



**Iddhipādā - Paths of Power,
Powerful Potentials or Paths to Success**

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The Buddha has taught four *iddhipādā* – **paths of power**. They have to be developed on the path to liberation.

These are:

- Path of power formed and accompanied by wish (*chanda*), concentration (*samādhi*) and striving (*padhāna*), (*chandasaṃādhipadhānaṣaṅkhārasaṃnāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ*),
- Path of power formed and accompanied by energie (*vīriya*), concentration (*samādhi*) and striving (*padhāna*), (*vīriyasaṃādhipadhānaṣaṅkhārasaṃnāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ*),
- Path of power formed and accompanied by consciousness (*citta*), concentration (*samādhi*) and striving (*padhāna*) (*cittasaṃādhipadhānaṣaṅkhārasaṃnāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ*),
- Path of power formed and accompanied by investigation (*vīmaṃsa*), concentration (*samādhi*) and striving (*padhāna*) (*vīmaṃsasaṃādhipadhānaṣaṅkhārasaṃnāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ*).

1. The meaning of the word:

Powerful potentials, paths of power, ways to success, spiritual powers, this is how the word *iddhipāda* could be translated.

Iddhipāda is a compound word: *iddhi* and *pāda*. *Iddhi* means power, potential or success.

The second part of the word *pādaṃ* actually means foot, but is also used in the sense of step, stage, factor, base or way. One could say step because one progresses with it or something is achieved through it.

One can translate *iddhipāda* as path of power, path to success. And success should be seen as success with the goal of liberation from suffering.



Iddhi is defined in the Visuddhi Magga as: Assured fulfilment, success, prosperity, fortune, power, magical force, magical effect. It says: *Iddhi* has the sense of 'succeeding' and denotes the realisation of a plan (*upāya*).

T. W. Rhys Davids writes that there is no corresponding word for *iddhi* in Western languages

because the meaning is unknown.¹ One could say potential.

The word *iddhi* is derived from the verb *ijjhati*, which means 'to have a good result, to be successful, to succeed'.

We find various definitions of *iddhis* in different contexts in the Pāḷikanon. For example, in DN 17, four *iddhis* of a king are described: He is handsome, has a long life, is popular and has good health. Here we are dealing with the description of worldly potentialities. We also find the word *iddhi* in the context of describing the worldly potentials of a rich young man, a hunter or a clan.

In several places in the Pāḷikanon we find the word *iddhi* in connection with the description of ten supernormal powers² :

1. Having been one, he becomes many;
2. having been many, he becomes one.
3. He becomes visible,
4. he disappears.
5. He passes unhindered through walls, enclosures and mountains as if they were empty space.
6. He can emerge from the earth and plunge into it as if it were water.
7. He walks on water which does not break, as if it were earth.
8. He travels in space with his legs crossed, like a bird with wings.
9. He touches and caresses the moon and the sun with his hand.
10. He makes the body go to the Brahma world with skill.

These supernormal powers are also called *abhiññā*. One also speaks of magical powers in the context of *iddhi*.

In DN 11, the Buddha distinguishes three types of supernormal powers:

The Buddha is in Nāḷanda. There, the householder Kevaṭṭa approaches him to invite a disciple of the Buddha to perform miracles in Nāḷanda. The Buddha tells him that this, the performing of miracles, is not his way of teaching *Dhamma*. He explains that he has found out three kinds of miracles:

1. The miracle of psychic power (*iddhipāṭihāriyaṃ*),

2. the miracle of mind reading (*ādesanāpāṭihāriyaṃ*):

"Here, a bhikkhu reads the minds of other beings, of other people, reads their mental states, their thoughts and ponderings, and says: 'That is how your mind is, that is how it inclines, that is in your heart.'"

3. The miracle of instruction (*anusāsanīpāṭihāriyaṃ*):

"Consider in this way, don't consider in that, direct your mind this way, not that way, give up that, gain this and persevere in it.' That, Kevaddha, is called the miracle of instruction ... He (the Buddha) preaches the Dhamma which is lovely in its beginning, lovely in its middle, lovely in its ending in the spirit and in the letter, and displays the fully-perfected and purified holy life."

The teachings include ethics, guarding the sense-doors, the practice of four *jhānā*, *vipassanā*, the realization of the four noble truths, the attainment of the four paths and the abandoning of the influxes.

In the first two kinds of powers the Buddha sees a danger and he doesn't allow these kinds of psychic power:

to 1. *"And that is why, Kevaddha, seeing the danger of such miracles, I dislike, reject and despise them."*

to 2. *"And that is why, seeing the danger of such miracles (mind reading), I dislike, reject and despise them."*

In many places in the Pāḷikanon and later literature, the word *iddhi* is used in the context of special powers. These powers can be divided into two areas:

- as magical miracles and
- as special powers to attain knowledge on the path of liberation from suffering, to finally overcome suffering.

1 Vgl. T.W. Rhys Davids: The Pali Textsociety's Pali-English Dictionary, Bristol 2015

2 Vgl. DN 2, DN 11

2. The particular factors

Only the context of how the four paths of power can be developed for *vipassanā* meditation, which leads to awakening, to liberation from all mental defilements, is presented here. For this purpose they can be developed in everyday events in various activities, but especially in meditation, both *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation. Development in everyday activities is a support for development in meditation, but also leads to a more satisfying fulfilling of everyday tasks carried out with wholesome motivation.

There are actually six spiritual powers contained in the four paths of power: Wish, energy, consciousness, investigation and all four are always accompanied by concentration and effort. Concentration and mental calm (*samādhī*) are the basis for developing the four paths of power. The great importance the Buddha ascribes to them is only possible through deep, sustained concentration. From a very concentrated state of mind, the four *iddhipādā* can then be specifically developed.

Right concentration (*sammā samādhī*) is described in the MahāSatipaṭṭhāna Sutta as the attainment of the four *jhānā*. The mind is purified by these mental absorptions from the hindrances as unwholesome mental states. Through *jhāna* concentration, the mind is in an extraordinary state of mind that cannot be compared to ordinary everyday consciousness. The mind is very fast, can grasp and directly understand things that the everyday consciousness cannot even perceive. Only on this basis can the great potential of these special strategies for success be understood.

