FROM FRIGHT TO FLIGHT

A Comparative Exploration of
The Path of Meditation and Wisdom
In Theravada and Indian Mahayana Buddhist Traditions

A Core Texts Program Course

READINGS SOURCEBOOK

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Ten Tuesdays: April 13, 20, 27, May 4, 11, 18, 25, June 1, 8, and 15

Course Syllabus

A. Class One: Introduction

1. **Topics:**
   a. Overview of the course
   b. The heart of the matter – mindfulness and awareness
2. **In class readings throughout the course:**
   a. Basic Practices, *Practical Insight Meditation*, Ven Mahasi Sayadaw, pp. 9-24

B. Class Two: Meditation - Types and Terms

1. **Topics:**
   a. Terms and meanings
   b. Survey of practices
2. **Readings:**
   a. Buddhist Practice: Meditation and the Development of Wisdom, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, by Peter Harvey, pp. 244-257
   b. Definition of Terms, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice*, by Paravahera Vajiranana Mahathera, pp. 17-33

C. Class Three: The Range of Meditation

1. **Topics:**
   a. Meditation subjects and their purposes
   b. Stages of practice
2. **Readings:**
   a. Samadhi in the Visuddhimaga, *The Experience of Samadhi: An In-depth Exploration of Buddhist Meditation*, by Richard Shankman, pp. 53-66
   b. Compendium of Meditation Subjects, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: the Abhidhamma Sangaha of Acariya Anuruddha*, pp. 327-344 (ending with "direct Knowledges are fivefold")

D. Class Four: Jhana

1. **Topics:**
   a. Samadhi and Jhana

b. Jhana and the eight stages

2. **Readings:**
    a. Jnana and Samadhi, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice*, by Paravahera Vajiranana Mahathera, pp. 35-45
    b. Jnana in the Pali Suttas, *The Experience of Samadhi: An In-depth Exploration of Buddhist Meditation*, by Richard Shankman, pp. 32-52

E. Class Five: Cultivating Jhana

1. **Topics:**
    a. The counterpart sign
    b. Cultivating the sign
2. **Readings:**
    a. The Jhanas II: Bliss upon Bliss, *Mindfulness, Bliss and Beyond: A Meditator's Handbook*, Ajahn Brahm, pp. 137-150
    b. Access to Absorption: At the Threshold of Peace, *Focused and Fearless: A Meditator's Guide to the States of Deep Joy, Calm, and Clarity*, by Shaila Catherine, pp. 112-119
    c. After Image Visualized in Various Forms, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice*, by Paravahera Vajiranana Mahathera, pp. 248-251

F. Class Six: The Foundations of Mindfulness

1. **Topics:**
    a. Four foundations of mindfulness
    b. The sixteen breaths
2. **Readings:**
    a. *Satipatthana Sutta*, Trs. Bhikkhu Nanamoli, 7 pages
    b. Excerpt on mindfulness, *Abhidharmakosabhasyam of Vasubandhu, Volume III*, Trs. Louis de la Valle Poussin, Trs. Leo M. Pruden, pp. 925-929
    c. The Beautiful Breath, *Mindfulness, Bliss and Beyond: A Meditator's Handbook*, Ajahn Brahm, pp. 81-101

G. Class Seven: Insight Meditation Part One

1. **Topics:**
    a. Essence and stages of insight meditation
    b. Origins and relation to jhana
2. **Readings:**
    a. *Focused and Fearless: A Meditator's Guide to the States of Deep Joy, Calm, and Clarity*, by Shaila Catherine:
        i) The First Jhana as a Basis for Insight, pp. 130-131
        ii) More on the Insight Phase of Practice, pp. 187-189
    b. Compendium of Insight, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: the Abhidhamma Sangaha of Acariya Anuruddha*, pp. 343-357

H. Class Eight: Insight Meditation Part Two

1. **Topics:**
    a. Wisdom and its relation to Jhana
    b. The two paths of serenity and insight
    c. The stages of insight meditation
2. **Readings:**
    a. The Way of Wisdom, *The Path of Serenity and Insight*: An Explanatin of the Buddhist Jhanas, pp. 143-173

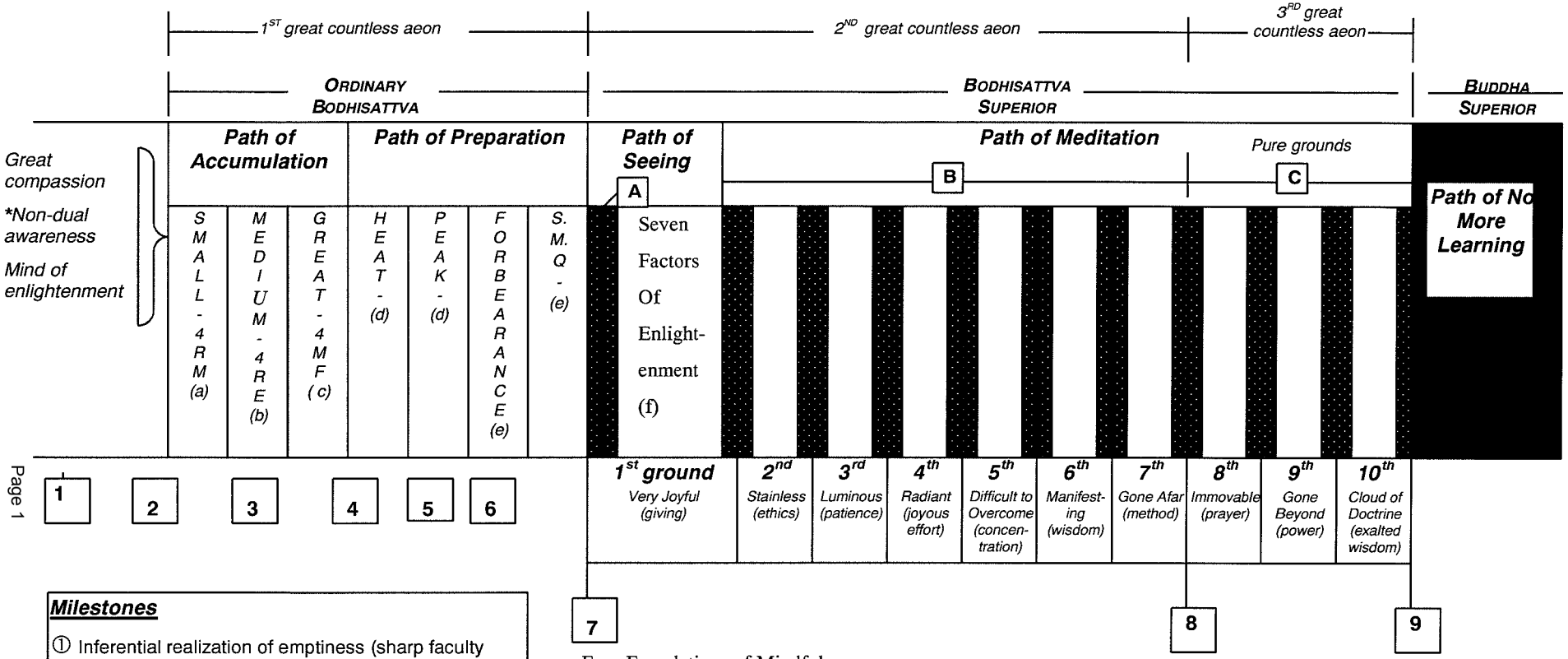
I. Class Nine: The Controversy

1. **Topics:**
    a. The relative importance of serenity and insight
    b. The order of progression of serenity and insight
    c. Seeing part-less particles
2. **Readings:**
    a. Introduction to Mindfulness, *A History of Mindfulness: How Insight Worsted Tranquility in the Satipatthana Sutta,* Bhikku Sujato, pp. 78-82
    b. Absorption and Realization, *Satipatthana: the Direct Path to Realization,* by Analayo, pp. 79-91
    c. Excerpt from *The Path is the Goal*, Chogyam Trungpa, pp. 100-103
    d. Conclusion, *The Experience of Samadhi: An In-depth Exploration of Buddhist Meditation,* by Richard Shankman, pp. 101-104

J. Class Ten: Meditation and Wisdom in the Mahayana

1. **Topics:**
    a. The path of the six paramitas as context
    b. The three prajnas
    c. Stages of insight
2. **Readings:**
    a. Dyana Paramita and Prajna Paramita, *Vasubandhu's Treatise on The Bodhisattva Vow*, by Vasubandhu, Trs. Bhikshu Dharmamitra, pp. 97-121
    b. Chapter Eight: The Practice of Calm Abiding and Chapter Nine, Actualizing Special Insight, root text by Kamalashila, in *The Stages of Meditation*, by The Dalai Lama, Trs. Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Gunchenpa and Jeremy Russell, five pages
    c. Closing Considerations, *Meditation and the Concept of Insight in Kamalashila's Bhavanakramas,* Martin T. Adam, pp. 108-115

Mahayana Path in Prasangika-Madhyamaka



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Milestones

① Inferential realization of emptiness (sharp faculty trainees)
② Uncontrived mind of enlightenment (Bodhisattva)
③ Will never fall to a lower vehicle
④ Union of calm abiding & special insight observing emptiness
⑤ Roots of virtue cannot be severed
⑥ No more rebirths in lower realms
⑦ First direct realization of emptiness (Superior)
⑧ Liberation (Foe Destroyer/Arhat)
⑨ Enlightenment (Buddha)

a. Four Foundations of Mindfulness
b. Four right efforts
c. Four Miraculous feet
d. Five powers
e. Five strengths
f. Seven branches enlightenment

Obstructions abandoned

A – *Afflictive Obstructions (to liberation)* – *Acquired*
B – *Innate*
C – *Knowledge Obstructions (to omniscience)*

Afflictive obstructions – conception of inherent existence and its seeds
Knowledge obstructions – appearance of inherent existence and stains of conceiving the two truths as different entities.

practical insight meditation

the Venerable
Mahasi Sayadaw

Unity Press

MINDFULNESS
SERIES
2

Part I
Basic Practice

Preparatory Stage

If you sincerely desire to develop contemplation and attain insight in this your present life, you must give up worldly thoughts and actions during training. This course of action is for the purification of conduct, the essential preliminary step towards the proper development of contemplation. You must also observe the rules of discipline prescribed for laymen (or for monks, as the case may be), for they are important in gaining insight. For layfolk, these rules comprise the eight precepts which Buddhist devotees observe on holidays *(uposatha)* and during periods of meditation.[1] An additional rule is not to speak with contempt, in jest, or malice to or about any of the noble ones who have attained states of sanctity.[2] If you have done so, then personally apologize to him or her or make the apology through your meditation instructor. If in the past you have spoken contemptuously to a noble one who is presently unavailable or deceased, confess this offense to your meditation instructor or introspectively to yourself.

The old masters of Buddhist tradition suggest that you entrust yourself to the enlightened one, the Buddha, during training period, for you may be alarmed if it happens that your own state of mind produces unwholesome or frightening visions during contemplation. Also place yourself under the guidance of your meditation instructor, for, then, he can talk to you frankly about your work in contemplation and give you the guidance he thinks necessary. These are the advantages of placing

trust in the enlightened one, the Buddha, and practicing under the guidance of your instructor. The aim of this practice and its greatest benefit is release from greed, hatred and delusion, which are the roots of all evil and suffering. This intensive course in insight training can lead you to such release. So work ardently with this end in view so that your training will be successfully completed. This kind of training in contemplation, based on the foundations of mindfulness *(satipatthāna)*, had been taken by successive buddhas and noble ones who attained release. You are to be congratulated on having the opportunity to take the same kind of training they had undergone.

It is also important for you to begin your training with a brief contemplation on the "four protections" which the enlightened one, the Buddha, offers you for reflection. It is helpful for your psychological welfare at this stage to reflect on them. The subjects of these four protective reflections are the Buddha himself, lovingkindness, the loathsome aspects of the body, and death.

First, devote yourself to the Buddha by sincerely appreciating his nine chief qualities in this way:

> Truly, the Buddha is holy, fully enlightened, perfect in knowledge and conduct, a welfarer, world-knower, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and mankind, the awakened and exalted one.

Second, reflect upon all sentient beings as the receivers of your lovingkindness, be fortified by your thoughts of lovingkindness and identify yourself with all sentient beings without distinction, thus:

> May I be free from enmity, disease and grief . . . . As I am, so also may my parents, preceptors, teachers, intimate, indifferent and inimical beings be free from enmity, disease and grief. May they be released from suffering.

Third, reflect upon the repulsive nature of the body to assist you in diminishing the unwholesome attachment that so many people have for the body. Dwell upon some of its impurities, such as stomach, intestines, phlegm, pus, blood.[3] Ponder these impurities so that the absurd fondness of the body may be eliminated.

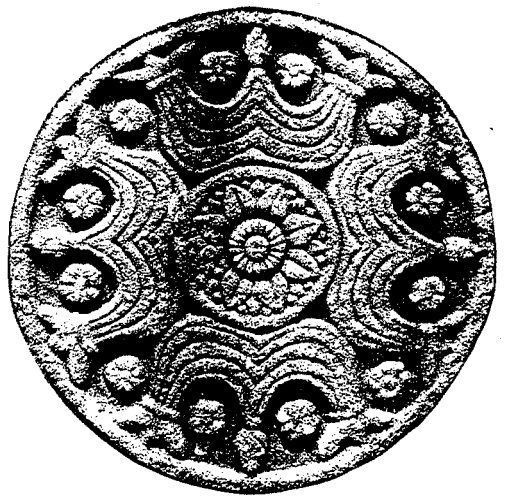
The fourth protection for your psychological benefit is to reflect on the phenomenon of ever-approaching death. Buddhist teachings stress that life is uncertain, but death is certain, life is precarious, but death is sure. Life has death as its goal. There is birth, disease, suffering, old age, and eventual death. These are all aspects of the process of existence.

To begin training, take the sitting posture with legs crossed. You might feel more comfortable if the legs are not interlocked but evenly placed on the ground, without pressing one against the other. If you find that sitting on the floor interferes with contemplation, then obtain a more comfortable way of sitting. Now proceed with each exercise in contemplation as described.

Basic Exercise I

Try to keep your mind (but not your eyes) on the abdomen. You will thereby come to know the movements of rising and falling of this organ. If these movements are not clear to you in the beginning, then place both hands on the abdomen to feel these rising and falling movements. After a short time the upward movement of inhalation and the downward movement of exhalation will become clear. Then make a mental note, *rising* for the upward movement, *falling* for the downward movement. Your mental note of each movement must be made while it occurs. From this exercise you learn the actual manner of the upward and downward movements of the abdomen. You are not concerned with the form of the abdomen. What you actually perceive is the bodily sensation of pressure caused by the heaving movement of the abdomen. So do not dwell on the form of the abdomen but proceed with the exercise. For the beginner it is a very effective method of developing the faculties of attention, concentration of mind and insight in contemplation. As practice increases, the manner of movement will be clearer. The ability to know each successive occurrence of the mental and physical processes at each of the six sense organs is acquired only when insight contemplation is fully developed. Since you are a beginner whose attentiveness and power of concentration are still weak, you may find it difficult to keep the mind on each successive rising movement and falling movement as it occurs. In view of this difficulty, you may be inclined to think: "I just don't know how to keep my mind on each of these movements." Then simply remember that this is a learning process. The rising and falling movements of the abdomen are always present, and therefore there is no need to look for them. Actually it is easy for a beginner to keep his or her mind on these two simple movements. Continue with this exercise in full awareness of the abdomen's rising and falling movements. Never verbally repeat the words *rising*, *falling*, and

do not think of *rising* and *falling* as words. *Be aware only of the actual process of the rising and falling movement of the abdomen.* Avoid deep or rapid breathing for the purpose of making the abdominal movements more distinct, because this procedure causes fatigue that interferes with the practice. Just be totally aware of the movements of rising and falling as they occur in the course of normal breathing.



Basic Exercise II

While occupied with the exercise of observing each of the abdominal movements, other mental activities may occur between the noting of each rising and falling. Thoughts or other mental functions, such as intentions, ideas, imaginings, are likely to occur between each mental note of rising and falling. They cannot be disregarded. A mental note must be made of each as it occurs.

If you imagine something, you must know that you have done so and make a mental note *imagining*. If you simply think of something, mentally note *thinking*. If you reflect, *reflecting*. If you intend to do something, *intending*. When the mind wanders from the object of meditation which is the rising and falling of the abdomen, mentally note *wandering*. Should you imagine you are going to a certain place, mentally note *going*. When you arrive, *arriving*. When, in your thoughts, you meet a person, note *meeting*. Should you speak to him or her, *speaking*. If you imaginatively argue with that person, *arguing*. If you envision and imagine a light or color, be sure to note *seeing*. A mental vision must be noted on each occurrence of its appearance until it passes away. After its disappearance, continue with the Basic Exercise I by knowing, by being fully aware of each movement of the rising and falling abdomen. Proceed carefully, without slackening. If you intend to swallow saliva while thus engaged, make a mental note *intending*. While in the act of swallowing, *swallowing*. If you intend to spit, *spitting*. Then return to the exercise of rising and falling. Suppose you intend to bend the neck, *intending*. In the act of bending, *bending*. When you intend to straighten the neck, *intending*. In the act of straightening the neck, *straightening*. The neck movements of bending and straightening must be done slowly. After mentally making a note of each of these actions, proceed in full awareness with noticing the movements of the rising and falling abdomen.

Basic Exercise III

Since you must continue contemplating for a long time while in one position, that of sitting or lying down, you are likely to experience an intense feeling of fatigue, stiffness in the body or in the arms and legs. Should this happen, simply keep the knowing mind on that part of the body where such feeling occurs and carry on the contemplation, noting *tired* or *stiff*. Do this naturally, that is, neither too fast nor too slow. These feelings gradually become fainter and finally cease altogether. Should one of these feelings become more intense until the bodily fatigue or stiffness of joints is unbearable, then change your position. However, do not forget to make a mental note of *intending*, before you proceed to change position. Each detailed movement must be contemplated in its respective order.

If you intend to lift the hand or leg, make a mental note, *intending*. In the act of lifting the hand or leg, *lifting*. Stretching either the hand or leg, *stretching*. When you bend, *bending*. When putting down, *putting*. Should either the hand or leg touch, *touching*. Perform all these actions in a slow deliberate manner. As soon as you are settled in the new position, continue with the contemplation of the abdominal movements. If you become uncomfortably warm in the new position resume contemplation in another position keeping to the procedure as described in this paragraph.

Should an itching sensation be felt in any part of the body, keep the mind on that part and make a mental note, *itching*. Do this in a regulated manner, neither too fast nor too slow. When the itching sensation disappears in the course of full awareness, continue with the exercise of noticing the rising and falling of the abdomen. Should the itching continue and become too strong and you intend to rub the itching part, be sure to make a mental note, *intending*. Slowly lift the hand, simultaneously noting the action of *lifting*, and *touching* when the hand touches the part that itches. Rub slowly in complete

awareness of *rubbing*. When the itching sensation has disappeared and you intend to discontinue the rubbing, be mindful by making the usual mental note of *intending*. Slowly withdraw the hand, concurrently making a mental note of the action, *withdrawing*. When the hand rests in its usual place touching the leg, *touching*. Then again devote your time to observing the abdominal movements.

If there is pain or discomfort, keep the knowing mind on that part of the body where the sensation arises. Make a mental note of the specific sensation as it occurs, such as *painful, aching, pressing, piercing, tired, giddy*. It must be stressed that the mental note must not be forced nor delayed but made in a calm and natural manner. The pain may eventually cease or increase. Do not be alarmed if it increases. Firmly continue the contemplation. If you do so, you will find that the pain will almost always cease. But if, after a time, the pain has increased and becomes almost unbearable, you must ignore the pain and continue with the contemplation of rising and falling.

As you progress in mindfulness you may experience sensations of intense pain: stifling or choking sensations, such as pain from the slash of a knife, the thrust of a sharp-pointed instrument, unpleasant sensations of being pricked by sharp needles, or small insects crawling over the body. You might experience sensations of itching, biting, intense cold. As soon as you discontinue the contemplation you may also feel that these painful sensations cease. When you resume contemplation you will have them again as soon as you gain in mindfulness. These painful sensations are not to be considered as something serious. They are not manifestations of disease but are common factors always present in the body and are usually obscured when the mind is normally occupied with more conspicuous objects. When the mental faculties become keener you are more aware of these sensations. With the continued development of contemplation the time will arrive when you can overcome them and they cease altogether. If you continue contemplation, firm in purpose, you will not come to any harm. Should

you lose courage, become irresolute in contemplation and discontinue for a time, you may encounter these unpleasant sensations again and again as your contemplation proceeds. If you continue with determination you will most likely overcome these painful sensations and may never again experience them in the course of contemplation.

Should you intend to sway the body, then knowingly note *intending*. While in the act of swaying, *swaying*. When contemplating you may occasionally discover the body swaying back and forth. Do not be alarmed; neither be pleased nor wish to continue to sway. The swaying will cease if you keep the knowing mind on the action of swaying and continue to note *swaying* until the action ceases. If swaying increases in spite of your making a mental note of it, then lean against a wall or post or lie down for a while. Thereafter proceed with contemplation. Follow the same procedure if you find yourself shaking or trembling. When contemplation is developed you may sometimes feel a thrill or chill pass through the back or the entire body. This is a symptom of the feeling of intense interest, enthusiasm or rapture. It occurs naturally in the course of good contemplation. When your mind is fixed in contemplation you may be startled at the slightest sound. This takes place because you feel more intensely the effect of sensorial impression while in the state of good concentration.

If you are thirsty while contemplating, notice the feeling, *thirsty*. When you intend to stand, *intending*. Then make a mental note of each movement in preparation for standing. Keep the mind intently on the act of standing up, and mentally note, *standing*. When you look forward after standing up straight, note *looking, seeing*. Should you intend to walk forward, *intending*. When you begin to step forward, mentally note each step as *walking, walking* or *left, right*. It is important for you to be aware of every moment in each step from beginning to end when you walk. Adhere to the same procedure when strolling or when taking a walking exercise. Try to make a

mental note of each step in two sections as follows: *lifting, putting; lifting, putting.* When you have obtained sufficient practice in this manner of walking, then try to make a mental note of each step in three sections: *lifting, pushing, putting;* or *up, forward, down.*

When you look at the water faucet, or water pot, on arriving at the place where you are to take a drink, be sure to make a mental note *looking, seeing.*

When you stop walking, *stopping.*
When you stretch the hand, *stretching.*
When the hand touches the cup, *touching.*
When the hand takes the cup, *taking.*
When the hand dips the cup into the water, *dipping.*
When the hand brings the cup to the lips, *bringing.*
When the cup touches the lips, *touching.*
Should you feel cold at the touch, *cold.*
When you swallow, *swallowing.*
When returning the cup, *returning.*
Withdrawing the hand, *withdrawing.*
When you bring down your hand, *bringing.*
When the hand touches the side of the body, *touching.*
If you intend to turn back, *intending.*
When you turn around, *turning.*
When you walk forward, *walking.*
On arriving at the place where you intend to stop, *intending.*
When you stop, *stopping.*

If you remain standing for some time continue the contemplation of rising and falling. But if you intend to sit down, *intending.* When you go forward to sit down, *walking.* On arriving at the place where you will sit, *arriving.* When you turn to sit, *turning.* While in the act of sitting, *sitting.* Sit down slowly, and keep the mind on the downward movement of the body. You must notice every movement in bringing hands and legs into position. Then resume the prescribed exercise of contemplating the abdominal movements.

Should you intend to lie down, *intending.* Then proceed with the contemplation of every movement in the course of lying down: *lifting, stretching, leaving, touching, lying.* Then make as the object of contemplation every movement in bringing hands, legs, and body into position. Perform these actions slowly. Thereafter continue with rising and falling. Should pain, fatigue, itching, or any other sensation be felt, be sure to notice each of these sensations. Notice all feelings, thoughts, ideas, considerations, reflections, all movements of hands, legs, arms and body. If there is nothing in particular to note, put the mind on rising and falling of the abdomen. Make a mental note of *drowsy*, when drowsy, and *sleepy*, when sleepy. After you have gained sufficient concentration in contemplating you will be able to overcome drowsiness and sleepiness and feel refreshed as a result. Take up again the usual contemplation of the basic object. Suppose you are unable to overcome a drowsy feeling; you must then continue to contemplate until you fall asleep.

The state of sleep is the continuity of subconsciousness. It is similar to the first state of rebirth consciousness and the last state of consciousness at the moment of death. This state of consciousness is feeble and therefore unable to be aware of an object. When you are awake the continuity of subconsciousness occurs regularly between moments of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and thinking. Because these occurrences are of brief duration they are usually not clear and therefore not noticeable. Continuity of subconsciousness remains during sleep—a fact which becomes obvious when you wake up; for it is in the state of wakefulness that thoughts and dense objects become distinct.

Contemplation should start at the moment you wake up. Since you are a beginner, it may not yet be possible for you to start contemplating at the very first moment of wakefulness. But you should start with it from the moment when you remember that you are to contemplate. For example, if on awakening you reflect on something, you should become aware of that fact and begin your contemplation by a mental note, *reflecting.* Then

proceed with the contemplation of rising and falling. When getting up from the bed, mindfulness should be directed to every detail of the body's activity. Each movement of the hands, legs and rump must be performed in complete awareness. Are you thinking of the time of the day when awakening? If so, note *thinking*. Do you intend to get out of bed? If so, note *intending*. If you prepare to move the body into position for rising, note *preparing*. As you slowly rise, *rising*. When you are in the sitting position, *sitting*. Should you remain sitting for any length of time, revert to contemplating the abdominal movements of rising and falling.

Perform the acts of washing the face or taking a bath in their order and in complete awareness of every detailed movement; for instance, *looking, seeing, stretching, holding, touching, feeling cold, rubbing*. In the acts of dressing, making the bed, opening and closing doors and windows, handling objects, be occupied with every detail of these actions in their order.

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You must attend to the contemplation of every detail in the action of eating:

When you look at the food, *looking, seeing*.
When you arrange the food, *arranging*.
When you bring the food to mouth, *bringing*.
When you bend the neck forward, *bending*.
When the food touches the mouth, *touching*.
When placing the food in the mouth, *placing*.
When the mouth closes, *closing*.
When withdrawing the hand, *withdrawing*.
Should the hand touch the plate, *touching*.
When straightening the neck, *straightening*.
When in the act of chewing, *chewing*.
When you are aware of the taste, *knowing*.
When swallowing the food, *swallowing*.
While swallowing, should the food be felt touching the sides of the gullet, *touching*.

Perform contemplation in this manner each time you partake of a morsel of food until you finish the meal. In

the beginning of the practice there will be many omissions. Never mind. Do not waver in your effort. You will make fewer omissions if you persist in your practice. When you reach an advanced stage of the practice, you will also be able to notice more details than those mentioned here.

Advancement in Contemplation

After having practiced for a day and night you may find your contemplation considerably improved and that you are able to prolong the basic exercise of noticing the abdominal rising and falling. At this time you will notice that there is generally a break between the movements of rising and falling. If you are in the sitting posture fill in this pause with a mental note on the act of sitting, in this way: *rising, falling, sitting*. When you make a mental note of sitting, keep your mind on the erect position of the upper body. When you are lying down you should proceed with full awareness as follows: *rising, falling, lying*. If you find this easy, continue with noticing these three sections. Should you notice that a pause occurs at the end of the rising as well as the falling movement, then continue in this manner: *rising, sitting, falling, sitting*. Or when lying down: *rising, lying, falling, lying*. Suppose you no longer find it easy to make a mental note of three or four objects in the above manner. Then revert to the initial procedure of noting only the two sections, *rising* and *falling*.

While engaged in the regular practice of contemplating bodily movements you need not be concerned with objects of seeing and hearing. As long as you are able to keep your mind on the abdominal movements of rising and falling it is assumed that the purpose of noticing the acts and objects of seeing and hearing is also served. However, you may intentionally look at an object, then simultaneously make a mental note, two or three times, *seeing*. Thereafter return to the awareness of the abdominal movements. Suppose some person comes into your view. Make a mental note of *seeing*, two or three times,

and then resume attention to the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. Did you happen to hear the sound of a voice? Did you listen to it? If so make the mental note of *hearing, listening,* and having done so, revert to *rising* and *falling.* But suppose you heard loud sounds, such as the barking of dogs, loud talking or singing. If so, immediately make a mental note two or three times, *hearing.* Then return to your basic exercise of attending to *rising* and *falling.* If you fail to note and dismiss such distinctive sights and sounds as they occur, you may inadvertently fall into reflections about them instead of proceeding with intense attention to rising and falling, which may then become less distinct and clear. It is by such weakened attention that mind-defiling passions breed and multiply. If such reflections do occur, make two or three times the mental note, *reflecting,* and again take up the contemplation of rising and falling. Should you forget to make a mental note of body, leg or arm movements, then mentally note *forgetting,* and resume your usual contemplation of the abdominal movements. You may feel at times that breathing is slow or that the rising and falling movements of the abdomen are not clearly perceived. When this happens, and you are in the sitting position, simply carry on the attention to *sitting, touching;* if you are lying down, *lying, touching.* While contemplating *touching,* your mind should not be kept on the same part of the body but on different parts successively. There are several places of touch and at least six or seven should be contemplated.[4]

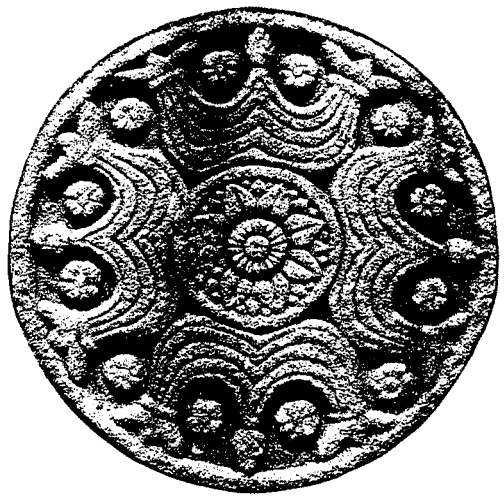
Basic Exercise IV

Up to this point you have devoted quite some time to the training course. You might begin to feel lazy after deciding that you have made inadequate progress. By no means give up. Simply note the fact, *lazy.* Before you gain sufficient strength in attention, concentration and insight, you may doubt the correctness or usefulness of this method of training. In such a circumstance turn to contemplation of the thought, *doubtful.* Do you anticipate or wish for good results? If so, make such thoughts the subject of your contemplation, *anticipating* or *wishing.* Are you attempting to recall the manner in which this training was conducted up to this point? Yes? Then take up contemplation on *recollecting.* Are there occasions when you examine the object of contemplation to determine whether it is mind or matter? If so, then be aware of *examining.* Do you regret that there is no improvement in your contemplation? If so, then attend to that feeling of *regret.* Conversely, are you happy that your contemplation is improving? If you are, then contemplate the feeling of being *happy.* This is the way in which you make a mental note of every item of mental behavior as it occurs, and if there are no intervening thoughts or perceptions to note, you should revert to the contemplation of rising and falling. During a strict course of meditation, the time of practice is from the first moment you wake up until you fall asleep. To repeat, you must be constantly occupied either with the basic exercise or with mindful attention throughout the day and during those night hours when you are not asleep. There must be no relaxation. Upon reaching a certain stage of progress in contemplation you will not feel sleepy in spite of these prolonged hours of practice. On the contrary, you will be able to continue the contemplation day and night.

Summary

It has been emphasized during this brief outline of the

training that you must contemplate on each mental occurrence good or bad, on each bodily movement large or small, on every sensation (bodily or mental feeling) pleasant or unpleasant, and so on. If, during the course of training, occasions arise when there is nothing special to contemplate upon, be fully occupied with attention to the rising and falling of the abdomen. When you have to attend to any kind of activity that necessitates walking, then, in complete awareness, each step should be briefly noted as *walking, walking* or *left, right.* But when you are taking a walking exercise, contemplate each step in three sections, *up, forward, down.* The student who thus dedicates himself to the training during day and night, will be able in not too long a time to develop concentration to the initial stage of the fourth degree of insight (knowledge of arising and passing away)[5] and onward to higher stages of insight meditation *(vipassanā-bhāvanā).*



PART II

Progressive Practice

When as mentioned above, by dint of diligent practice, mindfulness and concentration have improved, the meditator will notice the pairwise occurrence of an object and the knowing of it, such as the rising and awareness of it, the falling and awareness of it, sitting and awareness of it, bending and awareness of it, stretching and awareness of it, lifting and awareness of it, putting down and awareness of it. Through concentrated attention (mindfulness) he knows how to distinguish each bodily and mental process: "The rising movement is one process; the knowing of it is another." He realizes that each act of knowing has the nature of "going towards an object." Such a realization refers to the characteristic function of the mind as inclining towards an object, or cognizing an object. One should know that the more clearly a material object is noticed, the clearer becomes the mental process of knowing it. This fact is stated thus in the *Visuddhi Magga:*

> For in proportion as materiality becomes quite definite, disentangled and quite clear to him, so the immaterial states that have that materiality as their object become plain of themselves too" *(The Path of Purification,* translated by Bhikkhu Manamoli).

When the meditator comes to know the difference between a bodily process and a mental process, should he be a simple man, he would reflect from direct experience thus: "There is the rising and knowing it; the falling and knowing it, and so on and so forth. There is nothing else

The 'Peace Pagoda' in Battersea Park, London.

AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

Teachings, history and practices

PETER HARVEY

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

II

BUDDHIST PRACTICE: MEDITATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF WISDOM

THE APPROACH TO MEDITATION

In nearly all schools of Buddhism, the final goal can only be achieved by cultivating wisdom (Pali *paññā*, Skt *prajñā*), which directly sees things 'as they really are'. While such wisdom can be initiated by reflection on teachings from scriptures and living spiritual teachers, to mature fully it needs nourishing by meditative 'development' (*bhāvanā*) of the Path.

Wherever Buddhism has been healthy, those who have practised meditation have been not only monks, nuns, and married *bLamas*, but also the more committed lay people. There are also meditative aspects to the devotional practices carried out by most lay people. In the West, a relatively high proportion of those who have turned to Buddhism practise meditation.

Any type of meditation is done under the guidance of a meditation teacher, known in Theravāda tradition as one's 'good friend' (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). The Buddha saw having such a teacher as the most powerful external factor in aiding purification of the heart (*A*.I.14), and as the 'whole of the holy life', rather than merely half of it (*S*.V.2). Meditation requires personal guidance, as it is a subtle skill which cannot be properly conveyed by standardized written teachings. The teacher gets to know his pupil, guides him or her through difficulties as they occur, and guards against inappropriate use of the powerful means of self-change that meditation provides (*Vism*.97–110). In return, the pupil must apply himself well to the practice and be open to where it leads.

Learning meditation is a skill akin to learning to play a musical instrument: it is learning how to 'tune' and 'play' the mind, and regular, patient practice is the means to this. Progress will not occur if

one is lax, but it cannot be forced. For this reason, meditation practice is also like gardening: one cannot force plants to grow, but one can assiduously provide them with the right conditions, so that they develop naturally. For meditation, the 'right conditions' are the appropriate application of mind and of the specific technique being used.

Most meditations are done with the legs crossed in the half- or full-lotus position, seated on a cushion if necessary, with the hands together in the lap, and the back straight but not stiff. Once a person is accustomed to this position, it is a stable one which can be used as a good basis for stilling the mind. The body itself remains still, with the extremities folded in, just as the attention is being centred. The general effects of meditation are a gradual increase in calm and awareness. A person becomes more patient, better able to deal with the ups and downs of life, clearer headed and more energetic. He becomes both more open in his dealings with others, and more self-confident and able to stand his own ground. These effects are sometimes quite well established after about nine months of practice, starting with five minutes a day and progressing to about forty minutes a day. The long-term effects go deeper, and are indicated below.

To develop a good basis for meditation, certain reflections may be recommended. In the Northern tradition, these begin by pondering, in turn: the rarity and opportunity of having attained a 'precious human rebirth'; the uncertainty of when this human life will end; the fact that one will then be reborn according to one's karma; that suffering is involved in every realm of rebirth; that such suffering can only be transcended by attaining *Nirvāṇa*; and finally that one needs a spiritual guide to aid one on the path to this. This method rouses motivation for a *Śrāvakayāna* level of practice, as it concerns one's own needs. Next, there are reflections concerning the needs of others, so as to develop the Mahāyāna motivation. This is done by developing the four 'immeasurable' meditations (see pp. 209 ff.), starting with equanimity, then going on to lovingkindness, compassion and sympathetic joy. In this, the meditator cultivates lovingkindness by reflecting on the great kindnesses his mother has shown him, then moving on to reflect that all beings have been his mothers in one or other of his many past lives. He then develops compassion by visualizing a suffering person or animal, and reflects that all his 'mothers' have experienced many such sufferings. Thus arises the aspiration to lead all beings from suffering:

the 'great compassion' (*mahā-karuṇā*). The constant dwelling on this leads to the *bodhi-citta* arising, in the form of the aspiration to work for the attainment of Buddhahood so that the task of saving others may be accomplished. All Mahāyāna practice presupposes this *Bodhisattva* motivation.

THE PRACTICE OF CALM MEDITATION IN SOUTHERN BUDDHISM

Theravāda meditation builds on a foundation of moral virtue to use right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration as mental 'tools' to cultivate the mind and thus develop wisdom. Right effort serves to enable the meditator to develop and sustain the specific kind of activity that meditation is: for it is not a passive thing. It also serves to undermine unskilful states of mind which intrude on the process of meditation. To prevent such states arising, the meditator practises 'guarding the sense-doors': being circumspect about how he relates to sense-objects, so that they do not trigger habitual responses of desire, aversion or confusion.

Mindfulness (*sati*) is the process of bearing something in mind, be it remembered or present before the senses or mind, with clear awareness. It is defined as 'not floating away' (*Asl.*121), that is, an awareness which does not drift along the surface of things, but is a thorough observation. One can be mindful of the passing sensations involved in the action of lifting an arm, or of changing feelings as they pass through the mind. Either way, mindfulness observes without judgement, without habitual reaction, but clearly acknowledges what is actually there in the flow of experience, noting its nature. It has been described as a kind of 'bare attention' which sees things as if for the first time. It is by mindfulness, for example, that one clearly remembers a dream, without confusion and without elaborating the dream further. Mindfulness is crucial to the process of meditation because, without its careful observation, one cannot see things 'as they really are'.

People's normal experience of 'concentration' usually varies from a half-hearted paying attention, to becoming absorbed in a good book, when most extraneous chatter subsides in the mind. Buddhist meditation, in common with many other forms of meditation such as Hindu yoga, aims to cultivate the power of concentration till it can

become truly 'one-pointed', with 100 per cent of the attention focussed on a chosen calming object. In such a state of *samādhi* ('concentration' or 'collectedness'), the mind becomes free from all distraction and wavering, in a unified state of inner stillness.

In order for meditation to develop appropriately, the tools must be used in the right way. If a person attempted to develop strong concentration on an object, but without proper vigour or effort, he would become sleepy. If he vigorously developed concentration without also using mindfulness of the object, he could become obsessed or fixated on the object, this being 'wrong concentration'. Concentration, then, if developed on the basis of right effort, in unison with right mindfulness, is 'right concentration'. The development of concentration and mindfulness to high degrees is in fact the basis of one of the two main types of meditation. This is known as *Samatha*, or 'Calm' meditation. An object is chosen, mindfulness is applied to it, and concentration is focussed on specific aspects of the object. As concentration develops, mindfulness is developed as an adjunct which cultivates full presence of mind. Thus arises a state of tranquil, focussed alertness.

Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, the classic meditation manual of Southern Buddhism, describes forty possible objects of Calm meditation (listed at *Vism.* 110–11). Some are of a devotional nature, such as reflecting on the qualities of the Buddha, *Dhamma* or *Sangha* (*Vism.* ch. 7). These enable people with a temperament rich in faith to develop a joyful state of relatively deep calm ('access' concentration). Devotional chanting is also used by many as a way of 'warming up' and purifying the mind before meditation practice. Some meditation objects are used mainly to counteract negative character traits. Thus a monk or nun who has trouble with lust might be assigned by a meditation teacher to meditate on the 'thirty-two parts of the body', which include hair, skin, bones, heart, entrails, sweat and snot: a sure way of developing disenchantment with the body!

Lovingkindness meditation

A very popular topic of meditation is lovingkindness (*mettā*), an 'immeasurable' which, when fully developed, expands the mind into an immeasurable field of benevolent concern (see pp. 209 ff.). While it can

thus be used to develop a very deep level of calm and inner peace, it is generally used as a counteractive to ill-will. The practice consists of developing a friendliness which is warm, accepting, patient, and unsentimental. The meditator begins by focussing this on himself, for otherwise 'lovingkindness' for others is likely to be limited by an inability to like himself properly. Focussing lovingkindness on himself helps him get to know, and come to terms with, all aspects of himself, 'warts and all'. Once these are accepted – not in a complacent way – then other people, with all their faults, can become the objects of genuine lovingkindness: 'loving your neighbour as yourself', to use a Christian phrase, will then be of true benefit to others.

The meditator starts by saying to himself, for example, 'may I be well and happy, may I be free from difficulties and troubles', and tries to *feel* these words so as to generate a joyful and warm heart. After reviewing 'unlikeable' aspects of himself, he then goes on to focus lovingkindness on others. A common method (see *Vism.* ch. 9) is for the meditator to progressively focus on a greatly respected person, a friend, a person he is indifferent to, and a person he has some hostility towards (all being of the same sex as the meditator). Thus his mind becomes accustomed to spreading its circle of lovingkindness into increasingly difficult territory. If this is successful, he may then radiate lovingkindness to all sentient beings without exception, in all directions: in front, to the right, behind, to the left, below and above. The aim is to break down the barriers which make the mind friendly towards only a limited selection of beings; to cultivate an all-pervading kindness.

Mindfulness of breathing

Of the remaining topics of meditation, ten are certain devices known as *kasiṇa-maṇḍala*'s, or 'universal-circles': objects such as a blue disc, a circle of earth, or a bowl of water. A 'circle' is concentrated on until it can be seen clearly in the mind's eye as a mental image, representing such a 'universal' quality as blueness, earth or water (*Vism.*123–5, 177–84). The most common Calm meditation, however, is 'mindfulness of breathing' (*ānāpāna-sati*) (*Vism.*266–93). Its popularity arises because the breath is always present, and because it becomes more subtle, and thus more calming, as a person becomes calmer. According to one *Sutta*, it was by the method of Calm and then Insight (see below) based on the breath that the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Breathing meditation to induce calm is done with the eyes closed. It begins by some method of counting the in and out movements of the breath, so as to aid the mind in becoming accustomed to staying on it. After a time, the counting is dropped and the sensations arising from the breath going down into and out from the body are carefully followed; then the attention is focussed on the sensations at the nostrils. When a person begins meditation, the attention keeps wandering from the breath, but the method is to keep gently bringing it back. At first, it seems that the mind wanders more in meditation than at other times, but this is just due to a greater awareness of the fickle, shifting nature of thought. After some practice, the mind can remain on the breath for longer periods. At a certain stage, there arises a mental image, or 'sign' (*nimitta*), known as the 'acquired sign'. This can take various forms. It arises from there being good concentration and mindfulness focussed on the breath, just as attention to a 'universal circle' leads to a mental image. Once the image has arisen, in a state of deepening inner stillness, it becomes the focus of attention so as to stabilize it.

The five hindrances and access concentration

As the meditator learns to work with the mental image, he has to gradually suspend the 'five hindrances' which obstruct further progress. Each is a mental reaction to the process of developing sustained application to any task. The first is sensual desire, where the mind reaches out for something more alluring and interesting than the given object. The second is ill-will, where there is a reaction of aversion to the task at hand. The third is sloth and torpor, where there is lethargy and drowsiness. The fourth is restlessness and worry, where the mind alternates between over-sensitized excitedness at some success with the task, and unease over difficulties with it. The final hindrance is fear of commitment, where the mind vacillates and wavers, saying that the task is not worth performing. Overcoming the hindrances is likened both to the purification of gold-ore, which stands for the mind's potential (*S.*v.92), and to the training of a restless animal till it becomes still and tractable.

Once the hindrances are suspended, the image becomes the 'counterpart sign', which has a much brighter, clearer and subtler form. This is the stage of 'access concentration' (*upacāra-samādhi*), for it is the point of access to the full concentration of *jhāna* (*Vism.*125–37).

Working with this sign builds up the 'five factors of *jhāna*', which have been gradually developing all along, counteracting the hindrances. The first factor is 'applied thought', the process of projecting the mind onto the object. The second is 'examination', which leads to the mind remaining on the object. The third is 'joy', which starts in the form of warm tingles and culminates in a feeling of bliss pervading the entire body. This arises as other factors become developed in a balanced way. The fourth factor is 'happiness', a feeling of deep contentment which is more tranquil than joy, and which arises as the mind becomes harmonized and unagitated. The fifth *jhāna*-factor is 'one-pointedness of mind', that is, concentrated unification of the mind on the object. This arises once there is 'happiness', and the mind can contentedly stay with the object.

The *jhānas* and formless attainments

In access concentration; the *jhāna*-factors are still weak, like the legs of a toddler learning to walk. Once they are at full strength, and there is the state of 'absorption-concentration', then *jhāna* ('meditation'; Skt *dhyāna*) is attained (*Vism.*137–69). Here, the mind is blissfully absorbed in rapt concentration on the object, and is insensitive to sense-stimuli, so that *jhāna* can be seen as a sort of trance. This is not in the sense of a dull stupor with subsequent loss of memory of the state: due to the presence of a high degree of mindfulness, it is a lucid trance, and one in which wisdom is also present (*Dhs.* sec. 162). It has the deep, peaceful calm of sound sleep, but greater awareness than in waking consciousness. The mind has great clarity and tranquillity, so as to be like an unruffled, pellucid lake. Due to the radically different nature of this altered state of consciousness, it is classified as belonging to the 'realm of pure form', a level of existence in which the gods of the 'world of pure form' live (see pp. 34 ff.). It is a qualitatively different 'world' of experience, beyond the 'realm of sense-desire'. On emergence from it, there is a purifying afterglow, in which the compulsion to think is absent, and the urges to eat or sleep are weakened.

The state described above is the first of a set of four *jhānas*. Once it has been fully mastered, the meditator progressively develops the others, dropping certain *jhāna*-factors as relatively gross, cultivating deeper and more subtle degrees of calm, and channelling more and more energy into one-pointedness (*S.*IV.217). The fourth *jhāna* is a state of

Table 1 *States developed on the basis of Calm meditation*

States arising from Calm alone		*When combined with Insight*
THE FORMLESS REALM		
States present: one-pointedness, equanimity		
8	The sphere of neither-cognition-nor-non-cognition	→→→ ATTAINMENT OF CESSATION
7	The sphere of nothingness	
6	The sphere of infinite consciousness	
5	The sphere of infinite space	
THE REALM OF PURE FORM		
	States present	
4	Fourth *jhāna*— One-pointedness equanimity	→→→ THE SIX HIGHER KNOWLEDGES Psychic powers Clairaudience Mind-reading Memory of previous lives Clairvoyance *Nibbāna*
3	Third *jhāna*—	One-pointedness, happiness, equanimity
2	Second *jhāna*—	One-pointedness, happiness, joy
1	First *jhāna*—	One-pointedness, happiness, joy, examination, applied thought
THE SENSE-DESIRE REALM		
iii	Access concentration, based on 'counterpart sign'.	
ii	Work on 'acquired sign', so as to suspend the hindrances.	
i	Work on 'preliminary sign' (e.g. the breath or a *kasiṇa-maṇḍala*)	

profound stillness and peace, in which the mind rests with unshakeable one-pointedness and equanimity, and breathing has calmed to the point of stopping. The mind has a radiant purity, due to its 'brightly shining' depths having been uncovered and made manifest at the surface level. It is said to be very 'workable' and 'adaptable' like refined gold, which can be used to make all manner of precious and wonderful things. It is thus an ideal take-off point for various further developments. Indeed, it

seems to have been the state from which the Buddha went on to attain enlightenment.

One possibility is simply to further deepen the process of calming by developing the four 'formless attainments' (*arūpa-samāpatti*'s; *Vism.* ch. 10), levels of mystical trance paralleling the 'formless' realms of rebirth (see Table 1). They are 'formless' as they have no shape or form as object, even the image that is the focus of the *jhānas*. In the first, the meditator expands the previous object to infinity, then focusses on the space it 'occupies'. Next, he focusses on the 'infinite consciousness' which had been aware of this space. Transcending this, he then focusses on the apparent nothingness that remains. Finally, even the extremely attenuated cognition which had been focussed on nothingness becomes the object of attention.

Cessation and the higher knowledges

The remaining states which can be developed on the basis of profound Calm require the addition of insight into the nature of things. From the highest formless state, a meditator can attain an anomalous state known as the 'cessation of cognition and feeling', or simply the 'attainment of cessation' (*nirodha-samāpatti*) (*Vism.*702–9). This is where the mind totally shuts down, devoid of even subtle cognition or feeling, due to turning away from even the very refined peace of the formless level. In this state, the heart stops, but a residual metabolism keeps the body alive for up to seven days. Here a person gains a sort of unconscious meeting with *Nibbāna*, for they are said to 'touch *Nibbāna* with their body'. Only someone who is already a Non-returner or *Arahat* can attain this state.

From fourth *jhāna*, the 'higher knowledges' (*abhiññā*'s) can also be fully developed (*Vism.* chs. 12–13). The last three of these comprise the 'threefold knowledge' (*tevijjā*), culminating in the (conscious) attainment of *Nibbāna* (see p. 21). The first three consist of various paranormal abilities. The first is a group of 'psychic powers' (*iddhi*'s): psychokinetic abilities such as walking on water, flying, diving into the earth, and being in several places at once. These are said to be developed by meditating on the elements of matter to gain control of them. The second 'higher knowledge' is clairaudience: the ability to hear sounds at great distance, including the speech of the gods. The third knowledge

is that of reading the mental states of other people. Thus, based on the power and purity of fourth *jhāna*, many barriers can be overcome by the six higher knowledges, respectively those of physical laws, distance, the minds of others, time, death, and, highest of all, the barrier of conditioned existence as such.

THE PRACTICE OF INSIGHT MEDITATION IN SOUTHERN BUDDHISM

The other way to use the tools of meditation is to generate a high degree of mindfulness, based on right effort and a modicum of concentration. This is known as *Vipassanā*, or 'Insight' meditation. Calm meditation alone cannot lead to *Nibbāna*, for while it can temporarily suspend, and thus weaken, attachment, hatred and delusion, it cannot destroy them; only Insight combined with Calm can do this. Calm produces very valuable changes in a person, such as a deepening of morality. It also acts as an ideal preliminary to the practice of Insight: it gives the mind the clarity in which things can be seen 'as they really are'; it develops the ability to concentrate on an object for long enough to investigate it properly; it schools the mind in 'letting go', at least of objects other than the focus of meditation, and it makes the mind stable and strong, so that it is not agitated by the potentially disturbing insights into such matters as not-self. In these ways, then, Calm 'tunes' the mind, making it a more adequate instrument for knowledge and insight.

The most common way of developing meditation has thus been to practise 'Insight preceded by Calm', as described in such *Suttas* as the *Sāmañña-phala* (*D.*1.47–85). This method of training is known as the 'vehicle of Calm' (*Samatha-yāna*). In this, 'access concentration' or *jhāna(s)* are developed, and then Insight is cultivated and focussed on even these calm states, so as to overcome any attachment to them. A special case of this leads to the 'attainment of cessation'. The 'higher knowledges' are also developed by adding Insight to deep Calm. Another possible sequence, which has become popular in Burma in the twentieth century, is to practise 'Calm preceded by Insight': the 'vehicle of Insight' (*Vipassanā-yāna*). Here, the method is to develop powerful mindfulness, with just a little concentration on the breath to help keep the mind steady. From this, strong insight develops, and this naturally brings about stillness and calm due to strong momentary

concentration and the detachment which insight brings. In a third way of practice, 'Calm-and-Insight-yoked together', the two are developed in unison: first one level of Calm, then Insight into it, then a deeper level of Calm, and Insight into this, etc. However meditation is developed, though, both Calm and Insight are necessary ingredients, for the breakthrough to the experience of *Nibbāna* occurs in an instant where there is both insight and at least the level of calm found in the first *jhāna*. At this level, *jhāna* is 'transcendent', and no longer 'ordinary' (see p. 68).

The four foundations of mindfulness

The basic framework for developing Insight practice is known as 'the four foundations of mindfulness', the *sati-paṭṭhāna*'s, which are described in such *Suttas* as the *Mahā-sati-paṭṭhāna* (*D*.II.290–315). Here, rather than focussing on one chosen object, as in Calm practice, the attention is opened out so that mindfulness carefully observes each passing sensory or mental object. The four 'foundations' are the spheres in which to develop mindfulness: body, feelings, states of mind, and *dhammas*, which comprise all aspects of personality, whether in oneself or others. As the body is more easily perceived, mindfulness takes this as its object first, so as to build up its power before observing the more fleeting mental processes. When not doing sitting meditation, the meditator may carefully observe the sensations involved in movements, such as bending and stretching the arms, eating, washing, and going to the toilet. 'Mindfulness of walking' is a specific kind of practice, also used by Calm practitioners to strengthen their mindfulness. In this, a person walks back and forth along a path with the mind focussed on the sensations in the feet and calf muscles, and the various phases of walking may be mentally noted with such terms as 'lifting', 'moving', and 'putting'. This develops a light, open feeling of spaciousness, and may even lead to the 'foot' disappearing into a flow of sensations.

During seated meditation, the breath is usually investigated, for it is through this rising and falling process that the body is kept alive. Such meditation is described in the *Ānāpāna-sati Sutta* (*M*.III.79–88). The mind does not remain solely on the breath, but also observes various

physical sensations as they occur, such as itches and stomach rumbles. Insight meditation is more analytical and probing than Calm meditation, as it aims to investigate the nature of reality, rather than remaining fixed on one apparently stable object. Thus what might become a distraction within Calm meditation can become an object for Insight. Once mindfulness of the body is established, attention is turned to feelings. These are observed as they arise and pass away, noting simply whether they are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, born of the body or of the mind. No 'significance' is attached to them, however: they are viewed simply as passing phenomena. Mindfulness then moves on to states of mind, noting moods and emotions as they arise and are allowed to pass. Finally, mindfulness investigates *dhammas* (cf. pp. 83 ff.), such as the five hindrances or the seven factors of enlightenment (see p. 65), noting when they are present, when they are absent, how they come to arise, and how they come to cease. Likewise, the five factors of personality and the Four Holy Truths are investigated, using the heightened awareness that mindfulness brings.

Investigation of the 'three marks'

While investigating the processes described above, the aim is to experientially recognize their shared features: the 'three marks' (see pp. 50ff.). Their constant arising and ceasing is seen to demonstrate their *impermanence*. Their *unsatisfactoriness* is seen in the fact that they are ephemeral, unstable, and limited: not the kind of thing that one can rely on. Their being *empty of self* is seen in the fact that they rise according to conditions, cannot be controlled at will, and thus do not 'belong' to anyone. Investigation shows that the appearance of 'oneself' and external 'things' as substantial self-identical entities is a misperception. These insights are not of a conceptual, intellectual nature, but arise as flashes of penetrative understanding, or wisdom. Once these have occurred during meditation, they may also arise in the course of the day, as things are observed with mindfulness. The arising of such wisdom gradually leads to disenchantment with the ephemeral phenomena of the world, so that the mind can come to turn away from them and perceive *Nibbāna*, the Deathless.

The seven stages of purification

The stages in the development of Insight are outlined in detail in the *Visuddhimagga*, which is structured round a scheme of seven purifications: two relating to morality and Calm, and five relating to Insight. In the third purification, no 'person' or 'being' is seen apart from changing mental and physical phenomena. In the fourth purification, insight into Conditioned Arising starts to develop, so that the tendency to think of a self-identical 'I' continuing over time starts to wane. Reality is seen to be rapidly renewed every moment as a stream of fluxing, unsatisfactory *dhammas*. Strong confidence in the three refuges now develops. In the fifth purification, clearer insight leads to the arising of ten 'defilements of insight', such as flashes of light and knowledge, great joy, and a subtle delighting attachment to these phenomena. These can lead the meditator to think, wrongly, that he has attained *Nibbāna*. Once this 'pseudo-*Nibbāna*' is recognized, the ten states can themselves be contemplated as having the three marks, so that attachment to them gradually passes.

In the sixth purification, a series of direct knowledges develop. These start by focussing on the cessation of each passing phenomenon, such that the world comes to be seen as constantly dissolving away, a terror-inspiring phantasmagoria which is unreliable and dangerous. A strong desire for deliverance from such worthless conditioned phenomena arises. They are seen as crumbling away, oppressive, and ownerless; then dread passes and sublime equanimity, clarity of mind and detachment arise. The conditioned world is simply observed as an empty and unsatisfactory flux which is not worth bothering with. Reviewing these insights, the meditator is endowed with intense faith, energy and mindfulness.

In the seventh purification, the mind finally lets go of conditioned phenomena so that a moment of 'Path-consciousness' occurs, which 'sees' the unconditioned, *Nibbāna*. This is perceived either as 'the signless' (devoid of signs indicative of anything graspable), as 'the undirected' (that which lies beyond goal-directedness concerning worthless phenomena) or as 'emptiness' (*suññatā*: void of any grounds for ego-feeling and incapable of being conceptualized in views). A few moments of blissful 'Fruition-consciousness' immediately follow. The first time these events take place, a person becomes a 'Stream-enterer'

(see pp. 71 f.). The same path of seven purifications may subsequently be used to attain the three higher stages of sanctity, culminating in Arahatship, full liberation. Each attainment of 'Path-consciousness' is a profound cognitive shock, which destroys some of the hindrances and fetters and leads to great psychological and behavioural changes, so as to purify and perfect the practitioner.

THE CLASSICAL PATH OF CALM AND INSIGHT IN NORTHERN AND EASTERN BUDDHISM

In Northern and Eastern Buddhism, Calm (Skt *Śamatha*) and Insight (Skt *Vipaśyanā*) became modified by the Mahāyāna framework of belief and motivation. In Northern Buddhism, the classical practice of Calm and Insight is based on three works by the eighth-century Indian teacher Kamalaśīla, on *Bhāvanā-krama*, or 'Stages of Meditation'. It received perhaps its most thorough formulation in the *Lam-rim chen-mo*, or 'Graduated Path to Enlightenment' of Tsong-kha-pa, founder of the dGe-lugs school. In Eastern Buddhism, it received its most systematic working out by Chih-i, founder of T'ien-t'ai school, in his *Mo-ho Chih-Kuan* 'The Great Calm (*Chih*) and Insight (*Kuan*)'. The much-read 'Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna' also has a section (Part 4) devoted to Calm and Insight.

There is a broad similarity in these Northern and Eastern paths. Meditators begin with some combination of traditional Calm practices and the foundations of mindfulness (Skt *smṛtyupasthāna*'s), so as to attain access concentration (Skt *anāgamya*, 'arriving') and perhaps full *dhyāna* (Pali *jhāna*). Insight into the 'three marks' may then be cultivated. In T'ien-t'ai, Calm may subsequently be practised by special techniques in which the meditator seeks to become fully absorbed in such things as ritual preparation and purification of a meditation hall, bowing, circumambulation of images or a copy of the Lotus *Sūtra*, repentance, vows, recitation of *dhāraṇīs*, invocations of Amitābha's or another Buddha's name, and visualizations of the thirty-two characteristics of a Buddha. He then investigates the nature of the component phenomena of these rites, and of his mind. Alternatively, the mind may be the object of attention from the start. As in the Northern 'graduated path', phenomena are examined so as to see them as empty and thought-only. This leads up to the transcending of the subject/object duality, as

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BUDDHIST MEDITATION
IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

A General Exposition According to the Pāli Canon of The Theravāda School

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CHAPTER 3

DEFINITION OF TERMS

IN THEIR description of the theory and the practice of meditation the Buddhist Scriptures make use of many technical terms. It will therefore be advisable, in the interests of clarity and for the sake of convenience, to translate them regularly by certain definite English terms. It should be noted that all the technical terms herein mentioned are used strictly in the Buddhist sense.

1. SAMĀDHI

The word Samādhi, best rendered by 'concentration,' is the most important of these technical terms. Moreover it is one of the original terms used by the Buddha himself; for it occurs in His first sermon. It is used in the sense of "Sammā-Samādhi," Right Concentration. Samādhi from the root "saṃ-ā-dhā", "to put together", "to concentrate", refers to a certain state of mind. In a technical sense it signifies both the state of mind and the method designed to induce that state.

In the dialogue (M.I. 301), between the sister Dhammadinnā and the devotee Visākhá, Samādhi is discussed both as a state of mind and a method of mental training. Visākha asked : "What is Samādhi?" The sister replied : "Samādhi is 'cittassa ekaggatā" (literally one-pointedness of mind.) "What induces it?" "The four applications of mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna), induce it." "What are its requisites?" "The four supreme efforts (Sammappadhāna) are its requisites." "What is the culture (Bhāvanā) of it?" "Cultivation and increase of those self-same principles—mindfulness and supreme effort, are the culture of it."

In this discussion Samādhi, as a mental state, is defined as "cittassa ekaggatā," and this appears to be the first definition of it in the Suttas. In the Abhidhamma this definition is repeated and elaborated with a number of words that are very similar, indeed almost synonymous.

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* defines "cittassa ekaggatā" as follows :

"Yā cittassa ṭhiti, saṇṭhiti, avaṭṭhiti, avisāhāro, avikkhepo, avisāhaṭa-manasatā, Samatho, Samādhindriyaṃ, Samādhi-balaṃ, sammā-Samādhi" (Dhs. 10)—which means "Stability, steadiness and steadfastness of mind, absence of scattering and distraction, unscattered mentality, tranquillity, the faculty of and the power of concentration, Right Concentration."[1]

All these terms, though differing in their forms and expressing different aspects, are united in the one general sense of Samādhi—that is "cittassa ekaggata." Buddhaghosa Thera's comment thereon says "Cittassa ekaggabhāvo—cittekaggatā, Samādhissa etaṃ nāmaṃ," "One-pointedness of mind is cittekaggatā and it is the name of Smādhi." (Asl. 118).

