

Four Bases of Success

Insight Meditation South Bay

www.imsb.org

Four Bases of Success (*Iddhi-pādā*)

Key ideas:

- Referred to as the *Iddhi-pādā* in the Pali Canon, the four bases of success represent particular skills in meditation attainment that are to be developed through a set of four dominant mental facilities, each fortified by energetic striving.
- The term *iddhi* is derived from the verb *ijjhati*, which means to prosper, succeed, or flourish. Within the context of Buddhist practice, it has the special nuance of referring to spiritual success or spiritual power.
- This list is sometimes referred to as “Four roads to success”, or “Four bases of power”.
- The bases of success support the eradication of the five higher fetters and the attainment of supra-normal powers and awakening.
- The Pali Canon preserves an analysis of the stock formula of the *Iddhi-pādās* in the *Iddhi-pādā-samyutta* (*Samyutta Nikāya*, ch 51.20/ S V 268-9).
- This analysis makes it clear that a “basis of success” is conceived of as the interplay of three basic components in consolidating and furthering the process of meditational attainment:
 1. meditative concentration;
 2. forces of endeavor;
 3. the particular means by which meditative concentration is attained, namely, the desire to act (*chanda*), strength or energy (*viriya*), mind (*citta*), and investigation or inspection (*vīmaṃsā*).

An *iddhi-pādā* is not so much any of these three things in particular as the interaction between them.

The Four Bases of Success	Notes
1. Concentration gained by means of desire to act (<i>Chanda-samādhi</i>)	Concentration is consolidated through a powerful desire directed toward the goal of awakening, the eradication of the higher fetters, or the attainment of spiritual power. This desire is not the craving that is described as the cause of suffering, nor is it a hindrance to concentration. This desire serves as a valuable impetus for practice.
2. Concentration gained by means of strength (<i>Viriya-samādhi</i>)	Concentration is gained through an exertion of effort and energy to achieve the goal of practice. Skillful and diligent effort is applied consistently and appropriately, neither too forceful nor too lax. This balancing act of sustained and dedicated effort overcomes obstacles, cultivates wholesome factors, and maintains our achievements.
3. Concentration gained by means of mind (<i>Citta-samādhi</i>)	Concentration is achieved through a natural purity of consciousness that is unified and undistracted in its orientation toward the goal.
4. Concentration gained by means of investigation (<i>Vimaṃsā-samādhi</i>)	Concentration is obtained by sustained and penetrative investigation that discerns mental and physical phenomena as they are actually occurring. This concentration arises by contemplating the changing, unsatisfactory, foul, or empty nature of things, or through the careful examination of causes and effects. We can reflect before, during, and after our actions to discern patterns that may indicate how conditions function to produce effects.