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A Swift Pair of Messengers

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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhassa

Introduction

'Wide open are the doors to the deathless!
Let those with ears to hear make sure their faith'[1]

With this inspirational proclamation the Buddha declared the freedom he had realized available to all. Nothing less than escape from death itself was his promise, and this goal was available to anyone willing to listen to his message with a sincere and confident heart. Although many teachers had appeared - as they still do today - with such extravagant claims, the distinctive feature of the Buddha's teaching was a pragmatic course of spiritual training leading step by step to the goal.

This essay is an attempt to clarify the meaning and function of *samatha* and *vipassanā* in Buddhist meditation. Much has been written on this topic, yet a cloud of confusion persists. I am painfully aware of my presumption in treading where so many more worthy have gone before; however, it seems perhaps worthwhile to gather together many of the Buddha's own statements on the subject in a form neither obscurely technical nor patronizingly simplistic, and to present that material within a consistent and reasonable framework of interpretation.

This essay is intended neither as a beginner's introduction nor as a guide to the nuts and bolts of practice. Rather, it is intended for those who have some knowledge and experience in Buddhist meditation, but who are confused by the diverse and often conflicting opinions expressed by meditation teachers. All of those teachers, however, are unanimous on one point - the greatest Teacher, the Teacher of teachers, is the Buddha himself. To seek within the Buddha's own sayings for a guide to the perfect conduct of life is therefore an approach that is not to be faulted by any teacher of *Dhamma*. But it is to be hoped that this somewhat peculiar beast - an essay on the theory of practice - can provide not only theoretical clarity, but inspiration and practical tools for meditation as well. I wish to emphasize that the sutta passages are the heart of this essay.

Despite, perhaps, appearances, I include the vast array of references - like a massed body of soldiers or of evidence - neither to obscure nor to intimidate, but to accord with my conception of good scholarly procedure and, more fundamentally, seeking to inspire a love, a reverence, for this most extraordinary literature. I obviously have my own views on this matter, and offer explanatory material accordingly, but this should be accepted only to the extent that it aids understanding of the *suttas*. Never should we forget the vast chasm that lies between the label, the word, and the experience to which it points. How can 'Swan River' capture the dark grace of a bird on wing? Or the brackish redolence of a lazy warm memory? Still worse, how can it refrain from dragging in a welter of others, of unseen rivers and unnoticed allusions? And if something so banal is so fraught, what then the hope for concurrence in matters such as these, anciently subtle and yet intensely, immediately personal? My chief comfort is that the Buddha himself, having briefly flirted with such thoughts, decided, and then demonstrated, that words could be good enough. This is the distinction between caution and cynicism, not to be forgotten by we who seek to rediscover his meaning.

Fear kills spirit. It is the dedicated thirst for understanding, not the complacent acquiescence in a hallowed body of theory, which gives rise to true wisdom. All too often Buddhists come out trumpeting their commitment to free inquiry over tradition, then content themselves with critiquing any tradition but their own. So this work is offered, not as a set of dogmas, but as a stimulus to creative engagement with the teachings. I hardly address the question of how best to apply these teachings in a modem context. While individuals will come to different solutions, I believe that a sincere response will not be easy or comforting; it will not prop up our complacent existence, but will sweep out our stays, precipitating a radical realignment of lifestyle.

The most fundamental division of the path is threefold: virtue, *samādhi*, and understanding. Virtuous ethical conduct dams the poisonous outflow of defilements which pollute behavior of body and speech, corrupting an individual's relations with the world outside. It conduces to peace and harmony in relationships, in society, and in nature, for a moral person acts in a responsible, co-operative, and non-afflictive manner. *Samādhi* clarifies the still waters, cleansing the residual effluents that pollute the mind, cloud the emotions and darken wisdom. It leads to peace and harmony in the world within, with each mental factor functioning appropriately, in balance and unity. And in these still clear waters, understanding is able to locate and dry up the source of pollution once and for all.

'Samādhi imbued with virtue is of great fruit and benefit. Understanding imbued with samādhi is of great fruit and benefit. The mind imbued with understanding is completely released from all poisons; that is, the poisons of sensual pleasures, existence, views, and ignorance.' [2]

Meditation is the key; in fact the exalted mind states of *samādhi* as a basis for insight are the very doors to the deathless.

'What, Bhante Ānanda, is one principle declared by the Blessed One who knows and sees, arahant, and fully enlightened Buddha whereby for a monk abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute the unreleased mind becomes released, the unevaporated poisons become evaporated, and the unattained supreme security from bondage becomes attained?'

'Here, householder, a monk, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities, enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna... fourth jhāna ... the heart's release through loving-kindness ... the heart's release through compassion ... the heart's release through admiration ... the heat's release through equanimity ... the base of infinite space ... the base of infinite consciousness ... the base of nothingness ... [In all of these cases] *he reflects thus: "This attainment of the base of nothingness is formed by volition and acts of will." He understands: "Whatever is formed by volition and acts of will is impermanent, subject to cessation". Standing on that, he attains the evaporation of the poisons* [or to the state of non-returning]. *This, householder, is one principle declared by the Blessed One... whereby the unattained supreme security from bondage becomes attained.'*

When this was said, the householder Dasama of the city of Atthaka said to Venerable Ānanda: 'Just as if, Bhante Ānanda, a man seeking one entrance to a hidden treasure were to come all at once upon eleven entrances to a hidden treasure; so too when seeking one door to the deathless I have all at once come to hear of eleven doors to the deathless. Just as if, Bhante, a man had a house with eleven doors, and if that house were to burn down he would be able to save himself through one or other of those doors; so too I will be able to save myself through one or other of the eleven doors to the deathless.' [3]

Samatha, or peace of mind, is a gentle and unobtrusive quality. Meek and shy, she sometimes seems unable to hold her own against the forthright boldness of her brother, *vipassanā*. And yet she has a unique contribution to offer, no less precious for being unobvious. Persistent attempts have been made to diminish the significance of *samatha's* role in Buddhist meditation in the never-ending search for a shortcut to happiness, so typical of our restless times. It is, however, precisely because our post-modern world stresses the utility of analytical intelligence so excessively that the complementary holistic qualities of serenity and joy are sorely

needed. Perhaps this essay may make some small contribution towards rehabilitating *samatha* to her rightful position as equal partner in that noblest of tasks, the development of the mind.