In his *Visuddhimagga* he gives the same definition, but makes use of one more word. The special word which sheds more light upon the meaning is "Kusala-cittekaggatā" ; that is to say one-pointedness of mind is the collected state of moral consciousness (kusala-citta). In the Atthasālini the same meaning is attributed to Sammā Samādhi : "Sammā Samādhī'ti yathā Samādhi, kusala-Samādhi"—"Right concentration is proper concentration or moral concentration. Furthermore it is "Nīyānika-Samādhi," concentration which leads to emancipation.

In Buddhist teaching therefore, Samādhi is to be understood as a state of pure mind, a necessary preliminary to the higher progress towards Arhatship, or final emancipation.

The outstanding characteristic of this state is the absence of mental wandering and agitation ; the unification of the states of mind that rise with it, is its essential function. Tranquillity and knowledge are its manifestation. When this state has been attained, all the mists of passion are

1. Cf. Buddh. Psych. Eth. p. 13, and the Expositor, p. 157.

dissipated and are replaced by the clearness of insight. Thus in all respects the Buddhist term Samādhi is a positive state, as opposed to passive, unconscious absorption or a hypnotic condition of mind.

It is also the name given to the method, or system of meditation which leads to a well balanced, tranquil mental state ; and in this connection it is known as "Samādhi" or "Samatha-Bhāvanā" which precedes Vipassanā. The explanation given by the Sister Dhammadinnā, quoted above, refers to the method of Samādhi as Bhāvanā, or the cultivation of mindfulness and supreme efforts, which are respectively the two principles of Right Mindfulness and Right Effort in the Eightfold Path, of which Right Concentration is the culmination. When Right Effort, which means well directed mental and physical energy, is cultivated with Right Mindfulness, well established Samādhi is the result ; for Right Effort supports Samādhi, preventing it from sinking into a state of mental passivity. Right Mindfulness fortifies the mind with good qualities and acts as the guiding principle that keeps it alert and steady in the Samādhi state, not permitting it to lapse into a subconscious condition. These two principles join forces to produce Right Concentration ; and their development embraces the whole field of meditation common to both systems, Samādhi and Vipassanā. But when the term Samādhi is used with reference to the method, it must be understood to mean the system that tends to Samādhi in the preliminary stage, that is to say before the attainment of Vipassanā.

From what has been said it is clear that Samādhi, both in its literal and technical sense, means a state of mind which is to be developed by systematic training. This training inculcates the habit of mental concentration which results in spiritual progress experienced in and through the human organism, to a point at which self-illumination supervenes.

2.—CETO SAMĀDHI

The term Ceto-Samādhi is found (in D.I. 13), used with reference to an advanced form of Samādhi (Dhyāna) practised by non-Buddhists, who employed it to further their speculations concerning previous existences, etc. Here again the word means the concentration of mind, but in a developed state, in which one attains the knowledge or recollection of one's previous existences (Pubbenivāsa-one of the types of fivefold higher knowledge). The term, however, has been used in a general sense as synonymous with Samādhi, but in conjunction with the particular verb "phusati," thus: "Cetosamādhiṃ phusati," "He comes in contact with Ceto-Samādhi." This indicates that the term implies that the state of Samādhi has previously been experienced. It is comparable to the attainment of "trance," in which a mystic contacts divine vision. But in its Buddhist usage the term has an entirely different significance.

3.—CETO VIMUTTI

When Samādhi is developed to the culminating point on the path to Nirvāṇa, and associated with full knowledge, it emancipates the mind from its defilements, (cetopak-kilesa), and yields the fruit of Arhatship. In this state Samādhi is applied to the "one-pointedness" of the Arhat's mind, and is then called "Ceto-Vimutti," "mental release." (D.III. 71; M.I. 35, 71, etc.). This is the highest and final state of Samādhi, called "Phala-Samādhi," or "concentration conducing to the fruit of Arhatship." But Ceto-Vimutti has also been used to denote different stages of Samādhi as a general term. In the *Mahāli Sutta* (D.II.265), "Ceto-Vimutti" refers to the Arhat's mind, free from all fetters or bonds of passion. But in the *Sampasādaniya Sutta* (D.III.104), it is used of the first Jhānic state of Samādhi, which is induced by meditation upon the constituent parts of the body. Again in the A.IV.357 "Ceto-Vimutti" is the term applied to Samādhi which is but partially developed and immature (Apari-pakka-Cetovimutti). Thus we see that this term has various usages: but in every case it refers to an advanced state.

4.—CETO-SAMATHA

Samādhi, being one-pointedness of mind, exerts a salutary influence upon the mind of him who is engaged in the process of development. It calms his mental wavering and agitation, subdues trepidation, and establishes and sustains an inward serenity. The state of Samādhi is therefore described as "Ceto-samatha," "tranquillity of thoughts, or mental quiescence. (M.I. 33). The word "Samatha" itself is found in the sense of "tranquillity," denoting the system known as "Samatha-Bhāvanā." (D.III. 273; M.I. 494; S.IV. 360).

5.—CITTA-BHĀVANĀ

The Buddhist method of spiritual training is designed for a dual purpose, the cultivation of the mind and the cultivation of Vipassanā. Here the word "Citta-Bhāvanā," "cultivation" or "development of mind" is used, referring to the system of meditation. During the process of systematic meditation the mind is trained, until with the full development of Samādhi the whole mental power is concentrated and the mind achieves self-mastery. In this condition it can resist the current of feeling, whether it be painful or pleasant. It can even endure deadly pain and remains entirely unshaken by sense stimuli. The practice of Samādhi is therefore called "Citta-Bhāvanā," and it implies both mental and physical training. The whole system of Samādhi meditation is expounded in the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosa under the term, Citta-Bhāvanā.

6.—CITTA-VISUDDHI

Samādhi, as a mental quality, cleanses and purifies the mind from taints and defilements of passion; hence it is called "Citta-Visuddhi." It is discussed by the Elders, Sāriputta and Puṇṇa in the *Rathavinīta Sutta* (M.I. 147), where the whole system of religious life is expounded, together with the seven stages of "Visuddhi" or "Purification." The term is generally applied to the state of mental purity in the path of Vipassanā.

7.—ADHICITTA

When the mind has attained the state of Samādhi, it has raised itself above and remains superior to its normal, lowly condition, in which it is the slave of every sensory impulse and emotion. The mind, being thus exalted, is in a state in which it cannot be affected by external objects. It is then known as "Adhicitta," the "higher mind" and this implies a steady ascent through the stages of development. The whole system of mental training is embraced by this term in the expression "Adhicitta Sikkhā," the "training of higher mind." (D.III. 222; M.I. 119; A.I. 236).

The above are the most important terms used to distinguish Samādhi and the methods of its attainment. They are generally employed in the Scriptures to denote the doctrine of Samādhi meditation.

8.—VIPASSANĀ

The word "Vipassanā" is a purely Buddhistic term and has quite a distinct meaning. It is derived from the verb "Vi-passati," "to see in many ways," (Vividham), which means "to see, to penetrate an object thoroughly." Hence "Vipassanā" is best rendered by "Insight." "Paññā," "full knowledge," and "Ñāṇa-Dassana," "knowledge and vision," are the terms generally used to define "Vipassanā"; and a full description of them is frequently given in the Suttas, while they are further elaborated in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. This term is particularly applied to the "full knowledge" acquired by a discerning of the three characteristics of the phenomenal world, namely: Transitoriness (Anicca); Suffering, (Dukkha); and Non-Self, (Anattā). In the doctrine of meditation the term signifies the whole system designed to induce that "insight," with or without the practice of the Samādhi method. In the Scriptures it is always found with "Samatha", whenever meditation is divided into two systems, "Samatho ca Vipassanā ca. (D.III. 273; M.I. 494; S.IV. 360; A.I. 95; etc.,)

9.—JHĀNA

Jhāna occupies a very prominent place in the system of meditation. But there is no word connected with meditation whose meaning has been so misrepresented and confused by its English renderings as this Pāli word "Jhāna." It has a distinct meaning that is entirely peculiar to Buddhism. Its Sanskrit form is "Dhyāna," a term which in the Yoga philosophy has a very different meaning. The word "Jhāna" formed from the verb "Jhāyati", "to think" or "to meditate", appears in the Buddhist formula of The Four Jhānas, (which were later expanded to five). Buddhaghosa Thera in his *Samanta-Pāsādikā*, (Vin.A. pp. 145–6), defines "Jhāna" as follows:—

> "Jhāyati — upa-ni-jjhāyatī'ti = Jhānaṃ, to think, that is "to think closely (upon an object) is Jhāna"; or, "iminā yogino Jāyantī'ti = Jhānaṃ", "by this Yogis[1] think or meditate, hence it (that state) is Jhāna." Then he proceeds to connect the word with the verb "Jhāyati", "to burn", and defines it thus: "Paccanīka-dhamme jhāpetīti—Jhānaṃ", to burn opposed states is Jhāna — "paccanīka-dhamme dahati, gocaraṃ vā cintetī'ti attho", that is "to burn opposed qualities", or "to think upon a suitable object (gocaraṃ)." Hence thinking closely is its characteristic mark.

This Jhāna is twofold: (1) that which thinks upon the mental object closely (Ārammaṇa-upa-ni-jjhāna); and (2) that which examines the characteristic marks (lakkhaṇa-upa-ni-jjhāna). Of these, "Ārammaṇupanijjhāna" implies the eight stages, (four "Rūpa" and four "Arūpa"), which are known as "Samāpatti" attainments, and that which is termed "Upacāra", Jhāna (of access). Thus this Jhāna is divided into nine stages; of which "Upacāra" is the preliminary stage, and the others are the successive processes of development in the system of Samādhi meditation.

1. In the Buddhist sense "aspirants."

Lakkhaṇupanijjhāna is threefold: (1) Vipassanā, "Insight"; (2) Magga, "Path"; and (3) Phala, "Fruit." Of these, Vipassanā examines the characteristic marks of the phenomenal objects, but its function is completed in the path leading to the transcendental (lokuttara) state; hence the path is actually called Lakkhaṇupanijjhāna. The Jhāna associated with Phala, or "Fruit", results in Lokuttara attainment, realises the actual nature (Tatha-lakkhaṇa) of Nirvāṇa, and is therefore said to be "Lakkhaṇupanijjhāna."

Then Buddhaghosa Thera adds, "Jhāna is to be understood as the notion (Sammuti), of the five mental elements (as given in the Jhāna formulas). They are Reasoning, Investigation, Zest, (Mental) Happiness and One-pointedness of mind." In the Vibhanga we find the question, "What is Jhāna? It is Reasoning, Investigation, etc." (Vibh. 275).

His comments on this subject found in other works, (Asl. 167; Mnp. II. 41, etc.), are almost the same.

Thus the definitions of "Jhāna" in the commentaries give two derivations of the word, tracing it either from Jhāyati, "to think", or from Jhāpeti, "to make burn." The verb Jhāyati occurs frequently in the Nikāyas in the sense of "meditate", (M.I. 46, 118, 243; A.V.323, etc.), and the verbal noun "Jhāyi", (he who thinks), is used in the sense of "meditator." (M.I. 334; III. 13; S.III. 263; A.IV. 426, etc.). But the verb "Jhāpeti, used to define "Jhāna" is found only in one place in the text:

"Ajātaṃ jhāpeti jātena jhanaṃ tena pavuccati."

"It burns the unborn through the born, therefore it is called Jhāna. (*Paṭisambhidā-Magga*, p. 101, Siamese ed.)[1]

In Ācariya Mahānāma's commentary thereon we find, "He who has this Jhāna born in himself burns up the passions; thus he destroys and eradicates them; hence

1. P.T.S. text has "Ajātan ñāpeti jātena ñāṇaṃ tena pavuccati."(Ptsm. 1.70.)

this state, (lokuttara Jhāna), is said to be Jhāna, in the sense of 'to burn'." (*Saddhammappakāsani*, HV. ed. 196).

According to these various expositions, the term "Jhāna" is to be understood in a collective sense as the progress of mind from its initial transition from a lower to a higher state, and the mental image taken from an external object (Kammaṭṭhāna) which burns the defilements of the mind, whereby the meditator experiences supernormal consciousness in the intensity of Samādhi.[1]

In order to avoid unnecessary confusion, the Pāli term "Jhāna" will be used to imply the developed mental process of meditation in both the Samādhi and Vipassanā methods.

10.—BHĀVANĀ

Meditation by means of mind development is called "Bhāvanā." Unlike other technical terms, "Bhāvanā" is used to denote only the practical methods of mental training. It embraces in its vast connotation the whole system, together with the practices that have been developed from it. When the term "Bhāvanā" occurs in the Scriptures, it generally indicates the practice or cultivation of meditation and the verb "Bhāveti" is used to denote the act, "to practise", or "to cultivate", e.g.

"Mettaṃ, Rāhula, bhāvanaṃ bhāvehi."

"Rāhula, practise the meditation upon friendliness." (M.I. 424).

"Asubhāya cittaṃ bhāvehi."

"Cultivate the mind by the meditation upon impurities." (Sn. 341).

Unlike "Jhāyati", (which is only used to indicate "thinking upon" a mental object, or holding a mental image taken from an external object), "bhāveti" is used of

1. Cf. Buddhist Psychology, p. 108; Dialogues, II. 141; Compendium, 57–8;

any form of mental development: e.g., "Kusalaṃ cittaṃ bhāveti", "he cultivates or increases moral consciousness"; "Jhānaṃ bhāveti, Samādhiṃ bhāveti, Vipassanaṃ bhāveti, maggaṃ bhāveti", "he practises Jhāna, Samādhi Vipassanā or the Path."

The term "bhāvanā is to be found compounded with words implying the subjects of meditation, as, "Jhāna-bhāvanā", "Samādhi-bhāvana", Metta-bhāvanā", etc. in order to distinguish the different kinds of meditation.

Buddhaghosa Thera defines the verb "bhāveti" as a derivation from the root "bhū"—"to be" or "to become' and compares it with "Janeti", (begets), "Uppādeti" (produces or causes to rise), "Vaḍḍheti", (increases or develops). (Asl.163).[1] He quotes passages from the Scriptures to show that "bhāveti" is used in the sense of "producing", (Uppādana) and "increasing." (Vaddhana.)

"Again, Udāyi, I have preached the method whereby my disciples develop, (bhāventi), the four applications of mindfulness." (M.II. 14). Here in the *Mahāsakuludāyi Sutta* "bhāvanā" means "producing" and "increasing."

Elsewhere he says "bhāveti" means "to beget" or "to produce again and again", (punappunaṃ janeti), within oneself; that is to say to produce, to develop the object, keeping it in one's own heart. (SA. 158, Hv. ed.).

From these commentarial definitions and its use in the Canon, it can be seen that the word "bhāvanā" has a meaning that is stronger and more active than that of the English word meditation. The word has various renderings, such as "producing", "acquiring", "mastering", "developing", "cultivating", "reflection", and "meditation."[2] Here we shall use the word in the sense of "practice" and "cultivation", translations which bring out more clearly than the word "meditation" its connection with the root "to be" or "to become."

1. Cf. Expositor on *Dhammasangani*, p. 217.

2. Mrs. Rhys Davids discusses the word in her work "*Sākya*," where she renders "bhāvanā" "making to become," "coming to be," "to become more," pp. 93–4.

It is true that in "Bhāvanā" there is a certain thought process, similar to that involved in mental prayer, and also the repetition of some particular words or phrases in different practices, such as "Be happy, be happy" in the practice of Mettā; or "Earth, earth", (in Kasiṇa practice), as in verbal prayer. But "Bhāvanā" is more than that. It is "thinking" *in a special manner*, to edify something in oneself, something which is always *good*. The essential thing, therefore, in "Bhāvanā" is its productive factor, that which produces or manifests the essential quality or truth that is contained in the object of thought, within one's character. For example, when one practises "Mettā bhāvanā", one not only thinks upon "friendliness" but also makes it come into being, and grow stronger and stronger in his mind, so as to eradicate thoughts of enmity, malice, aversion and the like; and finally the aspirant becomes friendly towards all living things. In this sense it is "becoming."

In conclusion let it be said that the word "Bhāvanā" means the accumulation of all good qualities within oneself, to become apt and fit for the attainment of Nirvāṇa. Moreover Bhāvanā is the popular, current expression for meditation as a part of religious life in the Theravāda School.

11.—YOGA

The word "Yoga", which is the technical term used in the Sāṅkhya Yoga philosophy and in the system of meditation developed therein, is not common in the Buddhist Scriptures. But the term is not entirely unfamiliar to the student of Buddhism, for it is actually found used in the sense of "mental activity" and also "meditation."

It occurs in S.IV. 80 and V. 442 in the expression "Patisallāna-Yoga", which means "joining with", "the entry into", or "the advance to inward tranquillity"; while the phrase "Yogo Karaṇīyo" is frequently used in the sense that "Yoga, or effort in meditational activities should be made." (M.I. 472; S.II. 131; V. 414; A.II. 93; V. 94). It is also found in the sense of "meditation", as is seen in—

"Yogā ve jāyati bhūri, Ayogā bhūri saṅkhayo." (Dhp. 282).

"Through Yoga wisdom arises ; without Yoga wisdom is lost."

The commentary, in reference to this passage, says : "Tattha Yogā'ti aṭṭhatiṃsāya ārammaṇesu yoniso manasikāro." "Here Yoga[1] means proper attentive reflection upon the thirty-eight subjects of meditation, which are called "Kammaṭṭhāna." (Dhp. Com. 3. 421).

The word never achieved prominence as a technical term of the Theravāda School to denote "meditation". But the words "Yogi" and "Yogāvacara", (he who practises Yoga), occur very frequently in the commentaries in the sense of "meditator." "Yogāvacara" is also commonly used in Sinhalese works to designate "one who practises meditation." One of the most important works in the Sinhalese language on the subject of meditation was known as "Vidarsanāpota" the "Manual of Vipassanā", which now appears as "Yogāvacara's Manual", the title given to it by its editor, Professor T. W. Rhys Davids.

Thus the word "Yoga" does appear in Buddhist writing in the sense of "meditation", but always preserves its Buddhist significance. "Yoga" in the quite distinct sense of "uniting" is also frequently found in the Buddhist literature, but it then applies to "Kāma", "Bhava", "Diṭṭhi" and "Avijjā", (D.III.284),—since beings are united with senses, existence, opinions and ignorance, all of which must be destroyed.

12.—PADHĀNA

"Padhāna", from "pa-dhā, to put strongly or vigorously", means exertion or strenuous effort. In the Scriptures it is applied to the effort made to achieve spiritual progress. It occurs in M.I. 167, referring to the noble effort made by the Buddha at Uruvelā for the

1. Cf. Sacred Books of the East, Vol. X. 68 where Yoga is rendered "Zeal'. W. Fausboll translates "Yoga" as "meditation"—"E meditatione certe nascitur intelligentia." (Dhp. 282).

attainment of his enlightenment. In the *Buddhavaṃsa*, (II. 34,) the word is used in the sense of "meditation" : "Tattha - ppadhānaṃ padhahiṃ nisajja - ṭṭhāna caṅkame"—"There I strove strenuously, while sitting, standing and walking to and fro."

Again the effort made for the development of higher mind is termed "Samma-ppadhāna" which is described as essential to the practice of Samādhi. It seems that, as a result of its occurrence in such passages, "Padhāna" became a technical term, used for the practice of meditation, and it is very frequently found in this sense in the commentaries. It sometimes appears in the form of a title, as for example, "Padhānika Tissa Thera", that is "the Elder, Tissa, the meditator." (Dhp.A.3·142.) The place selected for meditation (padhāna), is called "Padhāna-ghara", and at Anurādhapura in Ceylon there was a meditation hall known as "Padhāna-ghara", connected with the Mahāvihāra, which was the centre of the Theravāda School. (Vin.A. Sinhalese edition, 427).

13.—KAMMAṬṬHĀṆA

"Kammaṭṭhāṇa", usually rendered by "Exercise of Meditation", "Station of religious Exercise", or "Basis of Action", is a late expression used by the Buddhist commentators to denote both the subjects of meditation and the methods of practising them. Buddhaghosa Thera uses it in referring to the forty subjects of Samādhi meditation, which are explained in his *Visuddhimagga* (Vism.1.89). Anuruddha Thera uses it to signify the subjects and the methods of both systems, Samādhi and Vipassanā, which are outlined in his *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*.[1]

1. "Samatha vipassanānaṃ bhāvanāna'mito paraṃ,
Kammaṭṭhāṇaṃ pavakkhāmi duvidhampi yathāraham."
(*Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*, p. 41).

Ācariya Sumaṅgala's commentary thereon explains that the word "Kammaṭṭhāṇa" implies both the mental object (Ālambana) in the sense of the basis whereon the twofold exercise of meditation is established, and the method of meditating, in the sense of the support through which further progress in the practice of meditation is made. (Cf. *Vibhāvani Tikā*, Sinhalese ed. p. 154).

The word is not found, however, with this special sense in the Piṭakas. But it occurs with a similar sense in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (II.v 97), where it refers in the first place to household occupations (gharāvāsa-kammaṭṭhāṇa), such as agriculture (kasi), and trade (vaṇijjā). In the second place it refers to religious exercise, "pabbajjā-kammaṭṭhāṇa", which means the work or duties of one who has renounced the household life. The term literally means the place or base (ṭhāna) of work or action (kamma). In the Scriptures it is generally used in the sense of the work or business of a householder. It is used in the commentaries, probably in relation to "pabbajjā-kammaṭṭhāṇa", to designate the subjects and methods of meditation, considered as a systematic exercise of mental training.

In connection with Bhāvanā it generally implies the act of meditating upon a given subject, undertaken with a view to developing Samādhi or Vipassanā. So we read "Kammaṭṭhāṇe kammaṃ karonto," "exercising himself in a Kammaṭṭhāṇa," etc. (Dhp.Com. on 422).

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From all the above, it will be seen that "Kammaṭṭhāṇa" is a term of wide significance, embracing a succession of practices and exercises, which form the basis or framework of all those modes of meditation, by means of which Arhatship is attained. Thus, for example, the First Jhāna is a state ; the ten Asubhas are the Kammaṭṭhāṇa, the subject or practice through which that state is attained.

14.—ĀRAMMAṆA

The word "Ārammaṇa" generally signifies any object on which the mind and thoughts rest or dwell, using it as a support or basis. In its psychological application it implies the objective elements pertaining to the senses, and also the subjective thoughts, the contact of which determines the processes of consciousness. Generally speaking, it is a term applied to any external object which may be presented to the senses and the mental impression derived therefrom, which latter lends support to the mind

and enables it to grasp an idea. According to the Abhidhamma teaching, the mind does not become active until it is stimulated by an external object coming in contact with the senses. Such objects are called "ārammaṇa," in the sense of "āḷambana" (hanging), that which supports or occupies the mind. Thus "Ārammaṇa" or "Āḷambana" (lit. "causing a thing to be hung, to be supported"), implies both the objects perceived and the representative images or impressions of them, which are formulated in the mind, causing the thought-process to function.

In relation to meditation "Ārammaṇa" is employed in a more restricted sense, to imply a given subject of meditation and the mental image taken from that subject. The term is also very frequently used in the commentaries in this sense :

> "Aṭṭha-timsāya ārammaṇesu kammaṃ karonto,"—"exercising himself in the thirty-eight subjects of meditation." (Com. on Dhp.Ver. 374, Dhp.A. 4, p. 110).

Here we have "ārammaṇa" used of the "subject of kammaṭṭhāna." The phrase "ārammaṇaṃ gaṇhāti" is also used in connection with meditation : it means "to obtain" or "lay hold of" an idea, a topic, a thought, upon which the mind is brought to bear, with intense concentration until supernormal illumination is attained. In this case "ārammaṇa" is applied to the mental object which should be taken from the subject of meditation, and which is technically spoken of as "Nimitta," "sign" or "mark". Thus the word "ārammaṇa," when used as a technical term in connection with meditation, implies in its most comprehensive sense the object or material of the contemplating mind.

15.—NIMITTA

Usually rendered "sign" or "mark," the word "nimitta" is used in the Scriptures as a psychological term denoting the mental attributes of sentient existence. Literally it means "that which marks or indicates" and it is generally

applied to evil tendencies such as lust, hate and ignorance, which are regarded as the conditions which determine the mental disposition (nimitta-karaṇā dhammā) of the individual. It is also used of the apparent characteristics of things or objects which give rise to passionate craving in the mind, as for example in the phrase "Chakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā nimittagghāhi," "seeing a form with the eye, he notes the marks or general appearance." (D.I. 70 ; cf. Dialogues of the Buddha, i. 80).

As one of the most important technical terms used in the doctrine of meditation, the word "Nimitta" has quite a different meaning. It is then distinguished as "Samatha-nimitta," "the mark of calm" (Dhs.1357), and according to the *Visuddhimagga* (I.125), it is twofold : "Uggaha-nimitta" and "Paṭibhāga-nimitta." But the *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha* gives it as threefold, the first division being "Parikammanimitta." The object selected for meditation, such as a kasiṇa device, is termed "Parikammanimitta," "the mark of preliminary exercise" (Parikamma). After prolonged contemplation of the kasiṇa, during which the eyes are fixed upon it, the student can retain a mental image, an exact copy of the original device, which with constant practice may be visualized as clearly as the concrete object is perceived by the eye : This image is called "Uggaha-nimitta," "the mark of grasping," or "the mental image." It is also rendered by "the mark of upholding" (*Compendium of Philosophy*, p. 54 ; *Manual of a Mystic*, p. 2), and "the sign to be grasped" (*Path of Purity*, p. 146). In its general sense "uggaha" is used of anything learnt or studied, being also applied to something that has been committed to memory. This nimitta, being the first sign of the mental illumination produced by the successful exercise of meditation, is said to have become established in the mind like something learnt by heart. When this image is once established in the mind of the aspirant, he is able to visualize it whenever he wishes ; so that he is at liberty to continue his practice without gazing at the device. But the mental image is not free from the blemishes and faults of the original device, such as marks

of froth or scratches ; in the image these will be like smoke or clouds in the sky. Its appearance will naturally vary according to the nature of the object. The concentration of thought gained by means of both these nimittas, the preliminary and the mental image, is termed "Parikamma-samādhi," "preliminary concentration," and it is obtained with all subjects of meditation.

After continued practice of meditation the student finds that his power of concentration has developed and that the mental image gives place to an abstract idea or concept (paññatti) ; this is now divested of its phenomenal reality and free from all the faults of the original object and becomes a sublimated image which yet embodies the quality of objectivity. This concept, which can no longer be presented to the mind as a concrete object, is termed "paṭibhāga-nimitta" "the mark of the equivalent," and is rendered by "after-image."

This nimitta only appears when the mind has reached the degree of concentration known as "Upacāra-samādhi," or "access concentration", which is deeper than that of the preliminary stage and approaching ever nearer to the state of Jhāna. But the *Visuddhimagga* (1. 113) states that the after-image arises only from the mental image derived from meditation upon the ten Kasiṇas, the ten Asubhas, Ānāpāna-sati and Kāyagatā-sati ; and that it is more refined and purer than the mental image, from which it rises like a mirror drawn from its case, or like the moon emerging from behind the clouds. "Paṭibhāga" literally means "equal," "similar," or "resembling," and it is applied to this after-image, in the sense that this represents only the idea innate in the original object which is identified with the abstract idea. The concentration of the mind on this image is termed "Appaṇā-samādhi," "concentration mounting or leading" up to the state of Jhāna with the ecstasy induced by mental purity.

Thus, these three Nimittas (Parikamma, Uggaha and Patibhāga) are the objects (ārammaṇa) of the three stages, Parikamma, Upacāra and Appāṇā, of intense concentration obtained in the development (bhāvanā) of meditation.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SAMĀDHI

An In-depth Exploration of Buddhist Meditation

Richard Shankman

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3

Samādhi in the Visuddhimagga

So wise men fail not in devotion
To the pursuit of concentration:
It cleans defiling stains' pollution,
And brings rewards past calculation.

Visuddhimagga XI, 125

AS THE UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BUDDHA'S teachings evolved over the centuries, later commentaries appeared, each with their particular interpretations of the doctrine. The Visuddhimagga (Path of Purification), a voluminous work written around the fifth century C.E., has remained the most influential of the postcanonical Pāli works. While not a commentary, but rather an independent treatise, it is a cornerstone of the commentarial method. For some Theravāda Buddhists, the entire teaching is funneled through this one commentarial lens, coloring the perspective and greatly influencing the understanding and style of meditation practice.

The Visuddhimagga's basic framework is based on the Relay Chariots Discourse (Pāli: Rathavinīta Sutta[1]) in the Middle Length Discourses of the Pāli Canon.[2] In it, the path of spiritual development is likened to someone using a series of seven chariots to reach a destination. With the first chariot one reaches the second, with the second chariot one reaches

the third, and so on until with the seventh chariot one reaches the final destination. Similarly, spiritual progress unfolds in seven stages, with each step being cultivated in order to bring one to the next.

The seven stages of purification are as follows: (1) purification of virtue, (2) purification of mind, (3) purification of view, (4) purification by overcoming doubt, (5) purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path, (6) purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and (7) purification by knowledge and vision. Each of these represents a deeper level of insight and wisdom leading to final Nibbāna.

The Pāli suttas do not provide details to explain this scheme or its seven elements. For that we have to turn to the commentaries. Briefly, according to the Visuddhimagga, "purification of virtue" entails observance of whatever precepts or moral rules of behavior one has undertaken, five or more precepts for laypeople, or the monastic code of discipline for monks and nuns. "Purification of mind" is the attainment of "access concentration" (to be explained under "Three Levels of Concentration" on page 56) and of the jhānas. "Purification of view" is the understanding that a living being is merely a convention or an appearance based on the five aggregates. "Purification by overcoming doubt" is purity through elimination of doubt regarding the conditioned cycle of births and deaths. "Purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path" is the understanding that distinguishes between the wrong path based upon attaining certain seductive meditative states and the right path of insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness (Pāli: anicca, dukkha, and anattā, respectively). "Purification by knowledge and vision of the way" consists of a series of insights leading up to Nibbāna, and "purification by knowledge and vision" is attainment of one of the four stages of enlightenment.

The Visuddhimagga is a comprehensive and detailed manual based on this structure, with roughly half of it devoted to developing concentration and jhāna. The Pāli suttas, while often clear and precise, can be vague at times, without a lot of explanatory detail and open to various interpretations. The Visuddhimagga, in contrast, is meticulous and specific. The Visuddhimagga is a practical manual, filled with detailed descriptions of the various stages of samādhi and clear-cut instructions for meditation practice.

Tranquillity and Insight

Two Paths of Meditation Practice

The Visuddhimagga divides meditation practice into two distinct, separate paths, tranquillity (Pāli: samatha), in which concentration is cultivated to a high degree without regard to insight; and insight (Pāli: vipassanā), in which samādhi can sometimes be de-emphasized. In samatha meditation, attention is focused on an unmoving object, called a "kasiṇa," or on other meditation subjects, depending on the meditator's temperament, in order to develop and highly refine concentration until the attainment of jhāna. *Fixed* concentration is cultivated, concentration on a fixed object so intense that awareness of no other experience can arise, resulting in one-pointed focus and states of profound tranquillity and peace where all experience of changing physical and mental activity ceases. Subtle states of steady, undistracted awareness can ultimately be achieved, but awareness of changing phenomena is lost as the mind is fixed or absorbed into its meditation object and mental activity becomes still. The initial objects for focusing attention in order to achieve these states can be physical or mental. A list of forty meditation subjects is given.

Insight meditation may be practiced either after developing at least the first jhāna, or directly, without ever having practiced toward or attained any of the jhānas. In either case, insight meditation employs *momentary* concentration (Pāli: khaṇika samādhi), where samādhi is strengthened to a degree corresponding to that achieved in access concentration (see page 56), so that the mind is relatively stable, concentrated, and present for the moment-by-moment changing expression of unfolding experience, but not so much that it becomes fixed on an unchanging object. One is able to practice insight with momentary concentration, since the experience of changing phenomena is retained. Meditation progresses by observing with clear, steady mindfulness the full range of physical and mental experiences that arise, in order to reveal their changing and selfless nature. It is through insight, the direct experiential realization into the selfless and constantly changing nature of all things, both internal and external, that wisdom arises and clinging is abandoned. According to the system

of the Visuddhimagga, insight cannot occur in jhāna because the mind is absorbed in fixed concentration. For one who has attained jhāna, insight is developed upon emerging from the fixed concentration of jhāna back to momentary concentration, and then considering the defects of jhāna and of all conditioned experience.

One who practices insight based upon the attainment of at least one of the jhānas is called "one who takes calm as his vehicle" (Pāli: samatha-yānika). One who practices insight without developing jhāna is called a "bare-insight worker" or "one whose vehicle is insight" (Pāli: sukkha-vipassaka or suddha-vipassanā-yānika, respectively). Attainment of insight without jhāna is called "dry" insight, because it is said to be "unmoistened" by the moisture of jhāna. None of these terms appear in the Pāli suttas.

One finds very few details about the dry-insight worker and khaṇika-samādhi in the commentarial literature, whether in the commentaries themselves or in the subcommentaries. Between them, however, more is said in the subcommentaries. In general, the Visuddhimagga, the commentaries, and the subcommentaries all seem to treat these topics as if there was already an understanding of them shared by the commentator and his readers. To come to a more analytical understanding, one has to piece together scattered references throughout all of these works.

Three Levels of Concentration

In the path of samatha—tranquillity—samādhi develops in three stages as meditation progresses. The first level of samādhi is *preparatory* concentration (Pāli: parikamma samādhi). This is the initial, undeveloped degree of concentration found in the normal, untrained mind. It is the ordinary level of concentration we have in daily life when focusing our attention on any object and is the level of concentration we bring to meditation practice when we first begin. Preparatory concentration varies greatly from one person to another since each individual has a different degree of natural concentration ability.

The second level of samādhi is *access* or *neighborhood* concentration (Pāli: upacāra samādhi). At this point the meditator is neighboring or close to accessing jhāna. One retains awareness of the full range of internal and

external experiences, but is no longer distracted or agitated by them. The mind is still liable to wander, but much more infrequently, and if the mind does drift from its object, it tends not to be for long. It is at the level of access concentration that the hindrances are temporarily suppressed and a clear, undistracted awareness can be brought to any meditation object.

The third level of samādhi is *fixed* or *attainment* concentration (Pāli: appanā samādhi), which is the concentration existing during jhāna.

The bare-insight worker does not use samatha meditation at all, or uses it just for settling into the meditation. This meditator, at the very outset, takes up the practice of attending to the rise and fall of the five aggregates (or other phenomena), and this contemplation eventually brings khaṇika samādhi and the insight knowledges. In dry-insight practice, samādhi is developed along with insight contemplation, but does not reach the level of the jhānas. Technically, though, one who develops access concentration and then goes on to insight is a samatha-yānika, for the commentaries include access concentration among the attainments of samatha.

The commentary to the Visuddhimagga (Paramatthamañjūsā) sees the force of khaṇika samādhi to be equivalent to that of full absorption, presumably of the first jhāna, and that is on the commentarial understanding of jhāna.

> "Momentary unification of the mind": concentration lasting only for a moment. For that too, when it occurs uninterruptedly on its object in a single mode, and is not overcome by opposition (the five hindrances), fixes the mind immovably, as if in absorption.[3]

Khaṇika samādhi seems to be more vulnerable to opposition, to the influx of the five hindrances, than jhāna, because the mind has not removed itself from the hindrances to the same degree that jhāna has. But its force of stabilization is otherwise seen as equivalent to that of absorption.

Three Signs of Concentration

The term *nimitta* is used in the suttas in various ways, referring to the characteristic or outward appearance of an object; to a portent, foreshadowing,

or sign preceding an event; and to the basis or theme of something. In the Visuddhimagga, *nimitta* is used in a special sense, referring to three specific signs obtained through meditative concentration practice.

The sign accompanying preparatory concentration is called "the preliminary sign" (Pāli: parikamma nimitta). The preliminary sign is the meditation object experienced at the initial stages of meditation practice. For example, in mindfulness-of-breathing meditation, the preliminary sign is the breath, wherever in the body one is focusing on it.

As concentration strengthens, a mental image of the meditation object begins to arise that can be perceived even with eyes closed. In the case of a nonvisual meditation object, such as the breath, a mental image of color or light arises in the mind. This mental image is called "the learning sign" or "acquired image" (Pāli: uggaha nimitta). At this stage, although concentration has begun to strengthen, it is still comparatively unsteady, as is the learning sign itself.

Access concentration is characterized by a steady mental image, called "the counterpart sign" (Pāli: paṭibhāga nimitta). The counterpart sign is unmoving, flawless, extremely clear, and steady. For the development of jhāna in the path of tranquillity, once the counterpart sign appears, the meditator continues to focus on it exclusively.

Concentration has strengthened to a great degree in order for the learning or counterpart sign to emerge. Both are strictly mental images. The Visuddhimagga distinguishes between them as follows:

"The difference between the earlier learning sign and the counterpart sign is this. In the learning sign any fault in the kasiṇa is apparent. But the counterpart sign appears as if breaking out from the learning sign, and a hundred times, a thousand times, more purified, like a looking-glass disk drawn from its case, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed, like the moon's disk coming out from behind a cloud, like cranes against a thunder cloud. But it has neither color nor shape; for if it had, it would be cognizable by the eye, gross, susceptible of comprehension and stamped with the three characteristics. But it is not like that. For it is born only of perception in one who has obtained concentration, being a mere mode of appearance. But as soon as it arises the hindrances are quite suppressed, the defilements subside, and the mind becomes concentrated in access concentration."[4]

The counterpart sign appears differently depending upon the meditation object and the meditator; different meditators can have different kinds of signs even when using the same object.

Developing Samādhi

"Concentration should be developed by one who has taken his stand on virtue that is quite purified. He should sever any of the ten impediments that he may have. He should then approach the Good Friend, the giver of a meditation subject, and he should apprehend from among the forty meditation subjects one that suits his own temperament. After that he should avoid a [dwelling place] unfavorable to the development of concentration and go to live in one that is favorable. Then he should sever the lesser impediments and not overlook any of the directions for development."[5]

Preparation for meditation practice begins by purification of virtue, which is the first of the seven stages of purification. Purification of virtue entails self-restraint and strict adherence to the five minimum training precepts for laypeople, which are nonharming, nonstealing, sexual restraint, verbal restraint, and abstinence from intoxicants. These may be increased to ten or more precepts as desired. Monastics adhere to a detailed code of conduct involving several hundred training rules covering all aspects of behavior. As the purification of virtue matures and is internalized, it manifests additionally as "virtue as volition," the mental attitudes of nonharming, nonstealing, and so on, accompanying the bodily expression of self-restraint.

The next step in creating the supportive conditions for developing concentration is to sever the ten impediments of dwelling, family, gain, class, building (doing construction work), travel, kin, affliction, books, and supernormal powers. The first nine of these are impediments for developing samādhi, while the last is a hindrance only for the development of insight. None of these are inherently impediments, but only so if the meditator has become attached to them or they preoccupy the mind. For example, a dwelling "is an impediment only for anyone whose mind is exercised about the building, etc., that goes on there, or who has many belongings

stored there, or whose mind is caught up by some business connected with it. For any other it is not an impediment."[6]

Once virtue has been purified and the ten impediments have been severed, a suitable meditation subject must be obtained from a qualified person, someone who is as far advanced in his or her own meditation and spiritual practice as can possibly be found. This person is known as "the Good Friend," and should be trusted to select an appropriate meditation subject from among the forty subjects specified, according to what is best suited for the aspirant's temperament. The six temperaments are as follows: greedy, hating, deluded, faithful, intelligent, and speculative.

Now that a meditation subject has been selected, a dwelling should be chosen suitable to the meditator's individual temperament. A person with a greedy temperament should select an ugly, unsightly place that arouses loathing when seeing it. One with a hating or a faithful temperament should select a place that is beautiful and makes one happy when seeing it. The deluded type will do best in a place that is not shut in, with a view of all four directions. For the intelligent type, any dwelling is suitable, whereas the speculative temperament should seek a deep cavern screened by woods, a place not open with a lot of views, since this person's mind tends to wander.

Finally, any lesser impediments should be severed, meaning that any details such as mending worn clothes, cleaning the living quarters, or grooming should be attended to. Now the meditator is ready to begin the formal meditation practice.

Meditation Subjects to Develop Samādhi

The Visuddhimagga spells out forty meditation subjects for samatha meditation. Each subject is best suited to people of particular temperaments and not others, and each leads to different levels of samādhi.

The forty meditation subjects are as follows:

Ten kasiṇas: earth, water, fire, air; the four colors blue, yellow, red, white; light; and limited space

Ten kinds of bodily decay, also called "ten kinds of foulness": bloated corpse, livid corpse, festering corpse, and so forth

Ten recollections: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, virtue, generosity, deities, mindfulness of death, mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of breathing, and peace

Four divine abidings: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity

Four immaterial states: the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception

One perception: repulsiveness in nutriment

One defining: of the four elements

Under the guidance of an experienced teacher, one of these meditation subjects will be selected according to the student's temperament, aptitude, and needs.

Table 1: Meditation Subjects Suitable for Various Temperaments

TEMPERAMENT	RECOMMENDED MEDITATION SUBJECT
Greedy	Any color kasiṇa, beginning with blue, whose color is not pure; 10 kinds of foulness; mindfulness of the body
Aversive, hateful	Any color kasiṇa, beginning with blue, whose color is quite pure; divine abidings
Deluded	Any large-size kasiṇa; mindfulness of breathing; measureless kasiṇas
Faithful	Any color kasiṇa, beginning with blue, whose color is quite pure; divine abidings; any of the 10 recollections, especially the first 6
Intelligent	Any meditation subject; mindfulness of death, recollection of peace, 4 elements, repulsiveness of nutriment

Speculative	A small kasiṇa; any color, beginning with blue, whose color is not pure; mindfulness of breathing; limited kasiṇas
All Temperaments	Any kasiṇa; any of the 4 immaterial states

Jhāna in the Visuddhimagga

The four jhānas of the Pāli suttas have been renamed "rūpa jhānas" (fine-material or formal jhānas) in the Visuddhimagga. The sutta's four "āruppas" (immaterial or formless attainments of boundless space, boundless consciousness, nothingness, and neither-perception-nor-nonperception) are also usually called "āruppas" here, and are grouped with the four rūpa jhānas to form "the eight attainments" (Pāli: aṭṭha samāpatti). In a few instances the āruppas are called "arūpa (formless) jhānas" (the term *arūpa jhāna* is more typical of the Pāli subcommentaries than it is of the commentaries). Some meditation teachers designate the four āruppas as "jhānas 5–8," a nomenclature that does not seem to appear in the commentarial texts, so the term may have originated among modern meditation teachers.

All of the forty meditation subjects previously discussed can lead to access concentration, but only thirty lead to the first jhāna or beyond (see table 2). The ten that lead no farther than access concentration can be used for cultivating each practice's wholesome mental qualities for their own sake.

Table 2: Attainments Possible Through the Various Practices

MEDITATION SUBJECT	DEGREE OF SAMĀDHI THAT MAY BE ATTAINED
8 of the 10 recollections (not including mindfulness of breath and body), perception of repulsiveness in nutriment, and defining of the 4 elements	Access concentration only
10 kinds of foulness and mindfulness of the body	First jhāna only

First 3 divine abidings (loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy)	Up to third jhāna
Mindfulness of breathing, 10 kasiṇas	First 4 jhānas
Fourth divine abiding (equanimity)	Fourth jhāna only (first 3 jhānas must have been previously attained through one of the first 3 divine abiding meditations).
The 4 immaterial states	The 4 āruppas (access concentration and lower jhānas must have been previously attained through any of the kasiṇas, except limited space)

Access concentration, which is characterized by the arising of the particular counterpart sign associated with the meditation subject being employed, is the beginning point for further development into full jhāna absorption. Once access concentration has been reached, the meditator enters jhāna by focusing the attention solely on the counterpart sign until the mind is immersed or absorbed into that counterpart sign.

With the arising of the counterpart sign, the meditator has attained the level of access concentration. It should be noted that only twenty-two of the forty meditation subjects have associated counterpart signs: the ten kasiṇas, ten kinds of foulness, mindfulness of the body, and mindfulness of breathing. The remaining subjects also lead to access concentration, but have various signs other than counterpart signs.

Twelve contemplations have signs accompanying access concentration consisting of the individual essences or special qualities of the meditation subject. These are eight of the ten recollections (excepting mindfulness of the body and of breathing), the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment, the defining of the four elements, the base of boundless consciousness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception. The remaining six meditation subjects have signs that are classified in other ways. In the four divine abidings, access concentration is breaking down the barriers to

those states. The bases of boundless space and nothingness take space and nothingness as their objects and signs, respectively.

Jhāna in the Visuddhimagga is a purely mental meditative state of fixed samādhi, in which the mind has become so intensely concentrated and focused on the mental image of the counterpart sign that all other experiences, including body awareness, are cut off. Fixed concentration is developed such that the mind is fixed or absorbed into the counterpart sign. The jhāna factors each have a function in absorbing the mind, but the object of experience is the counterpart sign itself.

For reference, the jhāna definition from the suttas is repeated here:

"Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and abides in the first jhāna [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, and accompanied by applied and sustained thought.[7] With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, he enters and abides in the second jhāna [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of concentration, and accompanied by inner composure and singleness of mind, without applied and sustained thought. With the fading away of rapture, he abides in equanimity, mindful and clearly aware, feeling pleasure with the body, he enters and abides in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare: 'Equanimous and mindful he abides in pleasure.' With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and abides in the fourth jhāna, [which has] neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness and equanimity."

The Jhāna Factors in Detail

Vitakka-vicāra

Jhāna is attained through sustained concentration on and mental absorption into the counterpart sign, so the sustaining and connecting aspects of the jhāna factors vitakka-vicāra are emphasized in the Visuddhimagga, rather than discursive and other mental qualities suggested by the terms *applied* and *sustained thought*. Continuously connecting and sustaining the mind on the chosen meditation object are especially important aspects of practices leading up to the attainment of jhāna and fixed concentration.

"[In] applied thought (vitakka), hitting upon is what is meant. It has the characteristic of directing the mind onto an object. It is manifested as the leading of the mind onto an object. [In] sustained thought (vicāra), continued sustainment is what is meant. It has the characteristic of continued pressure on the object. It is manifested as keeping consciousness anchored on that object."[8]

Six similes are used to further clarify the nature of vitakka and vicāra, and how they are related. The initial contact of the mind onto the meditation object is likened to the initial striking of a bell, and the continued sustainment of directed attention is like the subsequent ringing of the bell. Similarly, vitakka is comparable to a bird spreading its wings when about to fly or a bee diving toward a lotus when it first catches its scent, while vicāra is like the bird soaring with outstretched wings or the bee buzzing around the flower after diving toward it. Vitakka is like the hand that takes hold and grips a tarnished metal dish; vicāra is like the other hand that rubs it with powder, oil, and a woolen pad. Vitakka is like the potter's supporting hand, and vicāra like the hand that moves back and forth when making a dish. Vitakka is like the pin that remains fixed at the center of a compass, and vicāra is like the pin that revolves around when drawing a circle.

Vitakka functions to initiate mental contact, and vicāra follows. Vitakka carries the mind toward and draws awareness onto the meditation object, creating the initial impression of the mind upon the object. Vicāra secures it there, continuing and sustaining that impression. Vitakka brings the awareness close to the object, and vicāra maintains a continuous, focused degree of concentration. Together they serve to immerse the mind into the counterpart sign, leaving behind the physical object as the mind absorbs into jhāna. Once the level of jhāna has been attained, vitakka-vicāra reflect the qualities of mind continuously connected and sustained in one-pointed concentration, "directing the mind on to the object in an extremely lucid manner, and sustained thought does so pressing the object very hard."[9]

Pīti (Rapture)

Rapture is purely a mental state that "refreshes, thus it is rapture. It has the characteristic of endearing. Its function is to refresh the body and the mind; or its function is to pervade. It is manifested as elation."[10]

Rapture develops in stages as the cultivation of concentration progresses. Five distinct types of rapture are specified, in order of increasing intensity: minor, momentary, showering, uplifting, and pervading. Minor rapture is able to raise the hairs on the body. Momentary rapture is like flashes of lightning occurring at various moments. Showering rapture breaks over the body repeatedly in surges, like waves breaking on the seashore. Uplifting rapture has the power to levitate the body and move it from place to place. Rapture reaches its peak at the level of pervading rapture, at which stage it fills and suffuses the entire body. Of these five types, it is pervading rapture that is referred to as a jhāna factor "which is the root of absorption and comes by growth into association with absorption."[11]

"This fivefold rapture, when conceived and nurtured, perfects the twofold tranquility, that is, bodily and mental tranquility. When tranquility is conceived and matured, it perfects the twofold pleasure, that is, bodily and mental pleasure. When pleasure is conceived and matured, it perfects the threefold concentration, that is, momentary concentration, access concentration, and absorption concentration."[12]

Sukha (Pleasure)

Pleasure, as a jhāna factor, is a pleasant feeling that has the characteristic of gratifying, its function is to intensify associated states, and it is manifested as aid for those states. *Sukha* is also translated and understood as "happiness."

"Whenever the two are associated, rapture is the contentedness at getting a desirable object, and pleasure is the actual experience of it when got . . . If a man exhausted in a desert saw or heard about a pond on the edge of a wood, he would have rapture; if he went into the wood's shade and used the water, he would have pleasure."[13]

Ekaggatā (One-pointedness)

The Visuddhimagga emphasizes the presence of the fifth jhāna factor, one-pointedness, in the first jhāna. "Although one-pointedness is not actually listed among these factors (in the formal definition) . . . it is a factor, too."[14]

The Eight Attainments

The First Attainment

THE FIRST JHĀNA

"The words 'quite secluded from sensual pleasures' . . . express bodily seclusion, while the words 'secluded from unwholesome states' . . . express mental seclusion."[15] Having arrived at access concentration, the meditator has already created strongly supportive conditions for meditation and seclusion by reducing or eliminating external distractions, and focusing solely on the initial meditation subject. From the point of access concentration, all the attention is focused on the counterpart sign, further secluding the meditator from sensual stimulation. As the mind absorbs into the counterpart sign upon entering the first jhāna, the process of seclusion from sensual impressions is strengthened even further, so the first jhāna is said to be born of seclusion since it is well protected from the hindrances.

Upon entering the first jhāna all five factors come to fruition, working in concert, each contributing to the overall quality of the state.

"Applied thought directs the mind onto the object; sustained thought keeps it anchored there. Rapture produced by the success of the effort refreshes the mind whose effort has succeeded through not being distracted by those hindrances; and pleasure intensifies it for the same reason. Then one-pointedness aided by this directing onto, this anchoring, this refreshing and this intensifying, evenly and rightly centers the mind with its remaining associated states on the object consisting in unity. Consequently possession of five factors should be understood as the arising of these five, namely, applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, pleasure and one-pointedness."[16]

Jhāna can be reached through effort, but it will not last unless the mind has been purified from the mental states that obstruct concentration. If jhāna has been entered before completely purifying and suppressing the hindrances, then the meditator "soon comes out of that jhāna again, like a bee that has gone into an unpurified hive, like a king who has gone into an

Study and Practice of Meditation

Tibetan Interpretations of the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions

Leah Zahler

Snow Lion Publications
Ithaca, New York

Chart 2: Objects of Observation

(Objects of observation in *italics* are considered suitable for beginners.)

THE FOUR TYPES OF OBJECT OF OBSERVATION (from the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, Asaṅga's *Grounds of Hearers*, and Kamalashīla's *Stages of Meditation*)

1 Pervasive objects of observation
   a. Non-analytical image
   b. Analytical image
   c. Observing the limits of phenomena
      (1) the varieties (conventional phenomena)
      (2) the mode (their emptiness)
   d. Thorough achievement of the purpose

2 *Objects of observation for purifying behavior*
   a. The unpleasant: for persons in whom desire predominates
   b. Love: for persons in whom hatred predominates
   c. Dependent-arising: for persons in whom obscuration predominates
   d. The divisions of the constituents: for persons in whom pride predominates
   e. The exhalation and inhalation of the breath: for persons in whom discursiveness predominates

3 Objects of observation for [developing] skill
   a. The aggregates
   b. The constituents
   c. The twelve sources
   d. The twelve-linked dependent-arising
   e. The appropriate and the inappropriate

4 Objects of observation for purifying afflictive emotions
   a. Those having the aspect of grossness/peacefulness
   b. Those having the aspect of the truths

OTHER OBJECTS OF OBSERVATION
A Buddha's body
One's own mind

OBJECTS OF OBSERVATION USED IN TANTRA
A divine body (visualization of oneself as having a divine body)
Subtle drops

A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma

The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha

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CHAPTER IX

COMPENDIUM OF MEDITATION SUBJECTS
(*Kammaṭṭhānasangahavibhāga*)

§1 Introductory Verse

Samathavipassanānaṃ bhāvanānam ito paraṃ
Kammaṭṭhānaṃ pavakkhāmi duvidham pi yathākkamaṃ.

From here on I will explain in order the two types of meditation subject for the respective development of calm and insight.

Guide to §1

Two types of meditation subject: The Pali term *kammaṭṭhāna* means literally "field of action" or "workplace." The term is used to designate a subject of meditation, the workplace for the meditator to develop the special attainments in the field of contemplation. In Buddhism two approaches to meditative development are recognized, calm and insight. Of the two, the development of insight is the distinctively Buddhistic form of meditation. This system of meditation is unique to the Buddha's Teaching and is intended to generate direct personal realization of the truths discovered and enunciated by the Buddha. The development of calm is also found in non-Buddhist schools of meditation. However, in the Buddha's Teaching calming meditation is taught because the serenity and concentration which it engenders provide a firm foundation for the practice of insight meditation. Each of the two types of meditation has its own methodology and range of meditation subjects, to be explained in the course of this chapter.

Calm and insight: The word *samatha*, rendered "calm," denotes quietude of mind. The word is almost synonymous with concentration (*samādhi*), though it derives from a different root, *sam*, meaning to become peaceful. Technically, *samatha* is defined as the one-pointedness of mind (*cittass'ekaggatā*) in the eight meditative attainments—the four fine-material-sphere jhānas of the Suttanta system (five in the Abhidhamma system) and the four immaterial-sphere jhānas. These attainments are called calm because, owing to the one-pointedness of mind, the wavering or trepidation of the mind is subdued and brought to an end.[1]

The word *vipassanā*, rendered "insight," is explained as seeing in diverse ways (*vividhākārato dassana*). Insight is the direct meditative perception of phenomena in terms of the three characteristics—impermanence, suffering, and non-self. It is a function of the cetasika of wisdom (*paññā*) directed towards uncovering the true nature of things.

The explanation of calm and insight meditation in this chapter of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* is a summary of the entire *Visuddhimagga*, to which the reader is referred for an elaborate treatment of these topics.

Compendium of Calm
(*samathasangaha*)

Basic Categories

§2 Meditation Subjects

Tattha samathasangahe tāva dasa kasiṇāni, dasa asubhā, dasa anussatiyo, catasso appamaññāyo, ekā saññā, ekaṃ vavatthānaṃ, cattāro āruppā cā ti sattavidhena samathakammaṭṭhānasangaho.

Therein, in the compendium of calm, first the compendium of meditation subjects for developing calm is sevenfold: (1) ten kasinas, (2) ten kinds of foulness, (3) ten recollections, (4) four illimitables, (5) one perception, (6) one analysis, and (7) four immaterial states.

Guide to §2

These seven categories amount to forty separate meditation subjects, to be enumerated in §§6-12. See Table 9.1.

§3 Temperaments

Rāgacaritā, dosacaritā, mohacaritā, saddhācaritā, buddhicaritā, vitakkacaritā cā ti chabbidhena caritasangaho.

The compendium of temperaments is sixfold: (1) the lustful, (2) the hateful, (3) the deluded, (4) the faithful, (5) the intellectual, and (6) the discursive.

Guide to §3

"Temperament" (*carita*) means personal nature, the character of a person as revealed by his or her natural attitudes and conduct. The temperaments of people differ owing to the diversity of their past kammas.

The commentators state that the temperament is determined by the kamma productive of the rebirth-linking consciousness.

Of the six temperaments, the lustful and the faithful types form a parallel pair since both involve a favourable attitude towards the object, one unwholesome, the other wholesome. So too, the hateful and the intellectual temperaments form a parallel pair, since in an unwholesome way hate turns away from its object, while intelligence does so through the discovery of genuine faults. The deluded and the discursive temperaments also form a pair, since a deluded person vacillates owing to superficiality, while a discursive one does so due to facile speculation. For more on the temperaments, see Vism. III, 74-102.

§4 Development

Parikammabhāvanā, upacārabhāvanā, appanābhāvanā cā ti tisso bhāvanā.

The three stages of mental development are: preliminary development, access development, and absorption development.

Guide to §4

Preliminary development occurs from the time one begins the practice of meditation up to the time the five hindrances are suppressed and the counterpart sign emerges. *Access development* occurs when the five hindrances become suppressed and the counterpart sign emerges. It endures from the moment the counterpart sign arises up to the change-of-lineage citta (*gotrabhū*) in the cognitive process culminating in jhāna. The citta that immediately follows change-of-lineage is called absorption. This marks the beginning of *absorption development*, which occurs at the level of the fine-material-sphere jhānas or the immaterial-sphere jhānas.

§5 Signs

Parikammanimittaṃ, uggahanimittaṃ, paṭibhāganimittañ cā ti tīṇi nimittāni ca veditabbāni.

The three signs should be understood as: the preliminary sign, the learning sign, and the counterpart sign.

Guide to §5

The *preliminary sign* is the original object of concentration used during the preliminary stage of practice. The *learning sign* is a mental

replica of the object perceived in the mind exactly as it appears to the physical eyes. The mentally visualized image freed of all defects is the *counterpart sign*. The counterpart sign, it is said, "appears as if breaking out from the learning sign, and a hundred times or a thousand times more purified, ... like the moon's disk coming out from behind a cloud" (Vism. IV, 31). See too §17 below.

The Forty Meditation Subjects (*kammaṭṭhānasamuddesa*)

§6 The Kasinas

Kathaṃ? Paṭhavīkasiṇaṃ, āpokasiṇaṃ, tejokasiṇaṃ, vāyokasiṇaṃ, nīlakasiṇaṃ, pītakasiṇaṃ, lohitakasiṇaṃ, odātakasiṇaṃ, ākāsakasiṇaṃ, ālokakasiṇañ cā ti imāni dasa kasiṇāni nāma.

How? The ten kasinas are: the earth kasina, the water kasina, the fire kasina, the air kasina, the blue kasina, the yellow kasina, the red kasina, the white kasina, the space kasina, and the light kasina.

Guide to §6

The ten kasinas: The word *kasiṇa* means "whole" or "totality." It is so called because the counterpart sign is to be expanded and extended everywhere without limitation.

The earth kasina, etc.: In the case of the *earth kasina* one prepares a disk of about thirty centimeters in diameter, covers it with clay the colour of the dawn, and smoothens it well. This is the kasina-disk, which serves as the preliminary sign for developing the earth kasina. One then places the disk about a meter away and concentrates on it with the eyes partly opened, contemplating it as "earth, earth."

To develop the *water kasina* one may use a vessel full of clear water and contemplate it as "water, water." To develop the *fire kasina* one may kindle a fire and view it through a hole in a piece of leather or a piece of cloth, thinking "fire, fire." One who develops the *air kasina* concentrates on the wind that enters through a window or an opening in the wall, thinking "air, air."

To develop the *colour kasinas* one may prepare a disk of the prescribed size and colour it blue, yellow, red or white. Then one should concentrate upon it by mentally repeating the name of the colour. One may even prepare an object from flowers of the required colour.

The *light kasina* may be developed by concentrating on the moon or on an unflickering lamplight, or on a circle of light cast on the ground, or on a beam of sunlight or moonlight entering through a wall-crevice or hole and cast on a wall.

The *space kasina* can be developed by concentrating on a hole about thirty centimeters in diameter, contemplating it as "space, space."

For a full treatment of the kasinas, see Vism. IV and V.

§7 Foulness

Uddhumātakaṃ, vinīlakaṃ, vipubbakaṃ, vicchiddakaṃ, vikkhāyitakaṃ, vikkhittakaṃ, hatavikkhittakaṃ, lohitakaṃ, puḷavakaṃ, aṭṭhikañ cā ti ime dasa asubhā nāma.

The ten kinds of foulness are: a bloated corpse, a livid corpse, a festering corpse, a dismembered corpse, an eaten corpse, a scattered-in-pieces corpse, a mutilated and scattered-in-pieces corpse, a bloody corpse, a worm-infested corpse, and a skeleton.

Guide to §7

The ten kinds of foulness are corpses in different stages of decay. This set of meditation subjects is especially recommended for removing sensual lust. See Vism. VI.

§8 The Recollections

Buddhānussati, dhammānussati, sanghānussati, sīlānussati, cāgānussati, devatānussati, upasamānussati, maraṇānussati, kāyagatāsati, ānāpānasati cā ti imā dasa anussatiyo nāma.

The ten recollections are: the recollection of the Buddha, the recollection of the Dhamma, the recollection of the Sangha, the recollection of morality, the recollection of generosity, the recollection of the devas, the recollection of peace, the recollection of death, mindfulness occupied with the body, and mindfulness of breathing.

Guide to §8

The recollection of the Buddha, etc.: The first three recollections are practised by calling to mind the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, as enumerated in the traditional formulas.[2]

The recollection of morality is the practice of mindfully recollecting the special qualities of virtuous conduct, considered as untorn and free from breach and blemish.