The second factor that accompanies all four paths of power is called striving (*padhāna*). Striving is described in the noble eightfold path as right striving in four aspects:

- Overcoming unwholesome things that have already arisen;
- not allowing unwholesome things that have not yet arisen to arise;
- develop the wholesome that has not yet arisen;
- maintain the wholesome that has already arisen, or bring it to perfection.

The right striving, which accompanies and shapes each individual factor of the four paths of power, thus brings with it an intensive purification of the mind in the direction of wholesome tendencies.

In order to learn to distinguish between the wholesome and the unwholesome, one must study the teachings intensively. The wholesome (*kusala*) can also be translated as skilful and the unwholesome as unskilful (*akusala*). Skilful and unskilful here refers to the path to awakening, which involves overcoming all mental defilements. The Buddha found out the unwholesome in a very differentiated way and taught it out of compassion for beings. We find the unwholesome tendencies of the mind described down to the subtlest realms in the Pāḷikanon. We need to study the teachings again and again and apply them to our actions, speech and thinking. In addition, reflection on one's own actions and thinking is necessary to unfold the wholesome more and more, to apply learned knowledge.

Intensive practice times in seclusion are important in order to make the wholesome a habit. Times of seclusion and intensive practice are also indispensable on the path to awakening in order to clearly see and understand with one's own mind the relations between wholesome and unwholesome states of mind as causes for corresponding effects.

On this powerful basis of deep concentration and clear differentiation of wholesome and unwholesome with detachment from the unwholesome, the other four factors are then developed.

The **wish** (*chanda*) for the internal work of overcoming all mental defilements must be strong. One must truly wish to be liberated from states of mind that result in suffering again and again. The Buddha taught this way of overcoming all unwholesome tendencies through the profound understanding of our lives. The deeper the understanding of our existence is developed, the more the mental defilements are abandoned and cut off completely by reaching the paths of awakening. For both, overcoming and understanding, the wish must be strong in order to continuously and effectively direct the mind towards it. 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. Craving (*lobha*) then arises, and craving makes the mind restless and obscures the objects through delusion (*moha*) that always accompanies craving.

Wish (*chanda*) is a mental factor that accompanies both wholesome consciousness and unwholesome consciousness. Here, in the case of the paths of power, it is of course only a question of wish in wholesome consciousness. Wish supports and strengthens the effectiveness of other mental factors and especially the roots. The Buddha taught six roots, three wholesome and three unwholesome. The wholesome roots are non-craving (*alobha*), non-aversion (*adosa*) and wisdom (*paññā*), the unwholesome ones are craving (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). So wish is a different mental factor from craving (*lobha*). If one has the wish to attain *jhānā* in order to better understand existence in *vipassanā* meditation and to attain the goal of awakening, this is a wholesome wish associated with non-craving (*alobha*) and wisdom (*paññā*). However, if one has the wish to achieve *jhānā* in order to attain mental powers to be more successful on the worldly plane, to become a strong personality, it is an unwholesome wish associated with craving (*lobha*), delusion (*moha*) and wrong view (*diṭṭhi*).

If one increasingly recognises *dukkha*, the unsatisfactory, through one's own experience and accepts it as a universal factor of existence and develops through this insight the wish (*chanda*) to realise Nibbāna, it is a wholesome wish.

The wish and its effect become stronger the more one makes the corresponding practical effort. If the wish remains a wish, but is not put into practice, the effect remains small.

The overriding wish for the path of liberation has a strong potential, but this must be increasingly strengthened as a mental factor through repeated practice in order to be able to become effective in the sense of the paths of power and to reach the goal.

Therefore, in order to develop this path of power, it is necessary to strengthen the wish again and again in all actions. This can refer to wholesome everyday actions, but also to the ability to realise the objects of the mind in meditation. In both *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation, one should repeatedly strengthen the wish, that the mind takes and clearly recognises the appropriate objects. The wish, strengthened by repetition, then becomes the precursor for the other mental factors necessary for insight. If wish remains weak in *vipassanā* meditation, wisdom will also be weakly developed. The Buddha elaborated and taught these connections of mental activities, both in terms of cognition and in terms of the effect of actions, in a very differentiated way in order to make them useful for all beings for the path of liberation.

Tiredness and sluggishness in meditation are very often caused by the fact that the wish for the internal work in meditation is not clear and thus also remains weak.

When reflecting on one's own actions, speech and thinking concerning all activities, including mental activities during meditation, there are several steps to which one should direct the mind.

Guiding for each result and the direction of the result is intention (*cetanā*). Intention is like a charioteer who steers the vehicle along the appropriate path to the destination. It is through intention that the goal is defined. Intention also brings about the corresponding kammic effects. It is important to clarify the intention again and again in all actions. The actions thereby become more powerful kammically. If the intention is weak and diffuse, the result is also weak and unclear.

If one has clearly worked out the intention of an action for oneself, the wish is supportive for the intention. The wish accompanies the intention in every mind moment and strengthens it.

The wish for a goal and for each individual step, i.e. for each individual action to achieve the goal, should be clearly formulated internally again and again. Only in this way can the intention lead to success.

Wish (*chanda*), then, is the clear wish to achieve a goal, be it the ultimate goal of awakening, be it intermediate stages or states of mind conducive to the attainment of awakening, such as the attainment of concentration in meditation.

Wish is important for the achievement of all goals and the success of all undertakings, whether on

the spiritual path of insight or liberation, or whether in relation to any worldly endeavour. If we formulate the wish clearly for ourselves and strive towards it, the attainment of a goal is more assured than if we are not aware of our wish at all. It is also helpful to remember the wish again and again so as not to deviate from the path to the actual goal. This is especially useful in difficult periods and phases of life. If you have a clear wish, it will steer you through all the challenges that arise on the way to its realisation. If the wish is clear, it is also easier to maintain the daily practice of *dhamma*. If one does not have a clear wish, the mind follows many distractions and *dhamma* practice is neglected.

Supportive for realising the wish concerning the *dhamma* are other people who have the same wish, a community of dhammafriends who support each other according to the Kalyāṇamitta-principle, to walk the path, despite all arising difficulties, with the clear aim of inner liberation. Good dhammafriends support each other to practise, organise conditions to practise together in a helpful framework. They always bring you back to the path of the *dhamma*, the final way out of suffering. They help each other not to get involved in worldly distractions.

Their wish for liberation from *dukkha* expresses a preference for this goal and releases great forces to create appropriate conditions for its attainment.