My original plan was simply to investigate the role of *samatha* in the Buddha's scheme of meditation. As I progressed, however, it became more and more apparent that *samatha* can be fully understood only in relation to *vipassanā*, and so I found myself being drawn into the deeper waters of the Buddha's wisdom teachings. To some, *vipassanā* is an analysis of objective psychological reality, or a valuable therapeutic tool for mental health, or simply the art of mindful living. To others it is the unique Buddhist contribution to meditative science, while still others regard it as a universal technique independent of commitment to any particular dogma or belief. In my view none of these descriptions do justice to the profundity of the Buddha's vision. Time and again the texts indicate that key aspects of *vipassanā*, especially impermanence, must be understood in terms of dependent origination - how the identification and involvement with experience projects consciousness into future rebirth. Dependent origination is the thread which ties this work together. Following is an attempt at a brief explanatory synopsis of the standard series of twelve factors. [4]

Blundering about in the darkness of **ignorance**, the unenlightened being fails to recognize how their own craving gives rise to suffering. Delighting in **conceptual activities** and shunning peace, they form *kamma* - now good, now bad - through body, speech, and mind. This creates a force which propels consciousness - ever hungry for more experience - onward after death into a new body. Like the thumb that grips in opposition to the four fingers, consciousness establishes its identity in a new existence supported by a complex of **mentality & physical form**. As this sentient organism matures, the **six senses** develop, through which contact between consciousness and its objects stimulates **feelings** of pleasure, pain, or indifference. **Craving** grows; for more pleasure in this life or the next, or else bored, cynical, and despairing, one looks forward to one's own annihilation. **Grasping** at sensual pleasure and nurturing ideas revolving around a 'self' as the essence of being, one's thoughts and intentions conceive the embryo of continued **existence** in a future life. But that seed, sprouting in the springtime of **birth**, must fade in the autumn of **aging**, and fall in the winter of **death**. This betrayal of life's promise is the essence of suffering.

Dependent origination combines two complementary approaches to understanding. Through analysis the various aspects or facets of the world are explored, while through synthesis the relations between these facets are examined. Accordingly, in this work the path is first examined with a comprehensive survey of core doctrinal categories, emphasizing the role of *samatha*, and including a specially detailed exposition of *satipatthanā*, treated as an integral component of the path. The spotlight then turns to conditionality itself,

attempting to pin down the precise nature of the causal connection between key factors as a manifestation of a meaningful response to suffering. The seven purifications are elucidated with passages from the *suttas*. The all-important question, of course, is how to actually walk the path. This is therefore described next, showing the training for both monastics and laity. Given the central importance of *samādhi* in all the above teachings, the question naturally arises as to why it is so useful - how does *samādhi* work, and what do we get out of it? The highest benefit of *samādhi* is its support in attaining the various stages of enlightenment, and so the exploration of the path concludes by presenting the noble ones as living embodiments of the path. Lastly I consider the most important of the *sutta* passages which have been invoked to cast doubt on the necessity of *jhāna*. Issues relating to the translations have as far as possible been reserved for an appendix so as to not burden the text. A brief selection of comments by some of the most respected contemporary scholars and meditation masters is included.

For those who helped give birth to my conception, thank you. For the many faults which doubtless remain, I alone am solely responsible.

Abbreviations

PALI TEXTS

D	*Dīgha Nikāya*
M	*Majjhima Nikāya*
S	*Samyutta Nikāya*
A	*Anguttara Nikāya*
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
Ud	*Udāna*
Iti	*Itivuttaka*
Sn	*Sutta Nipāta*
Thag	*Therāgathā*

Vin	*Vinaya*
Cv	*Cūlavagga*
MV	*Mahāvagga*
Pj	*Pārājika*
Vsm	*Visuddhimagga*
DA (etc.)	*Dīgha Nikāya Atthakathā* (etc.)

TRANSLATIONS

LDB	*Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Walshe)
MLDB	*Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Ñānamoli, Bodhi)
CDB	*Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Bodhi)

References to the *suttas* are to *sutta* and section of **LDB** and **MLDB**; *samyutta* and *sutta* of **CDB** (which varies from the reckoning in earlier texts and translations, especially in S35), or verse number for the *Sagāthāvagga*; to *nipāta* and *sutta* for the *Anguttara Nikāya* and the *Itivuttaka*; *vagga* and *sutta* for the *Udāna*; and verse number for the *Dhammapada*, *Sutta Nipāta*, and *Therāgathā*.

Chapter1

A HANDFUL OF LEAVES

And the Blessed One addressed Venerable Ānanda: 'Ānanda, it might occur to you: "In the past we had the guidance of our Teacher - now we have no Teacher!" But it should not be regarded thus. The Dhamma and vinaya I have taught and laid down for you will be your Teacher when I have gone." [5]

What is our standard? Who should we believe? Amid the shifting sands of opinion, is there a solid rock of certainty on which to stand? The Buddha insisted that personal experience must be the ultimate criterion. But for the unenlightened, personal experience can be ambiguous, even misleading. To complicate matters further, in these times of information overload there is a bewildering diversity of teachers and teachings, all claiming to be based on experience. In this work I aim to address, not the question of the Kālāmas – 'How do we decide between different religious teachings?' - but rather: 'How do we decide between different interpretations of the Buddha's teachings?' This question also arose for the Buddha's followers as his life drew near its end. His answer, known as the four great references, is recorded as follows:

'Here, monks, a monk may say this: "Face to face with the Blessed One, friend, have I heard, face to face with him have I received this: 'This is Dhamma, this is vinaya, this is the message of the Teacher' ..."

'Again, monks, a monk may say: "In such and such a dwelling lives a Sangha with an elder, a leader. Face to face with that Sangha have I heard: 'This is Dhamma, this is vinaya, this is the message of the Teacher'..."

'Again, monks, a monk may say: "In such and such a dwelling live many elder monks of much learning who have mastered the tradition, Dhamma experts, vinaya experts, systematized summary experts. Face to face with them have I heard: This is Dhamma, this is vinaya, this is the message of the Teacher'..."

'Again, monks, a monk may say: "In such and such a dwelling lives a monk, an elder, of much learning, who has mastered the tradition, a Dhamma expert, a vinaya expert, a systematized summary expert. Face to face with this elder have I heard, face to face with him have I received it: 'This is Dhamma, this is vinaya, this is the message of the Teacher'..."

[In all of the above cases:] *'Monks, the speech of that monk should neither be delighted in nor disparaged. Every word and phrase should be well apprehended, placed beside the sutta and compared with the vinaya. Should they not fit in with the sutta or accord with the vinaya, you should conclude: "Certainly this is not the word of the Blessed One, and has been wrongly apprehended by that elder." Thus, monks, you should reject it. If they fit in with the sutta and accord with the vinaya, then you should conclude: "Certainly this is the word of the Blessed One, and has been rightly apprehended by that elder*." '[6]

It seems that the Buddha, though aware of the possibility of breakdown in transmission, nevertheless trusted the *Sangha* to adequately preserve his teachings; most practitioners and scholars today agree this has occurred. The *suttas* offer the seeker a unique opportunity to engage with a direct expression of perfect enlightenment. Lucid, immediate, and pragmatic, this *Dhamma* emerged at a time when experiments in democracy could form a model for organization of the *Sangha*; when freedom of religious creed and practice was unquestioned; and when the religious establishment was straining under the weight of the rituals, hierarchies, and mystifications of age-old tradition, unable to address the issues most relevant to people's lives. The spirit of inquiry responded to these conditions with a bewildering diversity of religious sects, of which the Buddha's best stood the test of time. The universal, timeless quality of the Buddha's words, like an arrow aimed straight at the heart of the human condition, inspired an unprecedented effort to preserve his Teachings 'for those who feel'. The following passage clarifies both what the Buddha meant by 'sutta' and why this standard is important.