TABLE 9.1:
THE FORTY MEDITATION SUBJECTS AT A GLANCE

SUBJECT	TEMPERAMENT	DEVELOPMENT			SIGN			JHĀNA
Kasina (10)								
Earth kasina	All	Pr	Ac	Ab	Pr	Ln	Cp	1st to 5th
Water "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	" "
Fire "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	" "
Air "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	" "
Blue "	Hateful	"	"	"	"	"	"	" "
Yellow "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	" "
Red "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	" "
White "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	" "
Space "	All	"	"	"	"	"	"	" "
Light "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	" "
Foulness (10)								
Bloated corpse	Lustful	"	"	"	"	"	"	1st only
Discoloured "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Festering "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Dismembered "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Eaten "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Scattered "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Mutilated "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Bloody "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Worm-infested "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Skeleton "	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Recollections (10)								
Buddha	Faithful	"	"	...	"	"	...	None
Dhamma	"	"	"	...	"	"	...	"
Sangha	"	"	"	...	"	"	...	"

TABLE 9.1 – Continued

SUBJECT	TEMPERAMENT	DEVELOPMENT			SIGN			JHĀNA
Morality	Faithful	Pr	Ac	...	Pr	Ln	...	None
Generosity	"	"	"	...	"	"	...	"
Devas	"	"	"	...	"	"	...	"
Peace	Intellectual	"	"	...	"	"	...	"
Death	"	"	"	...	"	"	...	"
Body	Lustful	"	"	Ab	"	"	Cp	1st
Breathing	Deluded, discursive	"	"	"	"	"	"	1st to 5th
Illimitables (4)								
Lovingkindness	Hateful	"	"	"	"	"	...	1st to 4th
Compassion	"	"	"	"	"	"	...	" "
Appreciative joy	"	"	"	"	"	"	...	" "
Equanimity	"	"	"	"	"	"	...	5th only
Perception (1)								
Food as loathsome	Intellectual	"	"	...	"	"	...	None
Analysis (1)								
Four elements	Intellectual	"	"	...	"	"	...	None
Immaterial States								
Infinite space	All	"	"	"	"	"	...	1st IS jhāna
Infinite consness.	"	"	"	"	"	"	...	2nd IS jhāna
Nothingness	"	"	"	"	"	"	...	3rd IS jhāna
Neither-perc.-nor-non-perc.	"	"	"	"	"	"	...	4th IS jhāna

KEY: Pr = preliminary; Ac = access; Ab = absorption; Ln = learning; Cp = counterpart.

The recollection of generosity involves mindful reflection on the special qualities of generosity.

The recollection of the devas is practised by mindfully considering: "The deities are born in such exalted states on account of their faith, morality, learning, generosity, and wisdom. I too possess these same qualities." This meditation subject is a term for mindfulness with the special qualities of one's own faith, etc., as its object and with the devas standing as witnesses.

The recollection of peace is contemplation on the peaceful attributes of Nibbāna.

The recollection of death is contemplation of the fact that one's own death is absolutely certain, that the arrival of death is utterly uncertain, and that when death comes one must relinquish everything.

Mindfulness occupied with the body is contemplation of the thirty-two repulsive parts of the body—hairs of the head, hairs of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, etc.

Mindfulness of breathing is attentiveness to the touch sensation of the in-breath and out-breath in the vicinity of the nostrils or upper lip, wherever the air is felt striking as one breathes in and out.

On the ten recollections, see Vism. VII and VIII.

§9 The Illimitables

Mettā, karuṇā, muditā, upekkhā cā ti imā catasso appamaññāyo nāma, brahmavihārā ti pi pavuccanti.

The four illimitables, also called divine abodes, are: loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity.

Guide to §9

The four illimitables: These states are called illimitables (*appamaññā*) because they are to be radiated towards all living beings without limit or obstruction. They are also called *brahmavihāras*, "divine abodes" or sublime states, because they are the mental dwellings of the Brahmā divinities in the Brahma-world.

Loving-kindness (*mettā*) is the wish for the welfare and happiness of all living beings. It helps to eliminate ill will.

Compassion (*karuṇā*) is that which makes the heart quiver when others are subject to suffering. It is the wish to remove the suffering of others, and it is opposed to cruelty.

Appreciative joy (*muditā*) is the quality of rejoicing at the success and prosperity of others. It is the congratulatory attitude, and helps to eliminate envy and discontent over the success of others.

Equanimity (*upekkhā*), as a divine abode, is the state of mind that regards others with impartiality, free from attachment and aversion. An impartial attitude is its chief characteristic, and it is opposed to favouritism and resentment.

For a full explanation of the divine abidings, see Vism. IX.

§10 One Perception

Āhāre paṭikkūlasaññā ekā saññā nāma.

The one perception is the perception of loathsomeness in food.

Guide to §10

The perception of the loathsomeness of food is the perception which arises through reflection upon the repulsive aspects of nutriment, such as the difficulty of searching for food, the repulsiveness of using it, the digestive process, excretion, etc. See Vism. XI, 1-26.

§11 One Analysis

Catudhātuvavatthānaṃ ekaṃ vavatthānaṃ nāma.

The one analysis is the analysis of the four elements.

Guide to §11

The analysis into the four elements involves contemplation of the body as compounded out of the four great essentials—the earth element as manifested in the solid parts of the body, the water element in the bodily fluids, the fire element in the body's heat, and the air element in the breath and vital currents. See Vism. XI, 27-117.

§12 The Immaterial States

Ākāsānañcāyatanādayo cattāro āruppā nāmā ti sabbathā pi samathaniddese cattāḷīsa kammaṭṭhānāni bhavanti.

The four immaterial states are the base of infinite space, and so forth. Thus in the exposition of calm there are altogether forty subjects of meditation.

Guide to §12

These are the objects of the four immaterial jhānas: (1) the base of infinite space; (2) the base of infinite consciousness; (3) the base of

nothingness; and (4) the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. See Vism. X.

§13 Analysis of Suitability (*sappāyabheda*)

Caritāsu pana dasa asubhā kāyagatāsatisankhātā koṭṭhāsabhāvanā ca rāgacaritassa sappāyā.

Catasso appamaññāyo nīlādīni ca cattāri kasiṇāni dosacaritassa.

Ānāpānaṃ mohacaritassa vitakkacaritassa ca.

Buddhānussati ādayo cha saddhācaritassa.

Maraṇa-upasama-saññā-vavatthānāni buddhicaritassa.

Sesāni pana sabbāni pi kammaṭṭhānāni sabbesam pi sappāyāni.

Tatthā pi kasiṇesu puthulaṃ mohacaritassa, khuddakaṃ vitakkacaritass' evā ti.

Ayam ettha sappāyabhedo.

With respect to temperaments, the ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness occupied with the body, i.e. meditation on the thirty-two parts, are suitable for those of a lustful temperament.

The four illimitables and the four coloured kasinas are suitable for those of a hateful temperament.

Mindfulness of breathing is suitable for those of a deluded and discursive temperament.

The six recollections of the Buddha, and so forth, are suitable for those of a faithful temperament; recollection of death, of peace, the perception of loathsomeness in food, and the analysis of the four elements, are suitable for those of an intellectual temperament.

All of the remaining subjects of meditation are suitable for all temperaments.

Of the kasinas, a wide one is suitable for one of deluded temperament, and a small one for one of discursive temperament.

Herein, this is the analysis by way of suitability.

Analysis of Development (*bhāvanābheda*)

§14 By way of the Three Stages

Bhāvanāsu pana sabbatthā pi parikammabhāvanā labbhat' eva.

Buddhānussati ādisu aṭṭhasu saññā-vavatthānesu cā ti dasasu kammaṭṭhānesu upacārabhāvanā va sampajjati, natthi appanā.

Sesesu pana samatiṃsa kammaṭṭhānesu appanābhāvanā pi sampajjati.

The preliminary stage of development is attainable in all these forty subjects of meditation. In ten subjects of meditation—the eight recollections of the Buddha and so forth, the one perception, and the one analysis—only access development is attained but not absorption. In the thirty remaining subjects of meditation, the absorption stage of development is also attained.

Guide to §14

In the ten subjects beginning with the recollection of the Buddha, the mind is engaged in reflecting upon many different qualities and themes, and this involves an intense application of thought (*vitakka*) which prevents one-pointedness from gaining the fixity needed to attain absorption.

§15 By way of Jhāna

Tatthā pi dasa kasiṇāni ānāpānañ ca pañcakajjhānikāni. Dasa asubhā kāyagatāsati ca paṭhamajjhānikā. Mettādayo tayo catukkajjhānikā. Upekkhā pañcamajjhānikā. Iti chabbīsati rūpāvacarajjhānikāni kammaṭṭhānāni. Cattāro pana āruppā arūpajjhānikā.

Ayam ettha bhāvanābhedo.

Therein, the ten kasinas and mindfulness of breathing produce five jhānas; the ten foulnesses and mindfulness occupied with the body (only) the first jhāna; the first three illimitables, such as loving-kindness, four jhānas; equanimity, the fifth jhāna (only).

Thus these twenty-six subjects of meditation produce fine-material-sphere jhānas.

The four immaterial states produce immaterial jhānas.

Herein, this is the analysis by way of development.

Guide to §15

The ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness occupied with the body both require the exercise of *vitakka*, and thus they are incapable of

inducing the jhānas higher than the first, which are free from *vitakka*. The first three illimitables necessarily arise in association with joyful feeling (*somanassa*) and thus can lead only to the four lower jhānas, which are accompanied by joyful feeling. The illimitable of equanimity arises in association with neutral feeling, and thus can occur only at the level of the fifth jhāna, which is accompanied by equanimous feeling.

Analysis of the Terrain (*gocarabheda*)

§16 The Signs

Nimittesu pana parikammanimittaṃ uggahanimittañ ca sabbatthā pi yathārahaṃ pariyāyena labbhant' eva. Paṭibhāganimittaṃ pana kasiṇ'-āsubha-koṭṭhāsa-ānāpānesv' eva labbhati. Tattha hi paṭibhāganimittam ārabbha upacārasamādhi appanāsamādhi ca pavattanti.

Of the three signs, the preliminary sign and the learning sign are generally found in relation to every object, in the appropriate way. But the counterpart sign is found only in the kasinas, foulness, the parts of the body, and mindfulness of breathing. It is by means of the counterpart sign that access concentration and absorption concentration occur.

§17 Appearance of the Signs in Meditation

Kathaṃ? Ādikammikassa hi paṭhavīmaṇḍalādisu nimittaṃ uggaṇhantassa tam ālambanaṃ parikammanimittan ti pavuccati. Sā ca bhāvanā parikammabhāvanā nāma.

How? When a beginner apprehends a particular sign from the earth disk, etc., that object is called the preliminary sign, and that meditation is called preliminary development.

Yadā pana taṃ nimittaṃ cittena samuggahitaṃ hoti, cakkhunā passantass' eva manodvārassa āpātham āgataṃ tadā tam ev' ālambanaṃ uggahanimittaṃ nāma. Sā ca bhāvanā samādhiyati.

When that sign has been thoroughly apprehended and enters into range of the mind door just as if it were seen by the eye, then it is called the learning sign, and that meditation becomes concentrated.

Tathāsamāhitassa pan' etassa tato paraṃ tasmiṃ uggahanimitte parikammasamādhinā bhāvanam anuyuñjantassa yadā tappaṭibhāgaṃ vatthudhammavimuccitaṃ paññattisankhātaṃ bhāvanāmayam ālambanaṃ citte sannisinnaṃ samappitaṃ hoti, tadā taṃ paṭibhāganimittaṃ samuppannan ti pavuccati.

When one is thus concentrated, one then applies oneself to meditation by means of that preliminary concentration based on that learning sign. As one does so, an object which is the counterpart of that (learning sign) becomes well established and fixed in the mind—(an object) which is freed of the flaws of the original object, reckoned as a concept, born of meditation. Then it is said that the counterpart sign has arisen.

§18 Attainment of Jhāna

Tato paṭṭhāya paripanthavippahīnā kāmāvacarasamādhisankhātā upacārabhāvanā nipphannā nāma hoti. Tato paraṃ tam eva paṭibhāganimittaṃ upacārasamādhinā samāsevantassa rūpāvacarapaṭhamajjhānam appeti.

Thereafter, access development is accomplished, consisting in concentration of the sense sphere in which the obstacles have been abandoned. Following this, as one cultivates the counterpart sign by means of access concentration, one enters the first jhāna of the fine-material sphere.

Tato paraṃ tam eva paṭhamajjhānaṃ āvajjanaṃ, samāpajjanaṃ, adhiṭṭhānaṃ, vuṭṭhānaṃ, paccavekkhaṇā cā ti imāhi pañcahi vasitāhi vasībhūtaṃ katvā vitakkādikam oḷārikangaṃ pahānāya vicārādisukhumang'uppattiyā padahato yathākkamaṃ dutiyajjhānādayo yathāraham appenti.

Following this, one masters the first jhāna by means of the five kinds of mastery—in adverting, attainment, resolution, emergence, and reviewing. Then, by striving to abandon the successive gross factors such as initial application, etc., and to arouse the successive subtle factors, such as sustained application, etc., one enters the second jhāna, etc., in due sequence according to one's ability.

Icc' evaṃ paṭhavīkasiṇādīsu dvāvīsatikammaṭṭhānesu paṭibhāganimittam upalabbhati. Avasesesu pana appamaññā sattapaññattiyaṃ pavattanti.

Thus the counterpart sign is found in twenty-two meditation subjects—the earth kasina, etc.—but of the remaining (eighteen) subjects, the illimitables occur with the concept of beings (as their object).

Guide to §18

The five kinds of mastery: Of these, mastery in adverting (*āvajjanavasitā*) is the ability to advert to the different jhāna factors such as *vitakka, vicāra*, etc., quickly and easily in accordance with one's wish. Mastery in attainment (*samāpajjanavasitā*) is the ability to attain the different jhānas quickly and easily, without many bhavangas arising in the process of their attainment. Mastery in resolution (*adhiṭṭhānavasitā*) is the ability to remain in the jhāna for a length of time determined by one's prior resolution. Mastery in emergence (*vuṭṭhānavasitā*) is the ability to emerge from the jhānas quickly and easily. And mastery in reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇāvasitā*) is the ability to review the jhāna from which one has just emerged. Besides these five masteries, the meditator is also encouraged to develop skill in extending the visualized counterpart sign by gradually increasing its size until it appears as if encompassing the entire world.

§19 The Immaterial Attainments

Ākāsavajjitakasiṇesu pana yaṃ kiñci kasiṇaṃ ugghāṭetvā laddham ākāsaṃ anantavasena parikammaṃ karontassa paṭhamāruppam appeti. Tam eva paṭhamāruppaviññāṇaṃ anantavasena parikammaṃ karontassa dutiyāruppam appeti. Tam eva paṭhamāruppaviññāṇābhāvaṃ pana natthi kiñcī ti parikammaṃ karontassa tatiyāruppam appeti. Tatiyāruppaṃ santam etaṃ paṇītam etan ti parikammaṃ karontassa catutthāruppam appeti.

Next one withdraws any kasina except the space kasina, and does the preliminary work by contemplating the space that remains as infinite. By doing so, one enters the first immaterial attainment. When one does the preliminary work by contemplating the first immaterial-sphere consciousness as infinite, one enters the second immaterial attainment. When one does the preliminary work by contemplating the absence of the first immaterial-sphere consciousness thus, "There is nothing," one enters the third immaterial attainment. When one does the preliminary work by contemplating the third immaterial attainment

thus, "This is peaceful, this is sublime," one enters the fourth immaterial attainment.

§20 Other Meditation Subjects

Avasesesu ca dasasu kammaṭṭhānesu buddhaguṇādikam ālambanam ārabbha parikammaṃ katvā tasmiṃ nimitte sādhukam uggahite tatth' eva parikammañ ca samādhiyati, upacāro ca sampajjati.

With the other ten meditation subjects, when one does the preliminary work by taking the virtues of the Buddha, etc., as one's object, when that sign has been thoroughly acquired, one becomes concentrated upon it by means of preliminary development and access concentration is also accomplished.

§21 Direct Knowledge

Abhiññāvasena pavattamānaṃ pana rūpāvacarapañcamajjhānaṃ abhiññāpādakā pañcamajjhānā vuṭṭhahitvā adhiṭṭheyyādikam āvajjetvā parikammaṃ karontassa rūpādisu ālambanesu yathāraham appeti.

Abhiññā ca nāma:

Iddhividhaṃ dibbasotaṃ paracittavijānanā
Pubbenivāsānussati dibbacakkhū ti pañcadhā.

Ayam ettha gocarabhedo.

Niṭṭhito ca samathakammaṭṭhānanayo.

Having emerged from the fifth jhāna taken as a basis for direct knowledge, having adverted to the resolution, etc., when one does the preliminary work, one enters into the fifth fine-material-sphere jhāna occurring by way of direct knowledge with respect to such objects as visible forms, etc.

The direct knowledges are fivefold: the supernormal powers, the divine ear, knowledge of others' minds, recollection of past lives, and the divine eye.

Herein, this is the analysis of the terrain.

The method of meditation
for developing calm is finished.

Guide to §21

Having emerged from the fifth jhāna, etc.: *The Visuddhimagga* explains the procedure for exercising the direct knowledges thus: "(After accomplishing the preliminaries) he attains jhāna as the basis for direct knowledge and emerges from it. Then if he wants to become a hundred,[3] he does the preliminary work thus, 'Let me become a hundred,' after which he again attains jhāna as the basis for direct knowledge, emerges, and resolves. He becomes a hundred simultaneously with the resolving consciousness" (XII,57).

The direct knowledges are fivefold:

(1) *Supernormal powers* include the ability to display multiple forms of one's body, to appear and vanish at will, to pass through walls unhindered, to dive in and out of the earth, to walk on water, to travel through the air, to touch and stroke the sun and moon, and to exercise mastery over the body as far as the Brahma-world.

(2) *The divine ear* enables one to hear subtle and coarse sounds, both far and near.

(3) *The knowledge of others' minds* is the ability to read the thoughts of others and to know directly their states of mind.

(4) *The recollection of past lives* is the ability to know one's past births and to discover various details about those births.

(5) *The divine eye* is the capacity for clairvoyance, which enables one to see heavenly or earthly events, both far or near. Included in the divine eye is the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings (*cutūpapātañāṇa*), that is, direct perception of how beings pass away and re-arise in accordance with their kamma.

These kinds of direct knowledge are all mundane and are dependent on mastery over the fifth jhāna. The texts also mention a sixth direct knowledge. This is the knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*), which is supramundane and arises through insight.

Compendium of Insight
(*vipassanāsangaha*)

Basic Categories

§22 Stages of Purification

Vipassanākammaṭṭhāne pana sīlavisuddhi, cittavisuddhi, diṭṭhivisuddhi, kankhāvitaraṇavisuddhi, maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhi, paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi, ñāṇadassanavisuddhi cā ti sattavidhena visuddhisangaho.

TABLE 9.2: THE SEVEN STAGES OF PURIFICATION

Purification	Practice
I. Of virtue	Four kinds of purified virtue
II. Of mind	Access and absorption concentration
III. Of view	Understanding characteristics, etc., of mental and material phenomena
IV. By overcoming doubt	Discernment of conditions for mental and material phenomena
V. By knowledge and vision of path and not path	1. Knowledge of comprehension 2. Knowledge of rise and fall (tender phase) Distinguishing wrong path from right path of contemplation
VI. By knowledge and vision of the way	2. Knowledge of rise and fall (mature phase) 3. Knowledge of dissolution 4. Knowledge of fearfulness 5. Knowledge of danger 6. Knowledge of disenchantment 7. Knowledge of desire for deliverance 8. Knowledge of reflection 9. Knowledge of equanimity towards formations 10. Knowledge of conformity
Between VI and VII	11. Change-of-lineage
VII. By knowledge and vision	Knowledge of four supramundane paths

NOTE: The insight knowledges are enumerated in the right-hand column using arabic numbers.

In insight meditation, the compendium of purifications is sevenfold: (1) purification of virtue, (2) purification of mind, (3) purification of view, (4) purification by overcoming doubt, (5) purification by knowledge and vision as to what is the path and what is not the path, (6) purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and (7) purification by knowledge and vision.

Guide to §22

These seven stages of purification are to be attained in sequence, each being the support for the one that follows. The first purification corresponds to the morality aspect of the path, the second to the concentration

Derek Kolleeny

BUDDHIST MEDITATION
IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

A General Exposition According to the Pāli Canon of The Theravāda School

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CHAPTER 4

JHĀNA AND SĀMĀDHI

INASMUCH AS each of the technical terms used in the Buddhist system of meditation can be applied to the whole work of mental training, a comprehensive expression of the entire system is included in the words Jhāna and Samādhi. These terms, which, from their usage in the Pāli Scriptures are often very abstruse, need amplification ; it seems well to add a survey of them here, which will include both their canonical and commentarial interpretation.

1.—JHĀNA

The word Jhāna, which corresponds to the Sanskrit "Dhyāna", has a wider meaning than the latter. It implies essentially "Contemplation" or "Meditation," and in its Buddhistic use embraces not only that extensive system of mental development, but also the process of transmuting the lower state of consciousness into the higher states, from the form-worlds, through the worlds of the formless, to the summit of progress in religious training.

According to its canonical usage and commentarial exposition, the word Jhāna has two possible meanings. On the one hand it means "to contemplate" (a given object) or "to examine closely" the characteristics of phenomenal existence ; and on the other it means "to eliminate" the hindrances, or the lower mental elements, which are detrimental to higher progress. In the latter use it is connected by Buddhist commentators with the verb "jhāpeti," "to burn". Today, however, the word Jhāna is more generally accepted in the former sense, that of "meditation"; and both Jhāna and Dhyāna are used to denote the system of meditation.

As we have already seen, the formula given in the Nikāyas, (as for example in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta), attributes to Jhāna the five psychic factors, Vitakka, Vicāra, Pīti, Sukha and Ekaggatā, which are induced by the expulsion of the five hindrances. It should therefore be noted that there is no Jhāna apart from these five factors, which raise the consciousness from normal sensuous experience to the higher form of purity ; and the consciousness associated with these five factors, is through their intrinsic nature named Jhāna.

In the ordinary state of mind these psychic factors may appear occasionally as the common elements of psychological processes. But then they arise as the conditions of the complex state of sensory emotion and hence do not correspond to Jhāna, which is to be attained, as the formula emphasizes, by the attenuation of sense desires and evil thoughts.

The mind that lusts after sense stimuli is not, and cannot be concentrated upon an object of a salutary nature. It does not enter upon the path of progress, which leads to release from sensory emotions ; and the mind that is harassed by ill-will cannot proceed at once towards one-pointedness. The mind that is submerged in sloth and torpor is not fit for intensive mental work. Obsessed by worry, remorse, distraction and agitation, the mind does not repose but wanders ; struck by perplexity and doubt, it does not even approach the path that leads to the attainment of the Jhāna state. Thus these five sensuous desires, ill-will, sloth and torpor, distraction, agitation and perplexity, are inimical to Jhāna, and are therefore called "Nīvaraṇa," "Hindrances to progress." Such hindrances must be eliminated by a systematic practice of the contemplative exercises. Thus we find, "Putting away covetousness for wordly things, he abides with his thought free from covetousness, etc." (D.I. 75).

Of the five constituent factors of Jhāna, Vitakka (alluded to as "Sammā Saṅkappa"—Vibh. 257), here means the Right Thinking which eliminates sloth and torpor, and

applies the mind and its concomitants to the object of concentration.

Vicāra, which means the "sustained mental application" upon the same object with a view to "investigation" (anupekkhanatā), keeps the mind continually engaged in the exercise ; and thereby doubt is removed.

Pīti, or Zest, arising in opposition to ill-will, brings about by degrees an expansion of interest in the same object. It is subdivided in the commentaries, (Vism. 1.43 and Asl. 115), into five: (1) Khuddakā Pīti, a slight or immature sense of interest ; (2) Khaṇikā Pīti, growing interest, momentarily keener ; (3) Okkantikā Pīti, absorbing interest ; (4) Ubbegā Pīti, an interest amounting to thrilling point ; (5) Pharaṇā Pīti, fully developed, intensive rapture or zest which arises infusing the whole being of body and mind. The last stage is that implied in the Jhāna formula ; it is associated with an intensive state of concentration.

Sukha, or "pleasurable, reposeful, happy feelings," which are invariably consequent upon this diffused zest, expel distraction and agitation, and lead the mind to concentration. "Sukhino cittaṃ Samādhiyati," "The mind of him who is happy, becomes concentrated." (D.I. 75, etc.)

Finally, concentration thus being intensified by the other four coefficient factors constitutes the one-pointedness of the mind with the expulsion of sensuous desire.

2.—THE FOURFOLD DIVISION OF JHĀNA

When these five factors arise in the mind, thus eliminating the five hindrances, the first stage of Jhāna is attained. This Jhāna, being the transition of consciousness from the plane of sense objects, is said to be the escape from sensuous desires: "From sense desire this is the escape, this is the way out." (D.III. 275). The Buddha is said to have

attained this first Jhāna even in his childhood[1] and this Jhāna was his entry into the path of enlightenment. (M.I. 246). When this Jhāna is attained for the first time, the consciousness has passed beyond all lower impulse and emotion caused by external objects, and is opposed to the lust of sense desires. The mind becomes self-possessed, since it is established in inward serenity and unshaken by sense stimuli. The Jhāyī experiences a new life, a new vision, a valuable reward for his effort, unlike anything he has ever before experienced. His whole being is suffused with indescribable joy and happiness ; in the words of the Dīgha Nikāya, " There is nothing in his body untouched by zest and happiness, born of inward solitude." (D.I. 73).

This is the first attainment in the course of the development of contemplation ; while it is the preliminary to the entry into other states of Jhāna. Hence it is called the first Jhāna, (Paṭhama-jjhānaṃ). The five factors, which form the process of thinking upon the object and the burning of states opposite in character, are explicitly called "Jhāna-aṅga," "constituent parts." The conciousness associated with them is the moral consciousness of the form world, (Rūpāvacara). It is so called because the Jhāyī, when in this state of consciousness, takes rebirth in the corresponding Rūpa world, Brahmaloka, where there are no sense objects giving rise to lust (Kāma).

It should be noted here that among the five factors of the first Jhāna, ekaggatā does not appear as such in the formula given in the Nikāyas. But, that it is a factor is revealed in the discussion between the Elders, Sāriputta and Mahā Koṭṭhita, (M.I. 294), where the first Jhāna is said to contain five parts, the fifth being " ekaggatā." It is also stated in the *Vibhanga* (p. 257) "Jhāna is Vitakka, Vicāra, Pīti, Sukha and Cittass'-ekaggatā." Buddhaghosa Thera commenting thereon says : " Whatever may have been the intention of the Buddha in making the outline (in the Suttanta formula), it is thus revealed in the *Vibhaṅga*." (Vism.l. 147).

1. The story of the infant Prince Gotama's attainment of this Jhāna is given in detail in the *Jātaka* A i. 57.

3 —HIGHER JHĀNA

The systematic elimination of the factors of the first Jhāna produces the higher stages of Jhāna, intensifying it at each stage. The Jhāyī who has just attained the first Jhāna, by continuous practice fixes his attention upon the same psychic symbol, derived from a Kasiṇa device, or upon any other given subject of meditation, and practices this repeatedly in order to make it habitual in his psychological processes. This practice is known as "Vasitā" and it is fivefold : Reflection, (Āvajjanā,); Entry, (Samāpajjanā) ; Establishing, (Adhiṭṭhāna) ; Rising, (Vuṭṭhāna) and Reviewing, (Paccavekkhanā). In the practice of this supplementary method of the training of Jhāna in these five ways, the Jhāyī acquires the ability to reflect upon the first Jhāna just attained or upon one of its five factors, wherever he pleases, whenever he pleases, and for so long as he pleases, without sluggishness in reflecting. When he becomes able to direct the mind immediately to the five Jhāna factors, then the habit of reflection (Āvajjana-Vasitā), is established. In the same way the ability to enter into the state of Jhāna, to remain in it as long as he wishes, to rise from it whenever he wishes, to review or recollect it, must be acquired.

He who is well versed in these five ways, rises from the first Jhāna, after his practice of it has been perfected, and realises the weakness inherent therein : "This Jhāna has the service of Vitakka and Vicāra, which have a near enemy in the hindrances. It is not entirely calm, for it still has the waves of attentive, sustained thinking." He sees that their absence would result in greater calm. Then giving up his attachment to the first Jhāna, he strives to attain the second Jhāna by dispensing with Vitakka and Vicāra. In the course of the practice his mind rises in zest, happiness and one-pointedness, which constitute the second Jhāna, born of concentration, tranquillity and developed exaltation of mind. Thus the simultaneous elimination of Vitakka and Vicāra gives rise to the second Jhāna, which is born of "Ekodibhāva," "Supreme Exalta-

tion." Although the first Jhāna is associated with concentration, it is the second Jhāna which is worthy of being called concentration because of its being born of Samādhi and its freedom from disturbing qualities; it is unshakeable, since it is well established.

When the second Jhāna is thus attained, the Jhāyī must be well practised in the fivefold habit, (Vasitā), as was said above, and rising from the second Jhāna, when it has been perfected, he perceives the fault therein: "This Jhāna has a near enemy in Vitakka and Vicāra. It is weakened by the emotion of zest, which is a perturbed condition of mind." He then strives to attain the third Jhāna, because of its calmness, and ceases to hanker after the second. When he repeats his meditation, as he has done before, the third Jhāna arises, devoid of zest, but with happiness and concentration. He abides therein with equanimity and mindfulness, maintaining the process of mental flux in a well balanced state. This is the most blissful state of happiness, exceedingly sweet; for it is free from even the slightest disturbance. There is no bliss belonging to the aggregate of feelings greater than this. A person who has attained this state of Jhāna, is said to be happy, (sukhavihārī). But owing to the presence of mindfulness and awareness, there is no longing for this bliss, nor is there any change in the mind of the Jhāyī.

When he has become thoroughly acquainted with this Jhāna, the Jhāyī perceives that even this state has its weakness; for it has a near enemy in zest and owing to the gross nature of happiness it is unstable. Giving up all hankering after this Jhāna, he strives to attain the fourth Jhāna, because of its calmness. He continues his concentration upon the same object (namely the mental image derived from an object such as one of the Kasiṇas) in order to put away the gross factor and attain perfect calm. Then the fourth Jhāna arises, accompanied by a neutral state of feeling in regard to his body and mind and by pure mindfulness born of equanimity. In this fourth

Jhāna there ensues that mental emancipation (Cetovimutti), which is a neutral feeling (M.I. 296). In this state the Jhāyī experiences neither bodily pain nor happiness, neither mental pain nor pleasure. He has now neutralized individuality, he is remote from lust and hate, since their cause, namely, discrimination between pleasant and unpleasant, is now destroyed.

In this fourth stage of Jhāna the consciousness is associated with perfect mindfulness and unmodified equanimity free from all attachment to the world of the senses and to the three lower stages of Jhāna. All the activities of the lower mind are completely arrested and the current of mental flow towards sensation is checked. But the Jhāyī who has attained this Jhāna consciousness is not by any means in a state of hypnotic trance, or sub-conscious state produced by auto-suggestion, or, as it were, in a cataleptic condition. On the contrary, he is intensely conscious and mindful of the object whereon his mind is concentrated, free from all mental disturbances, having eliminated every kind of activity, both bodily and mental. As it is said in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (iv. 217). "In the first Jhāna stage the Jhāyin is free from speech; for the innermost silence is manifested after the five hindrances are gone. In the second Jhāna he is free from Vitakka and Vicāra, which are called "Vacī Saṅkhāra,"[1] or the "faculty of uttering words." In the third Jhāna he is free from the emotion of zest; and in the fourth Jhāna he is free from breathing in and out, (Assāsapassāsa), which is called " Kāya-saṅkhāra" or "the manifestation of the motion, the vital current of the body."[1] Thus with perfect stillness of body and mind, he lives visualizing the condition within himself (Attani Dhammam Sampassamāno viharati, A.V. 209).

The residual content of the fourth Jhāna consciousness, which is dominated by sublimated and clarified mindfulness, the result of perfect equanimity, gives rise to inward vision or intuition. This Jhāna therefore is specially called "Pādaka" or "basic Jhāna" in the commentaries; for in this state the Jhāyin is apt and fit for clairvoyance

[1] Cf. M.I. 301; S.IV. 293; Yamaka I. 229.

and clairaudience and other supernormal attainments, and it leads to the point at which the Āsavas finally cease. These four stages which involve the gradual elimination of the factors of weakness in the mind and the gradual transition from a lower state to a higher, are to be understood as embraced by the term "Jhāna."

4.—THE FIVEFOLD SYSTEM

In the Abhidhamma (Dhs.160–175) we find a fivefold division of Jhāna, which is supplementary to the fourfold division of the Nikāyas. In this system Vitakka and Vicāra are eliminated in successive stages, instead of simultaneously. Whereas in the fourfold system the second Jhāna is attained by the elimination of Vitakka and Vicāra, and thus retains three factors ; in the fivefold system the elimination of Vitakka only produces a second Jhāna of four factors. With the elimination of Vicāra the third Jhāna is attained. Herein lies the difference between the two systems.

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According to the commentary this was an optional teaching, varying with the particular mental disposition of the disciple. To some, reviewing the first Jhāna, Vitakka is the first factor to appear gross, while the other four seem calm. To such a one the Teacher formulated a second Jhāna with four factors, that is without Vitakka, but with Vicāra, Pīti, Sukha and Ekaggatā.

Furthermore, the Buddha expounded three kinds of Samādhi in the Suttas : "Bhikkhus, the three kinds of Samādhi are—(1) Samādhi with Vitakka and Vicāra, (2) without Vitakka and with Vicāra only, (3) without Vitakka and without Vicāra." (A.I. 299 ; IV. 310 ; cf.S.IV. 360, 363 ; and K.V. 413.) Of these, the first and third are given in the fourfold Jhāna system, but not the second. It should be understood that the fivefold system was devised to show that Samādhi which has Vicāra, but not Vitakka, (Asl. 179), and also which is combined with the method of Arūpa (formless) Jhāna.

This fuller development in the Abhidhamma divides the Jhāna consciousness into five ; and thus, combined with Vīpāka and Kiriyā, we have a total of fifteen in the Rūpa plane and forty in the transcendental state, (Lokuttara), when combined with the fourfold Path and fourfold Fruit, as shown in the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* (pp. 3–4).

Advancing further we find a system of fourfold Formless attainments of consciousness, which are also commonly known as Jhāna. Thus the application of Jhāna is extended into eight, as will be seen in the next chapter.

1.—SAMĀDHI

As we have already seen, Samādhi is defined as "cittassa ekaggatā", "one-pointedness of mind", and this is the regular definition given in the Nikāyas. In the Abhidhamma this definition is further elaborated and Samādhi is described as the dominant mental factor in that process of the elimination of sensory impressions from the mind, which in its cultivated and developed form is termed "concentration" ; that is to say, the Samādhi which occurs in the higher types of consciousness.

According to commentarial explanations Samādhi in its general characteristic is regarded as twofold : (1) the concentration or collectedness of any kind of pure and skilful thought (Kusala cittekaggatā), and (2) the concentration which is transmuted into the Jhānic states. The former generally implies collectedness, in the sense of the concentration of the mental processes upon a single idea, which must always be of a wholesome nature ; the latter signifies the supernormal state of the same consciousness, which has passed from the ordinary state of Jhāna, and this is what is actually implied by Samādhi in any discussion of Buddhist meditation.

In the psychological analysis found in the Abhidhamma there occurs a psychic factor known as "ekaggatā", "one-pointedness", or "the concentration of the mental concomitants", which is common to all states of conscious-

ness, whether pure or impure, in accordance with the psychic law. With this in mind, Buddhaghosa Thera adds the word "kusala" to the definition of "cittekaggatā" given in the Samādhi system, in order to restrict its wide interpretation and confine it to Samādhi itself. It is therefore true to say that Samādhi never arises during the process of sensory cognition or in association with an evil thought; whereas the factor of "ekaggatā" is common to both good and evil thoughts. To the Buddhist then, the term Samādhi is always applied to that one-pointedness of mind which is obtained by "thinking wisely" or in due order (yoniso manasikāra); it is the awareness of one object, and only one, and that too, of a salutary nature. In the Buddhist system of mental training this is to be attained by the practice of meditation upon one of the subjects designed for the purpose.

From the Buddhist psychological point of view Samādhi is regarded as the positive and most active factor of the spiritually developed mind; for it must always include the virtues of morality, universal love, compassion, etc., and is associated with the psychological principles of Enlightenment.[1] Samādhi is therefore opposed to all passive, inactive states of mind, which are considered inimical and capable of proving a hindrance to self-development. It is only through the power of Samādhi that the mind becomes apt, fit and ready to work for higher knowledge and psychic powers; and the cultivation of Samādhi is therefore an essential preliminary to the attainment of spiritual happiness and full knowledge.

Samādhi means "concentration" in the sense of "putting together" or "placing", (Saṃ-ā-dhāna); that is, "fixing or establishing the mind and thoughts upon one object." Hence Samādhi should convey the meaning of that mental state wherein mind and thoughts are well established and centred upon one object, free from all traces of wavering and distraction.

1. Bodhipakkhiya—will be seen later.

2.—ITS CHARACTERISTIC, ESSENCE, MANIFESTATION AND PROXIMATE CAUSE

The characteristic of Samādhi to which all moral states tend, is non-distraction. Samādhi exercises a control over sense disturbances or stimuli, and rids the mind of distractions.

In its function or essence, therefore, it is a power which destroys all tendency to wavering and the habit of pursuing fantastic ideas which will either attract with their pleasantness or (as in the case of remorse) prove distracting. Thus Samādhi may be considered as an active faculty, or Indriya, of mind in that it controls emotional impulses and excitement.

It manifests the pliable energy of the mind unshaken by agitation; for the immediate results of Samādhi are imperturbability of mind and clear vision, penetrating into the object of meditation. When the mind has attained this state, it remains free from all wavering due to external stimuli and the flow of the manifold current of mixed thoughts is calmed. Furthermore, Samādhi cleanses the mind by eliminating all mental defilements; so that, like a polished mirror that gives a clear reflection, the mind radiates its own inner light to see, and to realize things "as they are." Moreover we read, "The mind of the happy one becomes concentrated." (D.I. 75, etc.); for ease and happiness of mind and body is the proximate cause of Samādhi and is to be obtained by the calming exercises of meditation.

3.—CLASSIFICATION OF SAMĀDHI IN ITS VARIOUS ASPECTS

The following account of Samādhi in its various aspects is based upon the exposition given in the *Visuddhi Magga*:

(i.) Samādhi signifies the concentration of the mind upon one object (ekaggatā), generally speaking, and its chief characteristic is freedom from wavering. But it also

THE EXPERIENCE OF SAMĀDHI

An In-depth Exploration of Buddhist Meditation

■

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Jhāna in the Pāli Suttas

Jhāna is called the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of peace, the pleasure of enlightenment. I say of this kind of pleasure that it should be pursued, that it should be developed, that it should be cultivated, that it should not be feared.

The Buddha, Laṭukikopama Sutta (MN66)

Just as the river Ganges slants, slopes, and inclines towards the east, so too one who develops and cultivates the four jhānas slants, slopes, and inclines towards Nibbāna.

The Buddha, Jhānasaṃyutta (SN53.1)

THE FOUR JHĀNAS ARE DISTINCTIVE MEDITATIVE STATES OF HIGH concentration in which the mind becomes unified. These are remarkable states of extraordinary rapture, happiness, and peace, characterized by a steady mental clarity and a profound sense of well-being. The experience of jhāna is inspiring, as the concentrative potential of the mind comes to fruition. Upon attaining any of the four jhānas, progress seems effortless as meditation takes on a power and momentum of its own. Jhāna is often referred to as an absorption state, since the mind in jhāna is so deeply concentrated that it "absorbs" into the meditation object. Much disagreement

has arisen over precisely what the nature of this meditative state is and its proper place in Buddhist meditation practice.

The word *jhāna* (Pāli; Sanskrit, *dhyana*) is derived from the verb *jhāyati,* meaning "to meditate or contemplate." In a few places the term *jhāna* retains its general meaning as a type of meditation or mental absorption, including some that would be described as wrong or unskillful.

For instance, before his enlightenment, when he was practicing extreme asceticism, the Buddha practiced a jhāna called the "breathingless jhāna," in which he would hold his breath, a form of wrong meditation that caused severe pain and did not lead to enlightenment.[1] The Buddha disapproved of a type of jhāna in which the mind is obsessed by the five hindrances, which could be considered mental absorption in anger, lust, and so forth, but is not really a meditation.[2] These types of jhāna are of interest as examples of meditations to avoid.

> Not every kind of jhāna was praised by the Blessed One, nor was every kind of jhāna criticized by the Blessed One . . . . What kind of jhāna did he praise? A monk enters and remains in the first jhāna . . . in the second jhāna . . . in the third jhāna . . . in the fourth jhāna. . . . The Blessed One praised that kind of jhāna.[3]

Of most importance, and the sense in which jhāna is most commonly used, is right concentration, the four jhānas in the context of the Noble Eightfold Path. Throughout the suttas the four jhānas are always defined in terms of the presence or absence of various associated attributes, using the following standard formula:

> Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and abides in the first jhāna [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, and accompanied by thought and examination. With the stilling of thought and examination, he enters and abides in the second jhāna [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of concentration, and accompanied by inner composure and singleness of mind, without thought and examination. With the fading away of rapture, he abides in equanimity, mindful and clearly aware, feeling pleasure

with the body, he enters and abides in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare: "Equanimous and mindful he abides in pleasure." With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and abides in the fourth jhāna, [which has] neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness and equanimity.

Four jhānas are enumerated in this definition, along with a number of qualities and factors associated with each.

The Mahāvedalla Sutta specifies certain elements from the definition as jhāna factors.

> How many factors does the first jhāna have? The first jhāna has five factors . . . there occur thought, examination, rapture, pleasure, and unification of mind. That is how the first jhāna has five factors.[4]

This is regarded as the standard list for the five jhāna factors. The first four—thought, examination, rapture, and pleasure (Pāli: vitakka, vicāra, pīti, and sukha)—are found in the jhāna formula. The fifth factor—unification of mind (Pāli: cittass' ekaggatā)—does not occur in the standard formula, but another similar term—singleness of mind (Pāli: ekodi-bhāva)—appears in the definition of the second jhāna (see the section entitled "The Jhāna Definition in Detail" on page 38 for a discussion of these two terms). As meditation progresses, the mind continues to become more strongly concentrated with each jhāna. The first four jhāna factors are abandoned or fade away with progression through the four jhānas; unification of mind persists as a factor in all jhānas. Unification of mind is never said to be abandoned or to fade away, so it is never lost and must be an attribute of all the subsequent jhānas.

The suttas differentiate carnal rapture, pleasure, and equanimity, which are dependent upon sense pleasure, from the rapture, pleasure, and equanimity associated with jhāna, which are free from carnal desire:

> There is carnal rapture . . . pleasure . . . equanimity . . . there is spiritual rapture . . . pleasure . . . equanimity. What is carnal rapture . . . pleasure . . . equanimity? [It is] rapture . . . pleasure . . . equanimity that arises in dependence on these five cords of sensual pleasure

> [the five senses]. What is spiritual rapture? . . . [one] enters and dwells in the first jhāna . . . [and] the second jhāna. What is spiritual pleasure? . . . [one] enters and dwells in the first . . . the second . . . and the third jhāna. What is spiritual equanimity? [one] enters and dwells in the fourth jhāna.[5]

In addition to the five jhāna factors and the other descriptive qualities in the definition, the Anupada Sutta describes eleven additional features present in each of the jhānas, which serve to more fully expand the description and illustrate the nature of these states. These are sense contact, feeling, perception, volition, mind, intention, determination, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention.[6] From this list we can see that the jhānas are dynamic states, with many associated mental factors. These additional aspects will be important in helping us to understand the nature of jhāna, especially in comparison to descriptions of jhāna in the later commentarial works.

The four jhānas are developed in successive order, with attainment of and stabilization in the lower jhānas forming the foundation for the next higher jhāna. The suttas compare the meditator who tries to develop a higher jhāna before consolidating and strengthening the previous one to an unwise, foolish cow searching for new pasture but unskilled at wandering in the rugged mountains.[7] Such a cow would neither successfully find the new pasture nor be able to find its way back to the old one. Similarly, the meditator will not successfully attain any stage of jhāna if the previous level has not been developed properly.

Progress through the four jhānas is through the systematic diminishment of the coarser factors, allowing the subsequent subtler and deeper jhāna states to emerge. Each jhāna is reached through the eradication of its impediments, which are factors to be abandoned, and the development and strengthening of its associated states, factors to be "entered into."

> Five factors are abandoned and five are present in the first jhāna. Sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt (these are the five hindrances) are abandoned; thought, examination, rapture, pleasure, and unification of mind are present. That is how five factors are abandoned and five are present in the first jhāna.[8]

The jhāna factors function to obstruct the hindrances and absorb the mind into the meditation subject. Unwholesome mental states do not have an opportunity to arise since the mind in jhāna is so deeply concentrated, steady, and clear.

As we proceed through the formula, in addition to the jhāna factors themselves, which fade away in succession as we progress through the levels, the definition introduces additional elements, adding further to the description and the overall distinct quality of each successive stage. In the second jhāna, two factors are eliminated, thought and examination, leaving the three remaining factors of rapture, pleasure, and unification of mind, and adding the new element of inner composure. The third jhāna abandons the factor of rapture, leaving pleasure and unification of mind, while naming for the first time the qualities equanimity, mindfulness, and clear awareness (also called "clear comprehension"). In the fourth jhāna, pleasure is abandoned, leaving neither-pain-nor-pleasure and unification of mind, and adding purity of mindfulness and equanimity. Each jhāna is defined in terms of its associated factors, all of which must be present for the meditative state to be considered jhāna.

The First Jhāna

In several suttas, descriptions of the jhānas are elaborated and embellished with beautiful similes.[9] These images and metaphors serve two functions. The first is to elucidate the nature of the jhāna experience, shedding further light on the standard definitions. The similes highlight that jhāna is not a state in which awareness of the body has been lost. Rather than losing connection with the body as one enters jhāna, the meditator gains heightened awareness of it as the jhāna factors gradually develop and suffuse throughout the body. The second purpose of the similes is to clarify the way to attain and progress through the jhānas. In some of the suttas, the similes begin with "I have proclaimed to my disciples the way to develop the four jhānas." The similes not only supplement the jhāna definition, shedding light on their nature, they also clarify the way to attain and to progress through the successive stages.

The simile continues, expanding on the standard definition of the first jhāna to illustrate how the associated factors of pleasure and rapture are strengthened by permeating them throughout the body:

> Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and abides in the first jhāna [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, and accompanied by thought and examination. He makes the rapture and pleasure born of seclusion drench, steep, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. Just as a skilled bath man or a bath man's apprentice heaps bath powder in a metal basin and, sprinkling it gradually with water, kneads it till the moisture wets his ball of bath powder, soaks it and pervades it inside and out, yet the ball itself does not ooze; so too, a bhikkhu makes the rapture and pleasure born of seclusion drench, steep, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.

Suffusing jhāna factors throughout the body is both a characteristic of and the way to progress through the higher stages of jhāna. Once the first jhāna is attained, in order to deepen it and proceed to the second, the meditator suffuses the body with rapture and pleasure, solidifying the first jhāna and strengthening the factors leading into the second. Rapture and pleasure are the jhāna factors that remain once thought and examination have subsided when the meditator enters the second jhāna. The image of a man gradually kneading bath powder into a moist ball emphasizes the extent to which these factors should be suffused throughout the body, as well as the transformative nature of these meditative states. Just as the bath powder is transformed into a moist ball, so, too, the concentration, calm, and associated factors transform the mind of the meditator. A focused and unified mind is tremendously powerful, enabling clear seeing.

A good deal of effort is needed leading up to jhāna, at which point the practice achieves a momentum of its own. But the first jhāna can still be unsteady, and the meditator is liable to fall out of it into lower levels of samādhi. A degree of diligence and effort is required at this stage to solidify

the jhāna attainment. The image of a man working gives us a very active sense of the meditator arousing energetic effort. The simile highlights the energetic quality of the first jhāna.

The Jhāna Definition in Detail

> Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and abides in the first jhāna [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, and accompanied by thought and examination.

"Quite secluded from sensual pleasures" refers to both external and internal seclusion, as we have discussed in chapter 1. The appropriate conditions for meditation practice must be established. This means finding a place, such as a meditation center or monastery, where the normal distractions of daily life can be avoided. The mind cannot settle down and still itself to the degree necessary for jhāna if it is receiving an incessant stream of inputs. And then we must guard the sense doors, protecting our focus from other sights, sounds, thoughts, or sensations that arise in our experience.

Internal seclusion begins as our attention focuses inward. As concentration deepens, the mind becomes quiet and is said to be "secluded from unwholesome states." This is called "internal seclusion" because, with this degree of samādhi, the mind has reached a strong enough degree of stillness that it is not susceptible to the hindrances.

Vitakka-vicāra

The Pāli terms for the expression "thought and examination," the first two jhāna factors, are *vitakka-vicāra*. These are problematic terms, difficult to arrive at the original intended meaning as used in the definition of jhāna. *Vitakka* (from the Pāli root *takka,* meaning "to think") means "reflection, thought, thinking, or initial application of mind." *Vicāra* (from the Pāli root *car,* "to move about") means investigation, examination, consideration, deliberation, or sustained application.

Although the term *vitakka* is sometimes used alone in the suttas, the term *vicāra* rarely is. These terms, when used together, as in the jhāna definition, should be taken as one expression. Together, they are variously translated as "reflection and investigation," "thinking and pondering," "thought and examination," "applied and sustained thought," "thought-conception and discursive thinking," "connecting and sustaining," "initial and sustained mental application," and "directed thought and evaluation."

Two distinct meanings are suggested from these various renderings, one indicating mental activities such as thinking, reflecting, and so on, and the other referring to the mental activity of connecting and sustaining the attention on a meditation subject. Since there is controversy over how these terms should be interpreted and understood, "thought and examination" were chosen for the translation of the jhāna definition used here, being close to the literal meanings.

Etymologically, it is hard to get away from at least some sense of discursive thinking in the meaning of vitakka-vicāra, so the probable meaning is that thinking, or some other forms of mental activity, is present in the first jhāna. Support for this idea can be found in the suttas, which state:

> With the stilling of thought and examination, he enters and abides in the second jhāna, [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of concentration, and accompanied by inner composure and singleness of mind, without thought and examination. This is called noble silence.[10]

Thought and examination, in the everyday sense, are called the "verbal formation," leading from ordinary thinking to speech:

> Why are thought and examination the verbal formation? . . . First, one thinks and examines, and then begins speaking; that is why thought and examination are the verbal formation.[11]

Elsewhere the suttas state that speech ceases for one who has entered the first jhāna.[12] These two statements can be brought into harmony by observing that verbal mental formations precede external speech. In the first jhāna, one may still verbalize internally, but one does not break into speech.

Jhāna is attained by directing the mind to some meditation object in order to strengthen concentration, so clearly the connecting and sustaining aspects of vitakka-vicāra are essential in practices leading up to jhāna.

"Vitakka-vicāra as jhāna factors" refers to qualities present upon having entered the first jhāna, rather than the qualities of mind and practices required for its realization. We should make a distinction between connecting and sustaining the attention in order to attain jhāna, and the qualities vitakka-vicāra once jhāna has been attained.

Upon attainment of the first jhāna, either the qualities of connecting and sustaining the mind on its meditation object, or the mental activities of directed thought and evaluation, or both are present. In jhāna any mental activity is integrated and synthesized with all the other associated jhāna and supporting factors.

Vitakka-vicāra should never be understood as thinking or musing in the ordinary sense. The salient unifying feature unique to vitakka-vicāra as jhāna factors is the function of applying and sustaining the mind to its object, rather than just recognition that thinking is present in the first jhāna. Vitakka-vicāra is not mere thought; it is applied thought and sustained thought. Applied thought is inclusive of all mental activity, and entails directing and focusing the whole mind, including its thinking capability, wholeheartedly and exclusively on the meditation object. Sustained thought denotes maintaining the full continuous, stable, and undistracted mental faculty on that object. Though the Pāli suttas do not state this explicitly, regardless of how one renders vitakka-vicāra, even as the presence of thinking and pondering, it seems that it always includes the aspect of connecting and sustaining.

Pīti-sukha

Rapture and pleasure, the third and fourth jhāna factors, are said to be born of seclusion because they are a natural outcome of a mind that is secluded from the hindrances. A mind free from desire, aversion, agitation, sluggishness, and doubt is invariably happy and peaceful, and readily engaged in the process and progression in meditation. The Pāli term for rapture is *pīti,* also translated as "bliss, joy, delight, zest, and exuberance." The term for pleasure is *sukha,* rendered variously as "happiness, joy, agreeable, pleasure, and bliss." From these various meanings, we can see that pīti and sukha are understood as being similar, though not identical.

Pīti is quite strong energetically, often experienced as intense bliss, energy, light, or manifesting in various other ways. Its rapturous quality

keeps the mind keenly involved in the meditative experience in the first two jhānas. Sukha, which is by no means weak, is milder, more even and more settled than pīti. Pīti is often seductive during the initial stages of development, but may later feel too coarse as the mind settles into subtler levels of happiness in the later stages of concentration. Pīti could be a mental or physical quality; the suttas nowhere make this distinction, and some later practice traditions insist that pīti is a physical phenomenon. The happiness or pleasant experience of sukha can also be either mental or physical. Sukha is defined in the third jhāna as purely a physical experience.

Sukha has been translated as "pleasure" in the jhāna definition in order to emphasize its connection with the body, especially in the jhāna similes, where rapture and pleasure are suffused throughout the body. Pīti and sukha are jhāna factors present in the first two jhānas, but are also important qualities leading up to jhāna. *Sukha* is translated as "happiness" in those contexts, highlighting its function as a supportive condition leading to concentration:

> Concentration has a proximate cause . . . happiness. Happiness has a proximate cause . . . tranquility. Tranquility has proximate cause . . . rapture. Rapture has a proximate cause . . . gladness.[13]

Gladness naturally arises when the five hindrances are absent.

> When the five hindrances are absent within him, gladness arises, and being glad, rapture (pīti) arises. Because of rapture his body becomes tranquil, with his body tranquillized he feels happiness (sukha), and with happiness his mind becomes concentrated. Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, he enters and abides in the first jhāna [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, and accompanied by thought and examination.[14]

Rapture arises prior to entering the first jhāna, is a supportive conditioning factor leading to its attainment, and is sustained until reaching the third jhāna.

Ekaggatā

Cittass' ekaggatā, the fifth jhāna factor, is translated as "one-pointedness, singleness, and unification of mind." Sustained undistractedness is what most determines whether or not a particular meditative state is jhāna. All of the jhāna factors are present to varying degrees of intensity throughout a wide range of levels of samādhi. Even in the early stages of meditative development, the power of applied and sustained attention increases as the mind begins to settle, resulting in a greater calm that can be pleasant or blissful. Well before attaining jhāna the meditator experiences longer periods of undistracted awareness as the ability to remain steady on the meditation object increases. An undistracted mind, in concert with the other factors, is a characteristic distinquishing jhāna from the lower levels of samādhi. While in jhāna the mind is not subject to wandering.

Some traditions maintain that ekaggatā means being aware of only one point; others, that it indicates maintaining a single center in a larger range of awareness. The term *one-pointedness* suggests a stable focus on a single object, in which no other awareness arises besides the meditation subject. One-pointedness is single-minded concentration, the ability of the mind to remain, without distraction, unwavering and steady on the fixed object of its attention.

Ekaggatā translated as "unification of mind" includes this meaning, but can also suggest another connotation. Rather than a mind fixed on one object, in which the experience of changing phenomena is lost, in this state the mind itself is unmoving, not the objects of experience, as all mental faculties come together, are unified and synthesized into an integrated whole. Even while the experience of objects is ever-changing, the mind itself remains still, present, and clear.

Ekaggatā is used in several places in the suttas to describe all levels of jhāna.[15] The term does not appear in the jhāna definition itself, though. *Cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ* is a similar term, also used to describe the focused application and undistracted nature of the mind in jhāna, which is explicitly mentioned at only one place, in the definition of the second jhāna. An injunction related to ekodibhāvaṃ, cittaṃ ekodiṃ karohi, occurs in reference to the first jhāna in the Moggallānasaṃyutta. Here the Buddha exhorts the struggling Moggallāna, who became one of the Buddha's

two chief disciples, "Do not be negligent regarding the first jhāna. Steady your mind in the first jhāna, *unify your mind in the first jhāna,* concentrate your mind in the first jhāna"[16] (italics are mine). Translated as "singleness of mind," "unification of mind," and "one-pointedness of awareness," *ekodibhāvaṃ* is similar in meaning to *ekaggatā,* and is also open to interpretation as meaning either a narrow, fixed attention or a still mind with a broader awareness.

In this discussion, the term "unification of mind" is being used whenever referring to *ekaggatā,* and "singleness of mind" is being used for the term *ekodibhāvaṃ* in the jhāna definition, to emphasize in both cases the aspect of mind that is unmoving, but clearly aware of a broad range of changing phenomena. One-pointedness will be used specifically to refer to states of single-pointed awareness fixed on a single object.

The Second Jhāna

> With the stilling of thought and examination, he enters and abides in the second jhāna [which is characterized by] rapture and pleasure born of concentration, and accompanied by inner composure and singleness of mind, without thought and examination.

Progress through the stages of jhāna is not accomplished by adding new factors, but by abandoning some of the factors already there. The second jhāna is attained upon the elimination or fading away of two factors, thought and examination, leaving three remaining factors of rapture, pleasure, and unification of mind. Inner composure, a new element introduced for the second jhāna, is not a jhāna factor, but is highlighted in the formula as a prominent feature in this state.

The meditator attains the second jhāna and, again, pervades the body, this time with rapture and pleasure born of concentration: "He makes the rapture and pleasure born of concentration drench, steep, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the rapture and pleasure born of concentration. Just as though there were a lake

whose waters welled up from below and it had no inflow from east, west, north or south and would not be replenished from time to time by showers of rain, then the cool fount of water welling up in the lake would make the cool water drench, steep, fill, and pervade the lake, so that there would be no part of the whole lake unpervaded by cool water; so too, a bhikkhu makes the rapture and pleasure born of concentration drench, steep, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the rapture and pleasure born of concentration."

The tone has shifted from the simile of the first jhāna, reflecting the deepening calm associated with the second jhāna. The seclusion of the second jhāna is much more stable than that of the first, and the image of cool water gives the impression of a well-established tranquillity and settledness. One does not have to put in the same effort as in the first jhāna; meditation has achieved a momentum and progresses more on its own. As the meditator deepens into the second jhāna, the mind becomes more "cool" with the subsiding of thought and examination.

The rapture and pleasure of the first jhāna are said to be born of seclusion. The second jhāna is characterized by rapture and pleasure born of concentration. With the stilling of thought and examination, the mind is more concentrated and unified than in the first jhāna. The kneading mentioned in the first simile stands for the function of vitakka and vicāra. In the second jhāna, where these two activities are dropped, the suffusing is more effortless, as when cool waters naturally fill the lake simply by flowing from the unified focus of the spring. In this image water is welling up from a deep internal place, conveying much more a sense of being self-contained and suffusing the body from within.

Having connected and sustained the mind on its meditation object, vitakka-vicāra drops away upon attaining the second jhāna, leaving only the jhāna factors rapture, pleasure, and unification of mind. Because thought and examination, the verbal formation, are no longer present, the second jhāna is called "noble silence." The importance of removing vitakka-vicāra in attaining the second jhāna is emphasized with the repetition that the second jhāna is attained with the stilling of vitakka-vicāra, and results in a state without vitakka-vicāra.

As concentration deepens, the mind becomes more still. The mind in the second jhāna is free from discursive thought. If vitakka-vicāra is viewed

as connecting and sustaining the mind on its meditation object, we can see that this, too, drops away in the deeper levels of samādhi. Concentration has been sufficiently strengthened so that it need not be tethered to an object by the factors of vitakka and vicāra, since it naturally remains steady through singleness of mind. At this stage the awareness remains stable and unbroken. The Samaṇamaṇḍikā Sutta states that wholesome intentions, a form of mental activity, cease without remainder with the subsiding of vitakka-vicāra upon entering the second jhāna.[17]

Upon attaining the second jhāna, one gains inner composure and singleness of mind. The Pāli term used here for inner composure, *sampasādana,* also means "tranquillity," and is translated variously as "self-confidence," "internal assurance," and "serene purity" (from *pasādana,* which means "a happy state or purity"). Composure and concentration are not identical, but are associated. Confidence and composure are both fruits of a concentrated mind, as well as factors strengthening concentration, as the meditator's practice bears fruit, the much more stable mind is further secluded from the hindrances, and direct, clear seeing and knowing deepens.

In the standard formula for the first jhāna, concentration is not mentioned at all, although it has been strengthened to a high degree manifesting as mental unification. Concentration appears twice in the formula for the second jhāna, emphasizing its prominence, once directly and a second time indirectly as singleness of mind. Although, by normal standards the mind is extraordinarily concentrated in the first jhāna, because vitakka-vicāra is active, concentration is subject to agitation. Concentration is mentioned in the formula for the second jhāna because, with the stilling of vitakka-vicāra, the mind becomes much better established, unwavering, and secure, reaching a much deeper level.

In the second jhāna, rapture and pleasure are born of concentration, arising in dependence on the concentration, rapture, and pleasure of the first jhāna, and also in dependence on and supported by the concentration of the second jhāna itself. In the first jhāna, rapture and pleasure were said to be born of seclusion, a consequence of being sheltered from the hindrances. Because the meditator has already obtained rapture and pleasure born of seclusion in the first jhāna, the rapture and pleasure of the second jhāna is born of a deeper level of concentration. Since vitakka-vicāra has subsided and concentration has strengthened, the rapture and pleasure of

the second jhāna are of a distinctive nature, and may be, but are not necessarily, of a finer, quieter texture.

An Alternate Scheme for the First Two Jhānas

A threefold classification of samādhi introducing an intermediate stage between the first and second jhānas, which appears to be an alternative arrangement for the first two jhānas, is briefly mentioned in a few places.[18] This threefold system does not appear in the jhāna formula, or anywhere else other than in these suttas, and is only briefly mentioned without providing any explanatory detail.