If progress in meditation is lacking, one does not have enough time at home to meditate regularly and does not participate in retreats of at least ten days, one should clarify motivation and wish regarding the Buddhist path.

If one wants to follow the Buddhist path of insight with the aim of liberation from all *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness/suffering), the wish for this must always be present in the stream of consciousness and dominate all actions. Through this and through the support of the other three paths of power, which are explained below, it becomes stronger and stronger and can, if the conditions are continuously created, lead to realisation. The wish will be fulfilled when it constitutes the ground of all actions in life.

SN 51. 13 Chandasamādhī Sutta- Concentration due to Wish

“Bhikkhus, if a bhikkhu gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind based upon wish (chanda), this is called concentration due to wish. He generates a wish for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. He generates a wish for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. He generates a wish for the arising of unarisen wholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. He generates a wish for the maintenance of arisen wholesome states, for their non-decline, increase, expansion, and fulfilment by development; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. These are called volitional forces of striving. Thus this wish and this concentration due to wish and these volitional forces of striving: this is called the basis for spiritual power that possesses concentration (samādhī) due to wish and volitional forces of striving (padhāna).”

The second path of power is **energy** (*vīriya*). Mental energy is meant here. *Vīriya*, energy, like wish, occurs both in wholesome consciousness and in unwholesome consciousness. Here we are talking about the energy that accompanies wholesome consciousness. Energy is a mental force that is necessary for all mental activities. It can be strong or weak. The cognitive capacity of the consciousness and also the result of an action are corresponding. If one wants to achieve a high goal, correspondingly strong energy must be applied. If one has the goal of liberation from all mental impurities, the goal of awakening from ignorance, one must let arise a lot of energy. One has to apply energy continuously. In the beginning, energy is necessary to recognise and overcome the unwholesome. Once the unwholesome has been calmed in meditation, energy is needed continuously to keep the mind clearly focused. The clear focusing of the mind is necessary in *samatha* meditation as well as in *vipassanā* meditation. As the wholesome states of consciousness increase in meditation, the energy increases. Through unwholesome states of mind, there is a lack of energy, exhaustion and the need for sleep. Wholesome states of mind

increase energy and reduce the need for sleep.

Energy is necessary for every goal, for every planned and desired activity.

As our mental and physical state often changes rapidly due to different kamma coming into effect, energy is always necessary to recognise different conditions and to balance them accordingly for a good meditation practice. Especially in times when there is a lot of unwholesome kamma, it is very important to recognise it as such and not to fall into torpidity, but to apply energy according to the difficulties.

Some people have no goal in meditation or in life. They go through life looking here and there, not reflecting on their existence and going along with whatever comes their way. Then, of course, it is difficult to let arise energy. The possibility of raising energy and the amount of energy depend on the realisation of what life is and whether one wants to follow a constructive path of liberation from suffering, as we find it in the Buddha's teachings. If one realises more and more what life is like and has the goal of liberation from all mental defilements, one can apply strong energy towards all challenges. One is not easily discouraged when unexpected circumstances arise. One does not tire, even if days, weeks or months of energy are needed again and again to deal well with internal and external difficulties.

Energy is necessary for all undertakings, be they worldly or spiritual. It is always necessary to muster it in order not to fall into indolence and self-satisfaction.

Energy is necessary to keep daily meditation times, to practise mindfulness in daily activities, to dwell with the mind in the wholesome.

The more clearly the wish is formulated, the more energy one can strive with energy.

To be clearly aware of the wish again and again allows energy to arise.

Another of these four paths of power is **consciousness** (*citta*). *Citta* is the basis of all cognitive processes, 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 only dealing 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 recognise the object. In meditation, the objects are the things that make up our life in detail. If you can see them sharply and clearly, you can understand them. If you cannot see them clearly, you cannot understand them. So when the *citta* is strong, the cognitive faculty is also strong.

The wish and the energy are supportive for this third path of power. There must be a wish to recognise an object, to recognise it precisely. Then energy must be used to realise the wish. If the *citta* is to become strong, it requires a continuous clear bending of the mind on the things that arise in the mind. In the untrained mind, the *cittas* tend to be weak and pass over objects superficially. That is why the things that make up our lives cannot really be recognised and understood.

In developing the paths of power, it is of course only concerning wholesome consciousness. It has to be learned how this can arise. It is also only wholesome consciousness that can clearly recognise the things of life. In unwholesome consciousness the mental factors of delusion (*moha*) and restlessness (*uddhacca*) are always present. The delusion obscures the objects, the restlessness makes the mind tremble, so that perception always remains blurred. In wholesome consciousness, the mind factor stillness (*passaddhi*) is always present. This is supportive of calm, straightforward cognition of objects.

The *citta* is also strengthened when one strives to keep the object of contemplation continuously in awareness.

The power of cognition is strengthened by consciously focussing again and again, i.e. by trying to see the things of daily life clearly and to bring the mind close to the object. This path of power can only be strengthened if one avoids wandering of the mind, daydreaming and fantasies.

The fourth path of power is called *vīmaṃsā*, **investigation** or exploration.

The path of power about investigation is nearly identical with *dhammavicaya*, investigation of phenomena, the second factor of the awakening factors.

MN 118 Mindfulness of breathing - *Ānāpānasati Sutta*

"Abiding thus mindful, he investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry (pari-vīmaṃsaṃ) 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 enlightenment factor (dhammavicayasambojhaṅgo) is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfilment in him."

This factor is developed for liberation from suffering, especially in *vipassanā* meditation. When one systematically practices *vipassanā*, one has to carefully examine all phenomena of our life in order to understand them.

This investigation takes place on three levels. First, all complex appearances must be analysed into their ultimate components. Emotions such as fear, happiness etc. must be analysed into their physical and mental parts. In the same way, complex physical phenomena such as pain, hunger or thirst must also be analysed in their physical and mental parts.

The second step is to find the ultimate causes for all phenomena in the stream of consciousness.

If one has practised long enough and systematically, the concentration is so strong that the universal characteristics of all conditionally arisen phenomena become clear. They are all impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) and selfless (*anatta*).

This path of power corresponds to the first factor of the noble eightfold path: right view.

In addition to these three levels of understanding all phenomena of our life, this factor also includes the increasingly subtle recognition of what is wholesome, i.e. conducive to inner liberation, and what is unwholesome, i.e. obstructive, to inner liberation.

This approach should also be applied as often as possible in everyday life.

