness** maintains continuing clear awareness of what is emerging in consciousness. **Investigation of Mental Phenomena** understands directly the characteristic elements of the emerging self-state organization. **Right Effort** channels energy away from unwholesome self-state processes before they “solidify” through craving and clinging into the misperception of a separate self. As these three Awakening Factors operate more frequently, a **balancing of enthusiastic engagement (joy)** and **tranquility** emerges more frequently and effectively (This is **equanimity),** and the mind becomes unified (**concentration**).

**This equanimous unification manifests as generosity, virtue, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination and lovingkindness.**