There is concentration with thought and examination (as in the first jhāna), concentration without thought but with examination only, and concentration without thought and examination (as in the second jhāna). Concentration with thought but without examination does not fit into the standard jhāna scheme.

The term *samādhi,* not *jhāna,* is used here, so this formula might not necessarily be referring to an alternative jhāna system. However, though these three types of samādhi mostly appear only as a simple list, in one sutta it states that the Buddha, just before his enlightenment, "developed concentration with thought and examination; concentration without thought but with examination only . . . without thought and examination . . . with rapture . . . without rapture . . . accompanied by enjoyment . . . developed concentration accompanied by equanimity."[19] With the exception of enjoyment (Pāli: sāta), which does not appear in the jhāna formula, this sequence roughly follows the progression through the four jhānas in the standard definition.

The Third Jhāna

> With the fading away of rapture, he abides in equanimity, mindful and clearly aware, feeling pleasure with the body, he enters and abides in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare: "Equanimous and mindful he abides in pleasure."

Upon entering the third jhāna, the simile continues: "He makes the pleasure divested of rapture drench, steep, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the pleasure divested of rapture. Just as in a pond of blue or red or white lotuses, some lotuses that are born and grow in the water thrive immersed in the water without rising out of it, and cool water drenches, steeps, fills, and pervades them to their tips and their roots, so that there is no part of all those lotuses unpervaded by cool water; so too, a bhikkhu makes the pleasure divested of rapture drench, steep, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the pleasure divested of rapture."

The sense of the image has shifted again. The intense bliss of rapture associated with the second jhāna can feel agitating, and at some point the mind settles down further, giving way to a less forceful, subtler, and more satisfying experience. At this stage rapture has calmed down as the mind becomes more deeply immersed in stillness. The pleasure of the third jhāna pervading the body is subtler than the bliss of rapture. Just as a lotus that is completely submerged in cool water requires no source outside of itself, nothing has to come in from the outside. The coolness and calmness has become so deeply established that there is no sense of "suffusing" or "upwelling," but the body is completely suffused.

With attainment of the third jhāna, rapture has faded away, leaving two remaining jhāna factors, pleasure and unification of mind. With the subsiding of rapture, pleasure comes to prominence, being mentioned twice here in the formula. The suttas describe pleasure as a proximate cause for concentration, emphasizing that concentration continues to be strengthened and unification of mind remains a factor throughout all four jhānas. Three new elements, not considered jhāna factors, are introduced in the formula: equanimity, mindfulness, and clear awareness, also known as clear comprehension or alertness.

Equanimity strengthens and becomes noticeable in the third jhāna, as the mind becomes contented and serene. The term *equanimity* has a range of meanings. It can refer to neutral feelings, which are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. More important here, it denotes nonreactivity, where the

mind rests mindful and clearly aware throughout a wide range of experiences without preference for any of them, including ones that can be very pleasant or painful. It should not be mistaken for lack of sensation, or a disassociated state, especially given that the formula mentions physical pleasure as a component of the third jhāna.

Mindfulness, keeping in mind the meditation subject, is present in all four jhānas, but this is the first time it is mentioned in the standard definition, emphasizing that it comes to prominence in the third jhāna with the subsiding of rapture. The Anupada Sutta states that mindfulness is one of eleven qualities, in addition to the jhāna factors and other attributes listed in the definition, associated with all the jhānas.[20] Mindfulness tends to be less apparent until the subsiding of the agitation of thought and examination, and the intensity of rapture in the comparatively coarse first two jhānas. Mindfulness and clear awareness are closely related and are often mentioned in conjunction.

The Fourth Jhāna

> With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and abides in the fourth jhāna, [which has] neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness and equanimity.

Finally, upon attaining the fourth jhāna, "He sits pervading this body with a pure bright mind, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the pure bright mind. Just as though a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth, so that there would be no part of his whole body not covered by the white cloth; so, too, a bhikkhu sits pervading this body with a pure bright mind, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the pure bright mind."

In the similes for the first three jhānas, the body is pervaded by various jhāna factors. Now the style of the simile has shifted and there is no sense of making effort or doing anything. The pure bright mind covers every-

thing, indicating the powerful lucidity, clear nature of mindfulness, and clear awareness accompanying this jhāna.

In one sutta, the simile ends with an inspiring promise of fruition from the practice and cultivation of jhāna meditation, through which many of the Buddha's disciples reached the culmination of direct knowledge.[21]

In the discussion of the third jhāna we saw that *equanimity* can refer either to neutral feelings, which are neither pleasant nor unpleasant, or to a nonreactive mind. The formula for the fourth jhāna introduces two new elements—neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness and equanimity—which together serve to underscore the presence of both aspects of equanimity. Neither-painful-nor-pleasant, also called "equanimous feeling," is the neutral bodily feeling remaining after pleasure, pain, joy, and grief are all eliminated. At this stage, with strong equanimity firmly established, mindfulness is said to be purified. The mind is detached, in the sense of not being pulled into or away from experiences, but is not disconnected or disassociated. Because the mind is not reactive, it is naturally clear and awake, able to be more present and mindful, unmoving and unperturbed by any experience.

The first four jhāna factors have been eliminated in the fourth jhāna, leaving only unification of mind. Even though it is not mentioned at this point in the formula, the fourth jhāna is characterized by a high level of concentration and calm, so mental unification remains as a jhāna factor. Neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is sometimes considered a second factor in the fourth jhāna, replacing pleasure, which has been eliminated.

Beyond the Four Jhānas

Three Divergent Paths of Development

Upon mastery of the four jhānas, three further paths of training and development are possible. These three divergent paths each have distinct goals and associated practices.

First, beyond the four jhānas already discussed, four additional higher immaterial or formless attainments are described. In the suttas, these

formless states are called "āruppas" (*āruppa* means "without form"). In the later commentaries, the four jhānas are called "rūpa jhānas," and the āruppas retain their designation, although in a few instances they are referred to as "arūpa jhānas."

The first of the āruppas is called "the base of the boundlessness of space," in which awareness of the body falls away, leaving only the experience of limitless space. According to the suttas, the base of the boundlessness of space is attained by not attending to any sensory stimulation, transcending all perceptions of form, and perceiving boundless space directly."[22] The next āruppas are called respectively "the base of the boundlessness of consciousness," "the base of nothingness," and, finally, a state so subtle that it can only be called "the base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception."

The āruppas are purely mental states, achieved by transcending any perceptions of form and sensory awareness. These are extremely subtle meditative states, not defined in terms of the factors associated with the four jhānas. The four jhānas were attained in order, by systematically eliminating the grosser jhāna factors. Moving from the fourth jhāna to the āruppas does not involve the abandoning of further jhāna factors, but rather a shift in the object of concentration. One means of doing this is by directing the equanimity of the fourth jhāna to the desired formless state.[23] In the āruppas body awareness is lost as the meditator focuses on the quality of the formless state. Based on the concentration of the fourth jhāna, the object of concentration becomes the āruppa itself.

The second training accessible upon attainment of the four jhānas is development of the supernormal powers or higher knowledge (*abhiññās* in Pāli).

These amazing powers, widely described in the Pāli suttas, are rarely discussed by Western meditation teachers, though they are not unknown. Three higher knowledges are listed in some suttas: recollection of past lives, knowledge of death and rebirth of beings, and the knowledge of the destruction of the corruptions.[24] Other suttas expand this list into six abhiññās: (1) the various psychic powers, known as iddhis; (2) the divine ear; (3) the ability to read minds; (4) the ability to remember past lives; (5) the divine eye (which is the same as knowledge of death and rebirth of beings); and (6) the knowledge of the destruction of the corruptions. [25]

The first higher power is the iddhis, attainments of supernormal or psychic power far surpassing the capabilities of normal human beings. These

powers are not considered miraculous, but are derived from realization of natural laws hidden from the minds of ordinary people. The list of iddhis includes the power to create multiple copies of oneself; pass through fences, walls, and mountains; dive into and out of the earth; walk on water; fly cross-legged through the air; and touch the sun and the moon. The divine ear, the second of the six higher powers, is the ability to hear heavenly and human sounds, both far away and near. The third power is the ability to know the minds of others, whether they are filled with passion, hate, delusion, are narrow or broad, expanded or unexpanded, surpassed or unsurpassed, concentrated or unconcentrated, and liberated or unliberated. The fourth power is the ability to recollect past lives, extending as many lifetimes back as one wishes. The divine eye, the fifth power, is the ability to see the death and rebirth of beings.

The sixth higher power is the destruction of the corruptions, which leads directly to enlightenment. The Pāli term for the corruptions, *āsava,* means "to flow out or onto," and is variously translated as "taints," "influxes," "cankers," "corruptions," "floods," "intoxicants," "fermentations," "effluents," and "biases." Three corruptions are most often listed in the suttas:[26] sense desire, craving for existence, and ignorance. A fourth corruption, corruption of views, is sometimes added.

Along with the abhiññās, the suttas mention two additional insights and attainments accessible upon mastery of the four jhānas.[27] The first is the insight knowledge that "this body of mine, made of material form, consisting of the four great elements (earth, air, fire, and water), procreated by a mother and father, and built up out of boiled rice and porridge, is subject to impermanence, to being worn and rubbed away, to dissolution and disintegration, and this consciousness of mine is supported by it and bound up with it." The second attainment is the knowledge of the mind-made body, which is the ability to create from the physical body another mind-made body, complete in every respect.

The āruppas and the first five supernormal powers, developed through refined concentration, are not prerequisites for achieving the end of suffering. While they are profound meditative achievements, they remain subject to the same laws governing all other conditioned phenomena. Even these extraordinary attainments are limited in that they are impermanent and thus inherently unsatisfactory. The sixth supernormal power, the

knowledge of the destruction of the corruptions, is attainable not through concentration alone but through insight, and thus is linked with the third path beyond jhāna.

The third path of training and development is insight, the path leading to Nibbāna, which is the ultimate goal of the Buddha's teachings. Through the application of mindfulness, and supported by the steadiness and concentration of jhāna, the meditator's awareness is able to penetrate beneath the ordinary, everyday way in which we view all experience in order to clearly perceive the three characteristics of existence, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness. It is through this direct seeing into the true nature of reality that the subtler levels of hatred, greed, and delusion are overcome, leading directly to liberation through nonclinging.

3

■

Samādhi in the Visuddhimagga

So wise men fail not in devotion
To the pursuit of concentration:
It cleans defiling stains' pollution,
And brings rewards past calculation.

Visuddhimagga XI, 125

AS THE UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BUDDHA'S teachings evolved over the centuries, later commentaries appeared, each with their particular interpretations of the doctrine. The Visuddhimagga (Path of Purification), a voluminous work written around the fifth century C.E., has remained the most influential of the postcanonical Pāli works. While not a commentary, but rather an independent treatise, it is a cornerstone of the commentarial method. For some Theravāda Buddhists, the entire teaching is funneled through this one commentarial lens, coloring the perspective and greatly influencing the understanding and style of meditation practice.

The Visuddhimagga's basic framework is based on the Relay Chariots Discourse (Pāli: Rathavinīta Sutta[1]) in the Middle Length Discourses of the Pāli Canon.[2] In it, the path of spiritual development is likened to someone using a series of seven chariots to reach a destination. With the first chariot one reaches the second, with the second chariot one reaches

NST B. Dudjom

THE SIX CLASSES OF LIVING BEINGS IN THEIR GRADATION TO THE SUMMIT OF EXISTENCE IN SAṂSĀRA

1. The Twenty-one Higher Realms (*khams gong-ma nyi-shu rtsa-gcig*)

1A. Four Formless Realms at the Summit of Existence (*gzugs-med khams-pa'i gnas-bzhi*, Skt. *Caturārūpyadhātu*, Mvt. 3110-3113)

4. Activity Field of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception (*'du-shes med 'du-shes med-min skye-mched*, Skt. *Naivasaṃjñāsaṃjñāyatana*)
3. Activity Field of Nothing At All (*ci-yang med-pa'i skye-mched*, Skt. *Akiṃcanyāyatana*)
2. Activity Field of Infinite Consciousness (*rnam-shes mtha'-yas skye-mched*, Skt. *Vijñānānantyāyatana*)
1. Activity Field Infinite as the Sky (*nam-mkha' mtha'-yas skye-mched*, Skt. *Ākāśānantyāyatana*)

Class 6: God Realms

1B. Seventeen Realms of Form (*lha gzugs-khams bcu-bdun*)

1Ba. The Five Pure Abodes (*gtsang-gnas lnga*, Skt. *Pañcaśuddhanivāsa*, Mvt. 3101-3108)

5. Highest (*'og-min*, Skt. *Akaniṣṭha*)
4. Extreme Insight (*shin-tu mthong*, Skt. *Sudarśana*)
3. Attractive (*gya-nom snang-ba*, Skt. *Sudṛśa*)
2. Painless (*mi-gdung-pa*, Skt. *Atapa*)
1. Slightest (*mi-che-ba*, Skt. *Avṛha*)

1Bb. The Twelve Ordinary Realms of the Four Concentrations (*so-skye'i gnas bcu-gnyis*, Mvt. 3085-3100)

FOURTH CONCENTRATION
12. Great Fruition (*'bras-bu che*, Skt. *Bṛhatphala*)
11. Increasing Merit (*bsod-nams 'phel*, Skt. *Puṇyaprasava*)
10. Cloudless (*sprin-med*, Skt. *Anabhraka*)

THIRD CONCENTRATION
9. Most Extensive Virtue (*dge-rgyas*, Skt. *Śubhakṛtsna*)
8. Immeasurable Virtue (*tshad-med dge*, Skt. *Apramāṇaśubha*)
7. Little Virtue (*dge-chung*, Skt. *Parīttaśubha*)

SECOND CONCENTRATION
6. Inner Radiance (*'od-gsal*, Skt. *Ābhāsvara*)
5. Immeasurable Radiance (*tshad-med 'od*, Skt. *Apramāṇābha*)
4. Little Radiance (*'od-chung*, Skt. *Parīttābha*)

FIRST CONCENTRATION
3. Great Brahmā (*tshangs-pa chen-po*, Skt. *Mahābrahmā*)
2. Priest Brahmā (*tshangs-pa mdun-na 'don*, Skt. *Brahmapurohita*)
1. Stratum of Brahmā (*tshangs-ris*, Skt. *Brahmakāyika*)

2. The Ten Higher Levels of the Desire Realm (*'dod-khams-kyi mtho-ris gnas-bcu*)

2A. Six Species of Kāma Divinities (*'dod-lha rigs-drug*, Skt. *Kāmadevaṣaṭkula*, Mvt. 3078-3083)

6. Mastery over Transformations (*gzhan-'phrul dbang-byed*, Skt. *Paranirmitavaśavartin*)
5. Delighting in Emanation (*'phrul-dga'*, Skt. *Nirmāṇarata*)
4. Joyful (*dga'-ldan*, Skt. *Tuṣita*)
3. Strifeless (*'thab-bral*, Skt. *Yāma*)
2. Heaven of Thirty-three Gods (*sum-cu rtsa-gsum-pa*, Ski. *Trayatriṃśa*)
1. Four Great Kings (*rgyal-chen bzhi'i ris*, Skt. *Caturmahārājakāyika*)

Class 5: Antigods

Antigods (*lha-ma-yin*, Skt. *asura*)[2]

Class 4: Human Beings

2B. Human Beings of the Four Continents (*gling-bzhi'i mi*)
4. Surpassing the Body (*lus-'phags*, Skt. *Pūrvavideha* in the East)
3. Rose-Apple Continent (*'dzam-bu gling*, Skt. *Jambudvīpa* in the South)
2. Enjoyer of Cattle (*ba-glang spyod*, Skt. *Aparagodanīya* in the West)
1. Unpleasant Sound (*sgra mi-snyan*, Skt. *Uttarakuru* in the North)

3. The Three Lower Levels of the Desire Realm (*ngan-song gsum*)

Class 3: Animals

3. Animals (*dud-'gro*, Skt. *tīryak*)

Class 2: Tormented Spirits

2. Tormented Spirits (*yi-dvags*, Skt. *preta*)

Class 1: Hells

1. Denizens of the Hells (*dmyal-ba*, Skt. *naraka*)

Chart 9: Cyclic Existence: The Three Realms and Nine Levels

(from the highest levels to the lowest)

III. Formless Realm (*gzugs med khams, ārūpyadhātu*)
- 9 Peak of Cyclic Existence (*srid rtse, bhavāgra*)
- 8 Nothingness (*ci yang med, ākiṃcaya*)
- 7 Limitless Consciousness (*rnam shes mtha' yas, vijñānānantya*)
- 6 Limitless Space (*nam mkha' mtha' yas, ākāśānantya*)

II. Form Realm (*gzugs khams, rūpadhātu*)
- 5 Fourth Concentration (*bsam gtan bzhi pa, caturthadhyāna*)
- 4 Third Concentration (*bsam gtan gsum pa, tritīyadhyāna*)
- 3 Second Concentration (*bsam gtan gnyis pa, dvitīyadhyāna*)
- 2 First Concentration (*bsam gtan dang po, prathamadhyāna*)

I. 1 Desire Realm (*'dod khams, kāmadhātu*)
- Gods of the Desire Realm (*'dod khams kyi lha, kāmadhātudeva*)
  - Those Who Make Use of Others' Emanations (*gzhan 'phrul dbang byed, paranirmitavaśavartin*)
  - Those Who Enjoy Emanation (*'phrul dga', nirmāṇarati*)
  - Joyous Land (*dga' ldan, tuṣita*)
  - Land Without Combat (*'thab bral, yāma*)
  - Heaven of Thirty-Three (*sum cu rtsa gsum, trayastriṃśa*)
  - Four Great Royal Lineages (*rgyal chen rigs bzhi, cāturmahārājakāyika*)
- Demigods (*lha ma yin, asura*)
- Humans (*mi, manuýya*)
- Animals (*dud 'gro, tiryañc*)
- Hungry ghosts (*yi dvags, preta*)
- Hell-beings (*dmyal ba, nāraka*)

Each of the nine levels has cycles of afflictive emotions pertaining to it. There are three main divisions for each level—great (*chen po, adhimātra*), middling (*'bring, madhya*), and small (*chung ngu, mṛdu*)—each of which is subdivided into three by degrees. Thus, each of the nine levels has nine degrees of afflictive emotions pertaining to it—(1) the great of the great (*chen po'i chen po, adhimātrādhimatra*), (2) the middling of the great (*chen po'i 'bring, adhimātramadhya*), and (3) the small of the great (*chen po'i chung ngu, adhimātramṛdu*); (4) the great of the middling (*'bring gi chen po, madhyādhimātra*), (5) the middling of the middling (*'bring gi 'bring, madhyamadhya*), and (6) the small of the middling (*'bring gi chung ngu, madhyamṛdu*); (7) the great of the small (*chung ngu'i chen po, mṛdvadhimātra*), (8) the middling of the small (*chung ngu'i 'bring, mṛdumadhya*), and (9) the small of the small (*chung ngu'i chung ngu, mṛdumṛdu*)[a]—making eighty-one in all. (See the chart below.)

Chart 10: Afflictive Emotions to be Abandoned, in Terms of the Three Realms and Nine Levels

(Read from bottom to top.)

afflictive emotions pertaining to the Formless Realm	Peak of Cyclic Existence (ninth level)		73-81
	Nothingness (eighth level)		64-72
	Infinite Consciousness (seventh level)		55-63
	Infinite Space (sixth level)		46-54
afflictive emotions pertaining to the Form Realm	Fourth Concentration (fifth level)		37-45
	Third Concentration (fourth level)		28-36
	Second Concentration (third level)		19-27
	First Concentration (second level)		10-18
afflictive emotions pertaining to the Desire Realm (first level)	small	small of the small	9
		middling of the small	8
		great of the small	7
	middling	small of the middling	6
		middling of the middling	5
		great of the middling	4
	great	small of the great	3
		middling of the great	2
		great of the great	1

All nine cycles of afflictive emotions pertaining to a given level must be overcome before a meditator can attain the meditative absorption of the next-higher level. In general, they are overcome by the preparations for the higher level. (The notable exception is the Foe Destroyer who proceeds by simultaneously abandoning the great of the great afflictive emotions of all levels, then the middling of the great

[a] *Meditative States*, p. 102.

Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond

A Meditator's Handbook

Ajahn Brahm

foreword by Jack Kornfield

Wisdom Publications • Boston

The Jhānas II: Bliss upon Bliss

The Nimitta: The Home Stretch into Jhāna

WHEN THE BREATH DISAPPEARS and delight fills the mind, the nimitta usually appears. I briefly discussed nimittas and their characteristics in chapter 2; here I discuss them in greater depth. *Nimitta,* in this context, refers to beautiful "lights" that appear in the mind. I would point out, though, that the nimittas are not visual objects, in that they are not seen through the sense of sight. At this stage of the meditation, the sense of sight is not operating. The nimittas are pure mental objects, known by the mind sense. However, they are commonly perceived as lights.

What is happening here is that perception struggles to interpret such a pure mental phenomenon. Perception is that function of mind that interprets experience in terms we can understand. Perception relies crucially on comparison, interpreting new experience as similar to previous experience. However, pure mental phenomena are so rarely visited that perception has great difficulty finding anything at all comparable to these new experiences. This is why nimittas appear strange, like nothing one has ever experienced before. But the phenomena in the catalogue of one's past experiences that come closest to these nimittas are simple visual lights, such as a car headlight, a flashlight in the dark, or a full moon in the night sky. Perception adopts this close but imperfect comparison and interprets the nimittas as lights.

It was for me a fascinating discovery to realize that everyone who experiences these nimittas experiences exactly the same thing! It is only that meditators interpret the experience in many different ways. Some see

the nimitta as a pure white light, others see it as golden, some as deep blue. Some see it as a circle, others as an oblong; some see it as sharp edged, others as fuzzy edged. There is indeed no end to the features of nimittas that meditators describe. The important thing to know is that color, shape, and so on are irrelevant. Perception colors the nimitta and gives it shape just so one can make sense of it.

When the Nimitta Comes Too Early

Sometimes a "light" can appear in the mind at a very early stage of the meditation. For all except accomplished meditators, however, such intruders are highly unstable. If one focuses one's attention on them, one will not get anywhere. It is not the right time for nimitta. It is best to regard them as distractions and go back to the main task of the early stage out of which they came.

There is more uncertainty what to do when a nimitta appears at the stage of the beautiful breath when the breath has yet to be calmed close to disappearance. Again, the nimitta appears intrusive. It interferes with the main task of sustaining one's awareness on the beautiful breath. If one deliberately turns from the breath to the nimitta, it usually doesn't remain long. The mind is not sufficiently refined to hold a subtle nimitta. One needs additional practice on the breath. So the best thing to do is to ignore the nimitta and train all one's attention on the beautiful breath.

Often, after one has followed this advice, the nimitta comes back, stronger and brighter. Ignore it again. When it returns a third time, even more powerful and radiant, go back to the breath. Practicing this way, eventually a very powerful and brilliant nimitta will break into your awareness. You can go with that one. Actually, it is almost impossible to ignore. That one usually takes you into jhāna.

The above can be compared to a visitor knocking on your door. It could be just a salesman, so you ignore his knocking and go on with your own business. Often, that's the end of the matter. Sometimes, though, the visitor knocks again, louder and longer. You ignore him a second time. Then after a few moments' silence, he bangs even louder and more vigorously. This persistence suggests that that the visitor must be a good

friend of yours, so you open the door, let him in, and have a great time together.

Another method of dealing with an early nimitta that arises at the stage of the beautiful breath is to incorporate the nimitta into the middle of the breath. One trains to visualize the situation as similar to a jewel being held in the center of lotus petals. The shimmering jewel is the nimitta, the lotus petals represent the beautiful breath. If the mind isn't quite ready to stay with the nimitta, it still has the breath to anchor it. Sometimes, the mind is so unprepared that the breath appears to close in on the nimitta, and as a result the nimitta disappears leaving only the beautiful breath. This step backward does not disturb the meditation. At other times, the mind is well prepared for the nimitta, and the nimitta strengthens and expands, pushing out the breath, which disappears beyond the edges of one's awareness, leaving only the nimitta. This method is skillful because it doesn't involve moving the mind from one thing to another—a coarse movement that disturbs the meditation significantly. Instead, one just passively observes the transition from the beautiful breath to the nimitta, and maybe back again, allowing the process to develop or recede according to nature, not according to one's desire.

Although the following advice is for accomplished meditators only, by which I mean those with plentiful experience of jhāna already, it is included here for the sake of completeness. When one is skillful in entering into jhāna and one has experienced a jhāna recently, the mind is so still and powerful, even before one begins to meditate, that one may skip many stages. So much so that one may arouse the nimitta almost immediately after starting. The mind, being so used to nimittas and so favorably disposed toward them, literally leaps onto the nimitta and the nimitta stays. Soon jhāna is reached. For such accomplished meditators, the earlier the nimitta arises, the better.

When the Nimitta Does Not Appear

For some, when the breath disappears, the nimitta doesn't happen. No lights appear in their mind. Instead, they are left with a deep feeling of peace, of emptiness, of nothing. This can be a very beneficial state and

should not be belittled, but it is not jhāna. Moreover, it lacks the power to proceed any further. It is a cul-de-sac, and a refined one at that, but it is incapable of being developed further. There are a number of methods to bypass this state, generate the causes for nimitta, and go deeper into the jhānas.

The state above arises because one did not cultivate sufficient pīti-sukha along with the breath. There was not enough delight when the breath disappeared, so mindfulness had no clear mental object of beauty on which to settle. Understanding this, one needs to put more value on developing delight when one is watching the breath, and cultivating that delight until it becomes a strong sense of beauty. For example, you may regard the breath as an old and well-loved friend with whom you have shared such wonderful times. Remembering those happy moments brings you joy, and that joy lets you look on the breath as beautiful. Whatever skillful means one employs, by paying careful attention to the beauty alongside the breath, the beauty will blossom. What one pays attention to usually grows.

In the previous chapter, one was cautioned not to be afraid to delight in meditation. I regard this exhortation as so important that I repeat it here almost word for word: Do not be afraid to delight in meditation. Too many meditators dismiss happiness, thinking it unimportant or believing that they don't deserve such delight. Happiness in meditation is important, and you deserve to bliss out! Blissing out on the meditation object is an essential part of the path. So when delight does arise alongside the breath, you should cherish it and guard it accordingly.

Another reason for the nimitta not arising is that one hasn't invested enough energy into the knower. As explained in the previous chapter, delight is generated by letting energy flow into the knower. Usually, most of our mental energy gets lost in the doing, that is, in planning and remembering, controlling and thinking. If one would only redirect one's energy away from the doer and give it all to the knower, to attentiveness, then one's mind would become brightened and energized with delight. When there is lots of delight, strong pīti-sukha, then after the breath disappears the nimitta appears. So maybe the reason why a nimitta doesn't

appear is that one has devoted too much energy to controlling and not enough to knowing.

However, if the breath has disappeared but still no nimitta arises, then one must be careful not to fall into discontent. Discontent will wither any pīti-sukha already there and will urge the mind into restlessness. Thus discontent will make the arising of a nimitta even more unlikely. So one must be patient and seek the remedy in becoming aware of contentment and letting it consolidate. Just through paying attention to contentment, it usually deepens. As contentment grows stronger, delight will arise. As delight grows in power, the nimitta appears.

Another useful method to arouse the nimitta when the breath disappears is to focus more sharply in the present moment. Present-moment awareness is the very first stage of this method of meditation. It should have been established at the beginning. But in practice, as the meditation progresses and one pays attention to other things, the present-moment awareness can become a little sloppy. It may be that one's mindfulness has become smeared around the present moment instead of being precisely focused. By noticing this as a problem, it is very easy to adjust the focus of mindfulness to be knife-edged in the center of now. Like adjusting the lens of a telescope, the slightly blurred image becomes very sharp. When the attention is sharply focused in the present moment, it experiences more power. Pīti-sukha comes with the sharpening of focus, and the nimitta soon follows as well.

Suitable Nimitta and Useless Nimitta

It is very helpful to cultivate nimittas of the sort perceived as a light. These "light nimittas" are the best vehicle for transporting the meditator into the jhānas. However, it is just possible, but rarely done, to enter a jhāna by using "feeling nimittas" instead. By this I mean that one sees no light in the mind but instead experiences a feeling of bliss in the mind. It is important to note that the sense of touch (the last of the five senses) has been transcended and such a feeling of bliss is experienced completely by the mind sense. It is a pure mental object again, but perceived as relating closely to a physical feeling of bliss. This is a bona fide nimitta.

But it is much more difficult to work with such a nimitta to gain access into jhāna, though it is not impossible. For these reasons, it is recommended to cultivate the light nimitta if one aspires for the jhāna.

There are some visual nimittas that are of no use on the path into jhāna. It is helpful to identify these "useless" nimittas so that one will waste no time with them.

Sometimes whole scenes can appear clearly in the mind. There might be landscapes, buildings, and people, familiar or strange. Such visions might be fascinating to watch, but they are of little use. Moreover, they are meaningless, and one should certainly not mistake them as some revelation of truth. Experience shows that visions arising at this stage are notoriously deceptive and completely untrustworthy. If one likes to waste time, one can linger on them a while. But the recommended thing to do is to remove all interest and go back to the beautiful breath. Such complex nimittas are merely a reflection of an overcomplicated mind. The mind should have been calmed into simplicity much more effectively before letting go of the breath. When one sustains the attention on the beautiful breath, uninterrupted for long periods of time, then one is training in simplicity. Then when the breath disappears, a simple unified nimitta arises, one that is suitable for progress.

A less elaborate nimitta, which is still overcomplicated, can be called the "firework nimitta." As the name suggests, this consists of many bursts of light coming and going, never lasting very long and exhibiting much movement. There may be several bursts of light at the same time, even of different colors. Again, this firework nimitta is a sign that the mind is still too complicated and very unstable. If one wants, one can enjoy the sideshow for a short time, but one should not waste too much time there. One should ignore all its razzle-dazzle, return to the breath, and develop more one-pointedness and calm.

The next type of nimitta can be called the "shy nimitta," a single pure light that flashes up quickly and then disappears. After a few moments, it flashes up again. Each time, it lasts only a second or two. Such a nimitta is much more encouraging. Its simplicity shows that the mind is one-pointed. Its power is a sign that pīti-sukha is strong. But its inability to

remain after breaking through into consciousness shows that the level of calm is not quite enough. In such a situation, one need not return immediately to the beautiful breath. Instead, one patiently waits, developing more calm, allowing the mind to become more receptive to the very shy nimitta. As will be explained later at greater length, this nimitta disappears because the mind overreacts to its arrival, usually with excitement or fear. By establishing a solid calm and having the confidence to not react at all, the shy nimitta returns and stays longer each time. Soon such a nimitta loses its shyness and, feeling accepted within the mind's calmness, remains a long time. One should attempt this approach first. But if the nimitta continues being shy and shows no sign of remaining longer, then one should return to the beautiful breath and ignore it. When one has built more tranquillity of mind with the beautiful breath, then one can return to the shy nimitta to see if it will establish itself this time.

Another type of nimitta is the "point nimitta," a simple and powerful light but ever so small, which persists many seconds. This nimitta can be very useful. It shows that one-pointedness is excellent, calm is sufficient, but pīti-sukha is still a bit lacking. All one needs to do is gently look deeper into the point nimitta, letting mindfulness zero in. Then it appears as if one's awareness comes closer to this nimitta and its size starts to increase. As it expands a little, one should keep one's focus on the center, not on the edges or beyond the edges. By maintaining the mind's focus sharply on the center of the point nimitta, it increases in power and grows in pīti-sukha. Soon the point nimitta unfolds into the best nimitta of all.

The best nimitta, the one most suitable for jhāna, begins by resembling the full moon at midnight in a sky free of clouds. It rises unhurried when the beautiful breath softly disappears. It takes three or four seconds to establish its presence and settle down, remaining still and very beautiful before the mind's eye. As it remains without effort it grows brighter, more luminous. Soon it appears brighter than the sun at midday, radiating bliss. It becomes by far the most beautiful thing one has ever seen. Its beauty and power will often feel unbearable. One wonders whether one can take so much bliss of such extreme power. But one can. There's no limit to the bliss one can feel. Then the nimitta explodes,

drowning one in even more bliss, or one dives into the center of the radiating ecstasy. If one remains there, it is jhāna.

Shining Up the Nimitta

In chapter 7, I first introduced the simile of the mirror. It is a far-reaching insight to realize that this nimitta is actually an image of one's mind. Just as one sees an image of one's face when one looks in a mirror, one sees an image of one's mind in the profound stillness of this meditation stage.

So when the nimitta appears dull, or even dirty, it means that one's mind is dull, even dirty! Usually, this is because one has been lacking in virtue recently; possibly one was angry, or maybe self-centered. At this stage of meditation, one is looking directly at one's mind and there is no opportunity for deceit. One always sees the mind as it truly is. So, if one's nimitta appears dull and stained, then one should clean up one's act in daily life. One should take moral precepts, speak only kindly, practice more generosity, and be selfless in service. This stage of meditation when nimittas appear makes it abundantly clear that virtue is an essential ingredient for success in meditation.

Having taught many meditation retreats over the years, I have noticed that the meditators who have the easiest progress and most sensational results are those who we would call purehearted. They are the people who are joyously generous, whose nature would never allow them to harm another being, who are soft-spoken, gentle, and very happy. Their beautiful lifestyle gives them a beautiful mind. And their beautiful mind supports their virtuous lifestyle. Then, when they reach this stage of the meditation and their mind is revealed in the image of a nimitta, it is so brilliant and pure that it leads them easily to jhāna. It demonstrates that one cannot lead a heedless and self-indulgent lifestyle and have easy success in one's meditation. On the other hand, purifying one's conduct and developing compassion prepare the mind for meditation. The best remedy, then, for shining up a dull or dirty nimitta is to purify one's conduct outside the meditation.

That being said, if one's conduct in daily life isn't too outrageous, one can shine up the dirty nimitta in the meditation itself. This is achieved

by focusing the attention on the center of the nimitta. Most areas of the nimitta may appear dull, but the very center of the nimitta is always the brightest and purest part. It is the soft center of an otherwise stiff and unworkable nimitta. As one focuses on the center, it expands like a balloon to produce a second nimitta, purer and brighter. One looks into the very center of this second nimitta, the spot where it is the brightest of all, and that balloons into a third nimitta, even purer and brighter. Gazing into the center effectively shines up the nimitta. One continues in this way until the nimitta is beautifully brilliant.

When, in life, one has developed a strong fault-finding mind, obsessively picking out what's wrong in this and that, then one will find it almost impossible to pick out the beautiful center of a dull nimitta and focus attention thereon. One has become so conditioned to pick out the blemishes in things that it goes against the grain to ignore all the dull and dirty areas of a nimitta to focus exclusively on the beautiful center. This demonstrates once again how unskillful attitudes in life can prevent success in deep meditation. When one develops a more forgiving attitude to life, when one becomes more embracing of the duality of good and bad—not being a negative obsessive nor a positive excessive but a balanced acceptive—then not only can one see the beauty in mistakes, but one can also see the beautiful center in a dull and dirty nimitta.

It is essential to have a bright and luminous nimitta to take one through to jhāna. A dull and dirty one is like an old, beat-up car that will break down on the journey. The dull nimitta, when not made to shine, usually vanishes after some time. So if one is unable to shine up the nimitta, then go back to the beautiful breath and build up more energy there. Generate greater pīti-sukha, huge happiness and joy, along with the breath. Then, next time the breath disappears and a nimitta arises, it will be not dull but beautiful and luminous. In effect, one has shined up the nimitta in the stage of the beautiful breath.

Stabilizing the Nimitta

When the nimitta is very bright, it is also very beautiful. It usually appears unearthly in the depth of its beauty and more wonderful than anything

one has ever experienced before. Whatever the color of the nimitta, it is a thousand times richer than anything that can be seen with one's own eyes. Such awesome beauty will captivate one's attention, making the nimitta remain. The more beautiful the nimitta, the more likely it is that the nimitta will become stable and not jump about. Thus one of the best methods to stabilize the nimitta, so that it persists a long time, is to shine the nimitta into brilliance, as explained above.

However, some brilliant nimittas still don't last long. They burst into the mental field of awareness with strong pīti-sukha, but they persist not much longer than a glorious shooting star in a clear night sky. These nimittas have power but lack sufficient stability. In order to stabilize such a nimitta, it is important to know that the two enemies that disperse the nimitta are fear and excitement.

Of the two enemies, fear is more common. These nimittas appear so immense in their sheer power and beauty that one often becomes very afraid. Fear is a natural response to the recognition of something much more powerful than oneself. Moreover, the experience is so unfamiliar that one's personal security looks seriously threatened. It seems as if one might lose all control. And one will—blissfully so—if one could only let go of the "self" and trust in the nimitta! Then one would experience desire and control overwhelmed by supramundane bliss, and, in consequence, much of what one took to be one's self would vanish, leaving a real sense of freedom. It is the fear of losing part of one's ego that is the root cause of alarm when a powerful nimitta appears.

Those who have understood something of the Buddha's teaching of anattā, that there is no self, will have an easier time transcending this fear and accepting the nimitta. They realize that they have nothing to protect and so can let go of control, trust in the emptiness, and selflessly enjoy the beauty and power. Thus the nimitta settles. Even an intellectual understanding that there is no one in here will help overcome the terror of letting go of the innermost controller. However, those who have no appreciation of the truth of no-self may overcome this fear by substituting the more powerful perception of bliss.

The simile of a child in a swimming pool illustrates this last point.

When children who have just learned to walk see a swimming pool for the first time, they are likely to be scared. The unfamiliar environment threatens their security, and they are deeply concerned whether their little bodies can manage in such an unsolid material. They are afraid of losing control. So they put one toe into the water and quickly pull it out. That felt all right. So they place three toes into the water for just a little bit longer. That was okay too. Next they dip a whole foot in, then a whole leg. As the confidence increases and the swimming pool promises to be fun, the anticipation of joy overpowers the fear. The child jumps into the water and immerses itself fully. Then they have such a great time that their parents can hardly get them to leave!

Similarly, when fear arises with the powerful nimitta, it is all one can do to stay there just for an instant. One then reflects how that felt. To say it felt wonderful is an understatement. So the next time one stays longer, and it feels even better. By this gradual method, confidence soon becomes strong and the expectation of joy so dominant that when the awesome nimitta arises, one jumps right in and immerses oneself fully. Moreover, one has such a great time that it is only with great difficulty that anyone can make you come out.

Another skillful means for overcoming fear at this stage, especially when fear is not too strong, is to perform a little mental ceremony of handing over trust. It is as if one has been the driver of one's meditation until now, but this is the moment to hand over control to the nimitta. As I suggested in chapter 7, one may imagine handing over a set of keys to the powerful nimitta, the way one allows a trusted friend to take over driving one's car. With an imaginary gesture of handing over the keys, one transfers control and places full trust in the nimitta. Such a transfer of faith usually leads to a greater stability of the nimitta and its subsequent deepening.

Here again one is placing faith in the knower and withdrawing it from the doer. This is the theme underlying the whole of the meditation path. One trains from the very beginning in passive awareness, that is, the ability to be clearly aware without interfering at all with the object of awareness. Energy, coupled with faith, flows into the mindfulness and away

from activity. When one learns to watch an ordinary object like the breath without meddling, then one's passive awareness will be challenged by a more seductive object like the beautiful breath. If one passes this test, then the most challenging object of all, the nimitta, will be presented to you as the ultimate test of passive awareness. For if one gets involved with the nimitta and tries to control it however slightly, then one fails the final examination and gets sent back to the beautiful breath for remedial training. The more one meditates, the more one learns to be powerfully mindful while letting go of all doing. When this skill is fully perfected, it is easy to pass the final test and stabilize the nimitta with flawless passive awareness.

Again, the simile of the mirror is applicable here. When you look at your reflection in a mirror and the image is moving around, it is because you are not still. It is futile to try to stabilize the image by holding the mirror still. In fact, if you try this, the reflection is apt to move even more. The image in the mirror is moving because the watcher is moving, not the mirror. Only when the watcher is still will the image be still.

The nimitta is in reality a reflection of the mind, an image of that which knows. When this reflection, this nimitta, moves back and forth, it is futile trying to stabilize the nimitta by holding the nimitta still. The nimitta is moving because that which is watching the nimitta is moving. When this is understood, one focuses on that which knows, letting it come to stillness. When that which knows doesn't move, then neither does the nimitta.

The other enemy of the nimitta's stability is excitement or exhilaration, what I have called the "wow!" response. When there is success in the meditation and amazing things happen, then the meditator can get very excited, especially when a wonderful nimitta first appears, more radiant than the sun and more beautiful than exquisite flowers! On such occasions it is common for the mind to say "wow!" Unfortunately, the nimitta immediately withdraws and may be reluctant to return for a very long time, even months. In order to avoid such a calamity, one should bear in mind Ajahn Chah's famous simile of the still forest pool, which I described in detail in chapter 7.

In this simile the forest pool represents the mind, and the forest monk sitting near its edge stands for mindfulness. When mindfulness is still, then animals like the beautiful breath and pīti-sukha come out from their jungle to play by the mind's edge. Mindfulness must remain still. If it does, then, after the beautiful breath and pīti-sukha have finished their business in the mind, the beautiful, shy nimitta will cautiously emerge to play in the mind. If the nimitta senses the knower thinking "wow!" it will bashfully run back into the jungle, not to reemerge for a very long time.

So when the powerful and beautiful nimittas appear, watch with the stillness of an Ajahn Chah, sitting absolutely motionless by the remote forest lake. Then one will watch this strange and wonderful nimitta make merry in the mind for a very long time, until it is ready to take one into jhāna.

Entering the Jhāna

When the nimitta is stable and radiant, then one is at the entrance to jhāna. One must train oneself to wait patiently here, maintaining the stillness and nondoing until the causes or conditions are ready for the transition into jhāna. At this stage, however, some meditators make the mistake of disturbing the process by peeking at the edge of the nimitta.

Once the nimitta is stable and bright, one might become interested in its shape or size. Is it circular or oblong? Are the edges precise or ill defined? Is it small or is it big? When one looks at the edge, mindfulness loses its one-pointedness. The edge is the place of duality, of inside and outside. And duality is the opposite of one-pointedness. If one looks at the edge, the nimitta will become unsettled and may even disappear. One should keep mindfulness on the very center of the nimitta, away from the edge, until any perception of edge vanishes into the nonduality of one-pointedness. Similarly, if one attempts to expand or contract the nimitta, then one will also be sacrificing the essential one-pointedness. Expansion and contraction involve the perception of size, and that involves awareness of the edge of the nimitta and the space that lies beyond. Again one is falling back into the trap of duality and loss of one-pointedness through this unprofitable expanding and contracting.

So when the nimitta is stable and bright, you must be patient. Don't move. One is building up the jhāna factors of pīti-sukha and one-pointedness. When they are built to sufficient power, they will unfold into jhāna by themselves.

An oft-quoted passage from the suttas, often erroneously translated to imply the existence of an original mind, is relevant here. The passage is from the Aṅguttara Nikāya.[8]

> This mind, O monks, is luminous, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements. The uninstructed worldling does not understand this as it really is; therefore for him there is no mental development.
>
> This mind, O monks, is luminous, and it is freed from adventitious defilements. The instructed noble disciple understands this as it really is; therefore for him there is mental development. (AN I,6,1–2)

At the stage of the beautiful and stable nimitta, it is the nimitta that is radiant and incredibly luminous. And the nimitta, as already explained, is an image of the mind. When one experiences such a nimitta, one recognizes it as the luminous (or radiant) mind of the Aṅguttara passage above. This nimitta is radiant because the mind has been freed from the "adventitious defilements," which mean the five hindrances. Then one understands that this nimitta—this luminous mind freed of the five hindrances—is the doorway into jhāna, then one truly understands what is meant by "mental development."

When the nimitta is radiant and stable, then its energy builds up moment by moment. It is like adding peace upon peace upon peace, until the peace becomes huge! As the peace becomes huge, the pīti-sukha becomes huge, and the nimitta grows in luminosity. If one can maintain the one-pointedness here by keeping one's focus on the very center of the nimitta, the power will reach a critical level. One will feel as if the knower is being drawn into the nimitta, that one is falling into the most glorious bliss. Alternatively, one may feel that the nimitta approaches until it envelops the knower, swallowing one up in cosmic ecstasy. One is entering jhāna.

Yo-Yo Jhāna

It sometimes happens that when inexperienced meditators fall into a nimitta, they immediately bounce back to where they began. I call this a "yo-yo jhāna," after the children's toy. It isn't a real jhāna because it doesn't last long enough, but it is so close. It is the enemy I identified above, excitement, that causes mindfulness to bounce back from jhāna. Such a reaction is quite understandable since the bliss that one experiences when falling into the nimitta is greater joy than one can ever imagine. One may have thought that the best sexual orgasm was something nice, but now one discovers that it is trivial compared to the bliss of these jhānas. Even after a yo-yo jhāna, one often bursts into tears of happiness, crying at the most wonderful experience by far of one's whole life. So it is understandable that novice meditators first experience yo-yo jhānas. After all, it takes a lot of training to be able to handle such immensely strong bliss. And it takes a lot of wisdom to let go of excitement when one of the great prizes of spiritual life is theirs for the taking.

For those who are old enough to remember the game of snakes and ladders, the simple children's board game played with dice, they will remember the most dangerous square to land on is the square just before the goal. The ninety-ninth square holds the head of the longest of snakes. If you land on the hundredth square you win. But if you land on the ninety-ninth square, you fall down the snake to its tail, right back at the beginning. A yo-yo jhāna is like landing on the ninety-ninth square. You are very close to winning the game and entering a jhāna, but you fall just a little short, land on the snake head of excitement, and slide, or rather bounce, right back to the start.

Even so, yo-yo jhānas are so close to the real thing that they are not to be sneered at. In the yo-yo jhāna one experiences incredible bliss and transports of joy. It makes one feel as high as a weather balloon for hours, without a care in the world and with so much energy that one can hardly sleep. The experience is the greatest in one's life. It will change you.

Through a little more training and wise reflection on one's experiences, you will be able to fall into the nimitta, or be enveloped by it, without bouncing out. Then you have entered the amazing world of jhāna.

FOCUSED *and* FEARLESS

A Meditator's Guide to States of Deep Joy, Calm, and Clarity

SHAILA CATHERINE

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CHAPTER 10
Access to Absorption: At the Threshold of Peace

Whoever, whether standing or walking, sitting or lying down, calms his mind and strives for that inner stillness in which there is no thought, he has the prerequisite to realize supreme illumination.

—The Buddha[1]

THE FIRST FORMAL INSTRUCTION I received for jhana practice surprised me. My teacher told me to meditate in any way that supported the development of three qualities: mental brightness, spaciousness, and relaxation. I had expected the early instructions to emphasize vigorous focus on a narrow object. It soon became clear, however, that demanding effort can create tension; in the wake of tension, aversion and hindrances thrive. Conversely, a mind that is relaxed, bright, and spacious contributes to mental and physical ease and encourages a natural release into present-moment experience.

For concentration to deepen the mind needs to relax. It cannot stay on the defensive. A mind that is glad is easily concentrated. In spiritual life gladness is not the giddy excitement expressed by titillation or thrill. The deeper forms of gladness arise when you trust your virtue. Happiness arises when you can trust the purity of your own heart's intentions. In short, it is a happiness of non-remorse. It is through sincere reflection and our inner ethical commitments that we purify our intentions and

grow to trust ourselves. If our ethical foundation is uncertain, tranquillity will remain shaky, the mind will be unable to confidently settle into this living process of purification.

We can improve the texture of the mind by influencing the kind of thoughts we tend to think. When you observe thoughts that diminish the qualities you appreciate, abandon those thoughts and give a thought or two to something virtuous, respectable, joyful—perhaps a thought of kindness.

THOUGHTS OF KINDNESS

When I practiced in a Thai forest monastery, I (along with all residents) was asked to generate thoughts of friendship and kindness for several minutes before leaving the mosquito nets we slept under at night. We would bring a person to mind and mentally recite a simple phrase of good will—"May you be well, happy, and at ease"—or an equivalent wish. With repeated practice, this simple reflection on kind wishes has the potential to soothe an ill temper, calm an anxious mind, and bring joy to the heart. Try this throughout your day.

BASIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR STABILIZING THE MIND

This book focuses on the technique of using the breath as your initial object for meditation. The Buddhist tradition suggests a number of objects for jhana meditation, including colors, light, the basic elements (earth, fire, water, and wind), foul aspects of bodily experience, or beautiful inner qualities such as loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Each object has the potential to raise the mind to correspondingly distinct levels of absorption. Traditionally, an experienced teacher tailors the meditation subject according to the student's disposition, meditative ability, interest, and intention.

The virtue of using the breath as a meditation subject is that it is suitable for meditators of all temperaments. It can bring the mind to the highest formless states. It is the preferred meditation subject for the majority of practitioners. Although certain individuals might find jhana easier to attain with a different meditation subject, the skills developed working with the breath can be applied to any meditative endeavor.

In the commentarial tradition, the designation of a state called *access concentration* arose as a convenient term to describe the conditions that immediately precede jhana. Although there is no direct reference in the discourses of the Buddha to access concentration as a distinct state, the conditions that lead to jhana are clearly described—and when these conditions arise, access to jhana is possible.

The following instructions for attaining access to jhana refine the basic meditation instructions given in Chapter 1.

Once you are sitting in a comfortable and alert posture, with a mind inclined toward qualities of ease, brightness, and spaciousness, apply an actively penetrative attention to experience the initial sensations of the breath touching the nostrils or upper lip. Choose a small point at the nostrils or upper lip area—wherever you feel the sensations of the breath most distinctly. The actual location will vary from person to person, depending on the angle of the nose, structure of the jaw, shape of the lips, and facial features; there is no best or correct place. Feel where the breath naturally touches you. Whenever the attention drifts off that point of sensation, guide it back, simply and diligently. Each time the awareness wanders off with thoughts of past or future, simply drop this preoccupation with thoughts by reaffirming the directed focus of your activity. Ignore everything else: environmental sounds, pain, thoughts, or plans. If emotions, great insights, a review of yesterday's shopping list, a plan for redecorating your kitchen, a replay of a movie you recently watched, or any profound or mundane thought should arise, invest no interest in these events and guide the attention perseveringly back to the breath.

Although this instruction is simple to understand, within just a few minutes of practice you will surely notice that the mind tends to wander away from that point of contact where the breath is felt. It may wander through past thoughts, future plans, or a commentary on the present experience of sitting with a book in your lap feeling the breath at your

nose. Whatever thoughts arise, interesting or boring, supportive or destructive of your self-esteem, let them all go equally and unequivocally. The discipline here is to discard all entanglement without judging yourself and return happily to the meditation subject, with a mind that is spacious, bright, and relaxed.

Let sounds, sensations, and thoughts go their own way; there is no need to follow them. You may initially notice a multitude of perceptions: sounds might impinge, pain might be felt, thoughts might meander through consciousness. These are all normal sensory experiences. You don't need to push them away, but you don't need to maintain interest in them either. Keep sequestering the mind close to the breath, abandoning the urge to move toward the various sensory experiences that will inevitably arise. This streamlined practice, sustained over time, creates a powerful momentum of concentration by connecting and sustaining the attention on a chosen object.

Initially the breath may appear with distinct physical properties: vibration, temperature, tension, pressure, roughness, for instance. To develop concentration, keep steadily aware of the continuity of connecting and sustaining (vitakka and vicara) without great emphasis on the physicality of changing sensations. As the attention remains connected for longer periods of time without distraction, there will be a corresponding withdrawal of perception from other bodily senses. Awareness of distinct sensations related to the sitting posture will diminish. Awareness of room temperature will fade. Sounds might occur as remote innocuous notes without pulling the attention toward them. Aches, pain, tensions, or twinges in the body will hardly be noticed. Parallel to this growing separation from physical sensory experiences, pleasant mental qualities of bliss, lightness, delight, rapture, pleasure, and happiness will grow, supporting the sustained connection. You will gradually experience clear awareness—samadhi is not a dull or drifting state—yet the objects you perceive will not be bound to the gross field of sensory perception.

As we've noted, meditation requires diligent effort and clear intention. You cannot demand that distractions vanish, but you can cultivate a deep willingness to repeatedly and happily let go. If you try to adhere to the breath and wrestle violently with anything that threatens that hold,

you will quickly become tense and probably decide to quit before you have barely begun. But if you allow yourself to *enjoy* letting go of distractions, to feel happy to reconnect, and unburdened by pressure to accomplish a certain number of consecutive breaths, happiness will arise through the simple joy of relinquishment.

When attention is continuously applied, intrusive thoughts subside. If a thought should arise, there will be no fuel for proliferation. It is just a tiny transparent thought that wisps through the mind without causing disturbance, like a momentary bubble on a stream or an ephemeral cloud in the sky. The few thoughts that do arise are entirely wholesome and often concern the meditation practice. Alertness thrives; the mind brightens. When access to jhana is available, there are no hindrances in the mind: no craving, no judging, no doubt, no agitation, no greed. The pulsing activities of vitakka and vicara continue. Relaxed, bright, and spacious, with a momentum of concentration supporting the process, the mind coheres around its object.

THE COUNTERPART SIGN

At some point the physicality of the breath will diminish and the mind will collect through the mere functions of connecting and sustaining attention on the subtle knowing of breath. Focus the attention below the nostrils, either at the subtle feeling near the upper lip, or in the space just off the body near that point. Stay focused on the whole breath—from the very start of the inhalation through to the end of the exhalation—without attention wavering. Be attentive to a continuous perception of breath as the object, rather than particular sensations associated with the breath.

The deepening of samadhi involves this distinctive shift from the physicality of breath sensations as the object of concentration to what is called the *counterpart sign* or *nimitta*. The nimitta often appears as a vibrating pearly bright light resonating with the in- and out-breath, or a soft luminous perception likened to cotton wool. Please don't jump to the conclusion that the first appearance of light in the mind is the nimitta. The mind progressively brightens long before the breath nimitta appears. Many meditators stall their progress by following after "false

nimittas"—changing colors, changing images, flashes, motley fields of light, or visual impressions of light that remove the focus of attention from the breath-point to another location (most commonly above the eyes, or in the head).

The breath nimitta usually appears as a stable, smooth, white radiance associated with the focus on the breath. It is a mental reflection of the breath and includes no physical aspect; the light and breath may appear to have merged into a single mental experience of breath. The counterpart sign arises as a result of the concentration and serves as the first landmark of a state conducive to absorption. By learning to notice when this sign arises, you will be able to retrace your steps in the future and attain jhana when desired. Discerning the nimitta is the first step in stabilizing this refined object for concentration. From this point forward, there is no attention to coarse physicality. The term *nimitta,* or counterpart sign, will refer to the object of breath when the breath is known as a stable, luminous, mental focus without sensation.

A skilled meditator should have the capacity to direct the attention at any time either back to the physicality of the sensation of breath or to the mental experience of the counterpart sign. If the meditator decides to remain attentive to physical sensations, rapture will still arise, but it will be known as physical delight. If you accept the subtler luminous mental sign as the object for concentration, this shift to the subtler mental perception will lead to absorption. To attain access to jhana, you would choose the perception of pleasant, radiant light as the new nimitta and allow the attention to remain steadily focused on the luminous perception that is known by directing attention to the upper lip area. But to confirm that you do have the option, it is helpful to sometimes choose the physicality. There is a choice: stay with physical sensations or shift to the counterpart sign.

The momentum of samadhi naturally inclines toward the subtler experience of mental brightness, but skillfulness always includes options. Concentration can be very strong. The mind should never be propelled through this system nor "sucked into a vortex" of concentration. A wise practitioner will moderate the pace, fully developing the meditative skills, before moving to the next stage. By valuing both the release into a

profound depth of experience and the insight that arises with dynamic proximity to the senses, you can explore the intertwined trainings of concentration and insight—simultaneously exploring how attention connects with both physical and mental objects of perception.

ACCESS TO JHANA

How strong does concentration need to be to be sure access is attained? Access to jhana has been achieved when there is a sustained experience of a unified mind free of all hindrances and imbued with strong factors of vitakka, vicara, piti, and sukha. Attention, undistracted by thoughts or sensory perceptions, remains intensely focused on the mental nimitta. The mind is utterly bright, the heart relaxed.

Fundamentally, *access* describes an absence of hindrances conjoined with the presence of strongly developed jhanic factors. These conditions are recognized prerequisites to jhana, as the Buddha describes:

> And when he knows that these five hindrances have left him, gladness arises in him, from gladness comes delight, from delight in his mind his body is tranquilized, with a tranquil body he feels joy, and with joy his mind is concentrated. Being thus detached from sense-desires, detached from unwholesome states he enters and remains in the first jhana. . . .[2]

With the absence of hindrances, in the presence of joy, happiness, tranquillity, and concentration, there is a feeling of great relief. The feeling of relief characterizing access to jhana increases to a sense of safety with the arising of jhana: safe from distraction, safe from hindrances, or, as the ancient scriptures describe, removed from the forces of Mara.

The jhanic factors of connecting, sustaining, delight, and joy will continue to strengthen. If your energy drops, you may find sounds or sensations intruding on the meditation. Gentle, joyful persistence is essential. If the mind becomes distracted, simply let the distracting perception be, and reconnect with the nimitta. Nurture equanimity; be happy to connect with the whole breath, or the light nimitta; direct your

attention to whichever object is apparent there. Reconnect repeatedly, clearly aware of gladness infusing the connection. Keep lifting the mind up to its object. Use this power of vitakka to refresh the connection whenever the energy sinks or the attention scatters.

When the prerequisites to jhana are stable and sustained, focus the attention for just a moment on the distinctive absence of hindrances. Consider if true happiness can ever be found through sensory experiences. Once you achieve the certainty that happiness will not be found by getting more sensory pleasures or thinking more interesting thoughts, your commitment to inner exploration will deepen. Recognize that this variety of seclusion is a source of joy and relief. After reflecting in this way, continue to develop the basic practice of connecting and sustaining attention on the light that infuses the breath point.

Let go with relief and allow the withdrawal from thoughts, personal concerns, and sensations to continue, unforced and unbroken. Mental brightness will continue to increase. A sense of cohesion and mental unification will grow. Since at this stage concentration is still fragile, this deep release is often interrupted by distraction. Quickly but gently bring energetic interest to the connecting and sustaining activity.

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With this practice, the mind is preparing itself for the altered state of jhana—a deeply absorbed state of mind that can retain its unity without effortful striving. When vitakka and vicara are strong and infused with delight, you won't need to continually refresh the connection or fuss with the energy. It is natural for the mind to stay attentive to that which is delightful. So harness this power of happiness and let it totally permeate the nimitta, allowing the mind to become increasingly stable, cohesive, and bright.

These references to delight, gladness, happiness, and rapture could cause you to expect dramatic ecstatic pleasures. The process is more subtle, however. A unified mind experiences such refined pleasures that, although the quiet presence of sublime happiness permeates consciousness and accompanies each stage of jhana, the jhanic factors will barely be noticed while in jhana. This is discerned primarily in the moments prior to absorption and upon emerging from jhana.

Are there thoughts and hindrances that you can set aside, or is there an absence of hindrances in the mind? When you perceive the genuine absence of hindrances, you will feel happy, the happiness I've described as "a great relief." Become sensitive to the subtle pleasant quality of rapture when connecting with the nimitta. When attention is quiet and steady, piti does not have to be gloriously exciting. Enjoy the ease of a mind that is growing in purity.

Derek Kilkenny

BUDDHIST MEDITATION
IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

A General Exposition According to the Pāli Canon of The Theravāda School

By

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short nose strike the upper lip. Hence he should fix upon the sign with the thought, "This is the place that they touch." This is what is meant in the text by the words, "setting mindfulness in front" (pari-mukham, in the very front of the face).

The next two items (3) phusanā (touching) and (4) ṭhapanā (applying) are involved in the exercise of following the process of the breathings as explained above, and therefore they are not treated as separate exercises. Here the instruction 'applying the mind to the sign' is to be understood as the application of the mind to the object of mindfulness : that is the sign of breathing, wherefrom the after-image (paṭibhāganimitta) arises.

After-image Visualized in Various Forms.

Thus when the disciple attends to this subject of meditation in these four ways, after a short time the after-image appears, and then the appanā, here called 'ṭhapanā' is attained together with the Jhāna factors. For some the gross process of breathing gradually subsides in the course of counting, and thereby the body and mind become tranquillized. At that moment the body becomes light as though it would rise up into the sky. From the time when the gross breathings have become calm, the mind arises and notes the sign of the ever subtler breathings as its object. Unlike the other subjects of meditation which become keener and clearer as they develop, this subject of ānāpānasati acquires greater subtlety as it develops. It may even become imperceptible and the disciple may feel that he has ceased to breathe altogether. When it becomes imperceptible the disciple should not move from his seat [1] wondering, "Is the kammatthāna lost for me ?" or "shall I ask the teacher ?" For when he goes away and so changes his posture his kammaṭṭhāna is lost, and he has to start it all over again. He should therefore remain in

1. Reading in *The Path of Purity*, p. 325 (line 25) : "But when it is not manifested the monk should rise from his seat and go away " should be "the monk should not rise . . . and go away" for the text "Na vutthātabbaṃ"—should not rise."

the same seat and induce it by fixing the thought upon the original points of the sign of breathing. By considering with close attention he is aware of the existence of breaths as they touch his nostrils. Thus he regains the after-image of respiration that exists in the finest state. Ānāpānasati is the most subtle and difficult subject of meditation and is not suitable for a person whose powers of memory and intuition are poor. As the Scriptures tell us, "Monks, I do not recommend the development of ānāpānasati for one who is forgetful and lacking in comprehension." (S.V. 337.) It therefore requires complete mindfulness and quick understanding. The disciple should always keep his mindfulness at the point that comes into contact with the breaths.

As he thus practises, in a short time the mental image appears. Its manner of appearance varies according to the type of mentality. To some it appears with a soft touch like a piece of cotton or a cooling breeze ; to others like a star, a round ruby or a pearl ; to others again it seems like the harsh contact of a pointed stick; others feel it as a long string, or a wreath of white flowers or a crest of smoke ; to others it is like a cobweb, a cloud, a lotus flower, a wheel or a disc of the sun or the moon.