'In future times there will be monks undeveloped in bodily conduct, virtue, mind, and understanding... when suttas spoken by the Tathagata are taught - profound, profoundly meaningful, transcendental, dealing with emptiness - they will not listen, they will not lend an ear, they will not set their minds on profound knowledge, they will not think those teachings worth apprehending and mastering. But when suttas composed by literati are taught - literary, with fancy wordings, fancy phrasings, irrelevant, spoken by disciples - they will listen, they will lend an ear, they will set their minds on profound knowledge, they will think those teachings worth apprehending and mastering.'

'Thus, monks, from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt vinaya; from corrupt vinaya comes corrupt Dhamma. This is the fourth future danger as yet un-arisen, which will arise in the future. Be alert, and strive to abandon it.' [7]

The texts relied on here are the only ones considered authoritative by all schools of Buddhism. My intention is to establish an interpretation of the crucial features of the path acceptable to all Buddhists by not relying on later authorities peculiar to any particular school. These texts are the five *Nikāyas* of the *Pāli Sutta Pitaka* - excluding later additions to the fifth *Nikaya* such as the *Patisambhidāmagga* - together with the *Vinaya Pitaka*. There are, no doubt, some extraneous additions even within this limited body of texts; yet such additions seem to be limited to supplementary matter, especially verse, and do not substantially affect the doctrine. These *Nikāyas* correspond to the *Āgamas* preserved in the Chinese and Tibetan traditions. Where

they differ, the *Nikāyas* usually seem to be more reliable, although in any case such differences probably do not significantly affect the present discussion. [8]

I have been conscious throughout of avoiding writing a 'fundamentalist' critique of contemporary schools of meditation or of the traditional commentaries. It seems that the commentaries in particular have become a favorite target of criticism, particularly for Western scholars. This might be influenced by the generally odious image of institutionalized medieval monasticism in the West. But time and again initially plausible critiques turn out to be shortsighted, and, worse, the critics then proceed to make as many or more new blunders. In fact the commentaries are an invaluable mine of information on *Dhamma*, *Pāli*, history, and much else, and any translator owes them a great debt. However, I am resolutely committed to interpreting the *suttas* on their own terms, and try as I might to see the matter from the commentarial position, I have in several instances reached conflicting conclusions. I have noted some important points of divergence; the points of agreement are too many to mention. I have mentioned such differences, not out of desire to criticize, but because the commentarial system is highly influential in contemporary meditation circles and therefore has a direct effect on people's lives. I believe that a careful appraisal of the tradition in the light of the *suttas* will facilitate appreciation of its true value.

I have yet to see any satisfactory study along historical and comparative lines of the development of *Theravadin* thought in these issues. I may simply add that the commentaries universally praise *jhāna* and devote great lengths to explain what it is and how to develop it. However, certain variations in their explanations of key points suggest that they may incorporate some divergence of opinion. Thus 'purification of mind' is defined in the *Dīgha Nikāya* commentary as 'the thoroughly mastered eight attainments [i.e. form and formless jhana] as a basis for *vipassanā*', whereas in the *Visuddhimagga* it is 'the eight attainments together with access [*samādhi*]'. Again, where the *Visuddhimagga* treats 'mind' as absorption and access *samādhi*, the *Samyutta Nikāya* commentary to the same verse defines 'mind' simply as 'the eight attainments'. Again, 'momentary *samādhi*' occurs only twice, both times subordinate to *jhāna*, in the *Visuddhimagga*, but more often and with more independence in its commentary. These differences could be explained away as mere variations in the letter; but the natural conclusion in the face of the evidence is that there is a divergence in meaning, perhaps a historical development. Far from being a uniform emanation of enlightened wisdom, the commentarial literature is a complex and evolving scholasticism. The tradition itself is quite happy to chronicle un-reconciled differences of opinion. In any case, the task I have set myself is to explain what the *suttas* say, and so I have throughout avoided relying on the commentaries. Nor, with two slight exceptions, have I relied on the testimony of contemporary meditators, as such testimony is diverse and unverifiable.

A problem can arise: since even learned scholars can disagree on the meaning of *sutta* passages, is the above standard any use? Two related principles of interpretation can help clarify obscure passages. One we call the principle of proportion, the second, the principle of historical perspective.

THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPORTION

The principle of proportion involves assessing the relative importance and reliability of *sutta* passages using a variety of acceptable objective criteria. If there are any gray areas, anomalies, or possible conflicts, then the more important and reliable passage should take precedence. It is not necessary to assume that there either are or are not contradictions in the sutta texts as we have them, nor that the secondary passages are not authoritative, simply that the primary passages should be granted greater authority.

Consider how the *suttas* were assembled. First, the Buddha would have taught; his followers would memorize the teachings and later embed them in a framework of time and place. This indicates that it is the doctrinal teachings themselves, rather than background details or anecdotes, which should be accorded greater weight. This can be shown by comparing the following two passages, each introducing the same *sutta*, the *Sāmaññaphala*. The first is from the *Vinaya Cūlavagga*, recounting the history of the recitation of the *suttas* and *vinaya* by the *Sangha* after the Buddha's passing away.

> *'Ānanda, where was the Sāmaññaphala spoken?'*
> *'At Rājagaha, Bhante, in Jīvaka's mango-grove.'*
> *'Who with?'*
> *'With Ajātasattu Vedehiputta.'*

Thus Venerable Mahā Kassapa questioned Venerable Ānanda about the setting and the individuals. Using the same method, he inquired about the five Nikāyas and Venerable Ānanda answered each question.[9]

From the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* as recorded in the *Dīgha Nikāya*:

'Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was living at Rājagaha, in the mango-grove of

Jīvaka Komārabhacca, together with a great Sangha of twelve hundred and fifty monks. Now at that time Ajātasattu, the king of Magadha, was seated on the upper verandah of his palace, it being the full moon observance day of the fourth month, the Komudi, surrounded by his ministers.'[10]

Although the story is essentially the same, the form is different and many details have been added. Even the words 'Thus have I heard' are missing from the *Cūlavagga* account. From other contexts it seems that the phrase 'Thus have I heard' is reserved for relating events Second-hand.[11] If one was actually present, the phrase Face to face have I heard it' is used instead. 'Thus have I heard' therefore would not have been spoken by Venerable Ānanda, since he was present when many of the suttas were delivered. The Buddha described his teaching as the 'suttas spoken by the *Tathagata'*, and it seems from the above account that his early disciples also regarded the '*sutta'* in the most authoritative sense as the doctrinal teachings spoken by the Buddha (or his enlightened disciples), as distinct from the incidental details of where it was spoken and to whom, etc.

Other common sense considerations should also be borne in mind when interpreting the *suttas*. Minor teachings should concede precedence to central and important themes, especially those given special significance by the Buddha himself. Poetry is naturally less suited to precise and detailed exposition of doctrinal points than prose; in addition, much of the poetry of the *Tipitaka* seems to be of later date than the prose. When quoting verses, therefore, we will try to restrict ourselves to the earlier strata. Similes, inferences, and passages of dubious or controversial interpretation are likewise of secondary consideration.