One should not let the things of life rush by indiscriminately, but take a close look at them. You should analyse them, examine them, in order to understand them ever more profoundly. This refers to all phenomena that we encounter in life, be they material or as persons. This investigation can be done directly after an experience, as well as reflecting or contemplating on past experiences.

If one practices in this way again and again, the wisdom ability as a spiritual factor becomes very strong through repetition and realisation, understanding can take place very quickly. Only in this way can direct seeing and understanding, of which the Buddha speaks again and again, arise. This is no longer a consideration by thinking, but a seeing of things and the direct understanding of their real nature.

The other three paths of power, wish, energy and recognition, with their two superordinate mental faculties of concentration and endeavour for the wholesome, are the prerequisites for this fourth factor of investigation for profound understanding.

MN 115 The Many Kinds of Elements - Bahudhātuka Sutta

1. *"Thus have I Heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's Park. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus." - "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:*

2. *"Bhikkhus, whatever fears arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man; whatever troubles arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man; whatever calamities arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man. Just as a fire that starts in a shed made of rushes or grass burns down even a house with a peaked roof, with walls plastered inside and outside, shut off, secured by bars, with shuttered windows; so too, bhikkhus, whatever fears arise ... all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man. Thus: the fool brings fear, the wise man brings no fear; the fool brings trouble, the wise man brings no trouble;*

the fool brings calamity, the wise man brings no calamity. No fear comes from the wise man, no trouble comes from the wise man, no calamity comes from the wise man. Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'We shall be wise men, we shall be inquirers (vīmaṃsakā).'"

3. When this was said, the venerable Ananda asked the Blessed One: "In what way, venerable sir, can a bhikkhu be called a wise man and an inquirer?"

"When, Ananda, a bhikkhu is skilled in the elements, skilled in the bases, skilled in dependent origination, skilled in what is possible and what is impossible, in that way he can be called a wise man and an inquirer."

3. The Buddha gives great importance to the four iddhipādā.

In the Collection of Middle Length Discourses 77, Mahāsakuludāyi Sutta, the Buddha lists various mental factors that he has developed and teaches, on the basis of which his disciples honour, respect, appreciate and revere him. Among other things, he lists thirty-seven factors, also known as requisites belonging to awakening (*bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*). These include the four iddhipādā, along with the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right strivings, the five mental faculties, the five mental powers, the seven awakening factors and the noble eightfold path.

At the end of the enumeration of each group of factors, including the four *iddhipādā*, it is said: "And thereby many disciples of mine abide having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge (*abhiññā*)."

DN 28 Sampasādanīya Sutta – Serene Faith

Sāriputta said to the Buddha:

"Also, Lord, the Blessed Lord's way of teaching Dhamma in regard to the wholesome factors is unsurpassed, that is to say: the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right strivings, the four paths of power, the five spiritual faculties, the five mental powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, the Noble Eightfold path. By these a monk, through the destruction of the corruptions, can in this very life, by his own super-knowledge, realise and attain the corruption-free liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom, and abide therein. This is the unsurpassed teaching in regard to the wholesome factors. This the Blessed Lord fully comprehends, and beyond it lies nothing further to be comprehended; and in such understanding there is no other ascetic or Brahmin who is greater or more enlightened than the Blessed Lord, as regards the wholesome factors."

In Saṃyutta Nikāya there is a whole chapter about the four *iddhipādā*, the *iddhipādasamyutta*.

There the Buddha says that the *iddhipādā* lead to the other shore, to *Nibbāna*, to the end of suffering. He says that whoever neglects the four *iddhipādā* also neglects the noble eightfold path, whoever neglects the eightfold path also neglects the four *iddhipādā*. (SN 51. 2)

The four *iddhipādā* are noble and lead to liberation; whoever acts according to them comes to final liberation. (SN 51. 3)

He also describes them as leading to the higher stages of *vipassanā* meditation: if developed and practised frequently, they lead to disenchanting (*nibbidā*), dispassion (*virāga*), cessation (*nirodha*), peace (*upasama*), direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), awakening (*sambodhi*), *Nibbāna*. (SN 51. 4)

In SN 51. 5 and 6 it is reported that all those who have developed supernatural powers, partially or completely, in the past and present, have developed them through the four *iddhipādā*. In the future it will also only be like this. It is possible through their practice and through frequent practice.

All those who have completely overcome the influxes (*āsavā*) in the past and in the present, and dwell in the influx-free liberation of the mind (*cetovimutti*), the liberation through wisdom (*paññāvimutti*), have achieved it through the four *iddhipādā*. Like this it will be also in the future. (SN 51. 7)

In SN 51. 11 it is described how the Buddha, as a bodhisatta, considers how to develop the four paths of power. It comes to him:

For the development of each path of power leading to success, one's wish (*chanda*), one's energy

(*vīriya*), one's consciousness (*citta*), one's scrutiny (*vīmaṃsā*) should not be too slack or too tense. They should not be inwardly contracted, nor outwardly scattered. As perception was before, it should be later; as it was later, it should be before. As it is below, it should be above. As it is above, it should be below. They should be in the day as they are in the night and in the night as they are in the day.

The mind should be open and not closed, it should be pervaded with light.

In SN 51. 20 we find more detailed explanations of this:

What does a too slack wish mean? The wish is too slack when it is accompanied by sluggishness, or even a slight drowsiness (*kosajja*) and occurs together with it.

What does a too tense wish mean? The wish is too tense or too tight when it is accompanied by or associated with restlessness (*uddhacca*).

What is inwardly contracted? The wish is inwardly contracted, i.e. it cannot really unfold, when it is accompanied by or associated with sloth and torpor (*thīnamiddha*).

What does externally distracted mean? The wish is externally distracted when the mind is busy with the five sense objects: Colours, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and when it is distracted by them.

What means: 'as perception was before, it should be later'?

The perception of the earlier and later should be well apprehended, well observed, well understood, well penetrated with wisdom.

What does it mean? 'as below so above, as above so below'?

One should practise the 32 parts of the body from the soles of the feet to the tips of the hair, and from the tips of the hair to the soles of the feet.

What means: 'as by day so by night, as by night so by day'?

The four *iddhipādā* should be developed in the same way, with the same characteristics and ideas, as they are developed during the day, also in the same way, with the same characteristics and ideas, during the night, and also as they are developed during the night, in the same way they should be developed during the day.