According to the *Yogāvacara's Manual* the sign of the mental image of this kammaṭṭhāna appears as ruffled water with the blemishes of foam, and bubbles in the waves ; or else it appears like a volume of smoke rising and falling in waves, or like white clouds in the sky. The after-image appears as a jewelled fan or crystal mirror suspended in the sky, or the moon rising through the clouds, or else as a flock of white cranes moving in front of dark clouds. It is a hundred times clearer and purer than the mental image. Then follow the three thought moments, parikamma, upacāra, and appanā. Of them parikamma is like a sheaf of feathers from a peacock's tail, upacāra is somewhat dark or black, like a beetle ; appanā is like a piece of cotton-wool which has a soft touch, or a wreath of white flowers, such as jasmine or lotus. In

the course of practice the disciple should closely observe these thought-forms and withdrawing them from the nose-tip, should mentally place them in the heart and then in the navel. Afterwards he should place them in the nostril. (Manual, p. 43.)

Three Different Objects.

In this meditation there are three distinctive mental objects ; assāsa, passāsa, and their nimitta or sign. Of these assāsa and passāsa are to be thoroughly studied in the previous exercises beginning with counting ; nimitta is to be known from the stage of anubandhanā by means of feeling them with special attention and applying the mind to the place with which they come into contact. Until these three become clear and distinct meditation is not fulfilled.

Though these three objects are inseparably connected with the same subject of meditation, they differ from one another according to the condition of the mind that arises with them. The mind which arises with inhalation notes that its manner of functioning is different from that of exhalation. The mind which arises with exhalation notes that its manner of functioning is different from that of inhalation. The mind which is established on the sign of both kinds of breathing notes neither breathing in nor breathing out, but the point of their contact. Thus it is true to say that these three are not the objects of the same state of mind, though they are connected with the same subject. Until these distinctive states become clear and fully apprehended the meditation leads neither to the "access" nor to jhāna. It is not assāsa nor passāsa that leads to jhāna, but their nimitta or sign. Nevertheless, this nimitta cannot be attained unless assāsa and passāsa are thoroughly studied.

When the nimitta is visualized in the forms described above, the disciple should inform his teacher, who will thereupon give him further advice. He who has obtained the mental image in one form or another should "protect"

it in the manner described for the Kasina meditation, with special care and attention, visualizing it repeatedly. He should concentrate his whole mind on the nimitta, an exercise known as ṭhapanā ; that is to say, after the appearance of the nimitta he neither counts, follows the breath, nor notes their touch, but keeps his mind upon the image visualized in connection with respiration. With the increasing intensity of the meditation the hindrances are eliminated, the mental defilements subside, mindfulness is established, and the mind is concentrated in the state of access samādhi. From this stage he should not reflect upon the colour or shape of the image, but take it as the concept of the mental representation derived from the air element of breathings. As he cultivates it, the Fourth and the Fifth Jhānas are attained in due course.

The disciple who wishes to increase the same subject of meditation with a view to further attainments, should make his mind capable of acquiring the knowledge of insight by contemplating the three characteristics. Rising from the fourth jhāna he sees the mind and body as the source of the breathings ; for it is on account of the body and the mind that the breath is set in motion. Then he distinguishes between the breathings and the body as rūpa, material form, and the mind and thoughts as nāma, the immaterial. Next he contemplates their characteristics of transitoriness painfulness and non-reality. Developing this knowledge, gaining freedom from the craving for the things which are perishing moment by moment he attains the full knowledge which transfers him to the Four Noble Paths of development, the fruit of which he realizes in Arhatship, the final goal of his training.

This is the end of the practice of concentration in mindfulness of respiration, beginning with counting and ending in the realization of the fruit of Arhatship. Here ends the exposition of the first four exercises of ānāpānasati.

Exercise : Part Two.

This part is concerned with the next four stages. It explains a method of developing the Ānāpānasati medita-

Satipatthana Sutta

From: 'The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Mijjhima Nikaya' by Bhikkhu Nanamoli

Thus Have I Heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Kuru country at a town of the Kurus named Kamma-sadhamma. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus." - "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said thus:

"Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of nibbana - namely the four foundations of mindfulness.

"What are these four? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.

1. Contemplation of the Body

(a) **Mindfulness of Breathing**

"And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating the body as body? Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, sets his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out. Breathing in long, he understands: 'I breathe in long'; or breathing out long, he understands: ' I breathe out long.' Breathing in short, he understands: ' I breathe in short' ; breathing out short, he understands: 'I breathe out short.' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body (of breath).' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body (of breathe).' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in tranquillising the bodily formation'; he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out tranquillising the bodily formation.' Just as a skilled nurse or his apprentice, when making a long turn, understands: 'I make a long turn'; or, when making a short turn understands: 'I make a short turn' ; so too, breathing in long, a bhikkhu understands: 'I breathe in long'...he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out tranquillizing the bodily formation.'

[Insight]

"In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in

the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in the body its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(b) **The Four Postures**

"Again, bhikkhus, when walking a bhikkhu understands: 'I am walking'; when standing, he understands: 'I am standing'; when sitting, he understands: 'I am sitting'; when lying down, he understands: 'I am lying down'; or he understands accordingly however his body is disposed.

"In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally... And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(c) **Full Awareness**

" Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu is one who acts in full awareness when going forward and returning; who acts in full awareness when looking ahead and looking away; who acts in full awareness when flexing and extending his limbs; who acts in full awareness when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl; who acts in full awareness when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting; who acts in full awareness when defecating and urinating; who acts in full awareness when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent.

"In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(d) **Foulness - The Bodily Parts**

"Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, bounded by the skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: 'In this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, large-intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine. Just as though there were a bag with an opening at both ends full of many sorts of grain, such as hill rice, red rice, beans, peas, millet, and white rice, and a man with good eyes were to open it and review it thus: 'This is hill rice, this is red rice, these are beans, these are peas, this is millet, this is white rice'; so too, a bhikkhu reviews this same body...as full of many kinds of impurity thus: 'In this body there are head-hairs...and urine.'

"In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(e) **The Primary Elements**

"Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reviews this same body, however it is placed, however disposed, as consisting of elements thus: 'In this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element and the air element.' Just as though a skilled butcher or his apprentice had killed a cow and was seated at the crossroads with it cut up into pieces; so too, a bhikkhu reviews this same body...as consisting of elements thus: 'In this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.'

"In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

(f) **The Nine Charnel Grounds Contemplations**

"Again, bhikkhus, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, one, two, or three days dead, bloated, livid, and oozing matter, a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: 'This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.'

" In this way he abides contemplating the body as the body internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

"Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, being devoured by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals, or various kinds of worms, a bhikkhu compares the same body with it thus: 'This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.'

"...That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

"Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together with sinews...a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together with sinews...a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together with sinews...disconnected bones scattered in all directions - here a hand-bone, there a foot-bone, here a shin-bone, there a thigh-bone, here a hip-bone, there a back-bone, here a rib-bone, there a breast-bone, here an arm-bone, there a shoulder-bone, here a neck-bone, there a jaw-bone, here a tooth, there the skull - a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus:'This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.'

"...That too is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

Page 3

"Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, bones bleached white, the colour of shells...bones heaped up, more than a year old...bones rotted and crumbled to dust, a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: 'This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.'

[Insight]

"In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in the body its arising factors, or he abides contemplating its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in the body both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is a body' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body.

2. Contemplation of Feelings

"And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu contemplating feelings as feelings? Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling, a bhikkhu understands: 'I feel a pleasant feeling', when feeling a painful feeling, he understands: 'I feel a painful feeling'; when feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.' he understands 'I feel a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.' When feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel a worldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel an unworldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling a worldly painful feeling, he understands: 'I feel a worldly painful feeling'; when feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: 'I feel an unworldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant-feeling.'

3. Contemplation of the Mind-State

"And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind as mind? Here a bhikkhu understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and mind unaffected by lust as mind unaffected by lust. He understands mind affected by hate as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate. He understands mind affected by delusion as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion. He understands contracted mind as contracted mind, and distracted mind as distracted mind as distracted mind. He understands exalted mind as exalted mind, and unexalted mind as unexalted mind. He understands surpassed mind as surpassed mind, and unsurpassed mind as unsurpassed mind. He understands concentrated mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind. He understands liberated mind as liberated mind, and unliberated mind as unliberated mind.

"In this way he abides contemplating mind as mind internally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind externally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind

both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind both its arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there is a mind' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind as mind.

4.Contemplation of Mind-Objects

(a) **The Five Hindrances**

"And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects? Here a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances? Here, there being sensual desire in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is sensual desire in me'; or there being no sensual desire in him, he understands: 'There is no sensual desire in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sensual desire, and how there comes to be the abandonment of unarisen sensual desire; and how there comes to be the abandonment of arisen sensual desire, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned sensual desire.'

"There being ill will in him...There being sloth and torpor in him...There being restlessness and remorse in him...There being doubt in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is doubt in me'; or there being no doubt in him, he understands: 'There is no doubt in me'; and he understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen doubt, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen doubt, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of abandoned doubt.

(b) **The Five Aggregates**

"Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging? Here a bhikkhu understands: 'Such is material form, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is feeling, such its origin, such its disappearance, such is perception, such its origin, such its disappearance; such are the formations, such their origin, such their disappearance; such is consciousness, such its origin, such its disappearance.'

"In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates affected by clinging.

(c) **The Six Sense-Bases**

"Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases. And how does a bhikkhu abide

contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases? Here a bhikkhu understands the eye, he understands forms, and he understands the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen fetter, and how there comes to be the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of the abandoned fetter.

"He understands the ear, he understands sounds...He understands the nose, he understands odours...He understands the tongue, he understands flavours...He understands the body, he understands tangibles...He understands the mind, he understands mind-objects, and he understands the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen fetter, and how there comes to be the abandoning of the arisen fetter, and how there comes to be the future non-arising of the abandoned fetter.

"In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, externally, and both internally and externally...And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the six internal and external bases.

(d) **The Seven Enlightenment Factors**

"Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors? Here, there being the mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is the mindfulness enlightenment factor in me'; or there being no mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, he understands: 'There is no mindfulness enlightenment factor in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen mindfulness enlightenment factor, and how the arisen mindfulness enlightenment factor comes to fulfilment by development.

"There being the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor in him...There being the energy enlightenment factor in him...There being the rapture enlightenment factor in him...There being the tranquillity enlightenment factor in him...There being the concentration enlightenment factor in him...There being the equanimity enlightenment factor in him, a bhikkhu understands: 'There is the equanimity enlightenment factor in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen equanimity enlightenment factor in him, he understands: 'There is no enlightenment equanimity factor in me'; and he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen equanimity enlightenment factor, and how the arisen equanimity enlightenment factor come to fulfilment by development.

"In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, externally, and both internally and externally... And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors.

(e) **The Four Noble Truths**

"Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths. And how does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the Four Noble Truths? Here a bhikkhu understands as it actually is: 'This is suffering'; he understands as it actually is: 'This is the origin of suffering'; he understands as it actually is: 'This is the cessation of suffering'; he understands as it actually is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.'

[Insight]

"In this way he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects internally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects externally, or he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind objects their arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects their vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind-objects both their arising and vanishing factors. Or else mindfulness that 'there are mind-objects' is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of The Four Noble Truths.

"Bhikkhus, if anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven years, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

"Let alone seven years, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for six years...for five years...for four years...for three years...for two years...for one year, one of two fruits could be expected for him either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

"Let alone one year, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven months...for six months...for five months...for four months...for three months...for two months...for one month...for half a month, one of two fruits could be expected for him, either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

"Let alone half a month, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven days, one of two fruits could b expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

"So it was with reference to this that it was said:'Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of Nibbana - namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.' "

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam

of Vasubandhu

Volume III

Translated into French by Louis de La Vallée Poussin

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13c-d. It is not observed by an inferior mind.[98]

In-breathing and out-breathing is observed by a mind of its own sphere or by a mind in a higher sphere; but not by an *airyāpathika* mind, nor by a *nairmāṇika* mind of a lower sphere.

***

We have spoken of the two teachings, the visualization of loathsome things, and mindfulness of breathing. Having attained absorption (*samādhi*) by these two portals, now, with a view to realizing insight (*vipaśyanā*),

14a-b. Having realized stilling, he will cultivate the foundations of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthānas*).[99]

How is this?

14c-d. By considering the twofold characteristics of the body, sensation, the mind, and the *dharmas*.

By considering the unique characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa*) and the general characteristics (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*)[100] of the body, sensation, the mind, and the *dharmas*.

"The unique characteristics" means its self nature (*svabhāva*).

"The general characteristics" signifies the fact that "All conditioned things are impermanent; all impure *dharmas* are suffering; and that all the *dharmas* are empty (*śūnya*) and not-self (*anātmaka*)."

What is the unique nature of the body? The primary elements and physical matter derived from these primary elements (i.12,

ii.65).

"*Dharmas*" means the *dharmas* which are neither the body, nor sensation, nor the mind. (*Vibhāṣā, TD* 27, p. 937a18).

According to the School, foundation of mindfulness of the body (*kāyasmṛtyupasthāna*) is realized when, being absorbed (*samāhita*), one sees the atoms and the succesive moments (*kṣaṇa*) of the body.

***

What is the nature of the foundations of mindfulness?

Foundation of mindfulness is threefold: foundation of mindfulness in and of itself (*svabhāva*), foundation of mindfulness through connection, and foundation of mindfulness in the quality of being an object.

Foundation of mindfulness in and of itself is

15a. *Prajñā.*[101]

What is *prajñā?*

15a. Proceeding from hearing, etc.

Prajñā proceeds from hearing, from reflection, and from meditation. The foundations of mindfulness are likewise threefold, proceeding from hearing, reflection, and meditation.

15b. The others, through connection and as object.

The other *dharmas* which are not *prajñā,* are, when they are *dharmas* coexistent with *prajñā,* foundations of mindfulness

through connection; when they are the object of *prajñā* and of the *dharmas* coexistent with *prajñā* [in other words, when they are the object of the foundation of mindfulness in and of itself and of the foundation of mindfulness through connection], they are a foundation of mindfulness as object.

***

How do we know that the foundation of mindfulness in and of itself is *prajñā?*

Because it is said in the Sūtra, "His attention is set having the body for its object" (*kāye* [var. *kāme*] *kāyānupaśyanā smṛtyupasthānam*).[102]

What is *anupaśyanā?* It is *prajñā.* In fact, through *prajñā,* one who is endowed with *prajñā* becomes an *anupaśya.*[103] Therefore the Sūtra further says, "He dwells in attention to the body, the internal body" (*madhyātmaṁ kāye kāyānupaśyī viharati*). The word *kāyānupaśyin* is explained as follows: one who possesses *anupaśya* or *darśana*[104] is called an *anupaśyin;* and one who is an *anupaśyin* with respect to the body is called a *kāyānupaśyin.*

***

What is *prajñā?*

The Blessed One said that it is the foundation of mindfulness.

[Why give the name of foundation of mindfulness to *prajñā?*]

The Vaibhāṣikas say: By reason of the preponderant role of attention, [which presents the object to *prajñā*]; as a wedge (*kīla*) contributes to the splitting of wood;[105] it is due to the force of mindfulness that *prajñā* is active with respect to the object.[106]

But the best explanation is the following: Mindfulness is applied (*upatiṣṭhate*)[107] by it; thus the *prajñā* is a foundation of

mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna = smṛter upasthānam*); in fact, as the object is seen by the *prajñā,* so too it is expressed, that is to say, grasped by the attention. Therefore the Blessed One said, "He dwells having an exact notion of the body with respect to the body (*kāye kāyānupaśyī viharati*): his attention is set and fixed having the body for its object" (*Saṁyutta,* v.294). And the Blessed One said, "He dwells with his attention fixed having his body for its object; his attention is applied, unexhausted" (see *Saṁyutta,* v.331).

***

Objection: Nevertheless the Sūtra says, "Oh monks, how is the origin, how is the disappearance of the foundations of mindfulness? Through the origin of food, there is the origin of the body; through the disappearance of food, there is the disappearance of the body; through the origin of contact, there is the origin of sensation . . . ; through the origin of *nāmarūpa . . . ;* through the origin of *manasikāra . . .* " (*Saṁyukta, TD* 2, p. 171a27). Therefore foundation of mindfulness is the body, etc.

Answer: In this Sūtra we are not dealing with a foundation of mindfulness in and of itself, but a foundation of mindfulness in the quality of being an object: the attention is applied to it, and therefore it is a foundation of mindfulness. The name differs according to the object.

***

Each foundation of mindfulness is threefold accordingly as it is considered as oneself, as another, or as oneself and another. [The ascetic has in view his own body, the body of another . . .]

15b-c. The order is that of their production.

Why are they produced in this order? According to the Vaibhāṣikas, because one first sees that which is the coarsest. Or rather: the body (1) is the support of sensual attachment which has its origin in the desire for sensation (2); this desire takes place because (3) the mind is not calmed; and the mind is not calmed because (4) the defilements are not abandoned.

15c-d. Four, oppositions to errors.[108]

The foundations of mindfulness are taught in this order as oppositions to the four errors, belief in purity, happiness, permanence, and self (v.9). They are therefore four, no more and no less.

Of the four foundations of mindfulness, three have an unmixed object; the fourth is of two types: when it bears only on the *dharmas,* its object is not mixed; when it bears on two, or three, or four things at one and the same time, its object is mixed [or universal, *samasta*].

***

Having thus cultivated the foundations of mindfulness having the body, etc., for their objects

16. Placed in the foundation of mindfulness having the *dharmas* as its universal object, he sees that the *dharmas* are impermanent, suffering, empty, and not-self.[109]

Placed in the foundation of mindfulness having the *dharmas* as its mixed object, placing together the body, sensation, etc., he sees them under the fourfold aspect of impermanence, suffering, empty, and not-self.

Study and Practice of Meditation

Tibetan Interpretations of the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions

Leah Zahler

Snow Lion Publications
Ithaca, New York

Chart 1: Mindfulness of Breathing in Sixteen Aspects: Three Presentations

Asaṅga's *Grounds of Hearers*	JYSP's *Concentrations*	*Ānāpānasati-sutta*
0. When one inhales while being mindful...when one exhales while being mindful	1. Thinking, "Exhalation, inhalation," with respect to the exhalation and inhalation of the breath while being mindful [of it]	0. Just mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out
1. long breaths	2. with respect to...long breaths	**[Contemplation of the body]** 1. long breaths
2. short breaths	3. with respect to...short breaths	2. short breaths
3. upon having correctly experienced the entire body	4. upon...having correctly experienced the entire body	3. experiencing the entire body
4. upon having thoroughly purified the workings of the body	5. upon having thoroughly purified the workings of the body	4. calming the workings of the body
5. upon having correctly experienced joy	6. upon having correctly experienced joy	**[Contemplation of feelings]** 5. experiencing joy
6. upon having correctly experienced bliss	7. upon having correctly experienced bliss,	6. experiencing bliss
7. upon having correctly experienced the workings of the mind		7. experiencing the workings of the mind
8. upon having thoroughly purified the workings of the mind	8. upon having thoroughly purified the workings of the mind	8. calming the workings of the mind
9. upon having correctly experienced the mind	9. upon having correctly experienced the mind	**[Contemplation of the mind]** 9. experiencing the mind
10. when the mind has thorough and strong joy	10. when the mind has thorough and strong joy	10. gladdening the mind
11. upon having set the mind in meditative stabilization	11. upon having set the mind in meditative stabilization	11. stabilizing the mind
12. upon the mind's being released	12. upon the mind's being released	12. releasing the mind
13. upon viewing impermanence	13. upon viewing impermanence	**[Contemplation of mind-objects]** 13. contemplating impermanence
14. upon viewing abandonment	14. upon viewing abandonment	14. contemplating separation from desire
15. upon viewing separation from desire	15. upon viewing separation from desire	15. contemplating cessation
16. upon viewing cessation	16. upon viewing cessation	16. contemplating renunciation

Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond

A Meditator's Handbook

Ajahn Brahm

foreword by Jack Kornfield

Wisdom Publications • Boston

7 The Beautiful Breath

THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHISM is in the enlightenment of the Buddha. Many centuries ago in India, the wandering monk Gautama remembered a childhood experience of the first jhāna and realized that jhāna was the way to awakening (MN 36). He went to a quiet stretch of forest on the banks of a great river, sat on a cushion of grass under a shady fig tree, and meditated. The method of meditation that he used was *ānāpāna-sati,* mindfulness of the in and out breaths. Through this practice he entered jhāna, emerged, and quickly gained the insights of enlightenment. Henceforth he was called the Buddha.

The Buddha continued to teach ānāpānasati for the remainder of his life. It was the method that had given him enlightenment, the meditation practice *par excellence,* and he imparted that same method to all his disciples both in the monastery and in the city. This foremost method of meditation is bequeathed to us today in the original Buddhist texts as part of many suttas, but in particular as the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* of the Majjhima collection (MN 118).

The Buddha described the practice of ānāpānasati as consisting of preliminary preparations followed by sixteen steps. The first twelve of those steps are instructions for entering jhāna, and the final four steps are instructions on what to do when you emerge.

The Preliminaries

A Quiet Place, a Comfortable Seat

First, the Buddha said, go to a quiet place where you will not be disturbed by people, sounds, or things like mosquitoes. Some teachers claim

that you can meditate in a marketplace or in your car in busy traffic, but such superficial meditation will not lead to enlightenment. The Buddha consistently recommended that you seek out a quiet place. Tough guys might want to meditate in mosquito-ridden jungles or in the middle of tiger paths, but that is more likely to build only endurance and not the ease of jhāna. The Buddha instead praised pleasant places like orchards or parks, similar to Bodh Gaya where he gained enlightenment.

Next sit down on a comfortable seat. You may sit on a cushion, on a bench, or even on a chair as long as it isn't too comfortable. The comfort required for success in breath meditation is that level where your body can be at ease for long periods of time. Buddhists do not sit on broken glass or beds of nails. Even the Buddha used a cushion of grass under the Bodhi tree. Nor do you need to cross your legs in full lotus and hold your back ramrod straight. I know from experience that you can succeed in meditation in the most unorthodox of postures. The purpose of posture is only to free you from discomfort so that you can let go of the body as soon as possible.

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The full sixteen steps of ānāpānasati are best done in a sitting position, just like the Buddha under the Bodhi tree. In walking meditation your attention should rest on the feet and not on the breath. The same goes for standing. Unenlightened meditators who try to watch their breath lying down usually fall asleep. So learn ānāpānasati in the sitting position.

Setting Up Mindfulness

You are now asked to set up mindfulness "in front of you." When the Buddha said "in front of you" he didn't mean putting attention on the tip of your nose, or on your upper lip, or some place in front of your eyes. To put something in front means to make it important. So this preliminary instruction is to establish mindfulness by giving it priority.

This preliminary level of mindfulness is established by following the first two stages of the basic method of meditation in chapter 1—that is, through practicing present-moment awareness and then silent present-moment awareness. From what has been said so far, it should be obvious

that when your attention is wandering through the past or into the future, you are not being mindful of what's happening right now. Also, when you are thinking or even just noting, then your attention is on the words, not on the bare experience of now. But when you are silently aware of whatever it is that is happening now (right in front of your mind), then you have established the level of mindfulness required to begin ānāpānasati.

It deserves to be said again that too many meditators go on to the breath too quickly, neglecting the preliminary instruction to establish adequate mindfulness first, and they run into trouble. Either they can't keep the breath in mind at all or, worse, they tenaciously grasp the breath with so much willpower that they end up more stressed out than before they started. The latter type gives Buddhist meditation on the breath a bad reputation.

The Sixteen Steps

The First and Second of the Sixteen Steps

Although the Buddha says to first experience long breaths and then experience short breaths, you do not need to control your breathing to fulfill the instructions. Controlling the breath produces only discomfort. Instead you are meant to simply observe the breath enough to know whether it is long or short. Even though this is not mentioned in the sutta, it is also fulfilling the instructions to observe the breath as neither long nor short, but somewhere close to the middle.

The reason for these instructions is that in the beginning you may find it uninteresting just to watch the feeling of air going in and out of your body, so this instruction gives you more to look at. It makes mindfulness of breathing more interesting. Sometimes I suggest to my students that at this stage they should notice which is longer, the in-breath or the out-breath. Is the gap between the in-breath and the next out-breath as long as the pause between the out-breath and the subsequent in-breath? Are the sensations of inbreathing the same as the sensations of outbreathing? This serves the same function as the Buddha's instructions

to experience long breathing and short breathing. It gives mindfulness more details to watch so it won't get bored.

Another method that belongs to this stage is to make a beautiful story around the in and out breathing. I suggest to my students to remember that the oxygen that they are breathing in is being constantly replenished by the plants in the gardens and forests. And that the carbon dioxide they are breathing out is the food of the same plants. So imagine that you are breathing in a precious gift from the flowers and the trees, and that you are breathing out an equally valuable gift to the green nature around you. Your breathing is intimately connecting you with all the vibrant vegetation. Such an uplifting way of perceiving your own breathing makes it more easy to follow.

In the Thai forest tradition, they add a *mantra* to the breathing. As you breathe in you think "Bud" and as you breathe out you think "Dho." These are the two syllables of the Buddha's name (in Pāli nominative singular). Again, it serves to make the breathing easier to follow at this early stage.

The Third Step: Experiencing the Whole of the Breath

The third step is called in Pāli *sabba-kāya-patisamvedī*, experiencing the whole process of breathing. A minority of teachers mistake the Pāli term *kāya* to mean your physical body and so wrongly assume that now you are meant to direct your attention onto all the sensations in the whole of your physical body. This is an error. The Buddha clearly stated in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* (MN 118,24) that he regarded the process of breathing as "a certain body *(kāya)* among the bodies." Moreover, the direction of the first twelve steps of ānāpānasati is toward simplifying the object of awareness, not making it more complex. Thus, this third step is where your mindfulness increases its agility sufficient to observe every sensation involved in the process of breathing.

You are aware of the in-breath from the very start when it arises out of the stillness. You see the sensations of inbreathing evolve in every moment, reaching its peak and then gradually fading away until it has completely subsided. You have such a degree of clarity that you even see

the space, the pause between the in-breath and the next out-breath. Your mind has the attentiveness of a cat waiting for a mouse, as you wait for the next out-breath to begin. Then you observe the first stirrings of the outbreathing. You watch its sensations evolve, changing with every moment, until it too reaches a peak and then enters into its decline before fading into nothingness again. Then you observe the pause, the space between the out-breath and the subsequent in-breath. When the process is repeated breath after breath, you have fulfilled the third step, experiencing the whole breath.

In a classical Indian text, the *Mahābhārata,* there is an illustrative story of a teacher and his three students that I adapt as an explanation for this third step of ānāpānasati. The teacher was training his students in meditation using archery as the means. Having taught his three disciples a long time, he gave them a test to reveal their capabilities. He took a bird, a stuffed doll not a real bird, and carefully secured it to a branch of a tree a long distance from his students. It would take an awesome level of skill to pierce the bird with an arrow from such a distance. But the teacher made it almost impossible when he instructed his students: "I do not want you to hit that bird anywhere on its body. To pass this test, your arrow will have to pierce the left eye of the bird. That is the target."

He gave the bow and a single arrow to the first student and told him that he must meditate first, make his mind one with the target, and only then shoot the arrow. The student was told to take as much time as he liked, but before releasing the arrow he must give a sign to his teacher. Thirty minutes later the first student gave the sign that he was ready to shoot. The teacher told him to wait a few more seconds and asked: "Can you see the bird on the tree?" Without breaking his concentrated gaze the student said, "Yes." At this the teacher pushed the student aside, grabbed the bow and arrow, and said: "You stupid student! Go back and learn how to meditate." He handed the bow and arrow to his second student and gave him the same instructions. This student took a whole hour before giving the teacher the sign that he was ready to shoot. "Can you see the bird on the tree?" asked the teacher. "What tree?" replied the student. The teacher then asked hopefully: "Can you see the bird?" The

student replied, "Oh yes." Then the disappointed teacher shoved the second student aside, snatched the bow and arrow away, and told the second student to go learn how to meditate properly.

Finally he gave the bow and single arrow to his third student with the same instructions. The student took a whole two hours meditating, making his mind one with the target, the left eyeball of the bird. Then he gave the sign that he was ready to shoot. The teacher asked, "Can you see the bird on the tree?" The student replied, "What tree?" The teacher then asked, "Can you see the bird?" The student replied, "What bird?" The teacher started to smile and then continued, "What can you see?" Without averting his gaze the student replied, "Master, all I can see is an eyeball, that's all." "Cool," said the teacher, "Shoot." And of course the arrow went straight through the only thing that remained within the student's awareness.

This story is an accurate simile on how to achieve the third step of ānāpānasati, the experience of the whole breath. Just as the third student focused his whole mind on the target, for him the left eyeball of the bird, so you focus your whole attention on the third step of ānāpānasati, for you the experience of the whole breath. When you have accomplished this third step, if you were to ask yourself, "Can you hear sounds?" you would answer, "What sounds?" "Can you feel the body?"—"What body?" "What can you see?"—"Only the breath happening now." Cool.

The Fourth Step: Calming the Breath

When you are comfortably at one with the breath, it will calm down automatically. There is so little remaining to disturb your progress that you naturally experience the sensations in each moment becoming softer and smoother, like a piece of rough denim changing into fine satin. Or you may assist this process by interrupting the inner silence for a few moments and suggesting to yourself "calm, calm, calm." Then you return to silently experiencing only the breath again. By doing this you are instructing the gatekeeper as was described in chapter 5.

If you jump to the fourth step too soon you will fall prey to sloth and torpor. You must capture a wild horse before you can train it, in the same way you must capture the whole breath, fulfilling step three, before you attempt to calm it down.

Meditators who have achieved step three by using their willpower find it impossible to calm or soften their breath. They have been striving instead of letting go, and now they are blocked. When you are holding a flower you should never grasp it tightly, or you will destroy it. Delicate objects require a delicate touch. To hold the calm breath in the middle of mindfulness for many minutes, you need a very refined mind. Such a refinement of attention is only achieved through gentle and persistent letting go; it is never attained by the brute force of sheer willpower.

When a carpenter begins to saw a piece of wood he can see the whole saw from the handle to the tip of the saw blade. As he concentrates on the cut, the attention focuses closer and closer on the point where the saw touches the wood. The handle and tip of the saw soon disappear from his vision. After a while, all he can see is the one sawtooth that is in contact with the wood, whereas all the teeth to the left and right are beyond his range of perception. He does not know, nor does he need to know, whether that sawtooth is at the beginning, middle, or end of the blade. Such concepts have been transcended. This is the simile of the saw.

In the same way, at this fourth step, you will only know this bit of breath happening now. You simply do not know whether it is an in-breath or out-breath, beginning, middle, or end. As your breath calms down your attention becomes so refined that all you know is this one moment of breath.

The Fifth and Sixth Steps: Experiencing Joy and Happiness with the Breath

In the fifth step of ānāpānasati you experience joy *(pīti)* along with the breath, and in the sixth step you experience happiness *(sukha)* along with the breath. Because joy and happiness are difficult to separate, and since they usually arrive together anyway, I will treat them as one.

As your unbroken mindfulness watches the breath calming down, joy and happiness naturally arise like the golden light of dawn on an eastern horizon. It will arise gradually but automatically because all your

mental energy is now flowing into the knower and not the doer. In fact, you are doing nothing, only watching. The sure sign that you are doing nothing is the tranquillity of your breath. In the early hours of the morning it is only a matter of time until the horizon glows with the first light of day, just as when you remain still with the calm breath it is only a matter of time until joy and happiness appear in your mind. Mental energy flowing into the knower makes mindfulness full of power, and energized mindfulness is experienced as *pīti-sukha,* happiness and joy.

If you reach step four and are continuously mindful of a very calm breath but see no happiness or joy, then my advice is: "Don't panic!" Don't spoil the natural process with your impatience. When you do anything at this stage you just delay, or even prevent, the arrival of happiness and joy. Instead just deepen the experience of the continuous calm breath. Are you fully aware of the peaceful breath, or have interruptions crept in? Perhaps the lack of progress is because you are not continually mindful of only the breath. Has your breath stopped growing calmer? Perhaps the breath isn't peaceful enough yet. If so, give it more time. This is a natural process completely independent of you. When mindfulness rests comfortably on the breath without any interruptions, and the sensation of breath becomes calmer and calmer, then happiness and joy will always arise.

It helps if you are able to spot *pīti-sukha* early. To do this you have to be familiar with what you are looking for. The happiness and joy that are associated with tranquillity can start off as extremely subtle. It is like someone who prefers hard rock attending a performance of classical music by Mahler, and who can't comprehend why the audience pays good money to listen to such stuff. They just don't get it. Or like the person who usually eats at cheap diners going for the first time to a five-star French restaurant and not appreciating the cuisine because their palate is too coarse. As you meditate more and more, you become a connoisseur of tranquil mind states and will naturally apprehend the arrival of joy and happiness at an increasingly early stage.

The fulfillment of these fifth and sixth steps of ānāpānasati is precisely the same as reaching the stage of full sustained awareness of the beautiful

breath in my basic method of meditation. The beauty of the breath at this level is my way of describing the experience of joy and happiness. The breath at this stage appears so tranquil and beautiful, more attractive than a garden in springtime or a sunset in summer, and you wonder if you will ever want to look at anything else.

The Seventh Step: Experiencing the Breath as a Mind Object

As the breath becomes ever more beautiful, as the joy and happiness grow in quiet strength, your breath may appear to completely disappear. In chapter 2, I described this as the breath dropping away from the beautiful breath leaving only the beautiful. I also gave the simile of the grinning Cheshire Cat, who gradually disappeared leaving only the grin, to depict this event. This precisely describes the passage from stage five and six, experiencing joy and happiness with the breath, to stage seven where the breath is known only as a mind object.

To clarify this transition, I invoke the Buddha's analysis of conscious experience into the six sense bases (SN 35)—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and the mind base of knowing. In the early stages of meditation you abandon seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting to the point where these four sense bases completely shut down for a while. Then you let go of most of the activity of the fifth sense base, touching, by focusing on the touch (physical sensation) of the breath to the exclusion of everything else. The sixth sense base, the mind, is operating throughout. As you pass into this seventh step, the fifth sense base, touching, now shuts down to leave only the sixth sense base, the mind, to know the breath. You are now experiencing the breath through a new sense base.

Imagine an old friend, fuzzy-haired and bearded, who usually goes around in ordinary old clothes. Then he is ordained as a Buddhist monk. When you first see him in the monastery, you probably won't recognize him with his bald head and robes. But it is the same old friend regardless. He appears different in the new setting, that's all. In the same way, your old friend the breath usually goes around dressed in the sensations

of touch and is recognized mainly through the fifth sense base. In the seventh step of ānāpānasati, your breath has transcended the world of the five sense bases, in particular the fifth sense base, and is now to be known only through the sixth sense, as a mind object. This is why the Buddha called this step experiencing the *citta-sankhāra,* the mind object.

So if your breath seems to disappear at this stage, be reassured that this is meant to happen, and don't go disturbing the process by searching here and there for the previous perception of breath. Instead, when the breath seems to disappear, ask yourself what is left? If you have followed the instructions carefully, the breath will only seem to disappear after happiness and joy have been established, and so what is left is happiness and joy. Your mindfulness has to be subtle and still to recognize this fine object at first, but with the familiarity born of long experience, the insight will come to you that this subtle happiness and joy is your old friend the breath, only now experienced as a mind object.

If you are unable to remain with this mind object it is because there was insufficient happiness and joy with the breath at steps five and six. You should train in cultivating a *very* beautiful breath with heaps of joy and happiness before you let the fifth sense base shut down. Then you will have a stronger mind object to watch. However, with much practice, you will know what you are looking for at step seven, the mindfulness will be more deft at holding subtle levels of happiness and joy, and you will be able to let go of the fifth sense base earlier and still be able to hold the weaker mental object.

The Eighth Step: Calming the Mental Experience

It can often happen, at this and subsequent stages of the meditation process, that the joy and happiness can become too exciting and therefore disturb the tranquillity. Because of this, the Buddha taught the eighth step of ānāpānasati as calming the mental experience of the breath.

When new meditators, and old ones too sometimes, start to experience some bliss, they carelessly generate the "wow!" response: Wow! At last! Amazing! —and immediately their bliss walks right out of the door. They were too excited.

Alternatively, fear can arise alongside the bliss: This is too much for me! This is scary, I don't deserve this! —and again the bliss departs. The fear destroyed the tranquillity.

So beware of these two enemies, fear and excitement, which can appear at this stage. Remember to keep calming the mental experience of the breath. This bliss is the happiness and joy born of peace, born of silence. Maintain the causes of that bliss. Remain in the stillness, otherwise the bliss will go away.

Ajahn Chah's famous simile of the "still forest pool" helps us understand what's happening here. Others have written about this image, but not in full. This is the way I remember Ajahn Chah explaining it. When he was wandering in the jungles and forests on what we call *tudong* in Thailand, he'd always try and find a stretch of water when late afternoon came. He needed water to bathe. After walking though the jungle, sweating from the heat and the exertion, if you don't bathe in the evening you feel uncomfortably dirty and sticky all night. He also needed water to drink. For these reasons Ajahn Chah searched for a pool, a stream, or a spring somewhere in the forest. When he found one, he'd camp nearby overnight.

Sometimes after drinking and bathing and settling in, Ajahn Chah would sit in meditation a few yards away from the pool. He said that sometimes he used to sit so still with his eyes open that he would see many animals coming out of the jungle. They wanted to bathe and drink as well. He said they would only come out if he sat very, very still, because jungle creatures are timid and far more afraid of human beings than we are of them. When they emerged from the bushes they would look around and sniff to see if it was safe. If they detected him, they would just go away. But if he sat absolutely still, the animals wouldn't be able to hear him. They wouldn't even be able to smell him. Then they would come out and drink. Some would drink and play in the water as if he weren't there, as if he were invisible. He said that sometimes he was so still that, after the ordinary animals came out, some very strange animals emerged, beings whose names he didn't know. He'd never seen such extraordinary creatures before. His parents had never told him about them. These

wonderful creatures came out to drink, but only if he was *absolutely still.*

This is a well-drawn simile of what happens in deep meditation. The pool or lake is a symbol for the mind. At this eighth step of ānāpānasati you are just sitting before it and watching. If you give any orders you're not being still. Beautiful creatures—nimittas and jhānas—will approach only if you're absolutely still. If they come out to "sniff around" and you say "wow!" they hurtle back into the forest and don't come out again. If they come out and you look at them, even out of the corners of your eyes, they'll know it and go away. You can't move if you want these beings to come out and play. But if you're absolutely still—no controlling, no doing, no saying, no moving, or anything else—nimittas come out. They look around and sniff the air. If they think no one is there, they come and play right in front of you. But if you move even an eyelid, they go away again. *Only if you're absolutely still do they remain.* The ordinary ones come out first, then the very beautiful ones, and lastly the very strange and wonderful ones. These last are the amazing experiences that you have no names for, the ones you never imagined could exist because they're so strange, so blissful, so pure. These are the jhānas.

This wonderful simile of Ajahn Chah's is a measure of his wisdom, of his profound understanding of the mind. This indeed is how the mind works, and having that wisdom is a tremendous power. The extraordinary jhānas can happen when you arouse joy and happiness in the mind, when you understand that this joy and happiness is not other than the mind experiencing the breath, and when you calm down the whole process of observing.

The Ninth Step: Experiencing the Mind

The ninth step of the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* describes a very important creature that comes to visit the still, silent mind—a nimitta. The step is called *citta-paṭisaṁvedī*, "experiencing the mind." It's only at this stage that you can truly say that you can know the mind. Some people have theories and ideas of what the mind is, and they try to test them out with scientific equipment. They even write entire books about the mind. But this is the only place where you can actually experience the mind.

The way you experience the mind is by a nimitta, which is a reflection of the mind. Remember the mind is that which knows. But is it possible for the knower to know itself? The eye is that which sees, but it can see itself when it looks into a mirror: it sees its reflection. The reflection you see in this stage of meditation, the nimitta, is a true reflection of the mind. You look into a mirror that has been cleaned of all the dust and grime on its surface, and now at last you can see yourself. You can only experience the mind directly through a nimitta or jhāna.

When a nimitta arises it's so very strange that it's next to impossible to describe. Language is built on similes. We describe something as hard like a brick, or soft like the grass. We always use similes from the world of the five senses. But the world of the mind is so different that language fails us. After your first experience of a nimitta you think, "What on earth was that?" You know it's a real experience, but you struggle to find language to describe it. You have to use imperfect similes: it's like a light, like a blissful feeling, sort of like this, sort of like that. You know it's so completely different from any previous experience, but you have to somehow describe it to yourself. That's why I keep on saying that you experience the nimitta sometimes as a light, sometimes as a feeling, sometimes as...a blob of Jell-O, or whatever. They are all exactly the same experience, but we give it different words. For many meditators, however, the mind flashes up very quickly and then disappears again. It's like the animal coming out of the forest. It senses someone becoming excited and flees.

Some meditators have difficulty in seeing nimittas. They reach the stage of calming the beautiful breath and nothing happens. No light appears. They wonder what they are doing wrong. The following analogy may help.

Late one night, I stepped outside from my brightly lit *kuti* (monk's hut) into the dense darkness of the forest. I had no flashlight. It was so black that I could not see anything. I remained still, patient. Slowly, my eyes became accustomed to the darkness. Soon I could make out the shapes of the tree trunks, and then I could look up and see the beautiful stars, the whole Milky Way even, glittering brilliantly in the night sky.

Experiencing nimittas can be like this. In the formless stillness when

the breath seems to disappear, at first one can see nothing. Be patient. Do nothing but wait. Soon mindfulness will become accustomed to this "darkness" beyond its usual habitat (the room of the brightly lit five senses) and it begins to see shapes, dimly at first. After a while, the beautiful starlike nimittas may appear, and, if one is still long enough, the best nimittas of all appear, like the brilliant disc of the full moon at night, released from the clouds.

The Tenth Step: Shining the Nimitta

Two flaws of the nimitta may hinder further progress: the nimitta appears too dull, and the nimitta is unstable. To address these two common problems, the Buddha taught the tenth and eleventh steps of ānāpānasati: shining the nimitta and sustaining the nimitta. "Shining" is my expression for the Pāli term *abhippamodayaṁ cittaṁ*, literally, "giving joy to the mind." The more joy there is in the mind, the more brilliant shines the nimitta. To enter jhāna, the nimitta has to be the most brilliant thing that you have ever seen, and of unearthly beauty.

Let's look at why the nimitta can appear dull or even dirty. It is very instructive to recall that the nimitta is just a reflection of your mind. If the nimitta is dull, it means that your mind is dull. If the nimitta is dirty, then it means that your mind is defiled. There is no possibility for dishonesty or denial here, for you are face-to-face with the truth of your mind state.

It is here that the importance of *sīla* (moral conduct) becomes apparent. If the mind is defiled due to impure action, speech, or thought, then the nimitta, if it appears at all, will be dull and stained. If that is your experience, then spend some effort purifying your conduct beyond the meditation cushion. Keep the precepts faultlessly. Check your speech. The Buddha said that without first purifying sīla, it is impossible to purify samādhi (AN VII,61).

Generous, compassionate people with strong faith have what is commonly called a "pure heart." From my experience teaching meditation, it is a general rule that such purehearted meditators are the ones who experience the bright nimittas. So in addition to keeping your precepts spotless, develop what is known as the pure heart.

However, sometimes even good-hearted people experience dull nimittas. Usually this is because their mental energy is low, maybe due to ill health or overwork. A skillful means of avoiding this problem is to spend some meditation periods developing the inspirational meditations, such as the reflections on the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. These should be contemplated until the mind becomes suffused with joy. Alternatively, if you are a very charitable sort of person, you could reflect on your past generosity and inspire yourself that way. The Buddha called this *cāga-anussati*. Or you can spend some time on mettā. Once the mental energy is raised to a level of joyful brightness, then you can return to ānāpānasati.

Thus far, I have talked about techniques to shine up the nimitta before you even start ānāpānasati. They are, in fact, the most effective techniques. However, when a nimitta has arisen during meditation but appears dull, there are four ways of proceeding:

Focus on the center of the nimitta. Even in a dull nimitta, the center is brighter than the periphery. By gently suggesting to yourself to look at the center of the nimitta, the central brightness expands. Then focus on the center of that, and that is brighter still. By going to the center, then the center of the center, and so on, the dull nimitta soon becomes incredibly bright and often continues "exploding" in luminosity all the way into jhāna.

Sharpen the attention in the present moment. Even though present-moment awareness was part of the preliminaries to ānāpānasati, it often happens that by this stage the attention is "smeared" around the present moment. Personally, I often find that a gentle reminder to focus more sharply in the present moment brightens the mindfulness and shines up the nimitta, abolishing any dullness.

Smile at the nimitta. Remember that the nimitta is a reflection of your mind. So if the mind smiles, then the nimitta smiles back! It brightens. It may be that a residue of ill will (the second hindrance) is keeping the nimitta dull. Smiling is both gentle and powerful enough to overcome this subtle form of the hindrance. If you do not understand what I mean by smiling at the nimitta, go and look at yourself in a mirror, smile, and

then take the mental part of that activity and repeat it in front of the nimitta.

Return to the beautiful breath. Sometimes it is simply too early to go to the nimitta, and it is better to exert a gentle determination to remain with the beautiful breath a bit longer. Even if the nimitta comes up, when it is dull ignore it and return to the mental experience of the breath. Often when I do this, after a short time the nimitta comes up again a little brighter. I ignore it again. It keeps coming up brighter and brighter, but I keep on ignoring it until a really gorgeous nimitta appears. Then I don't ignore it!

So these are the ways to "shine" the nimitta, polishing it, as it were, until it is brilliant, beautiful, and radiant.

The Eleventh Step: Sustaining the Nimitta

The second of the two flaws of the nimitta that hinder a deepening of the meditation experience is instability of the nimitta. It does not stay still but quickly disappears. In order to deal with this problem, the Buddha taught the eleventh step of ānāpānasati, *samādahaṁ cittaṁ,* literally "attentively stilling the mind" and here meaning "sustaining the attention on the nimitta."

It is common that the first few times a nimitta appears, it flashes up for a short time and then disappears, or else it moves around in the mental field of vision. It is unstable. Usually, the bright, powerful nimittas remain longer than the dull, weak ones, which is why the Buddha taught the step of shining the nimitta before the step of sustaining the nimitta. Sometimes shining the nimitta is enough to sustain it—the nimitta becomes so beautifully radiant that it grabs the attention for long periods of time. However, even a brilliant nimitta can be unstable, so there are methods to sustain attention on the nimitta.

The insight that helped me to sustain the nimitta was the realization that the nimitta that I was seeing in my mind was just a reflection of the knower, the one watching. If the knower moved, so did its reflection, the nimitta. Like staring at your image in front of a mirror, if you move then so does the image. So long as you are moving, it is a waste of time

trying to keep the image still just by holding the mirror still. It doesn't work. Instead focus on the knower, that one who is experiencing this, and calm that into stillness. Then the image of this knower, the nimitta, will stabilize and appear motionless, gloriously constant.

Once again, it is usually fear or excitement that creates the instability. You are reacting too much rather than passively observing. Experiencing the nimitta for the first time is like meeting a complete stranger. Often, you are on edge because you do not know who they are or how they might behave. After getting to know them, though, you relax in their company. They are good friends, and you are at ease with them. The overreaction disappears. Or it is like when as a child you first learned how to ride a bicycle. For the first few rides, you probably gripped the handlebars so tightly that, like me, your knuckles went white. And because I wasn't relaxed, I kept falling off. I soon discovered, after many cuts and bruises, that the more relaxed I was, the easier it was to keep my balance. In the same way, you soon learn to stop gripping the nimitta. You relax and discover that the more you ease off controlling, the easier it is to sustain the nimitta.

Another skillful means that I developed to stop controlling was to use the image of driving a car. When a bright nimitta comes up, I give it the keys and say, "You drive from here on." I give it full trust, complete confidence. I actually try to visualize my trust and give it over to the bright nimitta. I realize that the last residue of the doer, the control freak, still wants to spoil things. So I use this metaphor to help give up all control. This is the point where I stop. When I stop, the nimitta stops with me.

After sustaining attention on the nimitta a while, it becomes even more brilliant and very powerful. The signs of good nimittas are that they are the most beautiful colors you've ever seen in your life. For example, if you see a blue nimitta, the color is no ordinary blue but the deepest, most beautiful, bluest blue you've ever known. The good, or should I say "useful," nimittas are also very stable, almost motionless. When you are experiencing a beautiful stable nimitta, you are on the edge of the world of jhānas, looking in.

The Twelfth Step: Freeing the Mind

The twelfth step in ānāpānasati is called *vimocayaṁ cittaṁ,* "freeing the mind." Here, you have an experience that you might describe afterward in two different ways, depending upon your perspective. Either you find yourself sinking or diving into the nimitta, or the nimitta with its brilliant light and ecstatic feeling completely envelops you. *You* don't do this. It just happens as the natural result of letting go of all doing.

You enter the jhāna through liberating the mind. The jhānas, the Buddha said, are stages of freedom *(vimokkha)* (DN 15,35). *Vimokkha* is the same word used to describe someone who is released from jail and walks free. You may know it from the Sanskrit *moksha* which has the same meaning. The mind is now free. That is, free from the body and the five senses. I'm not saying the mind is floating somewhere in an out-of-body experience. You are not located in space anymore, because all experiences of space are dependent on the five senses. Here the mind is free from all of that. You're not at all sensitive to what's happening with the body. You're unable to hear anything, unable to say anything. You're blissed out yet fully mindful, still, stable as a rock. These are signs of the mind being freed. This experience becomes one of the most powerful, if not *the* most powerful experience, of your life.

If you get a few of these jhānas, you usually want to become a monk or a nun. The world will have less attraction for you. Relationships, the arts, music and movies, sex, fame, wealth, and so on all seem so unimportant and unattractive when compared to jhānas and the bliss of the freed mind. But there is much more than just the bliss. There is also the philosophical profundity of the experience. When you've spent hours in a jhāna, you can call yourself a mystic, if you like. You've had an experience that in all religious traditions is called a mystical experience—something far from the ordinary. The Buddha called it *uttari-manussa-dhamma* (MN 31,10), something that surpasses ordinary human experience. He called it the mind "gone to greatness" *(mahā-ggata)*. He also considered the happiness of jhāna so similar to enlightenment happiness that he named it *sambodhi sukha* (MN 66,21). It's a place where defilements cannot reach. So this is where Māra—the Buddhist devil—cannot reach you. You're awakened and free during this time.

So if you develop these stages, the first twelve steps of ānāpānasati, they will lead you into jhāna.

Emerging from a Jhāna

The last four steps in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* relate to the meditator who has just emerged from a jhāna. After you emerge from your first experience of jhāna you can't help but think, "Wow, what was that?" So the first thing you should do is review the jhāna. Investigate that experience, though you will struggle to give it words. Ask yourself, How did it arise? What special thing did I do? What did it feel like in jhāna? Why did it feel like that? How do I feel now? Why is it so blissful? All these reflections will give rise to deep insight.

You'll find that the best two words to describe why jhāna happened are "letting go." You've really let go for the first time. Not letting go of what you're attached to, but *letting go of the thing doing the attaching.* You've let go of the doer. You've let go of the self. It's a difficult thing for the self to let go of the self, but through these methodical stages you've actually done it. And it's bliss.

So, having reflected on the experience, you either take up satipaṭṭhāna (the focuses of mindfulness) or just go directly to the last four stages of ānāpānasati.

The Thirteenth Step: Reflecting on Impermanence

The first reflection is on anicca, usually translated as impermanence but meaning much more than this. Its opposite, *nicca,* is the Pāli word used to describe a thing that is regular or constant. For instance, in the Vinaya a regular supply of almsfood, say from a disciple who brings food to a monastery every Tuesday, is called nicca food (Vin II,4,4,6). When that which was once constant stops, that's *anicca.* What's important to reflect upon after the deep experiences of meditation is that there was something that was so constant that you never noticed it—this thing we call a "self." In jhāna, it disappeared! Notice that. Noticing it will convince you of the truth of no-self *(anattā)* so deeply that it's very likely to give rise to the experience of stream winning.

The Fourteenth Step: Reflecting on Fading Away of Things

If reflections on anicca fail to work, there is *virāga,* the fading away of things—sometimes called dispassion. It has this dual meaning, but I usually prefer the meaning "fading away." This is when things just disappear. You've seen many things disappear when you enter jhāna—some of which were so close to you that you assumed that they were an essential part of your identity. They are all gone in jhāna. You're experiencing the fading away of your self.

The Fifteenth Step: Reflecting on Cessation

The third reflection after emerging from a jhāna should be on *nirodha,* or cessation. Something that was once there has now completely disappeared. It has ended, gone, and its place is now empty! Such emptiness can be known only in deep meditation. So much of the universe that you thought was essential has ceased, and you're in a completely different space.

Cessation is also the third noble truth. The end of suffering is called cessation. The cause of that cessation is letting go. You've actually let go. Dukkha, suffering, has ended—most of it anyway, 99 percent. And what's left? What's the opposite of dukkha? Sukha. *The ending of suffering is happiness.* That's why you should reflect that these jhānas are the most blissful experience you've ever felt in your existence. And if you've got a little bit of wisdom or intelligence, you will see that the bliss arises because so much dukkha has ceased.

You experience happiness and you know the cause. Imagine that you had a migraine headache for many, many months and someone gave you a new medicine that had just been invented, saying it works for some but not for everybody. So you take it and find that it works for you. Your migraine has gone! How would you feel? You'd be high as a kite. You'd be blissed out! Sometimes you'd be crying with happiness. The ending of pain is happiness. Why is it that schoolchildren feel so happy when they finish their end-of-year school exams? It is because a lot of suffering has just ended. So often, the happiness in the world is just a measure of how much suffering preceded it. When you finally pay off the mortgage on your house, you feel so happy; all the pain of working for months and years to pay it off is gone.

The Sixteenth Step: Reflecting on Letting Go, Abandoning

The last of the reflections in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* is on this beautiful word *paṭinissagga,* "letting go, abandoning." In this context *paṭinissagga* is giving away not what's "out there" but what's "in here." Many times people regard Buddhism as being unworldly, giving away what's out there. But paṭinissagga is the letting go of the inner world, the letting go of the doer and even the knower. If you look very carefully, you'll see that what has been happening in jhāna is not only letting go of the external world but also letting go of the internal world, especially letting go of the doer, the will, the controller. This insight gives rise to so much happiness, so much purity, so much freedom, so much bliss. You've found the path to the ending of suffering.

That is how the Buddha described ānāpānasati. It's a complete practice that starts with just sitting down in a quiet place, on a comfortable seat, mindful of what's in front of you and just watching the breath. Step by step—in steps that you know are within your ability—you reach these profound and blissful states called jhāna.

When you emerge from them, you have any one of these four things to contemplate: *anicca,* the impermanence or uncertainty of things; *virāga,* the fading away of things; *nirodha,* cessation of self; and *paṭinissagga,* letting go of all that's "in here." And if you reflect upon those things after the experience of jhāna, then something is going to happen. I often say that jhāna is the gunpowder and reflection is the match. If you put the two together, then there's going to be a bang somewhere. It's only a matter of time.

May you all experience those beautiful bangs called enlightenment!

FOCUSED *and* FEARLESS

A Meditator's Guide to States of Deep Joy, Calm, and Clarity

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THE FIRST JHANA AS A BASIS FOR INSIGHT

Insight, for our purposes, does not refer to an intellectual understanding. In the context of meditation practice, insight refers to an undistorted clear perception that has the potential of liberating the mind from ignorance. Chapters 17 and 18 are devoted to the exploration of insight after emerging from jhana. This section briefly presents the practical shift between the concentration practices and insight practices so that each jhana can be used sequentially as a basis for insight as you progress through these levels.

Strengthened by absorption, concentration becomes the basis for insight: you allow the jhana to dissolve and shift to perceiving sensory phenomena. If you achieved deep absorption, you may not need to anchor the attention on a primary object during the vipassana aspect of the meditation session. Simply direct the energy of your accumulated samadhi to realize the true nature of all phenomena. Immediately upon emerging from absorption, observe the impermanent, changing nature of the jhanic factors as they fade. Once the jhanic factors diminish, continue to bring mindfulness to whatever mental and physical phenomena enter your awareness. If a sound arises, it is known as a moment of hearing: impermanent, undependable, and impersonal. As physical sensations occur, they are known according to their specific qualities: hardness, heat, coolness, or movement. They are also known by their general characteristics: inconstant, unsatisfactory, and empty. Whatever occurs—thoughts, emotions, hindrances or harmless thoughts—is met with stable mindfulness and the wisdom that apprehends them without attachment.

Commonly the meditator establishes jhana during the earlier portion of a sitting meditation session and then shifts to a vipassana mode for the later portion. You may find it useful to divide your meditation session in half. Or, you may weave back and forth between samadhi and vipassana practices as you feel inclined. Sometimes you might let the concentration grow by anchoring the attention with the breath for a few moments but not necessarily reentering absorption. At other times you might enter and exit jhana several times, tasting the deliciousness of a still mind and emerging again to experience the true nature of the

dynamic world. In this exploration of perception you learn to sensitively escort the mind between the seclusion of jhana and the clarity of engaged contact.

This application of the purity of absorption to the complexities of living is the purpose of this training. The shift from unified absorption to the diverse explorations of insight will be explored in greater depth later in this book, but it is important to incorporate insight practice throughout the development of the jhanic states. Don't wait until you experience all four absorptions before you see clearly. Use whatever degree of samadhi you have accumulated and direct that stability of mind toward investigating how suffering comes about and how it can end. This clarity is the function of insight. Insight that arises out of the steadiness of first jhana concentration can be enough to end all suffering.[7] Play in the terrain that is safe and secluded from Mara. Frolic with a joyful heart, courageously exploring this undependable fleeting world.

If, after moving in and out of absorption many times, learning to enter and exit without trouble or difficulty, and using the first jhana as the basis for insight, the mind is not totally liberated, you have another option. You may grow disenchanted with the relative coarseness of applied and sustained thought. Interest may arise to further deepen samadhi. Rather than shifting out of jhana to vipassana, aspire to attain a more sublime degree of samadhi. With dispassion toward the first jhana, relinquish that quality of pleasure and aspire to attain the second jhana.

FOR REFLECTION

Consider your relationship to the sensory field, now informed by a period of time secluded from sensory pleasures.

What is this body? What are feelings? What is your relationship to pleasure? Can happiness be found through the body?

After the meditation session, reflect upon the experience: In your experience, what is the significance of jhana, both in relationship to the state itself and to its effect on the mind?

Respect the depth of absorption; take the transition slowly and gently. Feel your way into a mindful encounter with the dynamic world without force.

To exit jhana, there is no need to actively abolish the jhanic state. Ceasing to hold the factors in one-pointed awareness is usually sufficient. If you need a stronger demarcation, try exiting with a resolve such as: "May I abide in full awareness," "May jhana dissolve and I see all things clearly," "May I rest in open clear awareness of what actually occurs." Or, make a mental gesture of opening the mind as you would open your fist. However, if you have been practicing with determining the time of absorption before entering each jhana, you may well find that the jhana automatically crumbles when the time period is reached.

Let go of expectations that something marvelous will happen when jhana dissolves. Don't be too disappointed if the world is just as wacky, painful, and imperfect as when you entered absorption. Of course it is! An explosive destruction of all defilements the moment you exit jhana is unlikely to happen. More typically the quiet mind simply knows ordinary experience as it is. Nothing fancy. Awareness meets whatever is arising without craving for more or less. Experiences remain ordinary. It is the absence of discontent that is extraordinary.

Examine how the mind emerges and meets the phenomenal world. Notice how the mind naturally apprehends perceptions. Do experiences of seeing, hearing, smelling, thinking, and feeling construct a sense of becoming someone through sensory encounters? Are experiences possessed as *mine*?

Whatever you notice is OK; you needn't manipulate the tendencies. Bring enough interest to notice what this mind is doing and how it functions. Relax in full wakefulness; observe without trying to control phenomena. Trust the strength of samadhi and have faith in your aspiration to awaken. There are no preconceptions to impose upon the experience of the present moment.

Everything is known as it really is: empty ephemeral phenomena arising out of nothing and passing away into nothing, leaving no litter, no trail, no trace. What an amazing world! And it is continuously revealed to anyone ready to behold it. If mind attends to the various changing objects

in the sensory field such as sounds and sights—fine. If mind attends to perceptual functions such as how things are known—fine. If it attends to jhanic factors such as the diminishing or intensification of sukha or upekkha—fine. If it recognizes habitual dynamics, such as self-grasping or what the Buddha calls "mine-making" and "I-making"—fine. If it rests in a deeply profound release of all suffering—fine.

MORE ON THE INSIGHT PHASE OF PRACTICE

During the insight phase of practice, you may employ a variety of vipassana methods:

You can practice vipassana by observing the rise and fall of the breath at the abdomen, or by systematically moving the attention through the body, from the top of the head to the tip of the toes.

You can shift the attention between various touch points in the body.

You may rest with an open awareness of the present.

You may incline toward reflection.

You may contemplate death, observe the fluctuations of pleasant and unpleasant experiences, contemplate how the mind is affected by moods, states, and dispositions.

You may focus on the apparent construction of self.

You may develop any of the many vipassana techniques preserved by Buddhist tradition.

Or, you may abide, simply noticing when there is clinging and when there is no clinging.

There is no single right way to experience the truth of the present. For most practitioners, I recommend keeping the vipassana techniques very simple, especially if absorption was quite deep. Trust the process to unfold naturally. When the mind is not running away with thoughts and sense impressions, it is open to insight. Allow the potential for insight to manifest simply, supported by curiosity and the power of purified observation, without adding a superstructure of formal vipassana techniques.