For several centuries the suttas were handed down orally, most reciters concentrating on learning texts from a single *Nikāya*. The arrangers of the *suttas* would naturally wish to edit their material so that the core teachings would be found in each *Nikāya*, the fifth (minor) *Nikāya* being only somewhat of an exception. In this way by learning one *Nikāya* one should be able to come to an accurate understanding of all the major teachings. The *Nikāyas* differ in perspective and emphasis, but not in doctrine. The interesting conclusion follows that it is unlikely that a text crucial for deciding an important doctrinal point would be found in only one or two *Nikāyas*.

The Buddha clearly felt that at least some of his discourses stood in no need of interpretation.

'These two misrepresent the Tathagata... one who shows a sutta whose meaning requires further explanation as not requiring further explanation; and one who shows a sutta whose meaning does not require further explanation as requiring further explanation.'[12]

There is therefore no justification for assuming that the *suttas* teach only a provisional, conventional teaching, which the *abhidhamma* explains in full detail; both of these methods are found within the suttas themselves. The *suttas* are full of similes, parables, and brief or enigmatic teachings that require interpretation. Sometimes the Buddha would do so, or encourage a disciple to do so. Often it is left up to the audience, the Buddha apparently recognizing that the process of sincere investigation into meaning can be of more value than being handed all the answers on a plate. But definitive statements of central doctrinal importance surely belong to the category of statements that are fully explained. Care should be taken, therefore, to avoid imputing unjustified meanings to such passages.

So what then are these central teachings on practice? Shortly before the Buddha passed away he emphasized a set of seven groups of *Dhammas*, later known as the thirty-seven wings to enlightenment, as the teaching which 'should be cultivated, developed, and made much of, so that this holy life will last long, for the benefit and happiness of many people, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of deities and humans.'[13] Again, it is said that who sees the *Dhamma* sees dependent origination, and who sees, dependent origination sees the *Dhamma*; the fundamental significance of causality in the Buddha's teaching is underlined by the famous verse of Venerable Assaji, regarded as the ideal epitome of *Dhamma*.

'Whatever phenomena arise from a cause –
Their cause and their cessation.
Such is the doctrine of the Tathagata
The Great Contemplative'[14]

The practical aspect of causality may be described as 'dependent liberation'. Finally, the Buddha said that practice in this *Dhamma-vinaya* is gradual, with no sudden penetration to knowledge; this gradual training comprises the heart of the second to twelfth suttas in the *Dīgha Nikāya* and many others. These three teachings - the wings to enlightenment, the dependent liberation, and the gradual training - are discussed in detail below.

This then is the first principle for interpretation, the principle of proportion, which we are proposing as a reasonable guideline to resolve conflicts in doctrinal understanding. Can we really suppose that the Buddha would have left a crucial question underpinning the whole way of practice to a background story, minor category, or dubious inference? Surely it is more reasonable to suppose that he would have described the way of practice very carefully, defined his terms clearly, and repeated them often. This being so, when faced with

gray areas or unclear passages, we should interpret the minor statements so as to agree with the major statements, not the other way around.

THE PRINCIPLE OF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our second interpretative guideline is the principle of historical perspective. In the 2,500 years since the Buddha, discussion, systematization, and perhaps modification of the meaning of what he said has continued unabated. Without passing judgment on the value of these discussions, it should be clear that it is quite inappropriate to read terminology and concepts of a later era into the texts of an earlier era. This error may occur in a number of ways: new terminology may be invented for old ideas; old words may acquire new meanings; or completely new concepts may be invented and artificially imposed on the old texts.

Remember that in the text quoted at the beginning of this paper the Buddha conferred sole authority on the *sutta* and *vinaya*; no *abhidhamma* and certainly no commentaries. It has been established by scholastic research that the abhidhamma did not exist in the Buddha's lifetime, but, along with some later works included in the *suttas*, was developed during a period of approximately four centuries after the Buddha's passing away. The commentaries were not finalized until 1,000 years after the Buddha, over the same period when the *Mahāyāna Sūtras* were composed. Some say that even if these texts did not exist in their present form, still their essence was spoken by the Buddha and his disciples. This claim, while not altogether baseless, is misleading. Much of the material in the *abhidhamma* and commentaries is perfectly in accord with the suttas and may well be descended from sayings of the Buddha. However, much of their teachings are radically different in both form and content from the *suttas*, and it is precisely these passages that give rise to controversy. We can fortunately, sidestep the question of whether these teachings differ only in the letter or also in the meaning as a strictly separate and secondary issue. The first of the great references quoted above refers to a teaching that a monk claims to have heard from the Buddha's lips; even this must only be accepted if it is in line with the *suttas* and *vinaya*. So the *suttas* can simply be taken on their own terms, and for all important matters they should be sufficient. Anyone who reads the *suttas* cannot help but be impressed by the clarity, consistency, and precision of the Buddha's teaching. To hold that he was unable to explain what he meant would be a curious aspersion on his ability.

The *Therāvada* tradition has coined a range of terminology and concepts which, although unknown to the *suttas*, constitutes the standard vocabulary of much contemporary Buddhist meditation teaching. These terms include 'momentary' and 'access' *samādhi*; '*vipassanā jhāna'*, '*samatha jhāna'*, and 'transcendental *jhāna'*; the 'one whose vehicle is serenity' and the 'one whose vehicle is pure (or dry) insight'. So prevalent is the influence of these terms that the conception of the path of meditation they imply is tacitly accepted by almost all books on meditation, and has been 'authorized' by inclusion in standard reference works. Someone interested in Buddhist meditation can thus pick up a wide variety of books from diverse sources, simple and complex, all of which re-affirm the same ideas. The plain fact that these special concepts are based on scholastic writings dated centuries after the Buddha and peculiar to the *Therāvada* school is obscured. If we wish to understand the *suttas* as those who listened to them, we must first carefully examine the contextual significance of crucial terms. Sound textual analysis must proceed from unambiguous contexts as a basis for inferring the meaning of ambiguous contexts. Any interpretation which relies on reading non-standard meanings into ambiguous passages should be rejected out of hand.

Samādhi

Samādhi is a regular synonym for 'one-pointedness of mind' (*cittekaggatā*) or 'unification' (*ekodibāva*). Both '*samādhi*' and 'unification' occur in the formula for the second *jhāna*, while elsewhere 'one-pointedness' is also said to already occur in first *jhāna*.[15] The verb forms of' 'unification' (*ekodihoti* or *ekodikaroti*), which regularly occur alongside *samādhiyati*, may also refer to first *jhāna*.[16] The absence of these terms in the normal formula for the first *jhāna* seems to imply a certain reservation over whether first *jhāna* is fully one-pointed or not, no doubt due to the continued operation of initial and sustained application of mind. A key doctrinal definition is this:

'One-pointedness of mind with these seven [path] *factors as requisites is called noble right samādhi with its vital conditions and requisites*.'[17]

This statement establishes that samadhi or one-pointedness of mind in the context of the path is 'right *samādhi'*, which is the four *jhānas*.[18] We shall see below that whenever *samādhi* is explicitly defined in core doctrinal categories, it is always the four *jhānas*.