In SN 51. 33, the Buddha says: "*Just as the river Ganges flows and inclines towards the east, so a bhikkhu who has developed the four iddhipādā inclines towards Nibbāna.*" So they have an essential meaning on the path of liberation.

They have the goal of overcoming lust, aversion and delusion. (SN 51. 45)

In SN 51. 59 Kumbha Sutta, the Buddha gives the following comparison: "*Just as water runs out of an overturned pot and does not run back in again, so it is with a bhikkhu who develops and trains the four iddhipādā: He lets the evil, unwholesome things run out and does not let them run back in.*" In SN 51. 62 Paṭhamamegha Sutta he also gives a similar comparison to illustrate the great wholesome potential of the four paths of power:

"Just as dust and dirt fly up in the last month of summer, but then, outside the rainy season, a mighty cloud makes the dust disappear on the spot and settle down, so a bhikkhu who develops and trains the four iddhipādā makes the evil, however appearing, unwholesome things disappear on the spot and settle down."

5. Fourteen ways to develop particularly strong concentration (*samādhi*)

In the Visuddhi Magga, an ancient commentary on the Pāḷikanon, a special concentration training is described which is very suitable for strengthening the *iddhipādā* for *vipassanā* meditation.³ This training is based on the *kaṣiṇa* meditation with eight *kaṣiṇa* and all eight attainments. It makes the mind very fast able to gain knowledge, flexible, light and soft. As a result, *vipassanā* meditation proceeds at a different, much more profound and thus more satisfying level than with the approach via pure mindfulness practice without *samatha* meditation. To be able to practise this training, one must be able to achieve all eight attainments of *samatha* meditation well and always. And one must be skilled in *kaṣiṇa* meditation.

3 cf. Visuddhi Magga chapter 12

The exercise lies in a very rapid alternation of both the attainments and the different *kaṣiṇā*. Both the *kaṣiṇā* and the attainments are practised forwards and backwards in sequence. This means that one must be able to practise the eighth attainment directly. If one can practise so well and quickly for a long time, one must be able to skip both *kaṣiṇā* and attainments and enter directly into the corresponding *kaṣiṇā* and attainments for a short time. In addition, one must be able to recognise the *jhāna* factors in the heart very quickly, both individually and as a bundle.

The mind and body are brought into a very pleasant state through this intensive concentration training. The mind experiences joy and happiness in rapid alternation with sublime equanimity. The matter of the body becomes light, soft and flexible. In this way, a basis is created for magical powers as well as for a differentiated *vipassanā* meditation with objects of the entire universe, reaching into the most subtle realms.

Through this concentration training, the mind is put into a completely different state of mind than the ordinary mind can imagine. The mind can know and recognise things immediately without thinking about them. The mind can remain in deep, sustained concentration despite rapidly changing objects. To further strengthen the mental faculties, Visuddhi Magga then teaches the development of the four *iddhipādā* based on this.

In the already mentioned MN 77 Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta, the Buddha also describes eight *vimokkhā*, liberations, among several other mental faculties. These include both the *kaṣiṇa* meditations and the eight attainments. These eight *vimokkhā* are also among the faculties by which the Buddha was honoured, respected, appreciated and revered. The ten *kaṣiṇa* meditations are also described there. And he says, "*And there many of my disciples now dwell, having attained perfection and perfection of direct knowledge (abhiññā).*"

So we find the four *iddhipādā* as essential instruments for realising the Buddha's teachings in both early Buddhist scriptures and ancient commentary literature.

For householders who do not have the opportunity to practise accordingly in this life, it is important, in order to attain final liberation from suffering, to receive such things kindly and appreciatively in the mind and to engage with the fact that this possibility lies in the Buddha's teachings, rather than being satisfied with a self-centred search for relief from emotions. Only then does the mind aspire in future lives to places and possibilities of finding the appropriate noble means for ultimate liberation.

In SN 51.2 the Buddha said:

"Bhikkhus, those who have neglected the four paths of power have neglected the noble path leading to the complete destruction of suffering. Those who have undertaken the four paths of power have undertaken the noble path leading to the complete destruction of suffering."

6. Description of the *iddhī* and *iddhipādā* in various places in the Pāḷikanon.

In the Paṭisambhidāmagga⁴, part of the Kuddhaka Nikāya, *iddhī* to be attained through the practice of the *iddhipādā* are described in ten ways. It says: "*As iddhi one has to understand the ten kinds of power.*" It is explained then:

"Now what are the ten kinds of power?" They are:

- (1) The power of determination (*adhiṭṭhānā iddhi*),

It is important to clearly verbalise and determine the decision for an action inwardly.

- (2) The power of transformation (*vikubbanā iddhi*),

The term 'power of transformation' (*vikubbanā iddhi*) is actually used in the sense of magical powers, such as becoming manyfold as one etc.. But also in the case of planned changes and the abandonment of certain things in every situation in life, it is important to clearly consider and know this power.

- (3) the power of mental generation (*manomayā iddhi*),

⁴ Paṭisambhidāmagga, Division 3, chapter 22

this power is also explained in ancient literature as a magical power. But the mind generates a lot or often wants to generate something, such as being collected in meditation or developing mindfulness in everyday life or creating conditions for meditation retreats. Again, it is very important to be fully aware of these things and to practise applying the four paths of power.

- (4) The power of penetrating knowledge (*ñānavipphārā iddhi*),

This power (*iddhi*) is about the great power that *vipassanā* insights have. In Visuddhi Magga, several cases are reported of how, through the power of these insights, people found shelter in dangerous situations as a kammical effect of these wholesome, powerful insights.

In Paṭisambhidāmagga, the insights mentioned are insights into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness, as well as insights into disenchantment, passionlessness, coming to an end, letting go.

- (5) The power of pervasive collection (*samādhivipphārā iddhi*),

here the eight attainments of *samatha* meditation are mentioned.

In Visuddhi Magga the following is reported about Venerable Sāriputta:

"When the venerable Sāriputta was living with the venerable Mahā-Moggallāna in Pigeon Ravine and was once sitting in the open air on a moonlit night with a freshly shaven head, an evil ghost, although restrained by one of his ghost friends, struck him on the head with a blow that resounded like thunder. But just as the Elder received the blow, he entered the state of perfection. And this blow did not cause him any discomfort. Now this is considered by that venerable one to be the power of pervasive collection."

