

# **The seven factors of Awakening**

By Bhante Anuttara

In this article, I would like to share seven factors of Awakening.

First of all, what does it mean to be awakened? Surely, all of us know what it means to be awakened. We have been awakened every morning since birth. But this type of Awakening is similar to turning a computer back on from sleep mode, starting to function again based on a familiar algorithm. We keep on re-identifying with our decaying mortal body and mind, repeatedly accessing this physio-psychological mechanism to function without really knowing why and for what purpose. We are carried by certain perceptions, mostly another name for deception.

However, this type of Awakening is just a half-awakening, meaning we are mostly half-asleep. Our waking state is like the low mode of a dimmer flashlight, just enough to see for survival. But we can maximise our flashlight of consciousness to see reality as it is and find the path to unconditional freedom. For that, we need another level of awakened state that can bring the realisation of our true nature, which we already possess but have forgotten due to the blindness of deep sleep. Such a sublime state of Awakening is only possible through the accomplishment of these seven factors which we are going to discuss.

This Awakening Factor is called 'Bojjanga' in Pali, derived from 'Bod' (awakened, enlightened) + 'janga' (factors). As you can assume, these 7 factors are the basic building blocks of the Buddha's state and status. Here are these precious seven:

1. mindfulness
2. investigation of Dhamma
3. energy
4. joy
5. tranquility
6. concentration
7. equanimity

Let's identify them one by one.

### **Mindfulness (Sati):**

The original meaning of 'sati' is 'remembering.' Here are a few variable definitions of 'Sati' that resemble its qualities: mindfulness (the mind with full awareness), choice-less awareness, bare attention, attention without tension, watchfulness, observing, witnessing.

### **Investigation of Dhamma (Dhamma-viccaya):**

Another way to translate this is discriminative knowledge of Dhamma. It means knowing what is the Dhamma and what is not. For example, through investigative knowledge on the Four Noble

Truths, the Eightfold Path, and the three characteristics of existence, you know what you should pursue and what you should avoid for the benefit for you and others.

### **Energy (Viriya):**

This energy doesn't refer to physical strength but to mental energy that leads you to practice according to the Dhamma. It brings wholesome effort, exertion, and ardent-ness out of an urgent aspiration to thrive this cultivation of the Truth.

### **Joy (Piti):**

Contrary to conventional worldly joy, 'Piti' arises from within, caused by within. It doesn't depend on outer sources of sensual fulfilment and social engagement. It arises through sincere meditation practice done by yourself. Worldly happiness often has a roller coaster effect, but meditative joy's direction is vertical and upward.

### **Tranquility (Passadhi):**

According to Buddha, tranquility can be experienced in both the body and the mind. Mindfulness of breathing, for example, leads to the tranquillisation of bodily formations, followed by joy and happiness, and ultimately, mental formations become tranquillised.

### **Concentration (Samadhi):**

Usual translation of 'Samadhi' is concentration, but it's better described as unification. In this unified state, there's no "I" or "you," only a state of unification where all divisions disappear.

### **Equanimity (Upekkha):**

Upekkha is translated as equanimity or evenness of mind. It's not indifference but a calm and unwavering mind in the midst of life's polar opposites.

Although these seven factors have their own qualities and functions, they should be taken as an organic unity, like body parts to the whole body.

In terms of a practical understanding, these seven factors of Awakening can be seen as a sequential and balanced process. Mindfulness is the starting point, leading to investigative knowledge, which generates energy. Joy follows, supported by mindfulness, leading to tranquility. With intensified mindfulness, you reach Samadhi, and from that state, equanimity naturally arises.

Balancing these factors is crucial. When sloth and torpor dominate, bring in investigative knowledge, energy, and joy. When restlessness and worries are present, regain tranquility, Samadhi, and equanimity. Mindfulness should be ever-present throughout the process.

Let's continue to develop and balance these seven factors of Awakening ardently so that we may reach the highest peak of bliss or the ocean of complete peace, where all Buddhas dwell in freedom.

With metta,  
Bhante Anuttara