In a very few contexts the meaning, not clarified by the context, may be *jhāna*, or possibly mere 'concentration' in the ordinary sense of the word.[19] One passage speaks of a monk establishing the 'mind one-pointed in *samādhii* while in all four postures, including walking.[20] This would seem to be difficult to square

with the usual understanding of *jhāna*, although it would not necessarily directly contradict anything in the suttas. Everything else in this *sutta*, though, is quite standard - virtue, abandoning the hindrances, energy, mindfulness, bodily tranquility (which strikes me as slightly odd in the context of walking), and *samādhi*, concluding with a verse extolling both *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Perhaps we might suspect some slightly clumsy editing; and we should not forget the many times when the meditator sits down cross-legged before entering *samādhi*.

More often, *samādhi* is used to describe meditative states of *vipassana* or liberation. These include three of the four kinds of 'development of *samādhi*',[21] the 'basis of reviewing',[22] and the 'signless heart *samādhi*'.[23] These are neither substitutes for *jhāna* in any important doctrinal categories, nor are they shown as the direct outcome of tranquility and bliss, but regularly follow after *jhana*. It may be noted that 'development' (*bhāvanā*) often refers not to the basic establishing of a meditation subject, but to its further, advanced development.[24] Presumably, establishing one-pointedness in *jhāna* enables the mind to maintain a comparable level of one-pointedness in the more complex task of *vipassanā*, justifying the term *samādhi*.

Very rarely, *samādhi* is used of a state of meditation that may precede *jhāna*. The following unique passage describes such a pre-*jhānic samādhi*.

'For a monk devoted to the higher mind, there are coarse taints - misconduct of body, speech, and mind. The aware and competent monk abandons, dispels, eradicates, and annihilates them.

'When they are abandoned ... there are middling taints -thoughts of sensual pleasures, ill will, and cruelty....

'When they are abandoned ... there are subtle taints - thoughts of family, country, and reputation. The aware and competent monk abandons, dispels, eradicates, and annihilates them.

'When they are abandoned and eradicated, from there on there remain only thoughts about Dhamma. That samādhi is not quite peaceful, nor refined, nor possessed of tranquility, nor unified, but is actively controlled and constrained. There comes a time when the mind is steadied within, settled, unified, and concentrated in samadhi. That samādhi is peaceful, refined, possessed of tranquility, unified, and is not actively controlled or constrained. One can incline the mind to witness with direct knowledge whatever principle can be witnessed with direct knowledge, and become an eye-witness in every case, there being a suitable basis.'[25]

Elsewhere too, *samādhi* is treated as the precursor of various direct knowledges, confirming that *jhana* is meant.[26] Since the passage only speaks of particular subtle taints, it - probably deliberately - does not quite clarify whether the '*samādhi*' accompanied by 'thoughts about *Dhamma*' is totally free of hindrances or not - there is no mention of sloth and torpor, etc. We might surmise that hindrances, even if not actually arisen, may re-emerge at any moment due to the lack of one-pointedness, which is the defining characteristic of true *samādhi*. In any case, this is obviously not the liberating *samādhi* of the path.[27] Its only significance is to precede true samadhi, and it is ignored in all expositions of right samadhi. 'Thoughts about the *Dhamma*' means just that.[28] The commentary asserts that the phrase refers to the ten 'taints of *vipassanā* '. But not only is this an anachronistic reading of a later concept into an earlier text, the context has nothing to do with *vipassanā*. Moreover, the meditator 'thinking about *Dhamma*' is still involved with concepts, whereas *vipassanā* deals with actualities.

Jhāna

'[*Jhāna*] never means vaguely "meditation". It is the technical term for a special religious experience reached in a certain order of mental states. It was originally divided into four such states.' (*Pali-English Dictionary*) This unambiguous meaning occurs many hundreds of times. Very rarely, *jhāna* may refer to a non-Buddhist form of self-torment such as the 'breathless *jhānaí*.[29] In prefixed form, *jhāna* often means 'ponder', 'brood'. Very rarely, the simple and prefixed forms are used together in a disparaging sense. Despite the obvious incongruity, I retain the word '*jhāna*' in the following passages for the sake of consistency.

'Then, when Māra Dūsī had possessed the brahman householders, they abused, reviled, mocked, and harassed the virtuous monks of good character thus: "These baldies, monkies, menial darkies spawned from the Ancestor's feet, claim: 'We're doing jhāna! We're doing jhāna!' and with shoulders drooping, heads hanging, and all limp they do jhana, re-do jhāna, out-do jhāna, and miss-do jhāna. Just like an owl on a branch watching out for a mouse ... like a jackal on a riverbank watching out for fish ... like a cat by a door-post or a dustbin or a drain watching out for a mouse ... like a clapped-out donkey hanging around a door-post or a dustbin or a drain does jhāna, re-does jhāna, out-does jhāna, and miss-does jhāna..." '[30]

This passage provides a clue as to the basic, non-specialized meaning of *jhāna*; close, sustained, concentrated observation at a single point. The significant image of 'food' as the object of *jhāna* recurs in the following remarkable passage, which encompasses the broadest range of meaning of '*jhāna*'.

'Sandha, you should practice the jhāna of the thoroughbred steed, not the jhāna of the clumsy nag. What is the jhāna of the clumsy nag?

'The clumsy nag, Sandha, when tied up by the feeding-trough does jhāna thus: "Fodder! Fodder!" For what reason? It does not occur to him: "What task will the trainer set for me today? What can I do for him in return?" Tied up by the feeding-trough, he just does jhāna thus: "Fodder! Fodder!" In just the same way, a certain clumsy nag of a person who has gone to a forest, the root of a tree, or an empty place, abides with heart obsessed and overwhelmed with sensual lust ... ill will ... sloth and torpor ... restlessness and remorse ... doubt. He does not understand the escape from these things in accordance with reality. Having formed these things inside himself, he does jhāna, re-does jhāna, out-does jhāna, and miss-does jhāna. He does jhāna dependent on earth ... water ... fire ... air ... the base of infinite space ... the base of infinite consciousness ... the base of nothingness ... the base of neither perception nor non-perception ... this world ... the world beyond ... on what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought out, and explored by the mind. This is the jhāna of the clumsy nag of a person.

'What is the jhāna of the thoroughbred steed?

'The excellent thoroughbred steed, when tied up by the feeding-trough does not do jhāna thus: "Fodder! Fodder!" For what reason? It occurs to him: "What task will the trainer set for me today? What can I do for him in return?"... The excellent thoroughbred steed regards the application of the whip as a debt, imprisonment, loss, and misfortune. In just the same way, the excellent thoroughbred steed of a person ... does not abide with heart obsessed with the five hindrances.... He does not do jhāna dependent on earth ... on what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought out, and explored by the mind. And yet he does practice jhāna.'[31]

This passage brings out a number of points in the usage of the term '*jhāna*'. The similes differentiate between the mind focused on one thing and the mind engaged in reflective consideration - the former is called '*jhāna*', the latter not. The series of four derivatives of '*jhāna*' augmented with prefixes is always used in connection with the five hindrances, never with the four *jhānas*. The mention of the four elements seems to be an idiomatic reference to the four 'form' *jhānas*. To preserve consistency, the text applies '*jhāna*' to the formless attainments - a common usage in later literature but perhaps unique in the *suttas*. The '*jhāna*' mentioned in the final phrase may be the fruition attainment of *arahantship*. Notice that this meditative experience of enlightenment is distinguished from the form and formless *jhānas*. Although the text does not

unequivocally praise *jhāna*, it is not the *jhāna*, but the person practicing it, who the Buddha criticizes, and then only by comparison with the *arahant*. As we shall see below, the ideas of 'food' and 'dependence' imply dependent origination; so all conditioned states are being faulted here from the standpoint of ultimate wisdom as being still bound up with rebirth. It should be re-emphasized that these broad usages of the term '*jhāna*' - here mentioned for completeness - are exceedingly rare.