The following is reported about the female householder Uttarā:

"The lay sister Uttarā was the daughter of the merchant Punnaka. Sirimā, a hetaera, filled with envy, poured a pot of hot oil over her head. At that moment, however, Uttarā was absorbed in the meditation of loving kindness. And the oil rolled down from her like a drop of water from a lotus leaf."

- (6) the noble power (*ariyā iddhi*),

This power refers only to awakened ones. That is why it is called noble power: In Paṭisambhidāmagga this explanation is given: One pervades an undesirable object with loving-kindness (*mettā*) or breaks it down into its elements. A desirable object one regards as unattractive (*asubha*) and impermanent (*anicca*).

- (7) Power as the result of (previous) actions (*kammavipakaja iddhi*),

Here powers are meant which come into effect through previous actions.

- (8) the power of the meritorious (*puññāvato iddhi*),

"In short, the extraordinary success of power that occurs as soon as the accumulation of meritorious deeds has reached maturity is called the power of the meritorious. ... The fact that Ghosita remained unharmed despite the fact that his life was threatened in seven places is considered to be the power of the meritorious."⁵

- (9) The magic power (*vijjāmayā iddhi*),

- (10) "the power in the sense of success conditioned by this or that right aspiration (*tattha tattha sammāpayogapaccayā ijjanatthēna iddhi*)."

In the Paṭisambhidāmagga, this power is explained as follows: When, through this or that effort, this or that action is accompanied by success, such as when, through renunciation, the desire for sense objects is overcome, or when, through arahatship, all mental defilements are overcome.

In Paṭisambhidāmagga are also described sixteen roots that are necessary for attaining the paths of power. These are:

- That the uninclined consciousness is not moved by indolence,
- that the not exited consciousness is not moved by restlessness,
- that the unattracted consciousness is not moved by lust,
- that the unrepelled consciousness is not moved by ill-will,

5 Visuddhi Magga, chap. 12

- that the uninfluenced consciousness is not moved by views,
- that the unattached consciousness is not moved by lustful desire,
- that the liberated consciousness is not moved by lust for sense objects,
- that the unassociated consciousness is not moved by mental defilements,
- that the unbounded consciousness is not moved by the limiting mental defilements,
- that unified consciousness attained to singleness is not moved by the multiplicity of mental defilements,
- that the consciousness governed by faith is not moved by lack of faith,
- that the consciousness governed by energy is not moved by indolence,
- that the consciousness governed by mindfulness is not moved by negligence,
- that the consciousness governed by concentration is not moved by restlessness,
- that the consciousness governed by wisdom is not moved by ignorance,
- that the radiant consciousness is not moved by the darkness of ignorance.

These 16 root conditions of power (*iddhi*) lead to the attainment and acquisition of power, to the power of transformation, to the production of power, to skill and certainty in it.

In the first chapter of the Paṭisambhidāmagga it is presented according to the Suttā what one should train through learning and hearing. Learning or hearing are the first steps taught by the Buddha to develop wisdom for ultimate liberation from suffering (*dukkha*). It says:

"The meaning of success concerning the paths of power should be understood by direct understanding."

(meanings related to the paths of power - iddhipādā)

"The meaning of the wish (chanda) should be understood by direct understanding; the meaning of the root of the wish ...; the meaning of the base of the wish ...; the meaning of the striving related to the wish ...; the meaning of success related to the wish ...; the meaning of determination related to the wish ...; the meaning of endeavoring related to the wish ...; the meaning of establishing related to the wish ...; the meaning of non-distraction related to the wish ...; the meaning of seeing related to the wish should be understood by direct understanding."⁶

In the same manner the other three paths of power are described.

Further it is said:

"At the moment of streamentry:

The paths of power with the meaning of success arise at that time."

In Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN 5. 67 Paṭhama-iddhipāda Sutta) the Buddha said the following about the four paths of power:

"Bhikkhus, when any bhikkhu or bhikkhuni develops and cultivates five things, one of two fruits is to be expected: either final knowledge in this very life or, if there is a residue remaining, the state of non-returning. What five?"

(1) Here, a bhikkhu develops the basis for psychic potency (iddhipāda) that possesses concentration due to wish (chanda) and activities of striving.

(2) He develops the basis for psychic potency that possesses concentration due to energy and activities of striving.

(3) He develops the basis for psychic potency that possesses concentration due to consciousness

⁶ Paṭisambhidāmagga, division 1, chap.1.

and activities of striving.

(4) He develops the basis for psychic potency that possesses concentration due to investigation and activities of striving.

(5) Enthusiasm⁷ itself is the fifth.

"When, bhikkhus, any bhikkhu or bhikkhuni develops and cultivates these five things, one of two fruits is to be expected: either final knowledge in this very life or, if there is a residue remaining, the state of non-returning."

In AN 5.68 Dutiya-iddhipāda Sutta the Buddha talks about himself as a Bodhisatta, before his full awakening:

"Bhikkhus, before my enlightenment, while I was just a bodhisatta, not yet fully enlightened, I developed and cultivated five things. What five?"

(1) I developed the basis for psychic potency that possesses concentration due to wish and activities of striving.

(2) I developed the basis for psychic potency that possesses concentration due to energy and activities of striving.

(3) I developed the basis for psychic potency that possesses concentration due to consciousness and activities of striving.

(4) I developed the basis for psychic potency that possesses concentration due to investigation and activities of striving.

(5) Enthusiasm itself was the fifth.

Because I had developed and cultivated these things with enthusiasm as the fifth, there being a suitable basis, I was capable of realizing any state realizable by direct knowledge toward which I inclined my mind."

7. Practical examples:

7.1. Samatha Meditation

In samatha meditation, one can strengthen the four paths of power by:

- a. - Clearly strengthening the wish for samatha in general,
 - arousing energy to learn samatha meditation,
 - seeing the benefits,
 - studying the benefits more in detail, engaging with them, such as reading the Suttā, and studying how and with what preparations the Buddha taught *jhānā*.
- b. - During meditation, one clearly develops the wish for the object, and to bring it to mind again and again, for example at the beginning of a meditation session or when the mind wanders;
 - Consciously arouses energy to keep the mind on the object;
 - makes an effort to see the object clearly again and again;
 - practising clearly recognising the *jhāna* factors one by one, distinguishing between them and also to recognise them as a bundle. Thus one should very quickly distinguish the *jhāna* through one's own direct examination.