Simply observe the moment. Reflect: *Did you "organize" the present moment like this; did you somehow cause it to be this way?* When coming out of jhana, you may be flooded with sudden bursts of sensations. Piti and sukha may flood the body with pulsing sensations. In sharp relief to the

seclusion of jhana, there may be a multitude of haphazard phenomena occurring at every sense door—birds twittering, dogs barking, heat, the tingling contact of hands, thoughts arising. Bare contact with sensory life can spark the simple but profound knowledge that all this is happening without your control. It is not constructed according to your personal design. Reflect: *Since you did not organize this, maybe you don't need to resurrect habits of worry, manipulation, and judgmental comparisons that dominate most human perceptions.*

The basic perception is simply that "I" did not organize it. "I" can't control it. It is not "my" personal story, not the defining feature of "my" life. You may then wonder, what is this "I" and "mine" anyway?

Observe: *Is experience simply being known?* Or is there a secondary process of "I-making" and "mine-making" intertwined with perception? "Not-self" is not merely a Buddhist concept to understand intellectually. It must be experienced. With the stability of a concentrated mind, you will know for yourself when, how, and if self-grasping arises in a moment of contact. You will also know when perception is crisply free from the distortions of what we can playfully call "*selfing*."

It is helpful to bring this understanding into the meditation practice. Wisdom and equanimity encourage acceptance through a present relationship with whatever is happening. Can you be present with dullness as well as with clarity? Are you interested in irritation as well as appreciation? Are both the experience of the unconcentrated mind and the concentrated mind worthy of being recognized? Mindfulness is without bias, prejudice, and preference. It readily recognizes whatever occurs. Through that total acceptance, insight into all things unfolds. Insight can quench a craving heart, like a tall glass of lemonade on a sultry summer's day quenches the thirst. It is distinctly refreshing, tantalizing, exciting—tart and sweet at the same time.

Tremendous happiness can follow insight. Experiencing change without the entanglement of attachment provides a joy greater than anything tasted in jhana. Contemplate the fading away of attachment with a big relaxed grin. Allow direct insights to resonate deep within the heart.

In the quest for liberation, the transitory states of jhanic delights have a practical function, but no intrinsic value. Enlightenment is not a

special secluded state. Enlightenment is defined as the eradication of lust, hate, and delusion. When you are in the midst of sensory contact, let insight dissolve any residue of lust, anger, and confusion, and radically transform your relationship to life. This is the greatest seclusion; this is the end of all suffering.

Sit in the midst of things, occupying the vantage point traditionally likened to a great throne that overlooks the city from a palace high up on the hill. Here, perched above the kingdom, a king observes all the daily functions that keep the city prosperous and safe. Assume your royal seat, observe all that occurs from this perfect vantage point. Awareness is naturally unsoiled, unruffled, unattached. You need do nothing, and there is nothing you need to undo. Empty experience, unpossessed and uncontrolled, appears and disappears, forms and dissolves.

Throughout this book I have referred to two practices: samadhi and vipassana. As facets of experience, they can be distinguished but not divided.

Conventional distinctions seem to divide calm abidings from the mindful investigation of perception; however, we simultaneously develop samadhi and vipassana. Since each jhana is conditioned and volitionally produced,[2] insight is integrated into the jhanic attainment. "Right concentration" is described as that concentration which has "release as its object."[3] The wisdom of release is a defining feature of concentration. The stability of concentration and the wisdom of release are inseparably intertwined.

Realization occurs as an undivided and limitless expression of not clinging—including not grasping views that separate samadhi and vipassana.

A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma

The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha

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Guide to §21

Having emerged from the fifth jhāna, etc.: *The Visuddhimagga* explains the procedure for exercising the direct knowledges thus: "(After accomplishing the preliminaries) he attains jhāna as the basis for direct knowledge and emerges from it. Then if he wants to become a hundred,[3] he does the preliminary work thus, 'Let me become a hundred,' after which he again attains jhāna as the basis for direct knowledge, emerges, and resolves. He becomes a hundred simultaneously with the resolving consciousness" (XII,57).

The direct knowledges are fivefold:

(1) *Supernormal powers* include the ability to display multiple forms of one's body, to appear and vanish at will, to pass through walls unhindered, to dive in and out of the earth, to walk on water, to travel through the air, to touch and stroke the sun and moon, and to exercise mastery over the body as far as the Brahma-world.

(2) *The divine ear* enables one to hear subtle and coarse sounds, both far and near.

(3) *The knowledge of others' minds* is the ability to read the thoughts of others and to know directly their states of mind.

(4) *The recollection of past lives* is the ability to know one's past births and to discover various details about those births.

(5) *The divine eye* is the capacity for clairvoyance, which enables one to see heavenly or earthly events, both far or near. Included in the divine eye is the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings (*cutūpapātañāṇa*), that is, direct perception of how beings pass away and re-arise in accordance with their kamma.

These kinds of direct knowledge are all mundane and are dependent on mastery over the fifth jhāna. The texts also mention a sixth direct knowledge. This is the knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*), which is supramundane and arises through insight.

Compendium of Insight
(*vipassanāsangaha*)

Basic Categories

§22 Stages of Purification

Vipassanākammaṭṭhāne pana sīlavisuddhi, cittavisuddhi, diṭṭhivisuddhi, kankhāvitaraṇavisuddhi, maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhi, paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi, ñāṇadassanavisuddhi cā ti sattavidhena visuddhisangaho.

TABLE 9.2: THE SEVEN STAGES OF PURIFICATION

Purification	Practice
I. Of virtue	Four kinds of purified virtue
II. Of mind	Access and absorption concentration
III. Of view	Understanding characteristics, etc., of mental and material phenomena
IV. By overcoming doubt	Discernment of conditions for mental and material phenomena
V. By knowledge and vision of path and not path	1. Knowledge of comprehension 2. Knowledge of rise and fall (tender phase) Distinguishing wrong path from right path of contemplation
VI. By knowledge and vision of the way	2. Knowledge of rise and fall (mature phase) 3. Knowledge of dissolution 4. Knowledge of fearfulness 5. Knowledge of danger 6. Knowledge of disenchantment 7. Knowledge of desire for deliverance 8. Knowledge of reflection 9. Knowledge of equanimity towards formations 10. Knowledge of conformity
Between VI and VII	11. Change-of-lineage
VII. By knowledge and vision	Knowledge of four supramundane paths

NOTE: The insight knowledges are enumerated in the right-hand column using arabic numbers.

In insight meditation, the compendium of purifications is sevenfold: (1) purification of virtue, (2) purification of mind, (3) purification of view, (4) purification by overcoming doubt, (5) purification by knowledge and vision as to what is the path and what is not the path, (6) purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and (7) purification by knowledge and vision.

Guide to §22

These seven stages of purification are to be attained in sequence, each being the support for the one that follows. The first purification corresponds to the morality aspect of the path, the second to the concentration

aspect, the last five to the wisdom aspect. The first six stages are mundane, the last is the supramundane paths. See Table 9.2.

§23 The Three Characteristics

Aniccalakkhaṇaṃ, dukkhalakkhaṇaṃ, anattalakkhaṇañ cā ti tīṇi lakkhaṇāni.

There are three characteristics: the characteristic of impermanence, the characteristic of suffering, and the characteristic of non-self.

Guide to §23

The characteristic of impermanence is the mode of rise and fall and change, that is, reaching non-existence after having come to be.

The characteristic of suffering is the mode of being continuously oppressed by rise and fall.

The characteristic of non-self is the mode of being insusceptible to the exercise of mastery, that is, the fact that one cannot exercise complete control over the phenomena of mind and matter.

§24 The Three Contemplations

Aniccānupassanā, dukkhānupassanā, anattānupassanā cā ti tisso anupassanā.

There are three contemplations: the contemplation of impermanence, the contemplation of suffering, and the contemplation of non-self.

§25 The Ten Insight Knowledges

(1) Sammasanañāṇaṃ, (2) udayabbayañāṇaṃ, (3) bhangañāṇaṃ, (4) bhayañāṇaṃ, (5) ādīnavañāṇaṃ, (6) nibbidāñāṇaṃ, (7) muñcitukamyatāñāṇaṃ, (8) paṭisankhāñāṇaṃ, (9) sankhār'upekkhāñāṇaṃ, (10) anulomañāṇañ cā ti dasa vipassanāñāṇāni.

There are ten kinds of insight knowledge: (1) knowledge of comprehension, (2) knowledge of rise and fall (of formations), (3) knowledge of the dissolution (of formations), (4) knowledge (of dissolving things) as fearful, (5) knowledge of (fearful) things as dangerous, (6) knowledge of disenchantment (with all formations), (7) knowledge of desire for deliverance (8) knowledge of reflecting

contemplation, (9) knowledge of equanimity towards formations, and (10) knowledge of conformity.

§26 The Three Emancipations

Suññato vimokkho, animitto vimokkho, appaṇihito vimokkho cā ti tayo vimokkhā.

There are three emancipations: the void emancipation, the signless emancipation, and the desireless emancipation.

§27 The Three Doors to Emancipation

Suññatānupassanā, animittānupassanā, appaṇihitānupassanā cā ti tīṇi vimokkhamukhāni ca veditabbāni.

There are three doors to emancipation: contemplation of the void, contemplation of the signless, and contemplation of the desireless.

Guide to §§26-27

These categories will be explained in the course of the following exposition.

Analysis of Purification (*visuddhibheda*)

§28 Purification of Virtue

Katham? Pātimokkhasaṃvarasīlaṃ, indriyasaṃvarasīlaṃ, ājīvapārisuddhisīlaṃ, paccayasannissitasīlañ cā ti catupārisuddhisīlaṃ sīlavisuddhi nāma.

Purification of virtue consists of the four kinds of purified virtue, namely:

(1) virtue regarding restraint according to the Pātimokkha;
(2) virtue regarding restraint of the sense faculties;
(3) virtue consisting in purity of livelihood; and
(4) virtue connected with the use of the requisites.

Guide to §28

These four kinds of purified virtue are explained with reference to the life of a bhikkhu, a Buddhist monk.

Virtue regarding restraint according to the Pātimokkha: The Pātimokkha is the code of fundamental disciplinary rules binding upon a Buddhist monk. This code consists of 227 rules of varying degrees of gravity. Perfect adherence to the rules laid down in the Pātimokkha is called "virtue regarding restraint according to the Pātimokkha."

Virtue regarding restraint of the sense faculties means the exercise of mindfulness in one's encounter with sense objects, not allowing the mind to come under the sway of attraction towards pleasant objects and repulsion towards unpleasant objects.

Virtue consisting in purity of livelihood deals with the manner in which a bhikkhu acquires the necessities of life. He should not acquire his requisites in a manner unbecoming for a monk, who is dedicated to purity and honesty.

Virtue connected with the use of the requisites means that the bhikkhu should use the four requisites—robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicines—after reflecting upon their proper purpose.

§29 Purification of Mind

Upacārasamādhi, appanāsamādhi cā ti duvidho pi samādhi cittavisuddhi nāma.

Purification of mind consists of two kinds of concentration, namely: access concentration and absorption concentration.

Guide to §29

The Pali Buddhist tradition recognizes two different approaches to the development of insight. One approach, called the vehicle of calm (*samathayāna*), involves the prior development of calm meditation to the level of access concentration or absorption concentration as a basis for developing insight. One who adopts this approach, the *samathayānika* meditator, first attains access concentration or one of the fine-material or immaterial-sphere jhānas. Then he turns to the development of insight by defining the mental and physical phenomena occurring in the jhāna as mentality-materiality and seeking their conditions (see §§30-31), after which he contemplates these factors in terms of the three characteristics (see §32). For this meditator, his prior attainment of access or absorption concentration is reckoned as his purification of mind.

The other approach, called the vehicle of pure insight (*suddhavipassanāyāna*), does not employ the development of calm as a foundation for developing insight. Instead the meditator, after purifying his morality, enters directly into the mindful contemplation of the changing mental and material processes in his own experience. As this

contemplation gains in strength and precision, the mind becomes naturally concentrated upon the ever-changing stream of experience with a degree of concentration equal to that of access concentration. This moment-by-moment fixing of the mind on the material and mental processes in their present immediacy is known as momentary concentration (*khaṇikasamādhi*). Because it involves a degree of mental stabilization equal to that of access concentration, this momentary concentration is reckoned as purification of mind for the *vipassanāyānika* meditator, the meditator who adopts the vehicle of pure insight. Such a meditator is also called a "dry insight worker" (*sukkhavipassaka*) because he develops insight without the "moisture" of the jhānas.[4]

§30 Purification of View

Lakkhaṇa-rasa-paccupaṭṭhāna-padaṭṭhāna-vasena nāma-rūpapariggaho diṭṭhivisuddhi nāma.

Purification of view is the discernment of mind and matter with respect to their characteristics, functions, manifestations, and proximate causes.

Guide to §30

Purification of view is so called because it helps to purify one of the wrong view of a permanent self. This purification is arrived at in the course of meditation by discerning the personality as a compound of mental and material factors which occur interdependently, without any controlling self within or behind them. This stage is also called the analytical knowledge of mind-and-matter (*nāmarūpavavatthānañāṇa*) because the mental and material phenomena are distinguished by way of their characteristics, etc.

§31 Purification by Overcoming Doubt

Tesam eva ca nāmarūpānaṃ paccayapariggaho kankhāvitaraṇavisuddhi nāma.

Purification by overcoming doubt is the discernment of the conditions of that same mind and matter.

Guide to §31

Purification by overcoming doubt is so called because it develops the knowledge which removes doubts about the conditions for mind-and-

matter during the three periods of time—past, present, and future. It is achieved by applying, during the contemplative process, one's knowledge of dependent arising in order to understand that the present compound of mind-and-matter has not arisen by chance or through a hypothetical cause such as a creator god or primordial soul, but has come into being from previous ignorance, craving, clinging and kamma. One then applies this same principle to the past and future as well. This stage is also called the knowledge of discerning conditions (*paccayapariggahañāṇa*).

§32 Purification of Path and Not-Path

Tato paraṃ pana tathāpariggahitesu sappaccayesu tebhūmakasankhāresu atītādibhedabhinnesu khandhādinayam ārabbha kalāpavasena sankhipitvā aniccaṃ khayaṭṭhena, dukkhaṃ bhayaṭṭhena, anattā asārakaṭṭhenā ti addhānavasena santativasena khaṇavasena vā sammasanañāṇena lakkhaṇattayaṃ sammasantassa tesv' eva paccayavasena khaṇavasena ca udayabbayañāṇena udayabbayaṃ samanupassantassa ca.

When he has thus discerned the formations of the three planes together with their conditions, the meditator collects them into groups by way of such categories as the aggregates, etc., divided into the past (present, and future).

He next comprehends, with the knowledge of comprehension, those formations in terms of the three characteristics—impermanence in the sense of destruction, suffering in the sense of fearfulness, and non-self in the sense of corelessness—by way of duration, continuity, and moment. Then he contemplates with the knowledge of rise and fall the rising and falling (of those formations) by way of condition and by way of moment.

Obhāso pīti passaddhi adhimokkho ca paggaho
Sukhaṃ ñāṇam upaṭṭhānam upekkhā ca nikanti cā ti.

Obhāsādi-vipassan'upakkilese paripanthapariggahavasena maggāmaggalakkhaṇavavatthānaṃ maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhi nāma.

As he does so, there arise: an aura, zest, tranquillity, resolution, exertion, happiness, knowledge, mindfulness, equanimity, and attachment.

Purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path is the discrimination of the characteristics of what is the path and what is not the path by discerning that those imperfections of insight—the aura, etc.—are obstacles to progress.

Guide to §32

Collects them into groups: This shows the preparation for knowledge of comprehension (*sammasanañāṇa*), the phase in the development of insight wherein the mental and material phenomena are explored in terms of the three characteristics. The meditator first considers all materiality—whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—as comprised by the materiality aggregate. Similarly, he considers all feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and acts of consciousness to be comprised by their respective aggregates—the feeling aggregate, the perception aggregate, the formations aggregate, and the consciousness aggregate.

He next comprehends, with the knowledge of comprehension: This shows the actual ascription of the three characteristics to the formations collected into the five aggregates. All those formations are characterized by "impermanence in the sense of destruction" (*khayaṭṭhena*) because they undergo destruction exactly where they arise, and do not pass on to some other state retaining their identity; they are "suffering in the sense of fearfulness" (*bhayaṭṭhena*) because whatever is impermanent provides no stable security and thus is to be feared; and they are "non-self in the sense of corelessness" (*asārakaṭṭhena*) because they lack any core of self or substance or any inner controller.

By way of duration, continuity, and moment: "By way of duration" (*addhāna*) means in terms of an extended period of time. One begins by considering that the formations in each single lifetime are all impermanent, suffering, and non-self, then one progressively reduces the periods: to the three stages of a single life, to the ten decades, to each year, month, fortnight, day, hour, etc., until one recognizes that even in a single step formations are impermanent, painful, and non-self. (See Vism. XX, 46-65.) "By way of continuity" (*santati*) means by way of a continuous series of similar mental or material phenomena. "By way of moment" (*khaṇa*) means by way of momentary mental and material phenomena.

The knowledge of rise and fall (*udayabbayañāṇa*) is the knowledge in contemplating the arising and cessation of formations. By "rise" is meant the generation, production, or arising of states; by "fall" is meant their change, destruction, dissolution. The knowledge of rise and fall is

exercised "by way of condition" (*paccayavasena*) when one sees how formations arise through the arising of their conditions and cease through the cessation of their conditions. It is exercised "by way of moment" (*khaṇavasena*) when one contemplates the actual generation and dissolution of the momentary phenomena in the present moment as they arise and pass away. (See Vism. XX, 93-99.)

As he does so: The knowledge of rise and fall occurs in two phases. During the first, "tender" knowledge of rise and fall, as the process of contemplation gains momentum, ten "imperfections of insight" (*vipassan'upakkilesā*) arise in the meditator. He may witness an aura of light (*obhāsa*) emanating from his body. He experiences unprecedented zest (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), and happiness (*sukha*). His resolution (*adhimokkha*) increases, he makes a great exertion (*paggaha*), his knowledge (*ñāṇa*) ripens, his mindful awareness (*upaṭṭhāna*) becomes steady, and he develops unshaken equanimity (*upekkhā*). And underlying these experiences there is a subtle attachment (*nikanti*)—an enjoyment of these experiences and a clinging to them.

The discrimination of the characteristics of what is the path, etc.: When such elevated experiences occur to a meditator, if he lacks discrimination he will give rise to the misconception that he has reached the supramundane path and fruit. He will then drop his insight meditation and sit enjoying these experiences, unaware that he is clinging to them. But if he possesses discrimination, he will recognize these states as mere natural by-products of maturing insight. He will contemplate them as impermanent, suffering, and non-self and proceed with his insight contemplation, without becoming attached to them. This discrimination between the ten imperfections as not being the path, and the practice of insight contemplation as being the correct path, is called purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path.

§33 Purification of the Way

Tathā paripanthavimuttassa pana tassa udayabbayañāṇato paṭṭhāya yāvānulomā tilakkhaṇaṃ vipassanāparamparāya paṭipajjantassa nava vipassanāñāṇāni paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi nāma.

When he is thus free from those obstacles to progress, as he practises he passes through a succession of insights in regard to the three characteristics, beginning with knowledge of rise and fall and culminating in conformity. These nine insight knowledges are called purification by knowledge and vision of the way.

Guide to §33

These nine insight knowledges: The nine insight knowledges that constitute purification by knowledge and vision of the way are as follows (see §25):

(1) *Knowledge of rise and fall*: This is the same knowledge as that which preceded the imperfections of insight, but when the imperfections have been overcome, it now matures and develops with increased strength and clarity.

(2) *Knowledge of dissolution (bhangañāṇa)*: When the meditator's knowledge becomes keen, he no longer extends his mindfulness to the arising or presence of formations, but brings it to bear only on their cessation, destruction, fall, and breakup. This is knowledge of dissolution.

(3) *Knowledge of the fearful (bhayañāṇa)*: As the meditator contemplates the dissolution of formations in all three periods of time, he recognizes that all such dissolving things in all realms of existence are necessarily fearful.

(4) *Knowledge of danger (ādīnavañāṇa)*: By recognizing that all formations are fearful, the meditator sees them as utterly destitute of any core or any satisfaction and as nothing but danger. He also understands that only in the unconditioned, free from arising and destruction, is there any security.

(5) *Knowledge of disenchantment (nibbidāñāṇa)*: When he sees all formations as danger, he becomes disenchanted with them, and takes no delight in the field of formations belonging to any realm of existence.

(6) *Knowledge of desire for deliverance (muñcitukamyatāñāṇa)* is the desire, arisen in the course of contemplation, of being delivered from the whole field of formations and escaping from it.

(7) *Knowledge of reflective contemplation (paṭisankhāñāṇa)*: In order to be delivered from the whole field of formations, the meditator again re-examines those same formations, attributing the three characteristics to them in various ways. When he clearly reviews those formations as marked by the three characteristics, this is knowledge of reflective contemplation.

(8) *Knowledge of equanimity towards formations (sankhār'upekkhāñāṇa)*: After he has passed through the reflective contemplation, the meditator sees nothing in formations to be taken as "I" and "mine," so he abandons both terror and delight and becomes indifferent and neutral towards all formations. Thus there arises in him knowledge of equanimity towards formations.

(9) *Knowledge of conformity (anulomañāṇa)*: This knowledge (also rendered "adaptation") is the knowledge in the sense-sphere cittas that

arise preceding the change-of-lineage citta in the cognitive process of the supramundane path (dealt with in the following section). This phase of insight is called conformity because it conforms to the functions of truth both in the preceding eight kinds of insight knowledge and in the path attainment to follow.

§34 Purification by Knowledge and Vision

Tass' evaṃ paṭipajjantassa pana vipassanāparipākam āgamma idāni appanā uppajjissatī ti bhavangaṃ vocchinditvā uppanna-manodvārāvajjanānantaraṃ dve tīṇī vipassanācittāni yaṃ kiñci aniccādilakkhaṇam ārabbha parikamm'-opacār'-ānulomanāmena pavattanti. Yā sikhāppattā sā sānulomasankhārupekkhā vuṭṭhāna-gāminīvipassanā ti ca pavuccati.

When he thus practises contemplation, owing to the ripening of insight (he feels), "Now the absorption (of the path) will arise." Thereupon, arresting the life-continuum, there arises mind-door adverting, followed by two or three (moments of) insight consciousness having for their object any of the characteristics such as impermanence, etc. They are termed preparation, access, and conformity (moments). That knowledge of equanimity towards formations together with knowledge that conforms (to the truths), when perfected, is also termed "insight leading to emergence."

Tato paraṃ gotrabhūcittaṃ nibbānam ālambitvā puthujjanagottam abhibhavantaṃ ariyagottam abhisambhontañ ca pavattati. Tass' ānantaram eva maggo dukkhasaccaṃ parijānanto samudayasaccaṃ pajahanto nirodhasaccaṃ sacchikaronto maggasaccaṃ bhāva-nāvasena appanāvīthim otarati. Tato paraṃ dve tīṇi phalacittāni pavattitvā nirujjhanti. Tato paraṃ bhavangapāto va hoti.

Thereafter, the change-of-lineage consciousness, having Nibbāna as its object, occurs, overcoming the lineage of the worldlings and evolving the lineage of the noble ones. Immediately after this, the path (of stream-entry), fully understanding the truth of suffering, abandoning the truth of its origin, realizing the truth of its cessation, and developing the truth of the path to its cessation, enters upon the (supramundane) cognitive process of absorption. After that, two or three moments of fruition consciousness arise and cease. Then there is subsidence into the life-continuum.

Puna bhavangaṃ vocchinditvā paccavekkhaṇañāṇāni pavattanti.

Maggaṃ phalañ ca nibbānaṃ paccavekkhati paṇḍito
Hīne kilese sese ca paccavekkhati vā na vā.
Chabbisuddhikkamen' evaṃ bhāvetabbo catubbidho
Ñāṇadassanavisuddhi nāma maggo pavuccati.

Ayam ettha visuddhibhedo.

Then, arresting the life-continuum, reviewing knowledge occurs.

The wise person reviews the path, fruit, Nibbāna, and he either reviews or does not review the defilements destroyed and the remaining defilements.

Thus the fourfold path which has to be developed in sequence by means of the sixfold purity is called purification by knowledge and vision.

Herein, this is the section on purification.

Guide to §34

There arises mind-door adverting: On the cognitive process of the path, see IV, §14. Three moments of insight consciousness occur in an individual with normal faculties, two moments (omitting the moment of preparation) in one with unusually acute faculties.

Insight leading to emergence (*vuṭṭhānagāminīvipassanā*): This is the culminating phase of insight preceding the arising of the supramundane path. The path is called emergence because, objectively, it emerges from formations and takes Nibbāna as object, and because subjectively it emerges from defilements.

The change-of-lineage consciousness (*gotrabhūcitta*): This citta is the first advertence to Nibbāna and the proximity condition for the supramundane path. It is called change-of-lineage because it marks the transition from the "lineage" or family of the worldlings (*puthujjana-gotra*) to the lineage or family of the noble ones (*ariyagotra*). However, while this knowledge is like the path in that it cognizes Nibbāna, unlike the path it cannot dispel the murk of defilements that conceals the Four Noble Truths. In the approach to the second and higher paths this mind-moment is called *vodāna*, cleansing, instead of change-of-lineage because the practitioner already belongs to the lineage of the noble ones.

The path: The path consciousness (*maggacitta*) simultaneously performs four functions, one with respect to each of the four truths. These four functions, mentioned here, are the full understanding (*pariññā*) of

suffering; the abandoning (*pahāna*) of craving, its origin; the realization (*sacchikiriya*) of Nibbāna, its cessation; and the development (*bhāvanā*) of the Noble Eightfold Path. For one of sharp faculties who has skipped the preparatory moment three fruition cittas occur following the path; for others, who have gone through the preparatory moment, two fruition cittas occur.

Reviewing knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇañāṇa*): After each of the four supramundane path attainments, the disciple reviews the path, fruition, and Nibbāna; usually, but not invariably, he reviews as well the defilements abandoned and the defilements remaining. Thus there are a maximum of nineteen kinds of reviewing knowledge: five each for each of the first three paths, and four for the final path. This is because an Arahant, who is fully liberated, has no more defilements remaining to be reviewed.

Analysis of Emancipation (*vimokkhabheda*)

§35 The Three Doors to Emancipation

Tattha anattānupassanā attābhinivesaṃ muñcantī suññatānupassanā nāma vimokkhamukhaṃ hoti. Aniccānupassanā vipallāsanimittaṃ muñcantī animittānupassanā nāma. Dukkhānupassanā taṇhāpaṇidhiṃ muñcantī appaṇihitānupassanā nāma.

Therein, the contemplation of non-self, which discards the clinging to a self, becomes the door to emancipation termed contemplation of the void. The contemplation of impermanence, which discards the sign of perversion, becomes the door to emancipation termed contemplation of the signless. The contemplation of suffering, which discards desire through craving, becomes the door to emancipation termed contemplation of the desireless.

Guide to §35

When insight reaches its culmination, it settles upon one of the three contemplations—of impermanence, or suffering, or non-self—as determined by the inclination of the meditator. According to the Commentaries, one in whom faith is the dominant faculty settles upon the contemplation of impermanence; one in whom concentration is the dominant faculty settles upon the contemplation of suffering; and one in whom wisdom is the dominant faculty settles upon the contemplation

of non-self. This final phase of contemplation, being the meditator's immediate access to the emancipating experience of the supramundane path, is thus called his "door to emancipation" (*vimokkhamukha*). Here, it is the noble path that is called emancipation, and the contemplation leading to the path that is called the door to emancipation.

The contemplation of non-self is termed contemplation of the void because it sees formations as being void of a self, a living being, a person. The contemplation of impermanence is termed contemplation of the signless because it abandons "the sign of perversion" (*vipallāsanimitta*), that is, the deceptive appearance of permanence, stability, and durability which lingers over formations owing to the perversion of perception. And the contemplation of suffering is termed contemplation of the desireless because it terminates desire by abandoning the false perception of pleasure in formations.

§36 Emancipation in the Path and Fruit

Tasmā yadi vuṭṭhānagāminīvipassanā anattato vipassati, suññato vimokkho nāma hoti maggo; yadi aniccato vipassati, animitto vimokkho nāma; yadi dukkhato vipassati, appaṇihito vimokkho nāmā ti ca. Maggo vipassanāgamanavasena tīṇi nāmāni labhati. Tathā phalañ ca maggāgamanavasena maggavīthiyaṃ.

Hence, if with the insight leading to emergence one contemplates on non-self, then the path is known as the void emancipation; if one contemplates on impermanence, then the path is known as the signless emancipation; if one contemplates on suffering, then the path is known as the desireless emancipation. Thus the path receives three names according to the way of insight. Likewise, the fruit (occurring) in the cognitive process of the path receives these three names according to the way of the path.

Guide to §36

When the meditator attains the path through the contemplation of non-self, the path makes Nibbāna its object through the aspect of voidness as devoid of self and it is thus known as the void emancipation. When he attains the path through the contemplation of impermanence, the path makes Nibbāna its object through the signless aspect—as devoid of the sign of formations—and it is thus known as the signless emancipation. When he attains the path through the contemplation of suffering, the path makes Nibbāna its object through the desireless aspect—as being free

THE PATH OF SERENITY AND INSIGHT

An Explanation of the Buddhist Jhānas

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CHAPTER VII

THE WAY OF WISDOM

The goal of the Buddhist path, complete and permanent liberation from suffering, is to be achieved by practicing the three stages of the path—moral discipline (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*pannā*). The mundane *jhānas*, comprising the four fine material *jhānas* and four *āruppas*, pertain to the stage of concentration which they fulfil to an eminent degree. However, taken by themselves, the *jhānas* suffer from two liabilities. Firstly, due to carelessness or complacency, they can be lost. And secondly, their attainment does not suffice to ensure complete deliverance from suffering. The reason the mundane *jhānas* cannot by themselves bring final liberation from suffering is because they are incapable of cutting off its source. The Buddha teaches that the fundamental cause of suffering, the driving power behind the cycle of rebirths, is the defilements (*kilesa*) with their three unwholesome roots—greed, hatred, and delusion. Concentration of the absorptive level, no matter how deeply it might be developed, only induces a suppression of the defilements, not their radical extirpation. It cannot dismantle the latent seeds of the defilements, and thus cannot abandon them at the root. Thence bare mundane *jhāna*, even when sustained, does not by itself terminate the cycle of rebirths. To the contrary it can even help perpetuate the round. For each fine material and immaterial *jhāna* attained, if held to with an attitude of clinging, brings about a rebirth in that particular plane of existence corresponding to its own *kammic* potency, which can then be followed by a rebirth in some lower realm.

What is required to achieve complete deliverance from the cycle of rebirths is the eradication of the defilements. Since the most basic defilement is delusion (*moha*), also called ignorance (*avijjā*), the key to liberation lies in the eradication of ignorance by developing its direct opposite, namely wisdom (*paññā*). In this chapter we will examine the nature of wisdom and the methods by which it is developed. Since wisdom presupposes a certain proficiency in concentration it is inevitable that *jhāna*

comes to claim a place in its development. This place, however, is not fixed and invariable, but as we will see allows for differences depending on the individual meditator's disposition.

Fundamental to the discussion in this chapter and the next is a distinction between two terms crucial to Theravāda philosophical exposition. These two terms are "mundane" (*lokiya*) and "supramundane" (*lokuttara*). The term "mundane" applies to all phenomena comprised in the world (*loka*) of the five aggregates of clinging (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*)—material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. It covers subtle states of consciousness as well as material and emotional states, virtue as well as evil, meditative attainments as well as sensual engrossments. The term "supramundane", in contrast, applies exclusively to that which transcends the world of the clinging-aggregates. It covers nine terms, the nine *lokuttarā dhammā*: *nibbāna*, the four noble paths (*magga*) leading to *nibbāna*, and their corresponding four fruits (*phala*) which experience the bliss of *nibbāna*. It is hoped that the discussion to follow will make the meanings of these terms clear.

The Nature of Wisdom

The *Visuddhimagga* presents an analytical exposition of wisdom dealt with under six headings: [1] the definition of wisdom, [2] the sense in which it is called wisdom, [3] its characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause, [4] its classification, [5] its method of development, and [6] its benefits.[1] A brief consideration of these principles should help bring the nature of wisdom to light.

[1] Wisdom, according to Buddhaghosa, is defined as insight knowledge associated with wholesome states of consciousness.[2]

[2] Wisdom (*paññā*) is so called in the sense that it is an act of understanding (*pajānana*), a mode of knowing (*jānana*) distinct from and superior to the modes of perceiving (*sañjānana*) and cognizing (*vijānana*). What distinguishes wisdom from these other forms of cognition is its ability to comprehend the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and selflessness and to bring about the manifestation of the supramundane path.

1. PP., pp. 479-89. Vism., pp. 369-75.
2. PP., p. 479. "Kusalacittasampayuttaṁ vipassanāñāṇaṁ paññā." Vism., p. 369.

[3] Wisdom has the specific characteristic of penetrating the true nature of phenomena. It penetrates the particular and general features of things through direct, unmediated cognition. Its function is "to abolish the darkness of delusion which conceals the individual essences of states" and its manifestation is "non-delusion." Since the Buddha says that one whose mind is concentrated knows and sees things as they are, the proximate cause of wisdom is concentration.[1]

[4] The wisdom instrumental in attaining liberation is divided into two principal types : insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and the knowledge pertaining to the supramundane paths (*magga-ñāṇa*). The first is the direct penetration of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena—impermanence (*aniccatā*), suffering (*dukkhatā*) and selflessness (*anattatā*). It takes as its objective sphere the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandhā*)—material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.[2] Because insight-knowledge takes the world (*loka*) of conditioned formations (*saṅkhāra*) as its object it is regarded as a mundane (*lokiya*) form of wisdom. Insight-knowledge does not itself directly eradicate the defilements. It serves to prepare the way for the second type of wisdom, the wisdom of the supramundane paths, which emerges when insight has been brought to its climax. The wisdom of the path, occurring in the four distinct stages (to be discussed below), simultaneously realizes *nibbāna*, fathoms the four Noble Truths, and cuts off the difilements. This wisdom is called "supramundane" (*lokuttara*) because it rises up (*uttarati*) from the world (*loka*) of the five aggregates to realize the state transcendent to the world, *nibbāna*.

[5] The Buddhist yogin, striving for deliverance, begins the development of wisdom by first securely establishing its roots—purified moral discipline and concentration. He then learns and masters the basic material upon which wisdom is to work—the

1. "Dhammānaṁ sabhāvapaṭivedhalakkhaṇā paññā. Dhammānaṁ sabhāvapaṭicchādaka-mohāndhakāraviddhaṁsanarasā; asammohapaccupaṭṭhānā; samāhito yathābhūtaṁ jānāti passatī ti [AN. 5:3] vacanato pana samādhi tassa padaṭṭhānam." Vism. p. 370.
2. In Pali: *Rūpakkhanda, vedanākkhandha, saññākkhandha, saṅkhārak-khandha, viññānakkhandha.*

aggregates, elements, sense bases, dependent arising, the Four Noble Truths, etc. He commences the actual practice of wisdom by cultivating insight into the impermanence, suffering, and selflessness of the five aggregates. When this insight reaches its apex it issues in supramundane wisdom, the right view factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. The wisdom of the path turns from conditioned formations to the unconditioned *nibbāna*, destroying thereby the latent defilements at their root.

[6] The removal of the defilements, the experiencing of *nibbāna* and the achievement of the states of holiness culminating in arahatship—these, according to Buddhaghosa, are the benefits in developing wisdom.[1]

The Two Vehicles

The Theravāda tradition recognizes two alternative approaches to the development of wisdom, between which yogins are free to choose according to their aptitude and propensity. These two approaches are the vehicle of serenity (*samathayāna*) and the vehicle of insight (*vipassanāyāna*). The meditators who follow them are called, respectively, the *samathayānika*, "one who makes serenity his vehicle," and the *vipassanāyānika*, "one who makes insight his vehicle." Since both vehicles, despite their names, are approaches to developing insight, to prevent misunderstanding the latter type of meditator is sometimes called a *suddhavipassanāyānika*, "one who makes bare insight his vehicle," or a *sukkhavipassaka*, "a dry insight worker." Though all three terms appear initially in the commentaries rather than in the suttas, the recognition of the two vehicles seems implicit in a number of canonical passages.

The *samathayānika* is a meditator who first attains access concentration or one of the eight mundane *jhānas*, then emerges and uses his attainment as a basis for cultivating insight until he arrives at the supramundane path. The experience of the path in any of its four stages always occurs at a level of *jhānic* intensity and thus necessarily includes supramundane *jhāna* under the heading of right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*), the eighth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. In contrast to the *samathayānika*, the

1. See Vism., Chapter XXIII.

vipassanāyānika does not attain mundane *jhāna* prior to practicing insight-contemplation, or if he does, does not use it as an instrument for cultivating insight. Instead, without entering and emerging from *jhāna*, he proceeds directly to insight-contemplation on the mental and material phenomena that appear in the six spheres of sense experience—the five outer senses and thought. By means of this bare insight he reaches the noble path, which as in the former case again necessarily includes supramundane *jhāna*.

The kingpost of the *vipassanāyānika's* approach is the practice of mindfulness (*sati*), the bare non-discursive observation of the changing phenomena of mind and body. The Buddha expounds the practice of mindfulness in terms of four contemplations—the contemplation of body (*kāya*), feelings (*vedanā*), states of mind (*citta*), and mind-objects (*dhamma*). These four contemplations, the four "foundations of mindfulness" (*satipaṭṭhāna*), bring to the focus of the observational field the diverse kinds of mental and material phenomena with their universal marks of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. The *samathayānika*, too, at the time he emerges from *jhāna* and begins insight-contemplation, has to practice the four foundations of mindfulness, as these have been called by the Buddha "the only way that leads to the purification of beings, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the ending of pain and grief, to the achievement of the right path and the realization of *nibbāna*."[1]

The classical source for the distinction between the two vehicles of serenity and insight is the *Visuddhimagga*, where it is explained that when a meditator begins the development of wisdom

> ...if, firstly, his vehicle is serenity, [he] should emerge from any fine material or immaterial jhana except the base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception, and he should discern, according to characteristic, function, etc., the jhana factors consisting of applied thought, etc. and the states associated with them.[2]

Other commentarial passages allow access concentration (*upacārasamādhi*) to suffice for the vehicle of serenity. The last *āruppa* is

1. DN. 2: 290.
2. PP., pp. 679-80. Vism., p. 503.

excluded because its factors are too subtle to be discerned by a beginning meditator. The meditator whose vehicle is pure insight, on the other hand, is advised to begin by discerning material and mental phenomena directly, without utilizing a *jhāna* for this purpose. This second type of meditator is sometimes referred to by another name, "dry insight worker", applied because his insight lacks moistening with the waters of *jhāna*.[1]

Although, as we mentioned earlier, the three terms—*samathayānika*, *vipassanāyānika*, and *sukkhavipassaka*—are terms of commentarial coinage, the distinction of vehicles and practitioners seems to draw directly from the Pali Canon. The Buddha generally includes the four *jhānas* in complete expositions of his system of training, placing them before the development of insight and the attainment of the path. A number of suttas, however, give evidence for alternative approaches to the practice. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya the Buddha states :

> There is, monks, one person who gains internal serenity of mind but does not gain the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena;...one person who gains the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena but does not gain internal serenity of mind;...one person who gains neither;...and one person who gains both....[2]

He urges the first, established on his serenity of mind, to strive to gain the wisdom of insight into phenomena, and the second, established on his wisdom of insight into phenomena, to strive to gain serenity of mind. The commentary explains "serenity of mind" as mental concentration of absorption (*appanācittasamādhi*) and the "higher wisdom of insight into phenomena" as the insight-knowledge discerning formations (*saṅkhārapariggahavipassanāñāṇa*), i.e. insight into the five aggregates.[3] The fact that individuals are capable of one attainment in the absence of the other provides a starting point for a differentiation of vehicles adapted to their differing capacities. In the end, however, all meditators have to enter upon the development of insight in order to reach the liberating path.

1. See Vism. T. 2:474.
2. AN. 2:92-93.
3. AN.A. 2:325.

An even clearer enunciation of alternative vehicles to the goal is presented in a sutta spoken by the Venerable Ānanda. On one occasion Ānanda declared to a group of monks that there are some monks who develop insight preceded by serenity (*samathapubbaṅgamaṁ vipassanaṁ*) and some who develop serenity preceded by insight (*vipassanāpubbaṅgamaṁ samathaṁ*). Both approaches, in his account, issue in the supramundane path :

> Herein, friends, a monk develops insight preceded by serenity. As he develops insight preceded by serenity the path arises. He follows that path, develops it and cultivates it. As he follows, develops, and cultivates the path the fetters are abandoned, the latent tendencies are destroyed. Or again, friends, a monk develops serenity preceded by insight. As he develops serenity preceded by insight the path arises. He follows that path, develops and cultivates it. As he does so the fetters are abandoned, the latent tendencies are destroyed.[1]

The commentarial exegesis of this passage (found in the Majjhima Nikāya commentary) explains the procedure for developing insight preceded by serenity thus :

> Here, someone first produces access concentration or absorption concentration; this is serenity. He contemplates with insight that serenity and its concomitant phenomena as impermanent, etc.; this is insight. Thus first comes serenity, afterwards insight.[2]

The procedure for developing serenity preceded by insight is described as follows :

> Here, someone contemplates with insight the five aggregates of clinging as impermanent, etc. without having produced the aforesaid kinds of serenity (access and absorption); this is insight. With the completion of insight there arises in him mental one-pointedness having as object the renunciation of the phenomena produced therein; this is serenity. Thus first comes insight, afterwards serenity.[3]

1. AN. 2:157.
2. MN.A. 1:112.
3. *Ibid.*, 113.

In case it should be suspected that the second type of meditator still attains mundane *jhāna* after developing insight, the subcommentary to the passage points out: "the mental one-pointedness he gains is right concentration of the supramundane path (*maggasammāsamādhi*) and its object, called 'renunciation' (*vavassagga*), is *nibbāna*."[1] The Aṅguttara sub-commentary explicitly identifies the second meditator with the *vipassanāyānika*: " 'He develops serenity preceded by insight' : this is said with reference to the *vipassanāyānika*."[2]

Thus the *samathayānika* attains in order first access concentration or mundane *jhāna* and then insight-knowledge, by means of which he reaches the supramundane path containing wisdom under the heading of right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) and supramundane *jhāna* under the heading of right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*). The *vipassanāyānika*, in contrast, skips over mundane *jhāna* and goes directly into insight-contemplation. When he reaches the end of the progression of insight-knowledge he arrives at the supramundane path which, as in the previous case, brings together wisdom with supramundane *jhāna*. This *jhāna* counts as his accomplishment of serenity.

The Functions of Jhāna

For a meditator following the vehicle of serenity the attainment of *jhāna* fulfills two functions: first, it produces a basis of mental purity and inner collectedness needed for undertaking the work of insight-contemplation ; and second, it serves as an object to be examined with insight in order to discern the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. *Jhāna* accomplishes the first function by providing a powerful instrument for overcoming the five hindrances. As we saw, the Buddha declares the five hindrances to be corruptions of the mind and weakeners of wisdom which prevent a man from seeing things as they are.[3] For wisdom to arise the mind must first be concentrated well, and to be concentrated well it must be freed from the hindrances. This task is accomplished by the attainment of

1. MN.T. 1:204.
2. AN.T. 2:344.
3. See Chapter III pp. 28-29.

jhāna: access concentration causes the hindrances to subside, the first and following *jhānas* drive them further and further away. Cleared of the hindrances the mind becomes "pliant and supple, having radiant lucidity and firmness, and will concentrate well upon the eradication of the taints."[1]

In their capacity for producing concentration the *jhānas* are called the basis (*pāda*) for insight, and that particular *jhāna* a yogin enters and emerges from before commencing his practice of insight is designated his *pādakajjhāna*, the basic or foundational *jhāna*. Insight cannot be practiced while absorbed in *jhāna*, since insight-meditation requires investigation and observation, which are impossible when the mind is immersed in one-pointed absorption. But after emerging from the *jhāna* the mind is cleared of the hindrances, and the stillness and clarity that then result conduce to precise, penetrating insight.

The *jhānas* also enter into the *samathayānika's* practice in a second capacity; that is, as objects for scrutinization by insight. The practice of insight consists essentially in the examination of mental and physical phenomena to discover their marks of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. The *jhānas* a yogin has attained and emerged from provide him with a readily available and strikingly clear object in which to seek out the three characteristics. After emerging from a *jhāna* the meditator will proceed to examine the *jhānic* consciousness, analyzing it into its components, defining them in their precise particularity, and discerning the way they exemplify the three universal marks. This process is called *sammasanañāṇa*, "comprehension-knowledge," and the *jhāna* subjected to such a treatment is termed the *sammasitajjhāna*, "the comprehended *jhāna*."[2] Though the basic *jhāna* and the comprehended *jhāna* will often be the same, the two do not necessarily coincide. A yogin cannot practice coonmprehensi on a *jhāna* higher than he is capable of attaining, but a yogin who uses a higher *jhāna* as his *pādakajjhāna* can still practice insight-comprehension on a lower *jhāna* he has previously attained and mastered. This admitted difference in nature between the *pādaka* and *sammasitajjhānas* leads to discrepant theories about the supramundane concentration of the noble path, as we will see below.[3]

1. Ibid. p. 41.
2. PP., pp. 706-709. Vism., pp. 521-22.
3. See below pp. 182-83.

Whereas the sequence of training undertaken by the *samathayānika* meditator is unproblematic, a difficulty seems to crop up in the case of the *vipassanāyānika's* approach. This difficulty lies in accounting for the concentration he uses to provide a basis for insight. Concentration is needed in order to see and know things as they are, but without access or *jhāna*, what concentration can he use ? The solution to this problem is found in a type of concentration distinct from the access and absorption concentrations pertaining to the vehicle of serenity. This type of mental unification is called "momentary concentration" (*khaṇika samādhi*). Despite its name, momentary concentration does not signify a single moment of concentration amidst a current of distracted thoughts. Rather, it denotes a dynamic concentration which flows from object to object in the ever-changing flux of phenomena, retaining a constant degree of intensity and collectedness sufficient to purify the mind of the hindrances. Momentary concentration arises in the *samathayānika* yogin simultaneously with his post-*jhānic* attainment of insight, but for the *vipassanāyānika* it develops naturally and spontaneously in the course of his insight practice without his having to fix the mind upon a single exclusive object. Thus the follower of the vehicle of insight does not omit concentration altogether from his training, but develops it in a different manner from the practitioner of serenity. Skipping over the *jhānas*, he goes directly into contemplation on the five aggregates and by observing them constantly from moment to moment acquires momentary concentration as an accompaniment of his investigations. This momentary concentration fulfills the same function as the basic *jhāna* of the serenity-vehicle, providing the foundation of mental clarity needed for insight to emerge.

The importance of momentary concentration in the vehicle of insight is testified to by the classical Theravāda exegetical literature, the commentaries and subcommentaries. The *Visuddhimagga*, in its discussion of mindfulness of breathing, states that "at the actual time of insight momentary unification of the mind arises through the penetration of the characteristics (of impermanence, and so on)."[1] Its commentary, the *Paramatthamañjūsā*, defines the phrase "momentary unification of the mind" (*khaṇika-cittekaggatā*) as concentration lasting only for a moment, stating: "For that too, when it occurs uninterruptedly on its object in a single mode and is not overcome by opposition, fixes the mind immovably, as if in absorption."[1] The same work contains several other references to momentary concentration. Commenting on Buddhaghosa's remarks that sometimes the path to purification is taught by insight alone, the *Mahā Ṭīkā* points out that this remark is meant to exclude not all concentration, but only "that concentration with distinction," i.e. access and absorption. It should not be taken to imply that there is no concentration in the case of the insight-meditator, "for no insight comes about without momentary concentration."[2] And momentary concentration is the type of concentration appropriate to one whose vehicle is insight:

> ...supramundane concentration and insight are impossible without mundane concentration and insight to precede them; for without the access and absorption concentration in one whose vehicle is serenity, or without the momentary concentration in one whose vehicle is insight, and without the Gateways to Liberation..., the supramundane can never in either case be reached.[3]

The commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya, in a passage quoted fully above (p. 149), states that "someone contemplates with insight the five aggregates of clinging as impermanent, etc. without having produced the aforesaid kinds of serenity." Its subcommentary, clarifying this statement, explains: "The qualification 'without having serenity' is meant to exclude access concentration, not momentary concentration, for no insight is possible without momentary concentration."[4]

In contrast to *jhānic* concentration, momentary concentration is a fluid type of mental collectedness consisting in the uninterrupted continuity of the mind engaged in noticing the passing succession of objects as though fixing it in absorption, holding the

1. PP., pp. 311-12. Vism., p. 239.

1. PP., pp. 311-12 Fn. 63. Vism. T. 1:342.
2. PP., p. 2 Fn. 3. "Na hi khaṇikasamādhiṁ vinā vipassanā sambhavati." Vism. T. 1:11.
3. PP., p. 3 Fn. 4. Vism. T. 1:15. For the three gateways to liberation, see below pp. 216-17.
4. MN.T. 1:204.

hindrances at bay and building up the power of mental purification. For this reason momentary concentration can be understood as implicitly included in access concentration in the standard definitions of purification of mind as consisting in access and absorption.

The Seven Purifications

The path to deliverance, usually expounded in terms of the three trainings in morality, concentration and wisdom, is sometimes divided further into seven stages called the seven purifications (*sattavisuddhi*). The canonical basis for this system is the Rathavinīta Sutta (MN. No. 24) and the Paṭisambhidāmagga. The scheme claims special prominence in the Theravāda commentarial tradition since it forms the framework for the *Visuddhimagga*. As such it comes to the forefront in every discussion of the progressive stages of Buddhist meditation.

According to this scheme in order to attain full liberation the meditator has to pass through seven kinds of purification. The seven are : [1] purification of morality, [2] purification of mind, [3] purification of view, [4] purification by the overcoming of doubt, [5] purification by knowledge and vision of the right and wrong paths, [6] purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and [7] purification by knowledge and vision.[1] The *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* recognizes several other sets of terms essential to the development of wisdom—the three characteristics of phenomena, the three contemplations, the ten kinds of insight knowledge, the three liberations, and the three doors to liberation;[2] but since these all come in the scope of the seven purifications we can take the latter as the basis for our discussion, mentioning the others when they become relevant.

[1] Purification of Morality

The purification of morality, identical with the training in the higher moral discipline (*adhisīlasikkhā*), consists in the fourfold

1. In Pali: [1] sīla visuddhi, [2] citta visuddhi, [3] diṭṭhi visuddhi, [4] kaṅkhāvitaraṇa visuddhi, [5] maggāmaggañāṇadassana visuddhi, [6] paṭipadāñāṇadassana visuddhi, and [7] ñāṇadassana visuddhi.
2. Nārada, *Manual.*, 408-409, 411-12.

purification of morality already discussed, i.e. restraint according to the rules of the Pātimokkha, restraint of the senses, purity of livelihood, and purity in the use of requisites.[1] This is the foundation for the growth of insight just as much as for the development of serenity.

[2] Purification of Mind

Purification of mind coincides with the training in concentration (*samādhi*) or in the higher consciousness (*adhicittasikkhā*). It is defined as the eight attainments of absorption together with access concentration. The *samathayānika* yogin accomplishes purification of mind by achieving access or full absorption in one or several *jhānas*, thereby suppressing the five hindrances. The *vipassanāyānika* disciple, as we noted, achieves purification of mind by means of momentary concentration, which as it overcomes the hindrances can be subsumed under access concentration.

[3] Purification of view

The remaining five purifications pertain to the training in wisdom. The first four belong to the mundane portion of the path, the wisdom of insight (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*); the last belongs to the supramundane portion, the wisdom of the noble path (*magga-ñāṇa*).

Purification of view aims obtaining a correct perspective on the nature of individual existence. Since it is the wrong grasp of existence, crystallized in the view of a substantial self, that keeps the unenlightened chained to *saṁsāra*, to reach liberation this delusive view has to be dissolved. The means of dissolving it is the purified view comprehending the so-called individual as a compound of evanescent phenomena without any inner core of substance or selfhood. To achieve purification of view the meditator has to bring these phenomena into focus, define them in terms of their salient characteristics, and then use this knowledge to remove the erroneous view of a self-subsistent ego.

The *samathayānika* and *vipassanāyānika* approach this purification from different angles, though the end result is the same for both. The former, after emerging from any fine material or immaterial *jhāna* except the last (which is too subtle for analysis),

1. See above, Ch. II, pp. 17-19.

discerns its *jhāna* factors and their concomitants in the light of their specific characteristics, functions, manifestations, and proximate causes. He then defines all these states as "mentality" (*nāma*). He next discerns the physical basis for these mental phenomena, the matter of the heart (*hadayarūpa*),[1] as well as the remaining primary and secondary kinds of material phenomena. These he groups together under the heading of "materiality" (*rūpa*). He thus perceives the living being as a composite of mentality and materiality, *nāmarūpa*, without and over-ruling self hidden within or behind it.

The *vipassanāyānika* begins to purify his view by analyzing the body into the four primary elements—solidity, fluidity, heat, and oscillation. After defining these in terms of their characteristics, he repeats the procedure for the other material phenomena, defining them all as materiality. He then turns to the states of consciousness and their principal concomitants, defining them and grouping them under the heading of "mentality." Thus, like the first kind of yogin, he eventually arrives at the realization that the living being is merely a compound of mutually supporting mental and physical phenomena apart from which there is no separate entity to be identified as a "self," "being," or "person."

The process of analysis can be undertaken using as basis the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases (the six sense faculties including mind and their six respective objects), the eighteen elements (six objects, six faculties, and six consciousness), or any other mode of classification. In the end all are defined in terms of mentality and materiality, resulting in the removal of the view of a self-identical ego.

[4] Purification by Overcoming Doubt

Once the disciple has overcome the false view of a self by discerning the living being as a compound of material and mental phenomena, he next sets out to overcome doubts concerning this compound by investigating the causes and conditions for mentality-materiality. He understands that the mind-body combination is neither causeless nor created by any single cause but arises due to a multiplicity of causes and conditions. He first seeks out the causes and conditions for the body and discovers that the body is brought into being by four causes operating from the past—ignorance, craving, clinging, and *kamma*—and sustained in the present by nutriment. Then turning to mentality, he finds that all mental phenomena come into being in dependence on conditions, such as sense organs, sense objects, and conascent mental factors, as well as through the defilements and *kamma* accumulated in the past. When he sees that the present occurrence of mentality-materiality is due to causes and conditions, he infers that the same principle applied to its occurrence in the past and will apply to its occurrence in the future. In this way he overcomes all doubt and uncertainty regarding the conditioned origination of mind and matter in the three periods of time.

By discerning the conditional basis for the mental-material compound, the yogin arrives at the realization that the course of existence is merely a succession of active *kammic* processes and passive resultant processes. The aggregates occurring in the past ceased immediately after arising but gave rise to aggregates occurring in the present. The aggregates occurring now will cease in the present and give rise to aggregates occurring in the future. There is nothing permanent passing through this succession. It is merely a sequence of phenomena acting and experiencing without an agent over and above the actions or a subject over and above the experiences.

[5] Purification by Knowledge and Vision into the Right and Wrong Paths

Before the next purification can arise several intermediate steps are necessary. Firstly, after dispelling his doubts by the knowledge of conditionality, the disciple undertakes the form of insight called "comprehension by groups" (*kalāpasammasana*), which involves collecting all phenomena into distinct categories and ascribing to them the three characteristics. Thus the disciple contemplates all material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness as impermanent, all as suffering, and all as not self, each being a separate comprehension.[1] This

1. The ancient Indian physiology, accepted by the Buddhist commentarial tradition, identified the heart with the seat of consciousness. In the canonical texts no such identification is made. Reference is only made to "that matter in dependence on which mind and mind-consciousness occur." See Nārada, *Manual*, pp. 292-93.

1. See Pts. p. 51.

same method of comprehension can be applied not only to the five aggregates but to any categorical scheme for classifying the constituents of experience—the six sense doors, the six objects, the six kinds of consciousness, six contacts, six feelings, six perceptions, six volitions, the twelve sense bases, the eighteen elements, etc. The four *jhānas*, four divine abidings (*brahmavihāras*), and four immaterial attainments are also included. Since the text advises a beginner to develop comprehension by contemplating those states that are readily discernible by him, a *samathayānika* yogin will generally choose as his object of comprehension a *jhāna* he has achieved and mastered; this becomes his *sammasitajjhāna*, as we explained above.

Whatever objects he selects as material for comprehension, the disciple must understand the precise way they embody the three characteristics. Firstly, they are all impermanent in the sense that they are subject to destruction (*khayaṭṭhena*). Nothing that comes into being is able to last forever, but whatever arises is bound to eventually pass away. Secondly, they are all suffering in the sense of being fearful (*bhayaṭṭhena*). Since all composite phenomena are impermanent they cannot provide any lasting contentment or security, but when held to with clinging are a potential source of suffering to be regarded as harmful and fearful. And thirdly, they are all selfless in the sense of being coreless (*asāraṭṭhena*). Composite phenomena, being compounded by conditions, lack any inner essence that can be conceived as a self, inner agent or subject, and thus are empty of a core.[1]

When the meditator succeeds in comprehending the various groups in terms of the three characteristics, he acquires comprehension-knowledge, *sammasanañāṇa*. This marks the actual beginning of insight. According to the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* comprehension-knowledge is the first of the ten kinds of insight-knowledge through which a *vipassanā*-practitioner has to pass.[2]

From comprehension-knowledge the disciple passes on to knowledge of contemplation of rise and fall (*udayabbayanupassanāñāṇa*). This knowledge, defined simply as "understanding of contemplating present states' change,"[3] is gained by contemplating the presently existent five aggregates as characterized by rise and fall. In brief, it arises by seeing the rise of the aggregates in their characteristic of generation, birth, or arising, and their fall in their characteristic of change, destruction or dissolution. In greater detail, it involves perceiving the arising of each aggregate through its specific conditions and its cessation through the cessation of these conditions. Focussing in more closely on the present process, the meditator realizes that present phenomena, not having been, are brought into being, and that having been they immediately vanish. Formations appear to him as instantaneous, coming into being and passing away with inconceivable rapidity, perpetually renewed.

1. PP., pp. 709-710. Vism., p. 523.
2. Nārada, Manual., pp. 409, 411.
3. PP., p. 734. Pts., pp. 53-54.

When he gains this initial understanding of rise and fall the meditator has arrived at tender insight (*taruṇavipassanā*). At this point, as a result of his successful practice, ten unprecedented experiences are likely to arise in him. Because they can impede his progress, these are called the ten imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*). The ten are: illumination, knowledge, rapture, tranquility, happiness, resolution, exertion, mindfulness, equanimity, and attachment.[1] If he is not cautious the unwary meditator can misinterpret these occurrences and think that he has reached one of the stages of enlightenment. Therefore novice yogins are advised not to allow themselves to be deterred by such occurrences but to recognize them for what they are: by-products of insight which can become impediments if wrongly adhered to. The skilled meditator contemplates them as bare phenomena—impermanent, suffering, and selfless. He distinguishes the right path from the wrong, realizing that these ten states are not the path but distractions; insight-knowledge free from imperfections is the path. The knowledge that is established in him by making this distinction is the purification by knowledge and vision into the right and wrong paths.

[6] Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way

Having relinquished attachment to the ten imperfections of insight and correctly distinguished the true path from the false, the

1. PP., pp. 739 ff. "Obhāsa, ñāṇa, pīti, passaddhi, sukha, adhimokkha, paggaha, upaṭṭhāna, upekkhā, nikanti,." Vism., pp. 544-45.

disciple now enters upon a steady progression of insights which leads him through increasingly deeper levels of understanding right up to the threshold of the supramundane path. These insights, nine in number, begin with mature knowledge of rise and fall and culminate in conformity knowledge (*anulomañāṇa*), the pinnacle of mundane insight. Together with the previously accomplished comprehension-knowledge (*sammasanañāṇa*), these nine insights complete the ten kinds of insight-knowledge mentioned in the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*.

Knowledge of contemplation of rise and fall
(udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa)

After distinguishing the right path from the wrong the meditator resumes the contemplation of rise and fall. Though he had previously cultivated this knowledge in part, his contemplation was disabled by the imperfections of insight and could not clearly observe the three characteristics. But now that the imperfections have been removed contemplation becomes extremely sharp, causing the three characteristics to stand out in bold relief. By attending to the rise and fall of formations the yogin sees the mark of impermanence—formations changing constantly at every moment, produced and stopped with inconceivable rapidity. As impermanence becomes more conspicuous suffering begins to stand out in its fundamental form, as continuous oppression by rise and fall. The yogin then realizes that whatever changes and causes suffering is insusceptible to the exercise of mastery, hence incapable of being identified as a self or the belongings of a self; this brings the understanding of the mark of selflessness into view. Having uncovered the three characteristics, the meditator sees that the so-called being is nothing but a becoming, a flux of evanescent, painful, impersonal happenings which does not remain the same for two consecutive moments.

Knowledge of contemplation of dissolution
(bhaṅgānupassanā-ñāṇa)

As the meditator persists in his contemplation of rise and fall, it becomes increasingly apparent that conditioned formations undergo three phases of becoming: a phase of arising (*uppāda*), a phase of presence (*ṭhiti*), and a phase of dissolution (*bhaṅga*). When he can discern these phases clearly, the yogin no longer

extends his mindfulness to their arising or presence, but focusses exclusively upon the final phase—their momentary cessation, dissolution, or breaking up. He then sees how formation sbreak up all the time "like fragile pottery being smashed, like fine dust being dispersed, like sesamum seeds being roasted."[1] Applying his direct knowledge of present dissolution to the past and future, he draws the inference that all past formations dissolved and all future ones will dissolve. Since dissolution is the culminating point of impermanence, the most salient aspect of suffering, and the strongest negation of selfhood, the three marks stand forth more distinctly than ever before. The whole field of formations thus becomes evident to contemplation as impermanent, suffering, and selfless. With the insight that formations break up constantly without a pause, and that this ceaseless process of momentary dissolution holds sway over the three periods of time, the meditator arrives at knowledge of contemplation of dissolution.