These are the only meanings of the words '*jhāna*' and '*samādhi*' which can be unambiguously established from the early *suttas*. Since these two words occur so often with such clear meaning, it seems reasonable to assume that they refer to the four *jhānas* unless there is contextual evidence otherwise. As *samādhi* may have a broader meaning on occasion, however, it will be prudent to confirm the contextual meaning whenever possible. The *Visuddhimagga* classifies meditation subjects according to whether they produce absorption or only access *samādhi*. But since access *samādhi* plays no role in the Buddha's scheme of meditation, it seems unlikely he would have taught any meditation not capable of leading to *jhāna.* Although it is difficult to substantiate this for every meditation subject, we will see below that in at least some cases, meditations traditionally believed to produce only access can, according to the *suttas*, lead to absorption.

Vipassanā Jhāna

The term '*vipassanā jhāna*' seems to stem from a historical development in the application of the terms '*samatha*' and '*vipassanā*'. In the *suttas*, no meditation technique is labeled, such as by saying '*kasinas* and loving-kindness are *samatha*, *satipatthāna* is *vipassanā*'. A growing tendency to segregate and systematize the various meditation subjects developed into the prevailing practice of identifying *samatha* and *vipassanā* with the meditation subjects themselves, rather than with the mental qualities that the techniques foster. Having thus labeled a certain technique as '*vipassanā* ', it was found that experiences of rapture, serenity, and bliss occur during '*vipassanā*' which were then called '*vipassanā jhāna*'. But these emotional qualities are precisely what '*samatha'* refers to. This is not some new kind of '*jhāna* happening in *vipassanā*', it is just *samatha* pure and simple. One may hear that '*vipassanā* 'helps to relieve stress, solve psychological imbalances, or increase compassion; but these things are aspects of *samatha*, 'development of the mind', regardless of the label stuck on the technique. As long as the mind is still moving, however, and as long as the five external senses still impinge, it falls short of true *jhāna* - the mind absolutely content to rest still within itself.

Transcendental *Jhāna*

There is one further concept to be discussed: 'transcendental *jhāna*', which has been pressed into service as a substitute for '*samatha jhāna*' to fulfill the path factor of right *samādhi*. According to the *Therāvada* commentarial tradition, derived it seems from the *Patisambhidāmagga*, one of the latest books in the *Sutta Pitaka*, this is a special kind of *jhāna* which occurs only at the time of penetrating to the noble paths and fruitions. This *samādhi* can apparently occur with the same mental factors as any of the four *jhānas*, but is distinguished by taking *Nibbāna* as its object and by permanently eradicating, rather than merely suppressing, the defilements appropriate to each path. The four paths are each conceived as lasting one 'mind moment'[32] - another *Therāvada* commentarial concept - occurring once only, while the fruition can be re-entered by the noble ones after appropriate preparation. This 'path-moment' is supposed to last less than a billionth of the duration of a flash of lightning.[33]

Apart from fruition attainment,[34] none of these ideas finds support in the *suttas*. The *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* distinguishes between the transcendental and non-transcendental path for the first five path factors, but does not maintain that distinction for the factors of the *samādhi* aggregate.[35] The divergence in presentation is not arbitrary. The express purpose of the *sutta* is to show how all the path factors function to support *samādhi* for one developing the noble path. The first five factors are accordingly given special definitions appropriate in the context of *samādhi*. In particular, right view and right intention are defined by way of cognitive function rather than objective content. But the final three factors in their normal formulation already pertain directly to samadhi, so stand in no need of any special definition here. In any case, the mere mention of the words 'noble, poison-free, transcendental, a factor of the path' even if they were applied to *jhāna* would hardly imply the details of the commentarial theory.[36] The definition of the spiritual faculty of *samādhi* is also relied on to support this thesis. In the section dealing with the spiritual faculties I offer an alternative interpretation, reserving a technical critique of the commentarial position to Appendix 1.

On these insubstantial grounds rests the entire elaborate edifice of the commentarial theory. One may wonder why the Buddha, normally so precise in wording, would choose to use such terms as 'path' and 'person' to describe a 'mind-moment'. Such ideas may have evolved from the recorded instances of apparently sudden penetration to the *Dhamma*. It seems that the path is entered at one time, developed gradually, and matures into the fruition at another time, after a short or long interval.[37] This is explained with such similes as chicks breaking out of their shells after incubation, or the collapse of a ship's rigging after rotting away for a long time in the weather.[38] We might note here that the word 'path' (*magga*), apart from a few instances cited below, is hardly used in the *suttas* to denote those developing the path; the synonym 'way' (*patipadā*), defined just as the noble eightfold path,[39] is the usual term. Nor is the path normally divided into four as such; the path is just the

noble eightfold path, but those at different stages practice for different immediate goals. This being so, the phrase 'the path to *arahantship'* that occurs below probably simply refers to the eightfold path. Key *sutta* passages on the path are collected below.

'Just as, monks, this great ocean deepens gradually, inclines gradually, slopes gradually, with no abrupt precipice, even so in this Dhamma-vinaya there is gradual training, gradual work, gradual practice, with no abrupt penetration to profound knowledge.'[40]

'Just as the great ocean is the home of many great beings... so too this Dhamma-vinaya is the home of many great beings: the stream-enterer, the one on the way to witnessing the fruit of stream-entry [and so on].'[41]

'As he develops samatha prior to vipassanā, the path is born in him. He cultivates, develops, and makes much of that path.'[42]

'One who, regarding the well, taught word of Dhamma,
Lives on the path, restrained and mindful
Cultivating blameless states –
This is the third kind of monk, the liver of the path.'[43]

'The four pairs of people, the eight individuals, these are the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples: worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential greeting, an unexcelled field of merit for the world.'[44]

'Those eight people who are praised
The four pairs of the Blessed One's disciples
They are worthy of offerings
What is given to them bears great fruit'[45]

'An offering to one on the way to witnessing the fruit of stream-entry can be expected to repay incalculably; what could I say of an offering to a stream-enterer?'[46]

Of the *Dhamma*-follower and faith-follower, those on the way to stream-entry, it is said:

'He is incapable of doing any action having done which he would be reborn in hell, the womb of an animal, or the ghost realm. He is incapable of passing away without witnessing the fruit of stream-entry.'[47]

'Just as that tender calf just born, being urged on by its mother's lowing also breasted the stream of the Ganges and got safely across to the further shore, so too those monks who are Dhamma-followers, faith-followers - by breasting Māra's stream they too will get safely across to the further shore.'[48]

'What do you think, Bhaddāli? ... Suppose there was a monk who was a Dhamma-follower ... a faith-follower, and I told him: "Come, monk, be a plank for me to walk across the mud." Would he walk across himself, or would he dispose his body otherwise, or would he say "No"?'