When practising mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath, one should:

- Have a wish to see the breath clearly at one point;
- develop the wish for non-distraction;
- develop the wish for overcoming obstacles;
- have the wish for powerful concentration.

⁷ In Pāḷi *ussohi* – which is explained in the commentary with *adhimattaviriya* – special or higher energy.

- Exert energy to stay close to the object;
 - exert energy to focus the mind on the object;
 - use energy to see the obstacles clearly and to abandon them.
-
- Direct the consciousness to recognise the breath from beginning to end.
-
- Understand that the resulting calm and concentrated mind is the prerequisite for understanding life.
 - Understand that concentration makes one needless and content.
 - Recognise and remember the internal and external conditions, that lead to good concentration.

Also *mettā* meditation is very useful, to strengthen these four powerful factors. At the same time, *mettā* also becomes stronger in the stream of consciousness through the practice of these four factors. First, one should formulate the wish of happiness for one being, for a group of beings or for all beings very clearly in the mind. In order to maintain this wish, one has to keep on arousing energy. Then it is important to recognise very clearly the one being or all beings to which the wish is directed. Then one can contemplate (*vīmaṃsa*) on what happiness really means and how to achieve true happiness, lasting happiness independent of external conditions and things. The effort to unfold this wholesome wish of happiness for other beings and the concentration are each supportive and necessary for a satisfying practice.

7. 2. Vipassanā Meditation

- One should clearly develop the wish for profound understanding of all phenomena in body and mind, specify the wish by the recognition of the three universal characteristics of all things.
- One should apply energy to observe continuously.
- Exert energy, to stay close to the object. Apply energy to keep up with the rapid arising and passing of the objects, to recognise, investigate and understand them.
- One should continuously direct the consciousness for clear recognition of the objects.
- One should thoroughly examine all phenomena for their specific characteristics, their direct and past causes and their universal characteristics.

This approach should be a strategy to practise throughout the day during a retreat. One should always keep this approach in mind and never slacken. Then one can enjoy a very satisfying meditation, and skilfully pass through the stages of insight and attain awakening with the four paths.

7. 3. In everyday projects

As we have seen, these four paths of power can only be fully effective through strong concentration. But even without very strong concentration, they can be an important bundle of mental factors in everyday life to deal with life in a more purposeful, meaningful and successful way. The prerequisite for success is, of course, always to want to develop, increase and bring to full maturity the wholesome according to the four strivings (*padhāna*).

In all undertakings one can:

a. Strengthen the wholesome wish by being clearly aware of it and never doing things automatically or out of routine. The wish creates joy, a lovely attitude and care and goodwill for oneself as well as for all others involved.

Develop the wish to perform an action optimally and not to become careless.

b. Put energy into the planned action itself and into the effort of mindfully carrying out the actions. Find energy for patience and equanimity when difficulties arise. To have energy for longer periods of work, not to easily fall into slackness. Do not be discouraged by others or by your own mind.

c. Keeping the mind focused on recognising all the factors involved, bringing the mind close to the objects in the body and mind to see them clearly. Always prevent indolence on the one hand and wandering of the mind on the other by clearly recognising individual factors.

d. Reflect on every action, what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, refrain from the unwholesome and increase the wholesome.

During an action or afterwards contemplatively analyse all involved factors in body and mind, recognise or contemplate their specific and universal characteristics. Contemplate cause and effect. Develop awareness and realise that only wholesome actions bring pleasant results in the future.

In this manner, all everyday actions can become an interesting enterprise. Mindfulness, contentment and the ever-deepening understanding of our lives are strengthened.

Expressed in another way, the four paths of power in everyday actions mean:

- Developing the wish for the corresponding action.
- To apply energy to start an action.
- To recognise which individual steps are necessary for the previously formulated wish to come true.
- To analyse individual steps and factors.

This approach can be applied to larger projects as well as to small activities, such as eating or drinking something, going shopping, cleaning.

8. Uppalavaṇṇā – at the head of the bhikkhunīs with iddhis

The Bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā is mentioned by the Buddha in AN 1. 24 as the best among the nuns with supernormal powers. She was born in Sāvattī as the daughter of a rich merchant. She was of special beauty and was desired as a wife by all the kings of India. Her father wanted her to become a nun in the order of the Buddha. Uppalavaṇṇā followed his wish. She soon attained arahatship and supernormal powers.

In SN 5. 5, the following is reported about her:

1. At Sāvattī.

Then, in the morning the Bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā dressed, took her alms bowl and outer robe, entered Sāvattī for alms.

2. Having finished her almsround in Sāvattī, she returned from almsround after her meal and went to the Andha forest to spend the day. After going deep into the forest, she took a seat at the foot of a salt tree that was in full bloom.

3. Then Māra the evil one, desiring to cause fear, trembling, shivering of the skin and to dissuade the Bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā from concentration, went to where the Bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā was. Having gone there, he addressed the Bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā with the stanza:

"You have gone, Bhikkhunī, to the salt tree with the top in full blossom.

And now dwells alone at its foot.

There is no other like you in beauty,

Are you not afraid of evil-doers?"

(4) Then this thought occurred to the Bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā: "What kind of human or non-human is speaking the stanza?"

(5) Then the Bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā had this thought: "It is Māra, the evil one, who speaks the stanza, desiring to cause me fear, trembling, shivering of the skin and to dissuade me from concentration."

(6) Then the Bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā knew that this was Māra, the evil one, and replied to Māra, the evil one, with the stanzas:

"May a hundred and a thousand of evil-doers

just like you come here,

I will not let a hair stand on end, nor am I in fear;
 I am not afraid of you, Māra, though I am alone.
 There I can make myself disappear or I can enter into your womb,
 And if I myself stand in the space between your brows,
 you will not see me.

I am the master of my mind, the paths of supernormal power (*iddhipādā*) are well developed,
 From all bonds I am delivered: I fear you not, friend."

7. Then Māra, the evil one, realised: It is the Bikkhunī Uppalavannā who knows me, and disappeared on the spot sorrowful and grieved.

