

# **The Buddha's Comment on the Nine Attainments A study based on the Pali Nikayas and the Chinese Agamas**

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This paper discusses whether the nine attainments are dispensable or indispensable in the path of liberation, and how the destruction of cankers takes place at each *jhana*.

A number of discourses suggest that the eight attainments apparently were existing ways of meditation in the time of the Buddha. Having experienced and mastered these attainments, the Buddha adopted a different approach that led him to final liberation. The Buddha recognized the importance of the four *jhanas* that lead to final liberation. Yet his approach differs from that of other ascetics. The Buddha not only acknowledged the existence of the four immaterial *jhanas*, but also spoke of them as a subtle danger for one who is seeking final liberation. Furthermore, he prescribed right methods for the final liberation to those who had mastered these immaterial attainments. Thus he says that one can attain enlightenment at any of the *jhanas*. A comparative study based on the Pali Nikayas and the Chinese Agamas has been made here, and it provides us evidence convincing that one can destroy cankers and attain final knowledge while staying in *jhana*.

In addition, one can attain final knowledge (*anna*) while staying in one of the first seven *jhanas* only. The last two attainments preclude final liberation. This impossibility of attaining final liberation in the two attainments suggests another way of understanding of the phrase: “*pannaya cassa disva asava parikkhina honti.*”