'No, Bhante.'[49]

'When that venerable one makes use of suitable dwellings, associates with good friends, and composes his spiritual faculties, he may witness ... the supreme goal.... He still has work to do with diligence.'[50]

One of the chief lay-disciples relates how he learns of the monks' attainments.

'It is no surprise, Bhante, when the Sangha is invited by me, that deities approach and tell me: "That monk, householder, is one released on both sides; that one is released by understanding; that one is a personal witness; that one has attained to view; that one is faith-released; that one is a Dhamma-follower; that one is a faith-follower; that one is virtuous, of good qualities; that one is immoral, of evil qualities." '[51]

Seeing some wanderers of other sects walk by, King Pasenadi asks the Buddha:

'Bhante, are those among those in the world who are arahants or attained to the path to arahantship?'

'It is hard, Great King, for you as a lay person enjoying sensual pleasures, dwelling crowded by children, using sandal, wood imported from Benares, wearing garlands, perfume and make-up, and accepting gold and money, to know whether these are arahants or those attained to the path to arahantship.'[52]

'Neither arahants nor those attained to the path to arahantship will attend such a sacrifice. Why not? Because beatings and throttlings [of sacrificial animals] *are seen there. But arahants or those attained to the*

path to arahantship will attend the kind of sacrifice where regular family gifts are specially given to virtuous monks.'[53]

Those of us who cannot imagine a 'mind-moment' lying in the mud or attending a meal or accepting a gift will conclude that the commentarial 'instant-path' theory cannot be relied on to explain the *suttas*. Furthermore, the *suttas* regularly speak of *samādhi* as a gradual settling of activities resulting in a stable coalescence of mind that lasts for a substantial period of time, into which one 'enters and abides'. The word 'abides' (*viharati*) is specifically and exclusively used in *Pali* to denote an ongoing situation or event.

'And so, Anuruddha, abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute I perceived limited light and saw limited forms, I perceived measureless light and saw measureless forms even for a whole night, a whole day, a whole night and day.'[54]

This then is our second principle of interpretation, that of historical perspective. This principle guards against playing 'Chinese whispers' with the *Dhamma*, relying on an interpretation of a retelling of an exposition of a summary of something the Buddha was supposed to have said. The original teachings are available to us. Great as our gratitude is to the monks who preserved and passed down the *suttas*, do we really suppose that any of them could explain *Dhamma* better than the Buddha himself? The idea that commentarial or *abhidhamma* concepts are necessary to correctly interpret the suttas hardly accords with the Buddha's own description of his liberating teaching.

'Perfect in every aspect, fulfilled in every aspect, with neither lack nor excess, well explained and entirely complete.'[55]

This completeness does not pretend to the impossible standard of providing all answers to all questions, but to the reasonable standard of setting out with sufficient detail, clarity, and precision a framework for understanding adequate to serve as guide for all essential questions of theory and practice.

Then the Blessed One, taking a few simsapa leaves in his hand, addressed the monks:

'What do you think, monks? Which is the greater, the few leaves in my hand or those left up in the trees?'

'The few leaves taken up by the Blessed One are less, Bhante; those left up in the trees are certainly greater.'

'Just so, monks, the things I have directly known but I have not declared to you are certainly greater; what I have declared is less. And why are they undeclared by me? They are pointless, not pertaining to the fundamentals of the holy life, not leading to repulsion, fading away, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, Nibbāna. Therefore they are undeclared by me. And what is declared by me? This is suffering.... This is the origin of suffering.... This is the cessation of suffering…. This is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering. And what is that declared by me? Because it has a point, it is pertaining to the fundamentals of the holy life, leading to repulsion, fading away, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, Nibbāna. Therefore it is declared by me.'[56]

Chapter 2

SAMATHA & VIPASSANĀ

'Suppose, monk, a king had a border city with strong ramparts, walls, and arches, and six gates. The gatekeeper there would be clever, competent, and intelligent, and would keep strangers out but let acquaintances in. A swift pair of messengers coming from the eastern quarter would question that gatekeeper thus: "Where, friend, is the lord of the city?"

'"There he is, sirs, he is sitting in the middle at the cross-roads."

'Then that swift pair of messengers would present a message in accordance with reality to the lord of the city and leave by the way they came. I have made up this simile to convey a meaning. And this is the meaning: "City" is a designation for this body made up of the four great elements, produced from mother and father, built up from rice and porridge, subject to impermanence, to rubbing, wearing, breaking up, and dispersal. "Six gates" is a designation for the six internal sense bases. "Gatekeeper" is a designation for mindfulness. "Swift pair of messengers" is a designation for samatha and vipassanā. "Lord of the city" is a designation for consciousness. "In the middle at the crossroads" is a designation for the four great elements.... "Message in accordance with reality" is a designation for Nibbāna. "The way they came" is a designation for the noble eightfold path."[57]

In ordinary usage, '*samatha*' means 'calming, settling, pacifying', for example, of disputes and litigations;[58] here the meaning approaches 'cessation'. The means of settling disputes in the *Sangha* exemplify how *samatha* and *vipassanā* work together. The disputants should come together in harmony; thoroughly examine the issues in accordance with *Dhamma*; and unanimously agree on a solution. We thus find '*vipassanā*' also used in a legalistic context.

'And when Prince Vipassī was born, the divine eye manifested to him as a result of past action, by means of which he saw for a league all around both day and night. And when Prince Vipassī was born, he was unblinkingly watchful, like the deities of Tāvatimsa. [People said:] *'The Prince is unblinkingly watchful', and so Prince Vipassī came to be called Vipassī. And then, when King Bandhumā was seated adjudicating a legal case, he sat Prince Vipassī on his lap and instructed him regarding the legal case. And Prince Vipassī, even while seated on his father's lap, having thoroughly investigated, drew a conclusion regarding the legal case by a logical method... and so Prince Vipassī was all the more called 'Vipassī'.*[59]

Here, two aspects of *vipassana* are brought forth. Firstly, the penetrative, clear-eyed observation of what is occurring in the present moment. And secondly, the ability to infer a correct conclusion by closely examining the evidence before one's eyes, understanding it in line with valid general principles. These two aspects are mirrored in the context of dependent origination by 'knowledge regarding *Dhamma*' - understanding each factor according to the four noble truths - and 'knowledge regarding entailment' - understanding that all those who see the *Dhamma*, past, present, and future, will see it the same way.[60] Another, similar, kind of knowledge is called the 'knowledge of the regularity of natural principles' - understanding that the conditional relations between the factors always operate the same way.[61]

The precise denotation of the terms '*samatha*' and '*vipassanā*' in the context of meditation can be derived from a passage quoted more fully below. *Samatha* is the steadying of the mind, its settling, unifying, and concentrating in *samādhi*. It is therefore similar in meaning to one-pointedness of mind, the most distinctive mental quality of *jhāna* or *samādhi*.[62] *Vipassanā* is the seeing and exploring of activities. It therefore refers to wisdom in its refined mode of investigation into the nature of reality as experience. These definitions express the quintessence of samatha and *vipassanā*. However, *samatha* and *vipassanā* also occur as a comprehensive summary of the meditative aspect of the path, and the next passage treats them as leading to the development of the mind and of wisdom respectively. This implies that they may also be taken in a more

general sense as including those qualities of mind leading to peace and to wisdom. They almost always occur as a pair in the *suttas*, and are a pair of mental qualities to be developed by means of the eightfold path.