Knowledge of appearance as terror
(bhayatūpaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa)

As he repeats and cultivates his insight into the destruction, fall, and breakup of formations,

> formations classed according to all kinds of becoming, generation, destiny, station, or abode of beings, appear to him in the form of a great terror, as lions, tigers, leopards,...appear to a timid man who wants to live in peace.[2]

When he sees how past formations have ceased, present ones are ceasing, and future ones will cease, there arises in him knowledge of appearance as terror, born of the understanding that whatever is bound for destruction cannot be relied upon and is therefore fearful.

Knowledge of contemplation of danger
(ādīnavānupassanā-ñāṇa)

Through the knowledge of appearance as terror the meditator finds that there is no shelter, protection, or refuge in any kind of becoming. He sees that there is not a single formation he can pin

1. PP., p. 752. Vism., p. 553.
2. PP., p. 753. Vism., pp. 554-55.

his hopes on: all hold nothing but danger. Then "the three kinds of becoming appear like charcoal pits full of glowing coals,... and all formations appear as a huge mass of dangers destitute of satisfaction or substance."[1] The meditator discerns the potential danger in all existence just as a timid man sees the danger in a delightful forest thicket infested with wild beasts. This is the knowledge of contemplation of danger.

Knowledge of contemplation of dispassion
(nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa)

Seeing the danger in all compounded things them editator becomes dispassionate towards them. He finds no delight in any state of worldly existence but turns away from them all. Even before he came to this knowledge the meditator had reduced his gross attachments but now, having seen the danger in formations, he gains even greater dispassion towards them on account of their impermanent, fearful, and insecure nature. It should be noted that according to the Paṭisambhidā-magga these last three insights—knowledge of terror, of danger, and of dispassion—represent phases of one kind of insight-knowledge apprehending its object in three different ways.[2]

Knowledge of desire for deliverance
(muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa)

When the meditator becomes dispassionate towards the formations in all the kinds of becoming his mind no longer cleaves to them. The desire then arises in him to get rid of formations, to be released and liberated from them all. The knowledge that arises in association with this desire is knowledge of desire for deliverance.

Knowledge of contemplation of reflection
(patisaṅkhānupassanā-ñāṇa)

In order to be released from the whole field of conditioned phenomena the meditator returns to the contemplation of formations, examining them again and again in terms of impermanence, suffering and selflessness. Looking at them from a variety of

1. PP., p. 755. Vism., p. 556.
2. Pts., p. 259.

angles in the light of the three characteristics, he sees formations as impermanent because they are non-continuous, temporary, limited by rise and fall, disintegrating, perishable, subject to change, etc.; as suffering because they are continuously oppressed, hard to bear, the basis of pain, a disease, a tumor, a dart, a calamity, an affliction, etc.; as not self because they are alien, empty, vain, void, ownerless, without an overlord, with none to wield power over them, etc.[1] This extended understanding of the three characteristics is the knowledge of contemplation of reflection.

Knowledge of equanimity about formations
(saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa)

To deepen his understanding of selflessness the meditator contemplates voidness (*suññatā*) in various ways. He sees that all compounds are empty of self or of anything belonging to a self, that nothing can be identified as "I" or as the property of an "I", as an "other" or as the property of an "other". Perceiving the voidness of selfhood in formations, the meditator abandons both terror and attachment. He develops instead a sense of detached equanimity. With the arising of this knowledge his mind retreats, retracts, and recoils from all the planes of becoming and no longer goes out to them "just as a fowl's feather or a shred of sinew thrown on a fire retreats, retracts, and recoils, and does not spread out."[2] At this stage, if he should perceive *nibbāna*, the goal, he will reject formations and resolve upon *nibbāna*. But if he does not see *nibbāna* the meditator will continue in the knowledge of equanimity about formations until his contemplation acquires further maturity.

When his knowledge ripens and the move to the supramundane path becomes imminent, insight settles down in one of the three contemplations—on impermanence, suffering, or selflessness, as determined by the meditator's disposition. Because they lead directly to the liberating experience of the noble path, these contemplations, at the pinnacle of insight, are called the three gateways to liberation (*tīni vimokkhamukhāni*). The contemplation of impermanence becomes the gateway to the signless liberation

1. PP., p. 760. Vism., p. 559.
2. PP., p. 766. Vism., p. 564.

(*animitta vimokkha*) for it directs the mind to *nibbāna* as the signless element; the contemplation of suffering becomes the gateway to the desireless liberation (*appaṇihitavimokkha*) for it directs the mind to *nibbāna* as the desireless element; and the contemplation of non-self becomes the gateway to the void liberation (*suññata-vimokkha*) for it directs the mind to *nibbāna* as the void element.

The liberation to which these contemplations are gateways is the supramundane path. Though one in essence the path gains three names according to the aspect of *nibbāna* it focusses upon, as Buddhaghosa explains:

> And here the signless liberation should be understood as the noble path that has occurred by making nibbāna its object through the signless aspect. For that path is signless owing to the signless element having arisen, and it is a liberation owing to deliverance from defilements. In the same way the path that has occurred by making nibbāna its object through the desireless aspect is desireless. And the path that has occurred by making nibbāna its object through the void aspect is void.[1]

The factor that determines which particular "gateway" will be entered and which liberation attained is the spiritual faculty predominant in the meditator's mental makeup. One with strong faith (*saddhā*) tends to settle down in contemplation of impermanence, one with strong concentration (*samādhi*) in the contemplation of suffering, and one with strong wisdom (*paññā*) in the contemplation of selflessness; thereby they each attain the path of liberation corresponding to their specific contemplation. As it is said in the Paṭisambhidāmagga:

> When one who has great resolution brings [formations] to mind as impermanent, he acquires the signless liberation. When one who has great tranquillity brings [them] to mind as painful, he acquires the desireless liberation. When one who has great wisdom brings [them] to mind as not-self, he acquires the void liberation.[2]

Insight-knowledge that has reached its climax and is about to issue in the supramundane path is also known by another name,

1. PP., p. 768. Vism., p. 565.
2. PP., p. 768. Pts., p. 254.

"insight leading to emergence" (*vuṭṭhānagāmini-vipassanā*).[1] This name covers three kinds of knowledge: fully matured equanimity about formations and the two that follow it—conformity knowledge (*anuloma-ñāṇa*) and change-of-lineage knowledge (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*). The word "emergence" (*vuṭṭhāna*) signifies the supramundane path, which is called thus because externally it rises up from formations to *nibbāna* and internally it rises up from defilements and defiled conditions to a state of complete purity. Since these last three kinds of mundane knowledge lead immediately to the path they are collectively named insight leading to emergence.

Conformity knowledge (anuloma-ñāṇa)

As the meditator cultivates equanimity about formations his faculties grow stronger and sharper. Then, at a certain point, the realization dawns that the path is about to arise. A thought-process of equanimity-knowledge occurs comprehending formations through one of the three characteristics—as either impermanent, or suffering, or selfless; the mind then sinks into the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*). Following the life-continuum there arises in the stream of consciousness a mind-door adverting (*manodvārāvajjana*) apprehending formations as impermanent, or suffering, or selfless, in accordance with the previous process of equanimity-knowledge. Immediately after the adverting two or three impulsions occur making formations their object in terms of the same characteristic. The three are individually called "preliminary work" (*parikamma*), "access" (*upacāra*), and "conformity" (*anuloma*), but they are most commonly collected under the group name "conformity." In very quick-witted meditators the moment of preliminary work is passed over and only the two moments of access and conformity occur. Conformity knowledge receives its name because it conforms to the functions of truth in the eight kinds of insight-knowledge preceding it and in the thirty-seven states partaking of enlightenment to follow. It is the last moment of insight-knowledge before the change over to the supramundane path supervenes.

1. PP., pp. 772-75. Vism., pp. 567-69.

[7] Purification by Knowledge and Vision

Change-of-lineage

The last purification, purification by knowledge and vision, consists of the knowledge of the four supramundane paths—the path of stream-entry, the path of the once-returner, the path of the non-returner, and the path of arahatship. However, immediately after conformity knowledge and before the moment of the first path, there occurs one thought-moment called change-of-lineage knowledge (*gotrabhūñāṇa*). This knowledge has the function of adverting to the path. Because it occupies an intermediate position it belongs neither to purification by knowledge and vision of the way nor to purification by knowledge and vision, but is regarded as unassignable. It receives the name "change-of-lineage" because by reaching this stage of knowledge the meditator passes out of the "lineage of the worldling" (*puthujjhanagotta*) and enters the "lineage of the noble ones" (*ariyagotta*).[1] In bringing about such a radical transformation change-of-lineage is clearly a most important and crucial moment of spiritual development.

The three kinds of conformity knowledge—preliminary work, access, and conformity proper—dispel the "murk of defilements" that conceals the Four Noble Truths. Each of the three clears away a degree of delusion, permitting the truths to become more and more manifest. However, though conformity-knowledge dispels the delusion that conceals the truths, it cannot penetrate them. For the truths to be penetrated *nibbāna* must be realized as object. Change-of-lineage knowledge, which arises right after conformity, is the first state of consciousness to make *nibbāna* its object. It is the initial advertance to *nibbāna*, and the proximate, immediate and decisive-support condition for the arising of the first path.

The first path and fruit

Change-of-lineage knowledge perceives *nibbāna* but cannot destroy the defilements. The eradication of defilements is the work of the four supramundane paths (*lokuttaramagga*). Each path attainment is a momentary experience apprehending *nibbāna*, understanding the Four Noble Truths, and cutting off certain defilements. The first path, as Buddhaghosa explains, arises in immediate succession to change-of-lineage:

> ...After, as it were, giving a sign to the path to come into being it [change-of-lineage] ceases. And without pausing after the sign given by that change-of-lineage knowledge the path follows upon it in uninterrupted continuity, and as it comes into being it pierces and explodes the mass of greed, the mass of hatred, and the mass of delusion, never pierced and exploded before.[1]

The first path is called the path of stream entry (*sotāpattimagga*) since the disciple who has reached this path has entered the stream of the Dhamma (*dhammasota*), the Noble Eightfold Path, which will take him to *nibbāna* as surely as the waters in a stream will be carried to the ocean.[2] On entering this path he has passed beyond the level of a worldling and become a noble one, an *ariyan*, who has seen and understood the Dhamma for himself.

When the path-knowledge arises it breaks through the mass of greed, hatred, and delusion, the root-defilements which drive living beings from birth to birth in beginningless *saṁsāra*. Each supramundane path has the special function of eradicating defilements. The defilements cut off by the successive paths are classified into a set of ten "fetters" (*saṁyojana*), so called because they keep beings chained to the round of existence. The ten fetters, which all arise out of the three unwholesome roots, are: [1] wrong views of personality, [2] doubt, [3] clinging to rites and rituals, [4] sensual desire, [5] ill will, [6] lust for fine material existence, [7] lust for immaterial existence, [8] conceit, [9] restlessness, and [10] ignorance.[3] The ten are divided into two groups: the first five are called the fetters pertaining to the lower worlds (*orambhāgiyāni saṁyojanāni*) because they keep beings tied to the sensuous realms; the last five are called the fetters pertaining to the higher worlds (*uddhambhāgiyāni saṁyojanāni*) because they remain operative even in the fine material and immaterial

1. PP., p. 785. Vism., p. 577.

1. PP., pp. 787-88. Vism., p. 579.
2. SN. 5:347.
3. In Pali: [1] sakkāyadiṭṭhi, [2] vicikicchā, [3] sīlabbataparāmāsa, [4] kāmacchanda, [5] vyāpāda, [6] rūparāgā, [7] arūparāga, [8] māna, [9] uddhacca, and [10] avijjā.

realms.[1] Some of these fetters—doubt, sensual desire, ill will, and restlessness—are identical with the five hindrances abandoned by *jhāna*. But whereas mundane *jhāna* only suppresses them, leaving the latent tendencies untouched, the supramundane paths cut them off at the root. With the attainment of the fourth path the last and subtlest of the fetters are eradicated. Thus the arahat, the fully liberated one, is described as "one who has eliminated the fetters of existence" (*parikkhiṇabhava-saṁyojana*).[2]

The path of stream-entry eradicates the first three fetters—the fetters of false views of personality, doubt, and clinging to rites and rituals. The first is the view that the five aggregates can be identified with a self or can be seen as containing, contained in, or belonging to a self.[3] The more theoretical forms of this view are attenuated by insight-knowledge into impermanence suffering, and selflessness, but the subtle latent holding to such views can only be destroyed by path-knowledge. "Doubt" is uncertainty with regard to the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, and the training; it is eliminated when the disciple sees for himself the truth of the Dhamma.[4] "Clinging to rites and rituals" is the belief that liberation from suffering can be obtained merely by observing rites and rituals. Having followed the path to its climax, the disciple understands that the Noble Eightfold Path is the one way to the end of suffering, and so can no more fall back on rites and rituals. The path of stream entry not only cuts off these fetters but also eliminates greed for sense pleasures and resentment that would be strong enough to lead to states of loss, i.e. to rebirth in the four lower realms of the hells, tormented spirits, animals, and titans.[5] For this reason the stream-enterer is released from the possibility of an unfortunate rebirth.

The path of stream-entry is always followed by another occasion of supramundane experience called the fruit of stream entry (*sotāpattiphala*). Fruition follows the path necessarily and immediately, succeeding it without a gap. It occurs as the result of the path, sharing its object, *nibbāna*, and its world-transcending character. But whereas the path performs the active function of

1. AN. 5:17.
2. MN. 1:4.
3. MN. 1:300.
4. MN. 1:101.
5. Dhs., p. 208.

cutting off defilements, the fruit simply enjoys the bliss and peace that result from the path's completion of its function. Also, whereas the path is limited to only a single moment of consciousness, fruition covers either two or three moments. In the case of a quick-witted meditator who passes over the moment of preliminary work the cognitive process of the path contains only two moments of conformity knowledge. Thus in his thought-process, immediately after the path has arisen and ceased, three moments of fruition occur. In the case of an ordinary meditator there will be three moments of conformity knowledge and thus, after the path, only two moments of fruition.

The three moments of conformity knowledge and the moment of change-of-lineage are wholesome states of consciousness pertaining to the sense sphere (*kāmāvacarakusalacitta*). The path consciousness and the fruition that follows it are supramundane states of consciousness (*lokuttara citta*), the former wholesome (*kusala*) and the latter resultant (*vipāka*). The path and fruit necessarily occur at the level of one of the *jhānas*—from the first to the fourth *jhāna* in the fourfold scheme, from the first to the fifth in the fivefold scheme. They partake of the character of *jhāna* because they contain the *jhāna*-factors endowed with an intensity of absorption corresponding to that of the fine material sphere *jhānas*. But unlike the mundane *jhānas* these *jhānas* of the path and fruit are supramundane, having an altogethe different object and function than their counterparts, as we will see in the next chapter.

The following diagram illustrates the thought-process of the path and fruit of stream-entry in the case of a normal meditator with three moments of conformity preceding the path and two moments of fruition succeeding it :

A									B							
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
bh	l	ch	d	p	u	a	g	m	ph	ph	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh

Here line *A* represents the four thought-moments preceding the path process. This comprises the past *bhavaṅga* or life-continuum (*bh*), its vibration (*l*), its cutting off (*ch*), and the mind's advertance to formations as impermanent, suffering, or selfless

through the mind-door (*d*). Line *B* represents the lapsing of the mind back into the passive life-continuum after the fruition phase is over. *P* represents the moment of preliminary work (*parikamma*), *u* the moment of access (*upacāra*), *a* the moment of conformity (*anuloma*), and *g* the moment of change-of-lineage (*gotrabhū*) where the ordinary stream of consciousness belonging to the sensual plane changes over to the lineage of the noble path. The following *m* represents the noble path consciousness (*magga-citta*), which is necessarily limited to a single thought-moment. After this there are two *ph's* representing the fruit of stream-entry, then the mind relapses into the life-continuum, represented by *bh* repeated six times. The groups of three dots in each *citta* represent the birth (*uppāda*), duration (*ṭhiti*), and dissolution (*bhaṅga*) of each thought moment.[1]

After the attainment of fruition the stream-enterer reviews the path, fruition, and *nibbāna*. He will generally also review the defilements he has destroyed by the path and the defilements remaining to be destroyed by the higher paths; this, however, is not invariably fixed and is sometimes omitted by some meditators.[2] The ariyan disciples who have passed through the next two fruitions will likewise review their attainments in the same way. Thus for each there will be at a minimum three and at a maximum five items to be reviewed. For the arahat, however, there will be a maximum of four since he has no more defilements to be eliminated. In this way there are a maximum of nineteen kinds of reviewing (*paccavekkhana*) followingt he supramundane attainments.

The disciple at the moment of the path of stream-entry is called "one standing on the path of stream-entry" or the first noble person; from the moment of fruition up to the attainment of the next path he is called a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), reckoned as the second noble person. Though conventionally the person standing on the path and the one abiding in the fruit can be described as one and the same individual at two different moments, the philosophical perspective requires another kind of descriptive device. From the standpoint of ultimate truth, according to Buddhism, an individual endures as such for only one thought-moment. Therefore, in classifying the types of noble persons, the Buddha drew upon the distinction between the thought-moments of path and fruition as the basis for a distinction between two types of noble persons. This bifurcation applies to each of the four stages of deliverance: for each, the individual at the path-moment is reckoned as one type of noble person, the same individual from the moment of fruition on as another type of noble person.

1. Adopted from Nārada, *Manual.*, pp. 214-19. Vism., pp. 111-12. *Compendium*, pp. 54-55.
2. Nārada, *Manual.*, p. 410. Vism., p. 581.

The texts extoll the stream-enterer as acquiring incalculable benefits as a result of his attainment. He has closed off the doors to rebirth in the woeful states of existence and can declare of himself:

> Destroyed for me is rebirth in the hells, in the animal kingdom, in the spirit realm, in the planes of misery, the bad destinations, the downfall. I am a stream-enterer, no longer subject to decline, assured of and destined for full enlightenment.[1]

He can be certain that he is released from five kinds of fear and hostility: the fear and hostility that come from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from taking intoxicants. He is endowed with the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅgāni*): unwavering confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, and unblemished moral discipline. He has penetrated and seen the truth with correct understanding.[2] By so penetrating the truth he has limited his future births to a maximum of seven in the happy realms of the human and heaven worlds, drying up the great ocean of suffering that laid beyond this. Thus the Buddha says that for the stream-enterer who has seen the Dhamma the amount of suffering that remains is like a pinch of dust on the finger nail, while the suffering that has been exhausted is like the dust on the mighty earth.[3]

1. SN. 2:68.
2. *Ibid.* 69-70
3. Stream-enterers are divided into three kinds: assuming that they will not go further in that same lifetime, one with sluggish faculties will be reborn seven times in the happy destinations; one with medium faculties will be reborn an intermediary number of times; and one with keen faculties will be reborn once more in the human world and there make an end of suffering. (See PP., pp. 833-34. Vism., pp. 611-12.)

The second path and fruit

A disciple who has attained to stream-entry is not debarred from progressing to higher stages of deliverance in that same life. He can advance all the way to arahatship if he has sufficient supporting conditions and puts forth the necessary effort. Therefore the yogin abiding at the stage of stream-entry is advised to strive for the next higher path, the path of the once-returner (*sakadāgāmimagga*), either in the same session or at a later time. He should stir up the spiritual faculties, the powers, and the factors of enlightenment, and with this equipment contemplate the whole range of formations included in the five aggregates in the light of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. As before he again passes through the progressive series of insights beginning with knowledge of rise and fall and culminating in knowledge of equanimity about formations. If his faculties have not yet reached sufficient maturity his contemplation will remain in equanimity about formations. But if and when his faculties mature, he passes through the moments of conformity knowledge and change-of-lineage knowledge and attains to the second noble path, the path of the once-returner.[1]

Unlike the other noble paths, the second path does not eradicate any fetters completely. However, it attenuates sensual desire and ill-will to such a degree that they no longer occur strongly or frequently but remain only as weak residues. The three unwholesome roots are weakened along with the other fetters derived from them. Following the path-consciousness in immediate succession come two or three moments of the fruit of the once-returner (*sakadāgāmiphala*), the inevitable consequence of the path. After fruition reviewing knowledge occurs, as described. The meditator at the moment of the path is known as the third noble person, from the moment of the fruit on as a once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), the fourth noble person. He is called a "once-

1. The thought-moment immediately preceding the three higher paths only receives the name "change-of-lineage" figuratively, due to its similarity to the moment preceding the path of stream-entry. The yogi actually crossed over to the noble one's lineage (*ariyagotta*) earlier, with the moment before the first path. Hence the moment immediately preceding the three higher paths is technically known by another name, *vodāna*, meaning "cleansing", so called "because it purifies from certain defilements and because it makes absolute purification (i.e. *nibbāna*) its object." Vism. T. 2:487-88.

returner" because, if he does not go further in this life, he is bound to make an end of suffering after returning to this world one more time. The standard sutta description reads: "With the destruction of the (first) three fetters and the attenuation of greed, hate, and delusion, the monk becomes a once returner, one who puts an end to suffering after returning to this world only one more time."[1]

The third path and fruit

As before, the ardent meditator resumes contemplation on the impermanence, suffering, and selflessness of the aggregates, striving to attain the third stage of deliverance, the stage of a non-returner (*anāgāmi*). When his faculties mature he passes through the preliminary insights and reaches the third path, the path of the non-returner (*anāgāmimagga*). This path destroys sensual desire and ill will, the two fetters weakened by the second path. Immediately after the third path its fruition occurs, after which he reviews his position as before. At the moment of the path the yogin is known as one standing on the path of a non-returner, the fifth noble person, from the moment of fruition on as a non-returner, the sixth noble person. He is called a non-returner because he no longer returns to the sensuous realm. If he does not penetrate further he is reborn spontaneously in some higher realm, generally in the pure abodes (*suddhāvāsa*) of the fine material sphere, and there reaches final *nibbāna*: "With the destruction of the five lower fetters, the monk is reborn spontaneously (in a higher world) and there attains *nibbāna*, without returning from that world."[2]

The fourth path and fruit

Again, either in the same session or at some future time, the meditator sharpens his faculties, powers, and enlightenment factors, contemplating the three characteristics of formations. He ascends through the series of insights up to equanimity about formations. When his faculties mature there arise in him conformity and change-of-lineage, followed by the fourth and final path, the path of arahatship (*arahattamagga*). This path eradi-

1. AN. 2:238.
2. *Ibid.*

A History of Mindfulness

How Insight Worsted Tranquillity in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Bhikkhu Sujato

Brahmavaṁsassa, hāsapaññassa: tassa sisso'hamasmi

Confucius' house was demolished, and a number of manuscripts were found hidden within the walls. Embarrassingly, when these were deciphered they were found to teach doctrines decidedly different from those proclaimed by the mainstream Confucianists. The repercussions of this event have been felt in Confucianism down to the modern era.

For us, the lost manuscripts are not like the Confucian scrolls hidden in the wall, or like the Dead Sea scrolls lost in the desert. The finds of ancient manuscripts from the deserts and caves of Afghanistan and Central Asia date from well after the Buddha's time and mainly serve to substantiate, rather than undermine, the authenticity of the existing canons. The lost manuscripts are instead buried in an even deeper, more inaccessible place – the shrine rooms of Buddhist temples. There they remain, buried beneath the sands of interpretation, objects of worship not of study, inspiring devotion but not practice. The Buddha's urgent, repeated call was for these teachings not to remain mere words, but to inform and nourish the liberation of the heart.

PART 2

A History of Mindfulness

Chapter 8: Introduction to Mindfulness

'Mindfulness is useful everywhere' – so said the Buddha. And in harmony with this motif, the theme of mindfulness echoes throughout each of the melodies that compose the path to freedom. At its most fundamental, mindfulness is essential for the sense of conscience on which ethical conduct is founded; hence alcohol and drugs, by destroying mindfulness, destroy the basis for a moral life. Mindfulness, in its older sense of 'memory', remembers and recollects the teachings, forming the basis for the intellectual comprehension of the Dhamma, and bears them in mind, ready to apply right at the crucial moment. Mindfulness guards the senses, endowing the meditator with circumspection, dignity, and collectedness, not allowing the senses to play at will with the tantalizing toys and baubles of the world. Mindfulness repeatedly re-collects awareness into the present, re-membering oneself so that one's actions are purposeful and appropriate, grounded in time and place. Mindfulness is prominent in all approaches to meditation, and in refined form it distinguishes the exalted levels of higher consciousness called samadhi. On the plane of wisdom, mindfulness extends the continuity of awareness from ordinary consciousness to samadhi and beyond, staying with the mind in all of its permutations and transformations and thus supplying the fuel for understanding impermanence and causality. And finally on the plane of liberation, perfected mindfulness is an inalienable quality of the realized sage, who lives 'ever mindful'.

Given this ubiquity of mindfulness, as omnipresent as salt in the ocean, it would seem a hopeless task to isolate certain areas of the Dhamma as bearing a special affinity with mindfulness. Indeed, we might even go further and allege that any such attempt conceals a program to co-opt the unique prestige of mindfulness in the cause of one's own partisan perspective. Nevertheless, it has become a commonplace in 20th Century Theravāda meditation circles that mindfulness, and in

particular its chief manifestation as satipatthana, is close or identical in meaning with vipassana, or insight. The chief support for this idea is the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which is the only well-known early text on satipatthana. The success of this doctrine, repeated in virtually every modern Theravāda text on meditation, reflects the unrivalled prestige of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Here are just a few representative quotes.

'[The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta] is generally regarded as the most important sutta in the entire Pali canon.'
Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, pg. 588

'The most important discourse ever given by the Buddha on mental development (meditation) is called the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.'
Walpola Rāhula, *What the Buddha Taught*, pg. 69

'[The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta] is by all Buddhists rightly considered the most important part of the whole Sutta-Piṭaka and the quintessence of the whole meditation practice.'
Bhikkhu Nyanatiloka, *Path to Deliverance*, pg. 123

'No other discourse of the Buddha, not even his first one, the famous "Sermon of Benares", enjoys in those Buddhist countries of the East which adhere to the unadulterated tradition of the original teachings, such popularity and veneration as the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.'
Bhikkhu Nyanaponika, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, pg. 11.

In fact, the worship, as opposed to practice, of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is a remarkable and undeniable feature of modern Theravāda. Venerable Nyanaponika, in his classic *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, waxes lyrical:

'In Lanka for instance, the isle of Ceylon, when on fullmoon days lay devotees observe eight of the ten principal precepts of novice monks, staying for the day and the night in the monastery, they frequently choose this Sutta to read, recite, listen to, and contemplate. Still, in many a home, the satipatthana book is reverently wrapped in a clean cloth, and from time to time, in the evening, it is read to members of the family. Often this discourse is recited at the bedside of a dying Buddhist, so that in the last hour of his life, his heart may be set on, consoled, and gladdened by the Master's great message of liberation. Though ours is an age of print, it is still customary in Ceylon to have new palm-leaf manuscripts of the Sutta written by scribes, and to offer them to the library of a monastery. A collection of nearly two hundred such manuscripts of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, some with costly covers, was seen by the writer in an old monastery of Ceylon.'[152]

The author discreetly avoids noticing that in this atmosphere of reverential awe the question of practicing the instructions in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta does not arise. Hundreds of copies of manuscripts on meditation are accumulated in a monastery where probably no-one is actually meditating. The irrationality of this is a classic symptom of religious fetishism – the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta has been transformed into a magical totem. Please notice that this eulogy of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as fetish appears at the beginning of the single most influential and widely read book on contemporary Theravāda vipassana meditation. It is explicitly invoked to magnify the aura of sanctity surrounding the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as a key aspect of the vipassanāvāda agenda.

Where forcefulness of opinion is matched by paucity of evidence, I cannot but smell a dogma lurking nearby. Much as we have benefited from the modern emphasis on mindfulness in daily practice, it is past time for the pendulum to swing back. The Buddha did not speak the

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in its current form. It is a late and, in part, poorly organized compilation; and it is specifically the vipassana aspects that are least authentic. In the early teachings satipatthana was primarily associated not with vipassana but with samatha. Since for the Suttas, samatha and vipassana cannot be divided, a few passages show how this samatha practice evolves into vipassana. In later literature the vipassana element grew to predominate, to the extent of almost entirely usurping the place of samatha in satipatthana. Subtle differences in emphasis between the schools can be discerned in their treatment of satipatthana, differences that can be seen to relate to the basic metaphysical controversies underlying the schisms. Thus the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is interesting not because it represents the 'unadulterated tradition of the original teachings', but because it provides suggestive evidence for how sectarian adulterations crept even into the early discourses.

In making such claims, claims that will inevitably be perceived as an attack on the authority of some of the most respected 20th Century meditation schools, I cannot say emphatically enough that what I am criticizing here is not the teachers of vipassana, or the meditation techniques that are marketed as 'vipassana', but the textual sources of the vipassanāvāda, the doctrine that vipassana is the central meditation taught by the Buddha.

The vipassanāvāda must be understood in its historical context, for it is this, rather than the textual sources, that shape its essential features. The vipassanāvāda grew up as part of the movement of 'modernist Buddhism', which started in the colonial era as the schools of Buddhism attempted to respond to the challenges of the modern age. This movement swept over the whole of the Buddhist world in a number of guises. In all its varieties, however, the key aspect of modernist Buddhism was rationalism. Meditation, especially samatha, was suspect, since in traditional Buddhist cultures it had often degenerated into a quasi-magical mysticism. Samatha is emotional rather than intelligential. It cultivates the non-rational aspects of consciousness, and so when it degrades it shades off into psychic tricks, fortune-telling, magic, and so on, all of which are rampant throughout Buddhist cultures. Some forms of Buddhist modernism did away with meditation altogether; this may be compared with the Protestant movement in Europe, which similarly opposed the contemplative aspect of religion. Contemplation will always remain a threat to religious orthodoxy, since there is always the uncomfortable possibility that the truth a meditator sees may not agree with the truth that the books say they're supposed to see. However in Buddhism, unlike Christianity, the contemplative life lies at the very heart of the Founder's message. Other modernist Buddhism movements, perceiving that Buddhist meditation was based on a rational psychology, developed contemplative systems that emphasized these aspects. These schools, originating mainly in Burma, marginalized or outright disparaged samatha and developed the vipassanāvāda as a scriptural authority for their 'vipassana-only' approach. The strength of these schools is that they have rightly championed an energetic and disciplined approach to meditation. But with our advancing knowledge and appreciation of the Buddhist scriptural heritage, the scriptural authority for their special doctrines lies in tatters. Followers of these contemplative schools would do well to be a little more humble in their claims, and to emphasize the demonstrable practical benefits of their practices, rather than rely on a discredited theory.

I am well aware that my claims fly in the face of virtually every modern interpreter of satipatthana. Such an accumulated weight of authority cannot be discarded frivolously. At the risk of appearing pedantic and perhaps obsessive, I must proceed very carefully. I will therefore attempt to make my coverage as comprehensive as reasonably possible, casting an eye at every available important early text on satipatthana, as well as a range of later passages. I consciously flirt with the danger of polemicism, of simply asserting one extreme in reaction to an original extreme. But everyone, no matter how 'objective' or 'scientific', has their own agenda, and it is more honest to be open with one's perspectives than to pretend – to others or to oneself – that

one has no bias. The concern here is not so much for balance within this particular work, but for balance within the tradition as a whole.

Samatha & Vipassana

The key to the approach used in this work is to analyse the various strata of texts on satipatthana in terms of samatha and vipassana. It is therefore necessary to start by explaining what I mean by these. We can distinguish two key aspects of how the Suttas speak of samatha & vipassana: their nature, and their function. Their specific nature is clearly distinguished in this passage.

'A person who has samatha of the heart within himself but no vipassana into principles pertaining to higher understanding should approach one who has vipassana and inquire: "How should activities be seen? How should they be explored? How should they be discerned with vipassana?" And later he can gain vipassana...

'A person who has vipassana into principles pertaining to higher understanding but no samatha of the heart within himself should approach one who has samatha and inquire: "How should the mind be steadied? How should it be settled? How should it be unified? How should it be concentrated in samadhi?" And later he can gain samatha...

'One who has neither should inquire about both [and "should put forth extreme enthusiasm, effort, endeavor, exertion, unflagging mindfulness, and clear comprehension to acquire them, just as if one's turban or hair were ablaze, one would put forth extreme effort to quench the flames"...[153]]

'One who has both, established in these beneficial qualities should make further effort for the evaporation of defilements.'[154]

'Just as if, Nandaka, there was a four-legged animal with one leg stunted and short, it would thus be unfulfilled in that factor; so too, a monk who is faithful and virtuous but does not gain samatha of the heart within himself is unfulfilled in that factor. That factor should be fulfilled by him... A monk who has these three but no vipassana into principles pertaining to higher understanding is unfulfilled in that factor. That factor should be fulfilled by him.'[155]

The description of vipassana mentions the seeing, exploring and discerning of activities (*saṅkhārā*). The mention of 'activities' here implies the three characteristics – impermanence, suffering, not-self – of phenomena, conditioned according to dependent origination. The meditative discernment of the nature of conditioned reality is the central meaning of vipassana. While this definition is possibly too narrow for some contexts, still vipassana is commonly used in this sense in the Suttas and in the present day.

Samatha is described in terms of the steadying, settling, and unifying of the mind in samadhi. Elsewhere the implications of this are spelt out.

'How does he steady his mind within himself, settle it, unify it, and concentrate it in samadhi? Here, Ānanda, he enters and abides in the first jhana... second jhana... third jhana... fourth jhana.'[156]

Here, as in virtually all central doctrinal contexts in the early texts, samatha or samadhi is explicitly defined as the four jhanas. We must therefore conclude that the four jhanas are an essential, intrinsic part of the path. Establishing these points formed the burden of the argument

of *A Swift Pair of Messengers*, so I won't repeat the reasons here. It is necessary to mention these conclusions, however, for anyone who persists in the very common practice of interpreting early texts on samadhi in terms of the commentarial ideas of 'access samadhi' and 'momentary samadhi' will certainly misinterpret the present work, and, I believe, will also misinterpret the Suttas.

The second mode of treating samatha and vipassana is in terms of their function, that is, the results of the practice.

'Monks, these two principles share in realization. What two? Samatha and vipassana.

'When samatha is developed, what purpose is achieved? The mind is developed. When the mind is developed, what purpose is achieved? Lust is abandoned.

'When vipassana is developed, what purpose is achieved? Understanding is developed. When understanding is developed, what purpose is achieved? Ignorance is abandoned.

'Monks, the mind tainted by lust is not released; understanding tainted by ignorance is not developed. Thus the release of heart is due to the fading away of lust; the release by understanding is due to the fading away of ignorance.'[157]

Thus the purpose of samatha is to alleviate lust, which here stands for all emotional defilements, whereas vipassana eliminates ignorance, that is, intelligential defilements. Both of these key Sutta passages strongly emphasize the complementary, integrative nature of these two aspects of meditation. While there is a clear conceptual distinction, they are not divided up into two separate baskets (still less into two separate meditation centres!). The early texts never classify the various meditation themes into either samatha or vipassana. They are not two different kinds of meditation; rather, they are qualities of the mind that should be developed. Broadly speaking, samatha refers to the emotional aspects of our minds, the heart qualities such as peace, compassion, love, bliss. Vipassana refers to the wisdom qualities such as understanding, discrimination, discernment. Samatha soothes the emotional defilements such as greed and anger, while vipassana pierces with understanding the darkness of delusion. It is apparent that all meditation requires both of these qualities, so in seeking to disentangle them we must inevitably remain in the twilight zone of emphasis and perspective, eschewing the easy clarity of black-&-white absolutes.

CHAPTER 9: PREVIOUS STUDIES

Many learned and wise authors have studied and commented on the various versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. I have learned something from each of these writers, and any virtue in my work stems purely from my being able to stand on such broad and strong shoulders. This book is already far too long, so I try to avoid repeating topics that have already been well-treated, except where re-evaluation is necessary in light of the special methods and materials of the current

Anālayo

SATIPAṬṬHĀNA

The Direct Path to Realization

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tration has become fully stable,[53] does the mind reach a state of complete inner stillness ("noble silence"), leaving behind even these subtle "wholesome intentions".

Based on the passages considered so far, it seems reasonable to suppose that "absorption" (*jhāna*) refers to profound experiences of deep concentration achieved after having developed a considerable degree of meditative proficiency.

IV.3 ABSORPTION AND REALIZATION

Countless discourses recommend the development of concentration as an essential factor for "knowing things as they really are".[54] Concentration is a requirement for full awakening,[55] and this concentration has to be "right" concentration.[56] These specifications recommend absorption concentration as a requisite for full awakening. However, the question might be asked if the same is also required for stream-entry. Although, owing to the powerful impact of experiencing *Nibbāna* at stream-entry, the concentrative unification of one's mind (*cittassekaggatā*) will momentarily reach a level comparable to absorption, how far does this require the previous development of absorption with a calmness object of meditation?[57]

The qualities listed in the discourses as essential for the realization of stream-entry do not stipulate the ability to attain absorption.[58] Nor are such abilities mentioned in the descriptions of the qualities

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53 Indicated in the standard descriptions of the second *jhāna* (e.g. at D I 74) by qualifying the joy and happiness experienced to be "born of concentration" (*samādhija*), and by the expression "singleness of mind" (*cetasa ekodibhāva*).

54 e.g. at S IV 80.

55 A III 426 points out that without *samādhi* it is impossible to gain realization.

56 A III 19; A III 200; A III 360; A IV 99; A IV 336; A V 4–6; and A V 314 explain that without right concentration it is not possible to gain liberation. A III 423 stresses again that right concentration is required to be able to eradicate the fetters and realize *Nibbāna*. It is interesting to note that in most of these cases the absence of right concentration is due to a lack of ethical conduct, so that in the reverse case (cf. e.g. A III 20) one gets a statement indicating that the "rightness" of concentration is the outcome of ethical conduct (viz. factors three, four, and five of the noble eightfold path). This brings to mind the alternative definition discussed above of right concentration as unification of the mind in interrelation with the other path factors. (This is further supported by the use of the Pāli word *upanisā* in the instances under discussion at present, which echoes the expression *sa-upanisā* used in the definition of right concentration as unification of the mind at M III 71.)

57 The distinction drawn here is concerned with what the commentaries refer to as "supramundane" and as "mundane" concentration (cf. the definition given at Vism 85).

that are characteristic of a stream-enterer subsequent to realization.[59]

According to the discourses, what is a necessary condition for being able to gain stream-entry is a state of mind completely free from the five hindrances.[60] Although a convenient way to remove the hindrances is the development of absorption, this is not the only way to do so. According to a discourse in the *Itivuttaka*, the hindrances can also be removed and the mind become concentrated even during walking meditation, a posture not suitable for attaining absorption.[61] In fact, another passage shows that the hindrances can be temporarily absent even outside the context of formal meditation, such as when one is listening to the *Dhamma*.[62]

This alternative is corroborated by a fair number of the attainments of stream-entry recorded in the discourses where the person in question might not even have meditated regularly in this life, much less be able to attain absorption.[63] Yet these reports invariably

58 S V 410 lists the need to associate with worthy men, to listen to the *Dhamma*, to develop wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), and to undertake practice in accordance with the *Dhamma* as requirements for the realization of stream-entry. (S II 18 explains practice in accordance with the *Dhamma* to refer in particular to overcoming ignorance through developing dispassion.) On requirements for stream-entry cf. also M I 323.

59 One would expect this ability to be mentioned among the four characteristic qualities of a stream-enterer, which however are confined to perfect confidence in the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and *Saṅgha*, together with firm ethical conduct. At S V 357 the Buddha mentioned these four as defining characteristics of a stream-enterer.

60 e.g. A III 63. Cf. also M I 323, which mentions several qualities needed for stream-entry, among them not being obsessed by the hindrances.

61 It 118.

62 S V 95.

63 D I 110 and D I 148 feature rich Brahmins, whose busy lifestyle as administrators of a royal domain would not be particularly conducive to the development of *jhāna*, yet each of them realized stream-entry while hearing a discourse of the Buddha. M I 380 and A IV 186 report the stream-entries of stout followers of the Jains during a discourse of the Buddha. (Considering that the leader of the Jains, according to S IV 298, even doubted the existence of the second *jhāna*, one may well suppose that *jhānic* abilities are improbable in the case of his followers. This impression is borne out by the account given in Tatia 1951: pp.281–93.) At A IV 213 a drunken layman, sobered up through the impact of meeting the Buddha for the first time, realized stream-entry during a gradual discourse given at that same first meeting. Ud 49 has a leper, described as a poor, pitiable, and wretched person, similarly realizing stream-entry during a discourse of the Buddha. This leper had actually mistaken the crowd listening to the Buddha for a free distribution of food and had only approached in hope of getting a meal. Finally, according to Vin II 192, several hired killers, one of whom even had the mission of killing the Buddha, all became stream-enterers instead of completing their mission after hearing a gradual discourse by the Buddha. In all these cases it is not very probable that those realizing stream-entry were involved in the regular practice of meditation or in the possession of *jhānic* attainments.

mention the removal of the hindrances previous to the arising of insight.[64] In all these instances, the hindrances were removed as a result of attentively listening to the gradual instructions given by the Buddha.

In fact, a substantial number of well-known modern meditation teachers base their teachings on the dispensability of absorption abilities for the realization of stream-entry.[65] According to them, for the mind to become momentarily "absorbed" in the experience of *Nibbāna* at stream-entry, the ability to attain mundane absorption is not a necessary requirement.

The issue at question becomes even clearer when the next stage of awakening is considered, that of once-returning. Once-returners are so called because they will be reborn only once again in "this world" (i.e. the *kāmaloka*).[66] On the other hand, those who have developed the ability to attain absorption at will, and have not lost this ability, are not going to return to "this world" in their next life.[67] They will be reborn in a higher heavenly sphere (i.e. the *rūpaloka* or the *arūpaloka*). This certainly does not imply that a stream-enterer or a once-returner cannot have absorption attainments. But if they were all absorption attainers, the very concept of a "once-returner" would be superfluous, since not a single once-returner would ever return to "this world".

According to the discourses, the difference between the realizations of "once-returning" and "non-returning" is related to differing

64 All above quoted instances explicitly mention the mind being free from the hindrances.

65 Cf. Visuddhacara 1996: who gives a convenient overview of statements by several well-known meditation teachers on the issue.

66 e.g. at M I 226. The fact that once-returners do return to "this world" is documented e.g. at A III 348 and A V 138, where once-returners are reborn in the Tusita heaven, a lower celestial realm of the sensual sphere, far inferior to those planes of existence corresponding to absorption attainment. Similarly, according to A IV 380 the more advanced types of stream-enterers will be reborn as human beings, a level of rebirth even further removed from the planes of existence gained through absorption abilities.

67 According to A II 126, one who has developed the first *jhāna* will be reborn in the Brahmā world. A worldling (*puthujjana*) will then after some time be reborn in lower realms again, while a noble one (*ariya*) will proceed from there to final *Nibbāna*. (This passage refers not only to someone who is absorbed in the actual attainment at the time of death, but to anyone who possesses the ability to attain *jhāna*.) A similar passage can be found at A I 267 concerning immaterial attainments and rebirth, and at A II 129 regarding the divine abodes and rebirth.

levels of concentrative ability. Several passages point out that the once-returner, in contrast to the non-returner, has not yet fulfilled the development of concentration.[68] Judging from this, the attainment of absorption might be of relevance for the realization of non-returning. In fact, several discourses relate progress towards the higher two stages of the path, non-returning and arahantship, to having had the experience of the first or higher absorptions.[69] The reason for this could be that the insightful contemplation of meditative absorption fulfils an important role in overcoming and completely eradicating the last traces of desire, and thereby facilitates the breakthrough to non-returning or full awakening.[70]

The concluding passage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the "prediction", appears at first sight to contradict this, since it predicts the realization of full awakening or non-returning for successful *satipaṭṭhāna* practice without making any additional stipulations.[71] This could be taken to imply that absorption abilities can be dispensed with even for the higher stages of awakening. However, such assumptions need to be weighed against other evidence in the discourses, where the need for at least the first absorption is clearly and explicitly stated.[72] Although absorption abilities are not directly mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the general picture provided by the discourses suggests that the ability to attain at least the first absorption is required for the higher two stages of awakening. Otherwise it would be difficult to understand why the Buddha mentioned absorption in the standard expositions of the noble eightfold path leading to full awakening.

68 According to A IV 380 the once-returner, in contrast to the non-returner, has not perfected/completed *samādhi*. A similar passage can be found at A I 232 and 233. Cf. also Dhammavuddho 1994: p.29; and Ñāṇavīra 1987: p.372.

69 e.g. M I 350 and A V 343 describe how a monk, based on attainment of the first or a higher *jhāna*, is able to reach the destruction of the influxes or non-returning. More explicit is M I 434–5, which clearly stipulates the attainment of *jhāna* as a necessity for the two higher stages of awakening. Similarly A IV 422 mentions *jhānic* abilities as a necessary condition for gaining non-returning or full awakening.

70 At A II 128 the insightful contemplation of absorption leads to non-returning (rebirth in the Suddhāvāsa heaven). Compare also M I 91 where Mahānāma, who according to the commentary (Ps II 61) was a once-returner, was advised by the Buddha to develop *jhāna* for further progress on the path.

71 M I 62: "if anyone should develop these four *satipaṭṭhānas* ... one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning."

72 M I 434 states that there is a path of practice which needs be undertaken in order to be able to overcome the five lower fetters, and this path of practice is *jhāna* attainment.

When considering the concluding passage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, one needs to take into account that this passage is concerned with the fruits of the practice, not with the need for a particular level of concentration as a prerequisite for realization. The fact that it mentions only the higher two fruits of realization highlights the potential of proper practice. The same holds true for a group of twenty discourses in the *Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta*, which relate a broad range of meditation practices to these two higher realizations.[73] These instances, too, do not bear any relation to the presence or absence of absorption abilities, but rather call attention to the potential of the respective meditation practices. Moreover, the *Madhyama Āgama* and the *Ekottara Āgama* both mention absorption attainment as part of their expositions on *satipaṭṭhāna*.[74] This suggests that for *satipaṭṭhāna* to unfold its full potential of leading to non-returning or full awakening, the development of absorption is required.

Another term relevant to the present topic is "purification of mind" (*cittavisuddhi*). This expression occurs in the *Rathavinīta Sutta*, which enumerates a series of seven successive stages of purification.[75] The discourse compares each stage of purification to a single chariot in a relay of chariots connecting two locations. In this sequence, purification of mind occupies the second position between the preceding purification of ethical conduct and the

73 S V 129–33.

74 In the *Madhyama Āgama* as part of the body contemplations, and in the *Ekottara Āgama* as part of the contemplations of *dhammas* (in Minh Chau 1991: pp.89 and 90; and Nhat Hanh 1990: p.154 and 176).

75 M I 149. This particular "path" scheme forms the underlying structure of the *Visuddhimagga*. It has been compared to other religious traditions by Brown (1986a) who relates it to path descriptions in the *Mahāmudra* and the *Yoga Sūtras*, and by Cousins (1989) who compares it to St Teresa's "Interior Castle". Concerning this path scheme it may be worthwhile to point out that, even though it has a normative role for the commentaries and most modern *vipassanā* schools, this set of seven purifications occurs only once again in the discourses, at D III 288, where it forms part of a nine-stage scheme. This passage does not fit too well with Buddhaghosa's presentation of the seven-stage model, since it adds two additional stages at the end of a progression of stages where, according to Buddhaghosa, with the seventh stage the peak of purification has already been reached (cf. Vism 672). Judging from its usage at M I 195 and M I 203, the term used for the seventh purification, "knowledge and vision", is indeed only a stage leading up to, but not yet identical with, realization. This impression is confirmed by the *Rathavinīta Sutta* itself, which qualifies the purification by "knowledge and vision" as "with clinging" and therefore as falling short of the final goal (M I 148). Thus it seems as if Buddhaghosa's interpretation of the seventh stage of purification were to some degree at variance with the implications of the same term in the discourses.

subsequent purification of view. The fact that purification of mind precedes purification of view is sometimes taken to imply that absorption is a necessary basis for realization.[76]

In this discourse, however, the question leading to the chariot simile was not at all concerned with the conditions necessary for realization. Rather, the topic discussed in the *Rathavinīta Sutta* was the aim of living the life of a monk or nun in the early Buddhist monastic community. The point was that each purification, though a necessary step on the path, falls short of the final goal. To illustrate this, the chariot simile was introduced. The need to move beyond different stages of purification in order to reach the final goal is in fact a recurrent theme in the discourses.[77]

Although the chariot simile in the *Rathavinīta Sutta* does imply a conditional relationship between the various stages mentioned, to take this as stipulating that absorption must be attained before turning to the development of insight pushes this simile too far. Such a literal interpretation needs to regard the establishment of ethical conduct, concentration, and wisdom as a matter of strict linear sequence, whereas in practical reality these three have a symbiotic character, each enhancing and supporting the other. This is illustrated in the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*, which compares the mutual interrelatedness of ethical conduct and wisdom to two hands washing each other.[78]

Besides, according to two discourses in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* it is impossible to purify concentration (viz. purification of the mind) without having first purified right view (viz. purification of view).[79] This statement proposes exactly the reverse sequence to the *Rathavinīta Sutta*, where purification of the mind preceded purification of view.

On further perusing the discourses one finds that they depict a variety of approaches to final realization. Two passages in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, for example, describe a practitioner who is able to gain deep wisdom, though lacking proficiency in concentration.[80]

76 Possibly based on A II 195, where purity of mind is related to attaining the four *jhānas*. The ability to attain absorption as a necessary basis for realization is maintained by e.g. Kheminda 1980: p.14.
77 Cf. e.g. M I 197 and M I 204.
78 D I 124. Cf. also Chah 1998: p.9; and Goleman 1980: p.6.
79 A III 15 and A III 423.
80 A II 92-4 and A V 90.

Another discourse in the same *Nikāya* speaks of two alternative approaches to full realization: the pleasant approach by way of absorption, and the much less pleasant approach by way of contemplating the repulsiveness of the body.[81] In addition, the *Yuganaddha Sutta* (in the same *Aṅguttara Nikāya*) states that realization can be gained by developing either concentration or insight first and then developing the other, or both can be developed together.[82] This discourse clearly shows that although some practitioners will build up concentration first and then turn to insight, others can follow the reverse procedure. It would do little justice to these passages if one were to limit the approach to realization to only one of these sequences, presuming that the development of concentration invariably has to precede the development of insight.

IV.4 THE CONTRIBUTION OF ABSORPTION TO THE PROGRESS OF INSIGHT

Nevertheless, in many discourses the Buddha pointed out that the cultivation of absorption is particularly conducive to realization.[83] The development of deep concentration leads to a high degree of mastery over the mind.[84] Not only does absorption attainment entail the temporary removal of the hindrances, it also makes it much more difficult for them to invade the mind on later occasions.[85] On emerging from deep concentration the mind is "malleable", "workable", and "steady",[86] so that one can easily direct it to seeing things "as they truly are". Not only that; when things are seen as they truly

81 A II 150.
82 A II 157; cf. also Tatia 1992: p.89.
83 e.g. D III 131; M I 454; or S V 308. The importance given to absorption in early Buddhism is documented by Griffith 1983: p.57, and C.A.F. Rhys Davids 1927a: p.696, both giving an overview of occurrences of the term *jhāna* in the Pāli *Nikāyas*.
84 A IV 34.
85 M I 463 explains that the mind of one who has had *jhānic* experiences will no longer be overwhelmed by the hindrances. On the other hand, it needs to be pointed out that if sensual desire or aversion should nevertheless manage to invade the mind, they can manifest with surprising vehemence, owing to the increased ability of the mind to remain undistractedly with a single object, even an unwholesome one. Examples of this can be found in several Jātaka tales (e.g. no. 66 at Ja I 305, no. 251 at Ja II 271, and no. 431 at Ja III 496), which report previous lives of the *bodhisatta* as an ascetic. In spite of being able to attain deep levels of concentration and possessed of supernormal powers, in each case this ascetic was nevertheless completely overwhelmed by sensual desire on unexpectedly seeing a sparsely-dressed woman.
86 This is the standard qualification of the mental condition on emerging from the fourth *jhāna* (e.g. at D I 75).

are by a calm and malleable mind, this vision affects the deeper layers of the mind. Such a vision goes far beyond a superficial intellectual appreciation, because, owing to the receptivity and malleability of the mind, insights will be able to penetrate into the deeper regions of the mind and thereby bring about inner change.

The advantages of developing absorption concentration are not only that it provides a stable and receptive state of mind for the practice of insight meditation. The experience of absorption is one of intense pleasure and happiness, brought about by purely mental means, which thereby automatically eclipses any pleasure arising in dependence on material objects. Thus absorption functions as a powerful antidote to sensual desires by divesting them of their former attraction.[87] In fact, according to the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha Sutta* wisdom alone does not suffice to overcome sensuality, but needs the powerful support available through the experience of absorption.[88] The Buddha himself, during his own quest for awakening, overcame the obstruction caused by sensual desires only by developing absorption.[89]

87 At M I 504 the Buddha related his lack of interest in sensual pleasures to his ability to experience far superior types of pleasure; cf. also A III 207 and A IV 411. A I 61 explains that the purpose of *samatha* is to overcome lust. Conze 1960: p.110, explains: "it is the inevitable result of the habitual practice of trance that the things of our commonsense world appear delusive, deceptive, remote, and dreamlike." Cf. also Debes 1994: pp.164–8; and van Zeyst 1970: p.39.

88 M I 91.

89 M I 92; cf. also S IV 97 and A IV 439. A IV 56 stresses the importance of overcoming sensual desires for him to have been able to gain realization. The Buddha's attainment of absorption might have taken place based on mindfulness of breathing, which according to S V 317 he practised frequently in the time before his awakening. His gradual progress through the various levels of absorption is described at M III 162 and A IV 440, clearly showing that by then he no longer had access to the *jhānic* experience of his early youth. His encounter with Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta would have to be placed after this gradual progress, since without having developed the four *jhānas* he would not have been able to reach any of the immaterial attainments. (The need for this is documented at D III 265, where the four *jhānas* precede the immaterial attainments in a sequence of successive stages of development.) Ps IV 209, however, assumes that the Buddha developed the four *jhānas* only during the first watch of the night of his awakening. This makes little sense in view of the fact that his pre-awakening development of *samatha* included also the practice of the "roads to power" (the *iddhipādas*, cf. A III 82) and developing the concentrative ability to know various aspects of the *deva* realms (A IV 302), in addition to attaining the four *jhānas* after overcoming a whole set of mental obstructions (M III 157; cf. also A IV 440, which clearly shows that he had to overcome various obstacles in order to gain each *jhāna*) and also gaining the four immaterial attainments (A IV 444). The broad range and gradual progression of the Buddha's development of *samatha* does not fit well into a single night.

Deep concentration promotes inner stability and integration.[90] In this way, the experience of deep concentration fulfils an important role in fortifying the ability to withstand the destabilizing effect of those experiences that might be encountered during advanced stages of insight meditation.[91] Without a calm and integrated mind, able to withstand the impact of such experiences, a practitioner might lose the balanced stance of observation and become overwhelmed by fear, anxiety, or depression. The development of mental calm thus builds up a healthy degree of self-integration as a supportive basis for the development of insight.[92]

Clearly, there are substantial advantages to be gained when the development of insight is supported and counterbalanced by the development of *samatha*. The experience of higher forms of happiness and the concomitant degree of personal integration are benefits that show that the development of *samatha* makes its own substantial contribution to progress along the path. This importance is expressed vividly in the discourses with the statement that one who has respect for the Buddha and his teaching will automatically hold concentration in high regard.[93] On the other hand, one who looks down on the development of concentration thereby only approves of those who have an unsteady mind.[94]

Nevertheless, it needs to be said that the Buddha was also keenly aware of potential shortcomings of deep states of concentration. The attainment of absorption can turn into an obstacle on the path to

90 According to Alexander 1931: p.139, "the absorption scale corresponds to the chronological path of a well-conducted analysis." Cf. also Conze 1956: p.20.

91 Ayya Khema 1991: p.140; and Epstein 1986: pp.150–5.

92 Engler 1986: p.17, aptly sums up the need for a well integrated personality as a basis for developing insight meditation: "you have to be somebody before you can be nobody." Epstein 1995: p.133, (commenting on the insight knowledges) explains: "experiences such as these require an ego, in the psychoanalytic sense, that is capable of holding and integrating what would ordinarily be violently destabilizing. One is challenged to experience terror without fear and delight without attachment. The work of meditation, in one sense, is the work of developing an ego that is flexible, clear and balanced enough to enable one to have such experiences." The supportive role of non-sensual inner happiness in case of hardship is documented at Th 351 and Th 436.

93 A IV 123.

94 A II 31. Cf. also S II 225, where lack of respect for the development of concentration is one of the causes of the disappearance of the true *Dhamma*. According to Thate 1996: p.93: "those who think that *samādhi* is not necessary are the ones who have not yet reached *samādhi*. That's why they cannot see the merit of *samādhi*. Those who have attained *samādhi* will never speak against it."

realization if such attainment becomes a cause for pride or an object of attachment. The satisfaction and pleasure experienced during absorption, though facilitating the relinquishment of worldly pleasures, can make it more difficult to arouse the dissatisfaction and disenchantment required for the complete relinquishment of everything that leads up to realization.[95]

The *Māra Saṃyutta* even reports a casualty of concentration meditation: a monk committed suicide because he had several times failed to stabilize his concentrative attainment.[96] On another occasion, when a monk was mourning his loss of concentration owing to physical illness, the Buddha dryly commented that such a reaction is characteristic of those who consider concentration the essence of their life and practice.[97] He then instructed the monk to contemplate the impermanent nature of the five aggregates instead.

IV.5 CALM AND INSIGHT

The central point that emerges when considering the relationship between calm and insight is the need for balance. Since a concentrated mind supports the development of insight, and the presence of wisdom in turn facilitates the development of deeper levels of concentration, calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) are at their best when developed in skilful cooperation.[98]

Considered from this perspective, the controversy over the necessity or dispensability of absorption abilities for gaining a particular

95 At A II 165 the Buddha compared attachment to the gratification and bliss experienced during absorption to grasping a branch full of resin, because owing to such attachment one will lose the inspiration to aim at the complete giving up of all aspects of one's personality and experience. At M I 194 the Buddha then illustrated such attachment using the example of someone who took the inner bark of a tree in mistake for the heartwood he was searching for. Cf. also M III 226, which refers to such attachment to *jhāna* experiences as "getting stuck internally". Buddhadāsa 1993: p.121, even goes so far as to suggest that "deep concentration is a major obstacle to insight practice".

96 According to S I 120, the monk Godhika committed suicide because on six successive occasions he had attained and lost "temporary liberation of the mind", which according to Spk I 182 refers to a "mundane" attainment, i.e. some concentrative attainment. The commentary explains that his repeated loss of the attainment was because of illness. According to a statement made by the Buddha after the event, Godhika died as an *arahant*. The commentary suggests that his realization took place at the moment of death (cf. also the similar commentarial explanations of the suicide cases of Channa at M III 266 or S IV 59, and of Vakkali at S III 123 .

97 S III 125.

98 Nett 43 explains that both *samatha* and *vipassanā* need to be developed, since *samatha* counters craving, while *vipassanā* counters ignorance. According to A I 61, the development of both *samatha* and *vipassanā* is required to gain knowledge (*vijjā*). A I 100 stipulates the same two as requirements for overcoming lust, anger, and delusion. Awareness of their cooperative effect also underlies Th 584, which recommends practising both *samatha* and *vipassanā* at the right time. On the need to balance both cf. Cousins 1984: p.65; Gethin 1992: p.345; and Maha Boowa 1994: p.86.

level of realization is to some extent based on a misleading premise. This controversy takes for granted that the whole purpose of calmness meditation is to gain the ability to enter absorption as a stepping-stone for the development of insight, a sort of preliminary duty that either needs or does not need to be fulfilled. The discourses offer a different perspective. Here calm and insight are two complementary aspects of mental development. The question of practising only insight meditation does not arise, since the important function of calmness meditation, as a practice in its own right, is never reduced to its auxiliary role in relation to insight meditation.

This need for both calm and insight on the path to realization leads me on to another issue. Some scholars have understood these two aspects of meditation to represent two different paths, possibly even leading to two different goals. They assume that the path of *samatha* proceeds via the ascending series of absorptions to the attainment of the cessation of cognition and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*) and thence to the cessation of passion. In contrast to this, the path of insight, at times mistakenly understood to be a process of pure intellectual reflection, supposedly leads to a qualitatively different goal, the cessation of ignorance.[99]

A passage from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* does indeed relate the practice of *samatha* to the destruction of passion and the practice of *vipassanā* to the destruction of ignorance.[100] The distinction between the two is expressed by the expressions "freedom of the mind" (*cetovimutti*) and "freedom by wisdom" (*paññāvimutti*) respectively. However, these two expressions are not simply equivalent in value relative to realization. While "freedom by wisdom" (*paññāvimutti*) refers to the realization of *Nibbāna*, "freedom of the mind" (*cetovimutti*), unless further specified as "unshakeable" (*akuppa*), does not imply the same. "Freedom of the mind" can also connote temporary

99 Cf. de la Vallée Poussin 1936: p.193; Gombrich 1996: p.110; Griffith 1981: p.618, and 1986: p.14; Pande 1957: p.538; Schmithausen 1981: pp.214–17; and Vetter 1988: p.xxi. Kv 225 confutes a somewhat similar "wrong view", involving two types of cessation (*nirodha*).