9. Paṭṭhāna – Conditionalities

Regarding the teachings about conditionalities (*paṭṭhāna*) are all four *iddhipādā* factors of the predominance condition (*adhipatti*). And only these four belong to this condition. They are conditioning factors for other mental factors, they dominate them, support them and give rise to them. This means that if they are strong in one mind moment, they are also strong for all other appearing factors. They dominate the other mental factors. If you look at this in the context of the five groups of existence, the four *iddhipādā* support the four mental groups. They make them powerful. All four *iddhipādā* simultaneously can only occur in wholesome consciousness associated with wisdom. The power of investigation (*vīmaṁsa*) corresponds to the mental factor of wisdom (*paññ'indriya*). Only one of the powers can exercise this predominance condition in a mind moment over the other factors arising simultaneously. This *adhipatti* condition also applies to unwholesome consciousness concerning wish, energy and consciousness.

If one has strong, sustained concentration (as described in 5.), one can also use these four factors to investigate these things, namely conditionings, on a micro-level of mentality in one's own stream of consciousness (*ajjhatta*) and also in that of other beings (*bahiddhā*). And one can see them oneself as conditioning factors with direct knowledge. One can also see, as with all mental factors and consciousness, whether they are strong or weak.

9. Summary

The four *iddhipādā* are a basic strategy for achieving a goal:

First one must clearly define the wish, then one must exert energy to act according to the wish.

Then one's ability to recognize the objects one encounters on the way to the goal must be well developed in order to make clear decisions.

Then one must examine the objects profoundly in order to understand all conditions well and to bring the planned project ever closer to the goal.

Path of power means that beings achieve success through their application, in the sense of increasing the wholesome, and thereby become powerful, successful and excellent in their practice on the path to awakening.

The *iddhipādā*, paths of power or ways to success, are necessary mental skills for spiritual progress as well as for any solving of worldly problems, for all learning processes and for any study, be it learning the Buddha's teachings or any worldly learning.

Concentration and striving are necessary as overriding qualities, specified by the wish for what one is doing, by energy, by the consciousness that recognises connections, by carefully examining what one is planning, doing or learning and studying. The Buddha has recognised basic principles here and taught in detail how to develop them. If one is aware of these four qualities and their foundations, concentration and effort, one can approach a task much more purposefully than without recognising them. Their conscious strengthening both in wholesome worldly contexts and on the inner path of liberation makes it easier to achieve success in every respect.

If one tries to develop these four spiritual qualities in all situations of life, they are well anchored in the stream of consciousness and are also more easily available for the process of spiritual development.

Three of the paths of power are mental factors (*cetasika*), namely wish (*chanda*), energy (*vīriya*) and the wisdom faculty (*paññā*). Another path of power is the consciousness itself, the supporting, leading force of a mind moment.

The fourth *jhāna* is the ideal starting point for strengthening the four paths of power for satisfactory *vipassanā* meditation. Then, on the Buddhist path of insight, all four paths of power are very useful for examining the objects of our life.

This training of the mind is what the Buddha called *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 only through repeated practice can it lead to success. This training is a crucial prerequisite for *vipassanā*. To realise the wish for a profound understanding of life again and again gives strength to train the consciousness.

In the Visuddhi Magga it is described that the mind that practices the paths of power becomes flexible or literally workable (*kammaññatā*). They should be developed in a manner, so that as a bundle and as all four individually are very strong and can work accordingly.

These four factors, supported by concentration and striving for the wholesome, will soon bring more clarity into our lives, increasing contentment, inner joy and pleasant feeling in the heart.

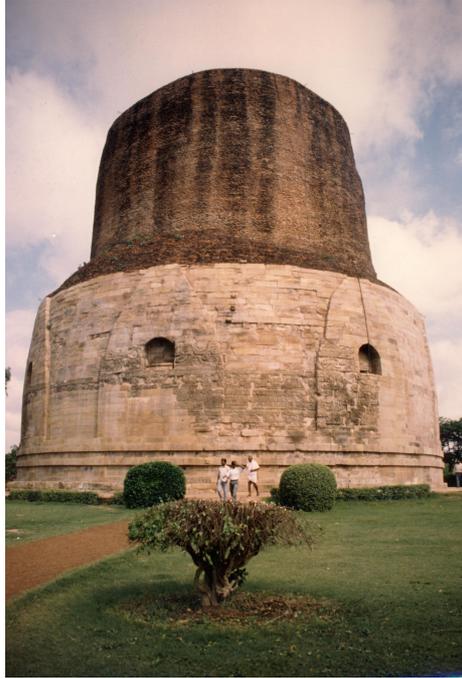
They can either be accompanied by joy, or they cannot be accompanied by joy. They can either be accompanied by happy feeling or they cannot be accompanied by happy feeling. They can either be accompanied by sublime equanimous feeling or they cannot be accompanied by sublime equanimous feeling. They are never accompanied by unpleasant feeling.

The Buddha taught these four paths of power or ways to success with a clear supramundane aim, namely to attain *Nibbāna*. This is clear from the Suttā of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, Iddhipādasamyutta. However, they also have an important significance for every worldly undertaking. Their success, however, depends on the overriding intention of worldly pursuits. If one seeks only worldly success and uses these four potentials, they will not necessarily bring success as for higher goals of spiritual liberation. Worldly pursuits are very often associated with states of mind that the Buddha called *akusala*, unwholesome or unskillful. He called them this because they are unskillful for the spiritual path of liberation from all suffering. They bring unpleasant results according to the law of cause and effect. These are results that do not liberate one from suffering, but rather bring suffering, difficult situations into one's life. These unskillful states of mind include all expressions of desire, be it desire for existence, for special existence, for being special, for being a special person, or desire for sense objects. Desire also includes standing out and comparing oneself with other beings (*māna*), which is called conceit or pride and arrogance.

It is therefore very important to internally clarify motivation (*cetanā*) when applying these powerful potentials.

Wholesome motivations are to understand life deeply in order to overcome suffering for oneself and all beings. With the insights of *vipassanā* meditation through seeing from direct knowledge, this motivation becomes increasingly clear and strives more clearly towards the goal of the Buddha's teachings Nibbāna.

For worldly activities related to the higher goal, such as organising meditation retreats, planning meditation centres, learning the Pāli language, these four powerful potentials can produce great strength, structured action and accordingly success.



MN 151 the Purification of Almsfood - Piṇḍapātapārisuddhi Sutta

...

"Again, Sariputta, a bhikkhu should consider thus: 'Are the four paths of power developed in me?' If, by reviewing, he knows thus: 'The four paths of power are not developed in me,' then he should make an effort to develop them. But if, by reviewing, he knows thus: 'The four paths of power are developed in me,' then he can abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states."