100 A I 61.

experiences of mental freedom, such as the attainment of the fourth absorption, or the development of the divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*).[101] Thus this passage is presenting not two different approaches to realization but two aspects of the meditative path, one of which is not sufficient by itself to bring realization.[102]

Another relevant discourse is the *Susīma Sutta*, which reports various monks declaring realization.[103] Since these monks at the same time denied having attained supernatural powers, this passage has sometimes been understood to imply that full awakening can be attained merely by intellectual reflection.[104] In reality, however, the monks' declaration that they were only "freed by wisdom" indicates that they were not in possession of the immaterial meditative attainments. It does not mean that they gained realization without meditating at all, by a purely intellectual approach.[105]

A similar problem is sometimes seen in regard to the *Kosambi Sutta*, where a monk declared that he had personal realization of dependent co-arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*), although he was not an *arahant*.[106] This passage becomes intelligible if one follows the commentarial explanation, according to which the monk in question was "only" a once-returner.[107] The point here is that personal realization of the principle of dependent co-arising is not a characteristic of full awakening only, but is already a feature of stream-entry.

101 Cf. e.g. M I 296; see further Lily de Silva 1978: p.120.

102 In fact, Vism 702 explains that the attainment of the cessation of cognition and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*) cannot be reached by *samatha* alone, but requires insight of the non-returner's level at least. Although this is not directly stated in the discourses, at M III 44, after all eight preceding concentrative attainments have been distinguished according to whether they are attained by the unworthy person or by the worthy person (*sappurisa*), once the attainment of the cessation of cognition and feeling comes up the unworthy person is no longer mentioned, thereby indicating that this attainment is the sole domain of the worthy person (a term which on other occasions is used on a par with "noble", cf. e.g. M I 300). This clearly shows that the attainment of the cessation of cognition and feeling is not merely the outcome of concentrative mastery, but also requires the development of insight, a fact that is hinted at in the standard descriptions with the expression, "having seen with wisdom, the influxes are destroyed" (e.g. at M I 160). Cf. also A III 194, which appears to relate the cessation of cognition and feeling to arahantship and non-returning in particular.

103 S II 121.

104 Gombrich 1996: p.126.

105 In this context it is telling that A IV 452 lists different types of *arahants* "freed by wisdom", all of them, however, able to attain *jhāna*.

106 S II 115. Cf. de la Vallée Poussin 1936: p.218; and Gombrich 1996: p.128.

107 Spk II 122.

Instead of perceiving these passages as expressing an "underlying tension" between two different paths to realization, they simply describe different aspects of what is basically one approach.[108] As a matter of fact, full awakening requires a purification of both the cognitive and the affective aspect of the mind. Although on theoretical examination these two aspects of the path might appear different, in actual practice they tend to converge and supplement each other.

This is neatly summarized in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, which emphasizes the importance of appreciating the essential similarity between calm and insight meditation in terms of their function.[109] A practitioner might develop one or the other aspect to a higher degree at different times, but in the final stages of practice both calm and insight need to be combined in order to reach the final aim – full awakening – the destruction of both passion and ignorance.

108 Critical assessments of the "two paths theory" can be found in Gethin 1997b: p.221; Swearer 1972: pp.369–71; and Keown 1992: pp.77–9, who concludes (p 82): "two types of meditation technique ... exist precisely because final perfection can only be achieved when both dimensions of psychic functioning, the emotional and the intellectual, are purified."

109 Paṭis I 21. On the interrelation of both in the Sarvāstivāda tradition cf. Cox 1994: p.83.

The Path Is the Goal

A BASIC HANDBOOK OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION

Chögyam Trungpa

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TR: That's right. If you really did exist, you wouldn't feel threatened.

S: I'm threatened because you're supposed to know something that I don't know. And if you state that we don't exist, then, who knows, maybe you're right.

TR: Well, that's it.

S: You're the one that knows. As far as I'm concerned, I exist.

TR: Not necessarily. There are some possibilities that you don't. Look, that you came here, took the trouble to come here, is an expression of your nonexistence. Your listening to my crap and getting upset and threatened is an expression of your nonexistence.

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S: Because I don't understand it. It's very hard to understand.

TR: That's right. There's nobody to understand, therefore you can't understand.

S: Well, it's very scary to think you don't exist. Then what the hell is going on?

TR: Good luck, madam.

S: I have good luck.

TR: With my compliments.

S: Thank you.

STUDENT: In *abhidharma* studies and other writings, it seems to be indicated that the point of shamatha practice is to develop *jhana* states. Without those, the literature seems to say, it is impossible to go on to the analytical processes involved in vipashyana. But you always caution us not to get involved in the concentration or absorption that leads to the jhana states, but to start out with mindfulness and go straight into panoramic awareness. Are these two different approaches that will both work, or will we have to get into jhana states eventually?

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: If I may be so bold as to say so, this approach is superior to the one that encourages jhana states. If you become involved with jhana states, you are still looking for reassurance—the reassurance that you can experience the bliss of the jhana states—before you get into precision. I present it this way partly because that is the way I learned it myself from my teachers. My teachers trusted me. They thought I was an intelligent person, a smart kid, and that I could handle myself all right if they presented the teaching that way.

That is the same way I feel about relating with North American audiences. Every one of you people have done some kind of homework or other, though for the most part very painfully. You have some sort of ground that makes it possible to communicate things very freely to you, in the same way I was taught myself. So I have enormous trust in the audience at this point. People can grasp the point of view behind the basic training being given to them, so there is no need to reassure them through the experience of jhana states.

Jhana states are pleasurable states in which they could feel something definite and therefore conclude that the spiritual path really does exist, that everything is true after all. That approach is not necessary. You don't need the proof, which is a waste of time. Everybody is here, and they have already proved to themselves, maybe negatively, what's wrong with life, and they are looking for what might be right with it. In that sense, people have done their homework already, so they don't need further proof.

Jhana states are part of what is called the common path, which is shared by both Buddhists and Hindus. The application is that if somebody wants to get into a religious trip, theistic or nontheistic, they could be reassured through the jhana states that the religious trip does give you something definite to experience right at the beginning. It's a kind of insurance policy, which we do not particularly need. I think we are more educated than that. Nobody here is a stupid peasant. Everybody is a somewhat intelligent person. Every one of you knows how to sign your name. So we are approaching things with some sophistication.

S: So as one proceeds on the path through the yanas, and gets into the tantric yogas and everything, there is still no need to work on the jhana states?

TR: From the vipashyana level onward, it's no longer the common path, it's the uncommon path. You are

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getting into enlightenment territory rather than godhead territory. So jhana states are unnecessary.

They are similar in a way to what people in this country have gone through in taking LSD. Through that they began to realize that their life has something subtler to it than they expected. They felt that something is happening underneath. People took LSD and they felt very special. They felt there is something behind all this, something subtler than this. This is exactly the same thing that jhana states provide—the understanding that life isn't all that cheap, that it has subtleties. But in order to get into the vajrayana, you don't just keep taking LSD, which is obsolete from that point of view. That was just an opener, and you were exposed to a different way of seeing your life. You saw it from a different angle than you usually do. So in a way, taking LSD could be said to bring about an instant jhana state. In a way, it's much neater. Maybe LSD pills should be called jhana pills.

STUDENT: I'm interested in the point where you are self-conscious in the mindfulness of shamatha and then you switch into becoming panoramically aware. Does that switch happen in flips, in flashes? How does it work?

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: What are you trying to find out, really?

S: I'm trying to classify my experience more, so I know when it's shamatha and when it's vipashyana.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SAMĀDHI

An In-depth Exploration of Buddhist Meditation

Richard Shaṇkman

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the earlier Paṭisambhidāmagga and Aṅguttara Nikāya offer as purely symbolic images.

Conclusion

The Visuddhimagga presents a path of meditation and the states within it that is new and distinct from the Pāli suttas. During the centuries between the composition of the suttas and Buddhaghosa's great work, the understanding of jhāna evolved from being a state of undistracted awareness and profound insight into the nature of changing phenomena to states of extreme tranquillity in which the mind is utterly engrossed in the mental qualities of the jhāna itself. Whether the path of meditation developed to adapt to that change or the new understanding arose from a change in the way meditation was practiced we cannot know. In any case, insight meditation and the path of concentration and tranquillity were necessarily separated because, in the fixed concentration of the Visuddhimagga, insight could arise only upon leaving jhāna.

The basis for separating meditation into two paths and the controversy surrounding whether jhāna is necessary at all for the deepest levels of awakening, is the notion that jhāna is ancillary to insight meditation. Jhāna may be developed, or not, prior to insight meditation, according to one's own predispositions. In the Visuddhimagga, the entire reason for developing tranquillity is to attain jhāna in order to then turn to other practices for cultivating insight.

The suttas, however, do not make such a clear distinction. The suttas never clearly articulate a dry path of pure insight in which jhāna plays no role. One could separate insight meditation from samatha meditation, though both are part of the same path. The practice of right samādhi seems to integrate tranquillity and insight into a single meditative path. Mindfulness meditation is a concentration practice leading toward jhāna; insight meditation is not a separate practice. Although achieving tranquillity is not the ultimate goal of concentration meditation, the suttas regard tranquillity as important. Tranquillity is a supporting condition for insight to arise.

Tranquillity and insight are two inseparable facets of mental cultivation, mutually supportive and necessary. They can be cultivated independently, but ultimately must be brought together in a balanced way.

The two jhānas are equivalent in terms of the strength of concentration, but dissimilar in terms of the type of concentration. In both cases the mind has reached the peak of stillness. Jhāna in the suttas is a state of heightened mindfulness and awareness of an ever-changing stream of experiences, in which the mind is unmoving. Jhāna in the Visuddhimagga is a state of fixed concentration, where there is no experience of changing phenomena whatsoever, because the objects of the mind are unmoving.

The jhāna factors vitakka-vicāra, which can be understood in the suttas in at least two possible ways, as applying and maintaining the mind on the object of meditation or as other mental activity, such as volition, thought, and mental evaluation, are strictly confined in meaning in the Visuddhimagga to connecting and sustaining. Ekaggatā, most properly understood in the suttas as unification of mind inclusive of all changing experiences, is a one-pointed, fixed concentration in the Visuddhimagga. The prominent role of physical-body awareness in the sutta jhāna definition, which is underscored in the jhāna similes and the Mindfulness of the Body Sutta, is understood purely as the "mental" body in the Visuddhimagga.

The Visuddhimagga introduces several other concepts and terms that are not found in the suttas. Preparatory, access, and attainment concentration, as well as the signs (nimittas) accompanying these stages, are not found in the suttas. The word *nimitta* does appear in the suttas in connection with right concentration, but there it simply means "theme" or "basis" of concentration, and is equated with the four foundations of mindfulness.[41] The forty meditation subjects can be found in the suttas, but many are only mentioned peripherally, often with little or no explanatory detail. There are certainly not the extensive and meticulous descriptions found in the Visuddhimagga. In particular, kasiṇa practice, which is central to the Visuddhimagga understanding of jhāna, is never explained in detail in the suttas at all.

The suttas and the Visuddhimagga are in agreement that a state of strong concentration totally divorced from any awareness of the body

is not necessary for awakening. They differ simply in that the suttas do not define such a state as constituting the four jhānas, whereas the Visuddhimagga does.

Table 3: Comparison of Jhāna in the Pāli Suttas and the Visuddhimagga

	SUTTAS	VISUDDHIMAGGA
The 4 absorptions	Called the 4 jhānas	Called the rūpa jhānas
The 4 formless attainments	Called the āruppas	Usually called the āruppas; in a few cases called arūpa jhānas
Type of concentration	Unification of mind	One-pointed concentration fixed on a single object
Body awareness in jhāna	Seems to suggest heightened experience of and insight into the physical body and changing phenomena	No experience of the physical body and changing phenomena
Insight meditation practice	Suggests that insight practice can occur within jhāna	Insight must come while not in jhāna
Nimitta	General term used in a variety of contexts for "sign," "theme," or "basis," but not specifically as a visual concentration object to attain jhāna	A visual image that arises in access concentration, used as the meditation object to attain jhāna
Preparatory, access, and fixed concentration	Terms are not found	Terms are used

Jhāna is clearly not required for any of the stages of enlightenment in the Visuddhimagga. The suttas are ambiguous about the necessity of jhāna for stream-entry, and the case becomes increasingly strong with each successive stage of enlightenment. The controversies over what is the "real" jhāna resolve when we realize that there are two distinct jhānas in the Pāli literature, each one true and correct within its own system: "sutta jhāna" and "Visuddhimagga jhāna." These two jhāna systems are not the same. They comprise different meditative states, sharing some features in common, but with their own unique characteristics, potentials, and methods for realizing them. Each can be properly understood only within the overall context of the texts within which it appears.

PART TWO

INTERVIEWS WITH CONTEMPORARY MEDITATION TEACHERS

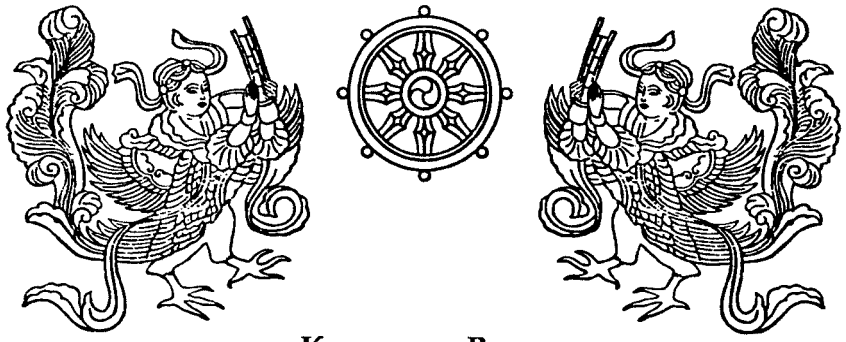
Vasubandhu's Treatise *on* The Bodhisattva Vow

A Discourse on the Bodhisattva's Vow
And the Practices Leading to Buddhahood

Treatise On The Generating the Bodhi Resolve Sutra

By Vasubandhu Bodhisattva
(*ca* 300 CE)

Translation by Bhikshu Dharmamitra



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Dhyāna Pāramitā

VIII. Chapter 8: The Perfection of Dhyāna Meditation

A. Three Kinds of Benefit and Path Adornment from Dhyāna

How does the bodhisattva go about cultivating dhyāna absorption? If dhyāna absorption is cultivated for the sake of bringing about self-benefit, benefit of others, and the combined benefit of both, one then becomes able to adorn the path to bodhi.

1. Right Motivation in the Practice of Dhyāna

In his cultivation of dhyāna absorption, the bodhisattva is motivated by a wish to so train and discipline beings that they are caused to abandon suffering and affliction.

One who cultivates dhyāna absorption skillfully focuses his mind and does not allow any distracted thoughts to interfere through the introduction of what is false. When walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, one's mindfulness remains anchored directly before one. Both upwards and downwards, one contemplates [the skeleton], tracing from the top of the skull on down through the spine, tracing from the upper arm bones on through the elbows [and so forth], tracing from the chest on through the rib bones, and tracing from the pelvic bones on through the shin bones, the anklebones, [and so forth]. And counting the breaths, one cultivates *ānāpāna*. This is what qualifies as the mind of meditative absorption as initially cultivated by the bodhisattva.

2. Self-Benefit

On account of cultivating dhyāna absorption, one does not indulge the many sorts of evil thought, but rather always experiences blissfulness. This is what is meant by "self-benefit."

3. Benefit of Others

One teaches and transforms beings, causing them to cultivate right mindfulness. This is what is meant by "benefit of others."

4. Combined Benefit

On the basis of that pure samādhi which one has cultivated, that which abandons evil ideation (*vitarka*) and mental discursion (*vicāra*), one teaches beings, thus causing them to gain benefit identical to one's own. This is what is meant by "combined benefit."

5. Adorning the Path of Bodhi through Dhyāna

On account of cultivating dhyāna absorption, one gains realization of the eight liberations and so forth until we come to the *śūraṅgama* and *vajra* samādhis. This is what is meant by "adorning the path to bodhi."

B. The Three Dharmas from which Dhyāna Absorption Arises

Dhyāna absorption arises from three dharmas. What are those three? They are:

First, it arises from learning-derived wisdom (*śruta-maya*).
Second, it arises from deliberation-derived wisdom (*cinta-maya*).
Third, it arises from meditation-derived wisdom (*bhāvanā-maya*).

These three dharmas gradually produce all of the samādhis.

1. Learning-Derived Wisdom

What is meant by "learning-derived wisdom" (*śruta-maya*)? In accordance with whatsoever dharma one has heard, one's mind always relates to it with fondness and happiness. One additionally thinks, "Such dharmas of the Buddha as the uninterrupted path (*ānantarya-mārga*) and the path of liberation (*vimukti-mārga*) must be perfected on the basis of abundant learning." Having had this thought, whenever the opportunity arises to seek out the Dharma, one increases the intensity of his vigor so that, day and night, he always delights in tirelessly listening to the Dharma. This is what is meant by "learning-derived wisdom."

2. Deliberation-Derived Wisdom

What then is meant by "deliberation-derived wisdom" (*cinta-maya*)? One ponders and analytically contemplates all conditioned dharmas in accordance with their true character. This refers to [contemplating]: "They are impermanent, conduce to suffering, are empty, are devoid of self, are impure, are produced and cease in each successive thought-moment (*kṣaṇa-kṣaṇa-utpanna-niruddha*), and are bound to undergo ruination before long. Beings are bound up in worry, lamentation, suffering, affliction, detestation and affection. [Their existence] is solely a matter of being burned up by the fire of covetousness, hatred, and delusion while increasing the great accumulation of suffering to be undergone in later existences. [Conditioned dharmas] have no reality-based nature and are analogous to a magically-conjured illusion or a supernatural transformation."

Having made such observations as these, one straightaway generates renunciation for all conditioned dharmas and, with ever increasing intensity, diligently proceeds to pursue the wisdom of the Buddha. One deliberates further and realizes that the wisdom of the Tathāgata is inconceivable, ineffable, and incalculable, is possessed of great power, is unconquerable, is able to transport one to the great city of fearlessness and safety, is not such as can be turned back, and is able to rescue countless suffering and afflicted beings.

One develops such knowledge and vision regarding the immeasurable wisdom of the Buddha, perceives that conditioned dharmas are freighted with an incalculable amount of suffering and affliction, and resolves then to advance, seeking to [cultivate according to] the unsurpassed Great Vehicle. This is what is meant by "deliberation-derived wisdom."

3. Meditation-Derived Wisdom

What is meant by "meditation-derived wisdom" (*bhāvanā-maya*)? All [meditation practice occurring] from the initial meditative contemplation of the skeleton on through to *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi* falls into the category of "meditation-derived wisdom."

Leaving behind desire and unwholesome dharmas, still retaining "ideation" (*vitarka*) and "mental discursion" (*vicāra*), and experiencing the "joy" (*prīti*) and "bliss" (*prasrabdhi-sukha*) born of abandonment, one enters the first dhyāna.[18]

One then causes the cessation of ideation and mental discursion, abides in "inward purity" (*adhyātma-saṃprasāda*), and "focuses the mind in a single place" (*citta-eka-agratā*). Free of ideation and mental discursion, and experiencing the "joy" and "bliss" born of concentration, one enters the second dhyāna.

On account of leaving behind joy (*prīti*), one experiences "equanimity in the sphere of the formative-factors aggregate" (*saṃskāra-upekṣa*), one's mind abides in "mindfulness" (*smṛti*), one is established in "discerning knowing" (*saṃprajñāna*), and one experiences "physically-based bliss" (*sukhā-vedanā*) of the sort which āryas are able to acquire while still maintaining equanimity towards it.[19] In a state of "meditative stabilization" (*sthiti*, or *samādhi*) (lit. "constant mindfulness") and experiencing feeling-based bliss, one enters the third dhyāna.

On account of having cut off suffering and having cut off bliss—this on the basis of having earlier caused the cessation of distress and joy—abiding in "a state wherein one feels neither suffering nor

bliss," coursing in "[pure] equanimity" (*upekṣa-pari-śuddhi*), and possessed of "mindfulness which is pure," one enters the fourth dhyāna.

On account of transcending [perception of] all aspects of physical forms, on account of causing cessation of [any perception of] duality-based characteristics (as with the subject-object duality of sense faculties versus sense objects), and on account of refraining from bearing in mind any marks of differentiation, one then comes to know the state of boundless space and straightaway enters the station of the [boundless] space formless absorption.

Having transcended all aspects of empty space, one comes to know the state of boundless consciousness and straightaway enters the station of the [boundless] consciousness formless absorption.

Having transcended all aspects of consciousness, one then comes to know the state of nothing whatsoever and straightaway enters into the formless-realm absorption known as the station of nothing whatsoever.

Having transcended the station of nothing whatsoever, one then comes to know the state of neither perception nor non-perception and then, having experienced peace and security therein, one straightaway enters the formless realm's station of neither perception nor non-perception.

Through merely acquiescing in these dharmas associated with one's practice [of these meditation states] while refraining all the while from indulging any attachment to the bliss associated with them, one [continues] to seek realization of the most supreme form of right enlightenment found in the unsurpassed vehicle.

[The above instances] exemplify what is meant by "meditation-derived wisdom" (*bhāvanā-maya*).

4. Summation on the Three Types of Wisdom from Dhyāna

Through learning-derived wisdom, deliberation-derived wisdom, and meditation-derived wisdom, the bodhisattva cultivates intense diligence in focusing the mind. He then becomes able to equip himself with the samādhis associated with the spiritual penetrations and clarities and proceeds to perfect dhyāna *pāramitā*.

C. Ten Meditation Dharmas Not in Common with the Two Vehicles

Furthermore, in the bodhisattva's cultivation of meditative absorption, there are an additional ten Dharma practices which are not held in common with either the Śrāvaka Disciples or the Pratyekabuddhas. What are those ten? They are:

First, in the cultivation of meditative absorption, he remains free of [attachment to] a self, this through perfecting the dhyāna absorptions of the Tathāgata.

Second, in the cultivation of meditative absorption, he refrains from indulging any enjoyment of the delectability [of their associated blisses] and refrains from becoming attached to them, this on account of renouncing and abandoning defiled thought and on account of refraining from seeking his own pleasure.

Third, in the cultivation of meditative absorption, he engages in the work necessary to develop the spiritual penetrations, this for the sake of knowing the mental activity of beings.

Fourth, in the cultivation of meditative absorption done for the sake of knowing the manifold varieties of [beings'] thoughts, it is undertaken for the purpose of bringing all beings across to liberation.

Fifth, in the cultivation of meditative absorption, he practices the great compassion, this for the sake of severing the affliction-based fetters of all beings.

Sixth, in cultivating meditative absorption, he develops a skillful understanding of how to enter and exit the dhyāna samādhis, this because he transcends the three realms.

Seventh, in cultivating meditative absorption, he always abides in a state of sovereign independence, this because he perfects all good dharmas.

Eighth, in cultivating meditative absorption, his mind abides in a state of quiescent cessation, this because [his practice] is supreme over the dhyāna samādhis of the Two Vehicles.

Ninth, in cultivating meditative absorption, he constantly enters a state governed by wisdom, this because he has transcended all worlds and has reached the "other shore" [of perfection].

Tenth, in cultivating meditative absorption, he is able to bring about the flourishing of right Dharma, this because he inherits and carries on the lineage of the Three Jewels, insuring that it will not be cut off.

Meditative absorption of these sorts is not such as is held in common with the Śrāvaka Disciples or the Pratyekabuddhas.

D. Additional Characteristics of Bodhisattva Meditation Practice

Additionally, one cultivates and accumulates all of the dharmas of dhyāna absorption for the sake of knowing the afflicted thoughts of beings. One thus assists the development of the mind of stabilization and causes this dhyāna absorption to abide with a mind of uniformly equal regard for all. This is what is meant by meditative absorption.

If one gains meditative absorptions such as these, then this is equal to [the realization of] emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and effortlessness. If one has achieved the equal of emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and effortlessness, then one achieves uniformly equal regard for all beings. If one achieves uniformly equal regard for all beings, then one achieves the state wherein all dharmas are beheld with uniformly equal regard. When one has entered a state characterized by uniformly equal regard of this sort, then this is what is meant by meditative absorption.

Furthermore, although the bodhisattva adapts to the world as he carries on his practice, still, he does not admix it with the mundane. He relinquishes the eight worldly dharmas and brings about the cessation of the fetters. He departs far from clamorous boisterousness and takes pleasure in abiding in a place of solitude. The bodhisattva cultivates the practice of dhyāna absorption in a manner such as this. His mind becomes established in a state of stabilization and he abandons worldly endeavors.

E. Four Additional Distinctive Factors in Bodhisattva Meditation

Also, in cultivating meditative absorption, the bodhisattva does so for the sake of equipping himself with the spiritual penetrations, knowing awareness, skillful means, and wisdom. What is meant by "spiritual penetrations"? What is meant by "knowing awareness"?

1. Spiritual Penetrations

Whether it be in the sphere of seeing [even distant] characteristics of form, whether it be in the sphere of the hearing [even distant] sounds, whether it be in knowing others' thoughts, whether it be in the sphere of remembering [lifetimes already in] the past, or whether it be in the sphere of the ability to go anywhere in any buddha world, these are all subsumed in what is meant by "spiritual penetrations."

2. Knowing Awareness

Where one knows that forms are identical with the nature of dharmas, where one completely understands the [nature of] sound and the actions of the mind, where one [perceives] the quiescent cessation of both nature and phenomenal characteristics, where one regards the three periods of time with uniformly equal regard, and where one knows the buddhalands as characterized by being identical to empty space and yet refrains from opting for the final realization of complete cessation, this corresponds to "knowing awareness."

3. Skillful Means

What then is meant by "skillful means"? And what is meant by "wisdom"? Where, when entering dhyāna absorption, one brings forth the great kindness and compassion, refrains from forsaking one's vows, keeps one's mind as solid as *vajra*, contemplates all of the buddha worlds, and carries on with the adornment of the *bodhimaṇḍala*, this corresponds to "skillful means."

4. Wisdom

Where one's mind abides in eternal quiescence and remains free of [the concepts of] "self" and "beings," where one remains undistracted in one's meditation on the fundamental nature of all dharmas, where one perceives all buddha worlds as identical to empty space, and where one contemplates that whatsoever one adorns is identical to quiescent cessation,[20] this corresponds to "wisdom."

F. Summation on the Bodhisattva's Distinctive Meditation Practice

This is what is meant by the bodhisattva's being distinctly different on the basis of his exercise of spiritual penetrations, knowing awareness, skillful means, and wisdom while cultivating dhyāna absorption. Through complete practice of these four matters, one succeeds in drawing close to *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*.

G. The Essence of the Bodhisattva's Perfection of Dhyāna Meditation

When the bodhisattva, *mahāsattva* cultivates dhyāna absorption, he remains free of any extraneous or evil thoughts. It is by resort to the dharma of remaining unmoving that one then perfects dhyāna *pāramitā*.

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Prajñā Pāramitā

IX. Chapter 9: The Perfection of Wisdom

A. Three Kinds of Benefit and Path Adornment from Wisdom

How does the bodhisattva go about cultivating wisdom? If wisdom is cultivated for the sake of bringing about self-benefit, benefit of others, and the combined benefit of both, one becomes able thereby to adorn the path to bodhi.

1. Right Motivation in the Practice of Wisdom

In his cultivation of wisdom, the bodhisattva is motivated by a wish to so train and discipline beings that they are caused to abandon suffering and affliction.

One who cultivates wisdom studies all aspects of worldly phenomena, abandons covetousness, hatred, and delusion, establishes himself in the mind of kindness, pities and benefits all beings, constantly bears in mind extricating and rescuing beings, serves as a guide for beings, and is able to distinguish and explain what constitutes the right path, what constitutes the erroneous path, and what constitutes the karmic retribution linked to good and bad karmic actions. This is what qualifies as the mind of wisdom as initially cultivated by the bodhisattva.

2. Self-Benefit

On account of cultivating wisdom, one separates far from ignorance, rids oneself of the affliction-based obstacles (*kleśa-āvaraṇa*), and rids oneself of the obstacles to cognition (*jñeya-āvaraṇa*). This is what is meant by "self-benefit."

3. Benefit of Others

One teaches and transforms beings in a manner whereby they are caused to become trained and disciplined. This is what is meant by "benefit of others."

4. Combined Benefit

On the basis of that advancement towards the unsurpassed bodhi which one has already cultivated, one teaches beings, thus causing them to gain benefit identical to one's own. This is what is meant by "combined benefit."

5. Adorning the Path of Bodhi through Wisdom

On account of cultivating wisdom, one gains the first [bodhisattva] ground and so forth until one reaches the *sarvajñā* wisdom [of omniscience]. This is what is meant by "adorning the path to bodhi."

B. Twenty Types of Mind Key to a Bodhisattva's Wisdom Realization

In the bodhisattva's cultivation of wisdom, there are twenty kinds of mind through which he is able to gradually bring about its establishment. What are those twenty? One must generate:

1. The mind which, with wholesome motivation, seeks to draw personally close to the good spiritual guide.
2. The mind which abandons arrogance and refrains from negligence.
3. The mind which complies with teachings and delights in listening to the Dharma.
4. The mind which remains insatiable in listening to Dharma while also skillfully contemplating its meaning.
5. The mind which practices the four *brahma-vihāras* (the four immeasurable minds) and cultivates right wisdom.
6. The mind which courses in "the reflection on the unlovely" (*aśubha-saṃjñā*) and thereby generates renunciation.
7. The mind which contemplates the four truths and sixteen mind states of the ārya [in gaining "the path of seeing."]
8. The mind which contemplates the twelve causes and conditions and cultivates the [three] clarities and wisdoms.
9. The mind which listens to [teachings on] the *pāramitās* and remains mindful and zealous in cultivating them.
10. The mind which contemplates impermanence, suffering, non-self, and quiescent cessation.
11. The mind which contemplates emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and effortlessness.
12. The mind which contemplates the abundant faults and vulnerabilities to misfortune inhering in the aggregates, sense realms, and sense bases.
13. The mind which conquers and subdues the afflictions, and recognizes that they are not one's friends.
14. The mind which guards all good dharmas and recognizes that they are one's friends.
15. The mind which suppresses and controls bad dharmas and causes them to be cut off.

16. The mind which cultivates right Dharma and causes it to increase and become widespread.
17. The mind which, although it cultivates [dharmas held in common with] the Two Vehicles, constantly relinquishes and abandons [allegiance to those vehicles themselves].
18. The mind which listens to [teachings from] the treasury of bodhisattva scriptures and delights in upholding them in practice.
19. The mind which, in benefiting self and others, acquiesces in the increasing development of all forms of good karmic deeds.
20. The mind which upholds the genuine practices and seeks out all dharmas of the Buddha.

C. Ten Dharmas of Skillful Contemplation Exclusive to Bodhisattvas

Furthermore, in the bodhisattva's cultivation of wisdom, there are ten additional "dharmas of skillful contemplative thought" which are not held in common with the Śrāvaka Disciples or the Pratyekabuddhas. What are those ten? They consist of:

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1. The contemplation and distinguishing of the roots of meditative absorption and wisdom.
2. The contemplation of [the faults inhering in] failing to relinquish the two extreme views of annihilationism and eternalism.
3. The contemplation of the dharmas involved in production arising through causes and conditions.
4. The contemplation of the non-existence of a being, a self, a person, or a life.
5. The contemplation of the non-existence of the dharmas of the three periods of time, whether past, future, or abiding [in the present].
6. The contemplation of the nonexistence of any implementation of action even while [the efficacy of] cause-and-effect is still not cut off.
7. The contemplation of the emptiness of dharmas while still not desisting from planting [the karmic "seeds" of] good deeds.
8. The contemplation of signlessness while still continuing to bring beings across to liberation without any deterioration in those efforts.

9. The contemplation of wishlessness while still not abandoning the quest for bodhi.
10. The contemplation of effortlessness while still not forsaking the taking on of physical bodies [to carry out the bodhisattva's endeavors].

D. The Bodhisattva's Twelve-fold Skillful Entry of Dharma Gateways

Furthermore, the bodhisattva has an additional twelve skillful entries into Dharma gateways. What are those twelve? They are:

1. He skillfully enters the samādhis of emptiness, [signlessness, wishlessness], and so forth and yet refrains from opting to take up their complete realization.
2. He skillfully enters the dhyāna samādhis and yet does not acquiesce in taking rebirth in the dhyāna [heavens].
3. He skillfully enters the spiritual penetrations and knowledges and yet does not take up final realization of the dharma of transcending outflow impurities.
4. He skillfully enters the dharmas of inwardly-directed contemplation, yet avoids realization of the "right and definite position" (*samyaktva-niyāma*) [of the arhat which would force him into a too-early nirvāṇa].
5. He skillfully enters the contemplation of all beings as empty and quiescently still and yet still does not relinquish the great kindness.
6. He skillfully contemplates all beings as devoid of self and yet does not relinquish the great compassion.
7. He skillfully enters rebirth amidst the wretched destinies and yet it is never on account of any karmic deeds that he is therefore reborn there.
8. He skillfully enters the abandonment of desire and yet he does not take up complete realization of the dharmas by which desire is entirely abandoned.
9. He skillfully enters the renunciation of bliss associated with desire and yet does not renounce Dharma bliss.
10. He skillfully enters the relinquishing of the ideations characteristic of all frivolous discourse and yet he still does not relinquish the contemplations which are consonant with skillful means.
11. He skillfully enters the contemplation of the many faults and misfortunes inherent in conditioned dharmas and

yet he still does not abandon the realm of conditioned [dharmas].

12. He skillfully enters the purity and far-reaching transcendence of unconditioned dharmas and yet he still does not take up residence in the unconditioned.

E. The Bodhisattva's Contemplation of the Three Periods of Time

Even while the bodhisattva is able to engage in cultivating all good gateways into the Dharma, he is simultaneously able to well comprehend that the three periods of time are empty and devoid of inherent existence]. Where one [successfully] carries out this contemplation, it is through the power of that wisdom which contemplates the emptiness of the three periods of time. In a case where one dedicates to unexcelled bodhi [the merit from rejoicing in and emulating] all of the incalculable merit created by all buddhas of the three periods of time, this qualifies as the bodhisattva's skillful means in well contemplating the three periods of time.

Additionally, although one perceives that those dharmas of the past which have already come to an end do not extend into the future, still, one constantly cultivates goodness, remaining vigorous and refraining from desisting. One contemplates that although the dharmas of the future have no production by which they come into existence, still, one does not relinquish one's practice of vigor and vows to go forth toward bodhi. One contemplates that, although the dharmas of the present are newly destroyed in each successive thought-moment, still, one's mind refrains from neglecting them and thus one nonetheless sets out toward bodhi. This is what is meant by the bodhisattva's skillful means in contemplating the three periods of time.

As for what is in the past, it has already been destroyed. As for what is in the future, it has not yet arrived. As for what is in the present, it does not abide. Although one contemplates in this manner the production, destruction, scattering, and demolition of mind dharmas and dharmas belonging to the mind, one nonetheless remains constant in not relinquishing the accumulation of roots of goodness and the accumulation of dharmas assisting realization of bodhi. This is what is meant by the bodhisattva's skillful means in contemplating the three periods of time.

F. Summation on the Bodhisattva's Wisdom-Based Contemplation

Additionally, the bodhisattva contemplates all [dharmas]: good and not good, self and non-self, real and unreal, empty and non-

empty, worldly truth and ultimate truth, right meditative absorption and wrong meditative absorption, the conditioned and the unconditioned, outflow impurities and absence of outflow impurities, "black" dharmas and "white" dharmas, birth-and-death and nirvāṇa—he contemplates them all as being like the very nature of the Dharma realm, as being of but a singular characteristic, [that is to say], as being signless. Among all of these, there does not exist any dharma known as "signlessness," nor does there exist any inherently-existent dharma which might be deemed signless. This then qualifies as the imprint of all dharmas, the indestructible imprint. Even within this "imprint" there is no characteristic of any "imprint." This constitutes the *prajñā pāramitā* as manifest in the skillful means arising from genuine wisdom.

The bodhisattva, *mahāsattva* should train in this manner and should practice in this manner. One who practices in this manner straightaway draws close to *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.*

G. The Essence of the Bodhisattva's Perfection of Wisdom

Even as the bodhisattva, *mahāsattva* cultivates wisdom, his mind remains free of anything being practiced, this because the very nature of dharmas is itself pure. This then constitutes the basis by which one perfects *prajñā pāramitā.*

The Stages of Meditation
By Kamalashila

Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and Jeremy Russell
(Snow Lion Publications, Itatha, NY)

Chapter Eight
The Practice of Calm Abiding

Definitions of Calm Abiding and Special Insight

Calm abiding meditation should be achieved first. Calm abiding is that mind which has overcome distraction to external objects, and which spontaneously and continuously turns toward the object of meditation with bliss and pliancy.

That which properly examines suchness from within a state of calm abiding is special insight. The *Cloud of Jewels Sutra* reads, "Calm abiding meditation is a single pointed mind; special insight makes specific analysis of the ultimate."

Also, from the *Unraveling of the Thought Sutra*: "Maitreya asked, 'O Buddha, how should [people] thoroughly search for calm abiding meditation and gain expertise in special insight?" the Buddha answered, 'Maitreya, I have given the following teachings to Bodhisattvas: sutras, melodious praises, prophetic teachings, verses, specific instructions, advice from specific experiences, expressions of realization, legends, birth tales, extensive teachings, established doctrine, and instructions.

'Bodhisattvas should properly listen to these teachings, remember their contents, train in verbal recitation, and thoroughly examine them mentally. With perfect comprehension, they should go alone to remote areas and reflect on these teachings and continue to focus their minds upon them. They should focus mentally only on those topics that they have reflected about and maintain this continuously. That is called mental engagement."

"'When the mind has been repeatedly engaged in this way and physical and mental pliancey have been achieved, that mind is called calm abiding. This is how Bodhisattvas properly seek the calmly abiding mind.'"

'"When the Bodhisatta has achieved physical and mental pliancy and abides only in them, he eliminates mental distractions. The phenomena that has been contemplated as the object of inner single-pointed concentration should be analyzed and regarded as like a reflection. This reflection or image, which is the object of single-pointed concentration, should be thoroughly discerned as an object of knowledge. It should be completely investigated and thoroughly examined. Practice patience and take delight in it. With proper analysis, observe and understand it. This is what is known as special insight. Thus, Bodhisattvas are skilled in the ways of special insight.'"

How to Practice Calm Abiding

The yogis who are interested in actualizing a calmly abiding mind should initially

concentrate closely on the fact that the twelve sets of scriptures-the sutras, melodious praises, and so forth-can be summarized as all leading to suchness, that they will lead to suchness, and that they have led to suchness.

One way of doing this meditation is to set the mind closely on the mental and physical aggregates, as an object that includes all phenomena. Another way is to place the mind on an image of the Buddha. The *King of Meditative Stabilization Sutra* says:

> With his body gold in color,
> The lord of the universe is extremely beautiful.
> The Bodhisattva who places his mind on this object
> Is referred to as one in meditative absorption.

In this way place the mind on the object of your choice and, having done so, repeatedly and continuously place the mind.

Obstacles and Antitodes

Having placed the mind in this way, examine it and check whether it is properly focused on the object. Also check for dullnes and see whether the mind is being distracted to external objects.

If the mind is found to be dull due to spleepiness and mental torpor or if you fear that dullness is approaching, then the mind should attend to a supremely delightful object such as an image of the Buddha, or a notion of light. In this process, having dispelled dullness the mind should try to see the object very clearly.

You should recognize the presence of dullness when the mind cannot see the object very clearly, when you feel as if you are blind or in a dark place or that you have closed your eyes. If, which you are in meditation, your mind chases after qualitities of external objects such as form, or turns its attention to other phenomena, or is distracted by desire for an object you have previously experienced, or if you suspect distraction is approaching, reflect that all composite phenomena are impermanent. Think about suffering and so forth, topics that will temper the mind.

In this process, distraction should be eliminated and with the rope of mindfulness and alertness the elephant-like mind should be fastened to the tree of the object of meditation. When you find that the mind is free of dullness and excitement and that it naturally abides on the object, you should relax your effort and remain neutral as long as it continues thus.

You should understand that calm abiding is actualized when you enjoy physical and mental pliancy through prolonged familiarity with the meditation, and the mind gains the power to engage the object as it chooses.

Chapter Nine
Actualizing Special Insight

The Motivation

After realizing calm abiding, meditate on special insight, thinking as follows: 'All the teachings of the Buddha are perfect teachings, and they directly or indirectly reveal and lead to suchness with utmost clarity. If you understand suchness with utmost clarity, you will be free of all the nets of wrong views, just as darkness is dispelled when light appears. Mere calm abiding meditation cannot purify pristine awareness, nor can it eliminate the darkness of obscurations. When I meditate properly on suchness with wisdom, pristine awareness will be purified. Only with wisdom can I realize suchness. Only with wisdom can I effectively eradicate obscurations. Therefore, engaging in calm abiding meditation, I shall then search for suchness with wisdom. And I shall not remain content with calm abiding alone.'

What is suchness like? It is the nature of all phenomena that ultimately they are empty of the self of persons and the self of phenomena. This is realized through the perfection of wisdom and not otherwise. *The Unraveling of the Thought Sutra* reads, "O Tathagatha, by which perfection do Bodhisattvas apprehend the identitylessness of phenomena?" "Avalokiteshvara, it is apprehended by the perfection of wisdom." Therefore, meditate on wisdom while engaging in calm abiding.

Meditation on the Selflessness of Persons

Yogis should analyze in the following manner: a person is not observed as separate from the mental and physical aggregates, the elements and sense powers. Nor is a person of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because the aggregates and so forth have the entity of being many and impermanent. Others have imputed the person as permanent and single. The person as a phenomena cannot exist except as one or many, because there is no other way of existing. Therefore, we must conclude that the assertion of the worldly "I" and "mine" is wholly mistaken.

Meditation on the Selflessness of Phenomena

Meditation on the selflessness of phenomena should also be done in the following manner: phenomena, in short, are included under the five aggregates, the twelve sources of perception, and the eighteen elements. The physical aspects of the aggregates, sources of perception, and elements are, in the ultimate sense, nothing other than aspects of the mind. This is because when they are broken into subtle particles and the nature of the parts of these subtle particles is individually examined, no definite identity can be found.

In the ultimate sense, the mind too cannot be real. How can the mind that apprehends only the false nature of physical form and so forth, and appears in various aspects, be real? Just as physical forms and so forth are false, since the mind does not exist separately from physical forms and so forth, which are false, it too is false. Just as physical forms and so forth possess various aspects, and their identities are neither one nor many, similarly, since the mind is not different from them, its identify too is neither one nor many. Therefore, the mind by nature is like an illusion.

Analyze that, just like the mind, the nature of all phenomena, too, is like an illusion. In this way, when the identity of the mind is specifically examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense [1] it is perceived neither within nor without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. [2] Neither the mind of the past, not that of the future, nor that of the present, is perceived. [3] When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical.

Resting in Not Finding

If you ask, "What is the entity of that which is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical?" *The Heap of Jewels* states: "O Kashyapa, when the mind is thoroughly sought, it cannot be found. What is not found cannot be perceived. And what is not perceived is neither past nor future nor present." Through such analysis, the beginning of the mind is ultimate not seen, the end of the mind is ultimately not seen, and the middle of the mind is ultimately not seen. All phenomena should be understood as lacking an end and a middle, just as the mind does not have an end or a middle. With the knowledge that the mind is without an end or a middle, no identity of the mind is perceived. What is thoroughly realized by the mind, too, is realized as being empty. By realizing that, the very identity, which is established as the aspect of the mind, like the identity of physical form, and so forth, is also ultimately not perceived.

In this way, when the person does not ultimately see the identity of all phenomena through wisdom, he will not analyze whether physical form is permanent or impermanent, empty or not empty, contaminated or not contaminated, produced or non-produced, and existent or non-existent. Just as physical form is not examined, similarly feeling, recognition, compositional factors, and consciousness are not examined. When the object does not exist, its characteristics also cannot exist. So how can they be examined? In this way, when the person does not firmly apprehend the entity of a thing as ultimately existing, having investigated it with wisdom, the practitioner engages in non-conceptual single-pointed concentration. And thus the identitylessness of all phenomena is realized.

The Necessity of this Meditation

Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way.

The Cloud of Jewels also states, "One skilled in discerning the faults engages in the yoga of meditation on emptiness in order to get rid of all conceptual elaborations. Such a person, due to his repeated meditation on emptiness, when he thoroughly searches for the object and the identity of the object, which delights the mind and distracts it, realizes them to be empty. When that very mind is also examined, it is realized to be empty. When the identity of what is realized by this mind is thoroughly sought, this too is realized as empty. Realizing in this way one enters into the yoga of signlessness." This shows that only those who have engaged in complete analysis can enter into the yoga of signlessness.

It has been explained very clearly that through mere elimination of mental activity, without examining the identity of things with wisdom, it is not possible to engage in non-conceptual meditation. Thus, concentration is done after the actual identity of things like physical form and so forth has been perfectly analyzed with wisdom, and not by concentrating on physical forms and so forth. Concentration is also not done by abiding between this world and the world beyond, because physical forms and so forth are not perceived. It is thus called the non-abiding concentration.

[Such a practitioner] is then called a meditator of supreme wisdom, because *by specifically examining the identity of all things with wisdom he has perceived nothing.* This is as stated in *The Space Treasure Sutra* and *The Jewel in the Crown Sutra*, and so forth.

In this way, by entering into the suchness of the selflessness of persons and phenomena, you are free from concepts and analysis because there is nothing to be thoroughly examined and observed. You are free from expression, and with single-pointed mental engagement you automatically enter into meditation without exertion. Thus, you very clearly meditate on suchness and abide in it.

Working with Obstacles to this Meditation

While abiding in that meditation, the continuity of the mind should not be distracted. When the mind is distracted to external objects due to attachment, and so forth, such distraction should be noted. Quickly pacify the distraction by meditating on the repulsive aspect of such objects and swiftly replace the mind on suchness. If the mind appears to be disinclined to do that, reflecting on the advantages of single pointed concentration, meditate with delight. The disinclination should be pacified by also seeing the defects of distraction.

If the function of the mind becomes unclear and starts sinking, or when there is a risk of it sinking due to being overpowered by mental torpor or sleep, then as before, quickly attempt to overcome such dullness by focusing the mind on supremely delightful things. Then the object suchness should be held in very tight focus. At times when the mind is observed to be excited or tempted to become distracted by the memory of past events of laughter and play, then as in the earlier cases, pacify the distractions by reflecting on such things as impermanence, and so forth, which will help subdue the mind. Then, again endeavor to engage the mind on suchness without applying counter forces.

If and when the mind spontaneously engages in meditation on suchness, free of sinking and mental agitation, it should be left naturally and your efforts should be relaxed. If effort is applied when the mind is in meditative equipoise, it will distract the mind. But if effort is not applied when the mind becomes dull, it will become like a blind man due to extreme dullness and you will not achieve special insight. So, when the mind becomes dull, apply effort, and when in absorption, effort should be relaxed. When, by meditating on special insight, excessive wisdom is generated and calm abiding is weak, the mind will waver like a butter lamp in the wind and you will not perceive suchness very clearly. Therefore, at that time meditate on calm abiding. When calm abiding mediation becomes excessive, meditate on wisdom.

(All headings in italics have been added for further clarity)

Meditation and the Concept of Insight in Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākramas*

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CHAPTER 3 CLOSING CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 A Suggestion for Future Research

All of this is suggestive, if not conclusive. It would appear that for Kamalaśīla the śrāvakas' conception of *vipāsyanā* is that of the comprehension of the three marks of impermanence, suffering and lack of self. This is also the view of modern day Theravādin traditions.[157] There is little doubt that when it comes to insight meditation practices modern day Theravāda Buddhism accords a much greater role to the realization of impermanence, and more generally the three marks of existence, than is evident in the *Bhāvanākramas* (and the Mahāyāna *sūtra* passages Kamalaśīla quotes from). In the Pāli scriptures insight into impermanence is sometimes even said to be liberating.[158] One can see what the relation might be by expanding on Gethin's observations above: He who sees *paṭicca-samuppāda* sees *dhamma* and he who sees *dhamma* sees *paṭicca-samupāda*. He who sees *paṭicca-samupāda* sees the arising and passing away of *dhammas*. Therefore he who sees the *dhamma* sees arising and passing away, which is to say impermanence *(anicca)*.[159] We

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157 See e.g. Bhikkhu Bodhi: "Insight should be understood as the three contemplations of impermanence, pain and not self; not contemplation of impermanence alone." (PM 9-10) VSM: 750.

158 e.g. Saṃyutta Nikāya 22. 102.10: 961-2: At Sāvatthī. "Bhikkhus, when the perception of impermanence is developed and cultivated, it eliminates all sensual lust, it eliminates all lust for existence, it eliminates all ignorance, it uproots all conceit 'I am.' Just as, bhikkhus, in the autumn a ploughman ploughing with a great ploughshare cuts through all the rootlets as he ploughs, so too, when the perception of impermanence is developed and cultivated, it eliminates all sensual lust.... it uproots all conceit 'I am.'.....And how, bhikkus, is the perception of impermanence developed and cultivated so that it eliminates all sensual lust, eliminates all lust for existence, eliminates all ignorance and uproots all conceit 'I am'? 'Such is form, such its origin, such its passing away; such is feeling... such is perception... such are volitional formations such is consciousness, such its origin, such its passing away': that is how the perception of impermanence is developed so that it eliminates all sensual lust, eliminates all lust for existence, eliminates all ignorance, and uproots all conceit 'I am.' "

159 The Pāli texts standardly seem to suggest that the other two marks of existence are what we would call "inferred" rather than "seen" in the same direct way as impermanence -- at least initially. The inferences are that if something is impermanent it is not satisfying, and if something is not satisfying it is not the self. The process also would appear to involve what we call "induction" to establish their universality throughout the three times. It is also said to involve emotional states such as terror. See Gethin 1998: 188-194 for a useful summary. One must note

should notice, however, that the relationship is "one-way"; on this formulation the observation of impermanence is not a sufficient condition of seeing the *dhamma*. It is, however, necessary.[160]

In our text it is *pudgaladharmanairātmya* that is identified with the key content of *vipaśyanā* -- not impermanence or the three marks. Furthermore, Kamalaśīla appears to explicitly reject the idea that the three marks of existence are soteriologically relevant. Rather than being observed under the aspects of three marks, observed *dharmas* are experientially analyzed by kind to demonstrate their lack of ultimate reality. Whether permanent or impermanent, they are all ultimately unreal. In the Madhyamaka school an understanding of the impossibility of anything truly existing is what counts. For Kamalaśīla this is established on the basis of the concentrative analysis described above.

One could research the possibility that these suggestions point to an actual area of difference between various Indian Buddhist schools. It seems reasonable to suggest, for example, that the Mādhyamika conception of the process of insight might have co-arisen along with its theoretical rejection of the earlier ontology of *svabhāva* associated with the Vaibaśikas' theory of

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here that perception and inference were not identified as distinct modes of knowledge in the Pāli texts. While instances of both abound in the Nikāyas, there was no need to clearly distinguish between them.

Knowledge of impermanence does seem to stand on a different epistemological footing from other items of Buddhist dogma. When in meditation we "see change" this involves a sensed comparison and contrast between consecutive moments of experience. Change is not a pre*supposition* of intellectual judgment, it is in fact a pre*condition* for it. Insight meditation that focusses on impermanence aims to make the awareness of change explicit by removing obscuring conditions. Among such obscuring conditions are included the five hindrances (which are emotional in nature), *as well as intellectual activity.*

160 To see impermanence is perhaps only to see dependent origination in its most minimally conceived of senses (i.e. When this, that is. This arising, that arises. When this is not, that is not. This ceasing, that ceases). To see dependent origination in a more sophisticated formulation, as for example the well known twelve nidānas, much more than a simple observation of impermanence is implied (in this case very specific causal connections must be seen and understood). If this is so, how much more so in the case of Mādhyamika conceptions of *pratītyasamutpāda* as emptiness and dependence on a designating mind (See Williams 1989: 61).

dharmas.[161] The emergence of the Madhyamaka might have been characterized by a recasting of the notion of insight such that the identification of *dharmas* and the *observation* of their arising, enduring, and passing away (i.e. "impermanence") was displaced by the *understanding* of *emptiness* (and the *non*arising of phenomena). Such a shift in the basic conception of insight could be understood as correlated with the theoretical shift away from an ontology of *dharmas.* No longer considered as ultimate realities, the meditative act of watching *dharmas* arise and pass away might naturally have come to be considered as an unnecessary, secondary or even an inferior kind of practice.[162] Thus within the Mahāyāna a trend may have developed towards the identification of insight practices with specific intellectual lines of reasoning. Observation of the impermanence of *dharmas* may have been relegated to a lesser role -- no longer associated with the liberating insight that marks the entry into supramundane wisdom, so much as a healthy reminder that time is short and one had best practice while one can.[163]

For the śrāvaka schools the mode of cognition involved in insight may have been less

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161 Note that for the Theravāda the notion of *svabhāva* is simply that of nature, or character, *svalakṣana,* rather than one of an ontological ultimate. Hence water has the character of wetness -- nothing in this conception implies permanence, irreducibility or ultimacy. See Gethin (1992:149-150).

162 These observations are consistent with the commonly made generalization that an empirically oriented early Buddhism was gradually displaced by a more philosophically inclined religion concerned with defending itself against brahmanical critics.

163 Such a suggestion would seem particularly compatible with the tradition of Tathāgatagarbha teachings as found in sutras like the *Tathāgatagarbha, Mahāparinirvāṇa, Śrīmālādevi, Laṅkāvatāra and the Ghanavyūha sūtras.* In these texts, to varying degrees, we find the rejection of the three marks (along with impurity, *aśubha*) as proper characterizations of the *Dharmakāya.* Somewhat problematically, from the traditional Buddhist point of view, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* actually defends the attribution of permanence, bliss, self, and purity to the *Dharmakāya.* Although traditionally one must come to see conditioned phenomena as they are -- impermanent, suffering, of no substantial ego and impure, this characterization will itself be in error if it is applied to the *Dharmakāya* considered as emptiness, and *even to dharmas* understood to be empty of self-nature (Brown: 78). These errors are attributed to the śrāvakas, for whom the notions of *anitya, asukha, anātman* and *aśubha* have become the objects of dogmatic attachment. Thus the RGV negates them -- albeit while attempting not to posit the *Dharmakāya* as a substantial entity. See Brown (72-81) and Ruegg (1989:17-55).

conceived as involving the deliberative inferences of the aggregate *of saṃskāra*, and more as a process of cultivating and intensifying an *observational recognition (saṃjñā)* of *dharmas* qualified by the three marks. The conception Kamalaśīla outlines on the other hand most certainly involves the volitional formations. It is through a deliberate concentrated analysis directly founded on the objects of observation, that emptiness is conceptually understood. Put in other terms, we may alternately suggest a śrāvaka emphasis on *samprajanya* rather than *manasikāra*, which would be more strongly emphasized, and associated with insight, in some Mahāyāna schools. For example, the Madhyamaka in general may have placed less emphasis on the observational aspect and more on the analytic dimension of insight. It is possible that these two conceptions were combined in the Yogācāra school, two of whose *sūtras* appear as the main sources of the experientially based analytic meditation we find described in the *Bhāvanākramas.*

Thus for Kamalaśīla it is clear that the relatively passive act of observing *dharmas* is not considered sufficient. More generally we can say that for those who would have held the observation of the arising and passing away of *dharmas* to be insufficient (or misguided), there would obviously have been less scope for accommodating practices aimed at the direct observation of the three marks of existence. For śrāvakas to see reality as it is is at least to see *dharmas* as impermanent; for Mahāyanists it is to understand that *dharmas* are actually unoriginated. Any predication of impermanence (or permanence) is ultimately unfounded, as the logical subject or property holder (*dharmin*) of the predication is unreal, like an illusion.

In different Mahāyāna schools, and in varying degrees, active inferential analyses of various kinds would thus have come to characterize their conceptions of insight. It seems credible to suggest that when taken to its limit such a position would imply an identification of insight with

cintāmayī prajñā and meditation with nonconceptual *dhyāna*, as outlined in conception B in Section 1.3.2 above.[164] We have seen, however, that for Kamalaśīla this reading is not as plausible as that of conception A. As a Madhyamaka, Kamalaśīla did indeed conceive the process of insight as aimed at the cognition of emptiness. But he also describes insight as an *observationally based* analytic process -- even if not one aimed at recognizing the three marks of existence. Thus while the observational experiencing of *dharmas* in meditation is not regarded as sufficient, it is considered necessary.

It is further possible that the two conceptions of *samādhi* found in the *Bhāvanākramas* can be respectively attributed to Yogācāra (A) and Madhyamaka (B) influences. The former might be principally associated with a conception of *samādhi qua bhāvanā* and *vipaśyanā* as essentially including an observational component. The latter could be associated with a conception of *samādhi qua dhyāna* and *vipaśyanā* as intellectual analysis. Further research is necessary to corroborate or falsify this hypothesis.[165]

If Indian Buddhist traditions did indeed differ regarding their *conceptions* of what is known in insight meditation, would this fact suggest anything at all about what individuals may actually have been doing when practicing meditation? I think it is reasonable to suppose that it would. For Kamalaśīla the notion of origination is not accepted (Bhk 1 199.3-202.8). It would not make sense for a meditator who takes such a recognition seriously to cultivate anything more than a minimal

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164 It is possible that within some Indo-Tibetan Buddhist traditions, such as the Prāsangīka tradition of the dGe lugs, a tendency to understand insight as primarily intellectual in nature arose from just such an understanding. More research is required to determine if this is true.

165 This is suggested by the fact that conception A seems to be partially based on the conception of *samādhi* found an important Mādhyamika proof text, the *Samādhirājasūtra*, while conception B is primarily based on two texts associated with the Yogācāra: the *Saṃdhinirmocana* and *Laṅkāvatāra sūtras*.

awareness of arising and ceasing -- just enough, perhaps, to be subsequently negated.

At a minimum, these considerations can be used to understand one scholastic stream of Indian Buddhism's self-understanding, its self-identification as Mahāyāna in contrast to the Śrāvakayāna (i.e. those whose insight meditation practices consist in a special mode of concentrative analysis). It is clear that Kamalaśīla held that the two vehicles differed in their respective conceptions of insight. It is possible that he was correct. This hypothesis is falsifiable in principle. Given the central importance of both meditation and the concept of insight to the Indian Buddhist tradition, it seems to me that an attempt to test it would be a worthwhile, albeit vast, undertaking. In order to investigate this scholars would have to first analyze what the various schools' texts have to say about the concept of insight. One could word-search the corpus of various early Mahāyāna texts for references to insight (*vipaśyanā*) and to the three marks of existence (individually and collectively). One could then chart the results to see the frequencies and correlations of such references over the centuries in different schools of thought. It is possible that in the Mahāyāna in general, the Madhyamaka in particular, or some further sub-schools thereof, there gradually came to be fewer and fewer references to the observation of the three marks and insight in the same breath.

3.2 Conclusions

In the course of this study of the *Bhāvanākramas* six general and interconnected themes have emerged:

1. Two concepts of *samādhi* exist within the text, associated with two views of *vipaśyanā*. The first regards *samādhi* as both conceptual and nonconceptual and *vipaśyanā* as *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*. The second understands *samādhi* as nonconceptual and *vipaśyanā* as *cintāmayī prajñā*.

2. The first of these, conception A, predominates in the *Bhāvanākramas.* The texts have therefore been translated accordingly. A very different translation would have resulted if conception B was taken as normative.

3. Kamalaśīla regarded *bhāvanā* as a broader concept than *dhyāna,* one that more truly reflects the nature of Mahāyāna practice.

4. For Kamalaśīla *vipaśyanā* involves both the meditative observation of *dharmas* and a special kind of experiential analysis that is not identifiable with ordinary reasoning.

5. Kamalaśīla held that what is known through insight in the Mahāyāna is different from what is known through insight in the Śrāvakayāna. Recognition of emptiness is regarded as distinctively belonging to the Mahāyāna. Knowledge of impermanence, and more generally of the three marks of existence, is not, in and of itself, regarded as insight. It is, rather, associated with *śamatha* meditation.

6. This suggests the possibility that different conceptions of insight prevailed in different streams of Indian Buddhism. In particular, some elements of the Mahāyāna, especially within the Madhayamaka, may have distinguished themselves from the Śrāvakayāna in terms of the meditation practices they prescribed for insight. This hypothesis is falsifiable in principle.

It is generally agreed by Buddhists that *vipaśyanā* is an observationally analytic process. But it may be the case that while the weight of this notion initially rested on the observation aspect, in later times analysis was emphasized. This fact may be reflected in a blurring of the distinction of *cintāmayī* and *bhāvanāmayī prajñā,* a phenomenon which is apparent in the *Bhāvanākramas.* We have seen that in the *Bhāvanākramas* the concept of insight is associated both with observation and analysis. Insight is said to be experiential in a way ordinary reasoning is not. I suggest that this is because of the observational dimension of the process. It is thus because of this aspect of insight that the process is correctly considered one of *bhāvanāmayī* rather than *cintāmayī prajñā.* Insight is equated with *bhūtapratyavekṣā,* which in turn is said to be either identified with or based upon *dharmapravicaya.* Each of these terms is associated both with a dimension of observation and a dimension of analysis. *Dharmapravicaya,* however, is a term more clearly conceived along observational lines. Unfortunately its nature is not clearly spelled out in the *Bhāvanākramas* --

perhaps because it was considered too obvious (or perhaps because it was too obscure).

It may be the case that the experiential nature of the analytic component of *vipaśyanā* was not considered crucial by some within the Buddhist tradition. This may have allowed *vipaśyanā* to become identified with strictly intellectual processes of analysis, and the nonconceptual processes of *śamatha* and *dhyāna* to become exclusively associated with the experiential dimension of practice. While both conceptions are present within the *Bhāvanākramas*, the elevation of the status of nonconceptual *dhyāna* over *bhāvanā* was vigorously opposed by Kamalaśīla.

One possible reason for the lack of clarity surrounding the experiential dimension of insight is that practices involving the cultivation of awareness of the three marks of existence may have fallen by the wayside in some schools of the Mahāyāna. We have seen that such practices were not held by Kamalaśīla to constitute insight. It is, however, clear that he held them to be part of the śrāvakas' conception of insight and felt that his opponent would also recognize them as such. He himself appears to associate these practices with *śamatha* meditation.