'Monks, these two principles share in realization. What two? Samatha and vipassanā.

'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 vipassanā 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.'[63]

Sometimes the phrases 'release of heart' and 'release by understanding' denote different kinds of *arahants* distinguished by their giving chief emphasis to either *samādhi* or wisdom. Normally however, as here, they point to two complementary aspects of the release of all *arahants*. Thus *samatha* and *vipassanā* function as a pair, not only in the preliminary training, but also right up to the ultimate liberation. This is why the Buddha called *Nibbāna* the '*samatha* of all activities', emphasizing that samatha points to the stilling, tranquillizing, and pacifying of suffering.

Notice that *samatha* brings about the fading of lust, *vipassanā* the fading of ignorance. Lust is a term for the emotional aspect of the defilements; ignorance is a term for the intellectual aspect. At their most general, then, *samatha* may be regarded as pertaining to emotional development, *vipassanā* as pertaining to intellectual development. The terms 'emotional' and 'intellectual' are meant here in their broadest possible connotation. They have been chosen because they offer an established usage, easily understood, which approximates to this context. No doubt we risk trivializing the concept of *samatha* and *vipassanā*; but perhaps we may succeed instead in dignifying the contemporary impoverished understanding of the emotions and the intellect. By using the word 'emotional' we no more mean being moody and impulsive than by 'intellectual' we mean mere reasoning and rational thinking. Rather, we refer to that whole side of experience, half of our mind or world that deals with feelings and intuitions, the soft feminine side, and that, which deals with understanding and analysis, the penetrating masculine side. All of us contain both of these aspects within us. Each of these

aspects contains some good and some bad and must be developed in a balanced way if we are to achieve liberation - we cannot enlighten only half our mind.

Many similes can illustrate this mutual support. *Vipassanā* only is like trying to cut down a tree with a razor blade; *samatha* only is like using a hammer. Both together is like using a sharp axe - both penetrating and powerful. Or *samatha* is like the underside of a postage stamp - it sticks - while *vipassanā* is like the top - it informs. Or *samatha* is like the left foot, *vipassanā*. like the right foot - one can only move one foot forward by leaning on the other. Or *samatha* is like the cool breeze at the mountain top, and *vipassanā* is like the view of the countryside. Or *samatha* is like the hand which clings to the next rung up the ladder, *vipassanā* like the hand which lets go of the rung below. This simile contains a warning - if one lets go of both ends before reaching the top, one is likely to end up as a crumpled heap at the foot of the ladder.

Venerable Ānanda states that enlightenment must depend on some combination of *samatha* and *vipassanā*.

'Friends, any monk or nun who declares arahantship in my presence has arrived there by four paths or by one of them. What four? Here, friends, a monk develops samatha prior to vipassanā. While he is developing samatha prior to vipassanā the path is born in him. He cultivates, develops, and makes much of that path. As he does so his fetters are abandoned and his inherent compulsions are eradicated. Again, friends, a monk develops vipassanā prior to samatha.... Again, friends, a monk develops samatha and vipassanā yoked equally.... Again, friends, a monk's mind is seized by restlessness for the Dhamma. When the mind settles down within, becomes steady, unified, and concentrated in samādhi, then the path is born in him. He cultivates, develops, and makes much of that path. As he does so, his fetters are abandoned and his inherent compulsions are eradicated.'[64]

Venerable Ānanda sets out a comprehensive fourfold classification of the sequence of practice. The basic sequence is common to all four modes. First *samatha* and *vipassanā* are developed; then the path is born; then the path is developed further. The only variation is the manner of preliminary practice of *samatha* and *vipassanā*. The 'path' here is obviously the noble eightfold path. At its inception this is the way to stream-entry.[65] This discourse indicates that all meditators who are to attain liberation will develop both *samatha* and *vipassanā* before entering into the plane of the noble ones. There is no mode which develops *vipassanā* first and then *samatha* (as transcendental *jhāna*) simultaneous with the arising of the path. Nor is there a mode that develops *vipassanā* until stream-entry and then *samatha* to support the higher stages.

Examples of the first mode appear frequently throughout this work. *Vipassanā* prior to *samatha* is exemplified as follows. In this passage, 'imperturbable' refers to the first two formless attainments.

'Again, monks, a noble disciple considers thus: "Sensual pleasures... sensual perceptions... physical forms... perceptions of physical forms both here & now and in lives to come are alike impermanent. What is impermanent is not worth relishing, not worth welcoming, not worth adhering to." When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind becomes clear about this base. When there is full clarity he attains to the imperturbable now, or he decides upon understanding. With the breaking up of the body, after death, it is possible that his on-flowing consciousness will pass on to the imperturbable....

'Again, monks, a noble disciple, gone to a forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, considers thus: "This is void of a self or of what belongs to a self." When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind becomes clear about this base. When there is full clarity he attains to the base of nothingness now or he decides upon understanding. With the breaking up of the body, after death, it is possible that his on-flowing consciousness will pass on to the base of nothingness....'[66]

The path of *samatha* and *vipassanā* yoked equally is explicitly described in only one place.

'Monks, when one knows and sees in accordance with reality the eye ... visible forms ... eye consciousness ... eye contact... feeling born of eye contact, then one is not inflamed by lust for these things. When one abides un-inflamed by lust, unattached, unconfused, contemplating danger, then the five aggregates associated with grasping are diminished for oneself in the future, and one's craving which generates repeated existence, accompanied by relishing and lust, delighting here and there, is abandoned. One's bodily and mental troubles, torments, and fevers are abandoned, and one experiences bodily and mental bliss.

'Such a person's view is right view. Their intention is right intention, their effort is right effort, their mindfulness is right mindfulness, and their samādhi is right samādhi. But their bodily action, verbal action, and livelihood have been well purified earlier. Thus the noble eightfold path is fulfilled for them by development [and also the other wings to enlightenment]. *These two qualities, samatha. and vipassanā, are operating in them yoked evenly together.'* [And so on for the ear, etc.] [67]

In the final mode, the meditator seized by restlessness for *Dhamma* must turn to *samatha* for a cure.[68]

'How does he steady his mind within himself, settle it, unify it, and concentrate it in samādhi? Here, Ānanda, he enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna.'[69]

This restlessness for *Dhamma* is probably the subtle fetter of restlessness remaining to be cut by the non-returner. It seems that if this restlessness is too strong, the meditator will over-emphasize *vipassanā* at the expense of *samatha*, whereas if the corresponding 'lust for form [*jhāna* realms]' and 'lust for formless [*jhāna* realms]' are too strong, they will over-emphasize *samatha*, at the expense of *vipassanā*. These imbalances must be rectified if the path is to manifest. I take the phrase 'pertaining to the higher understanding' below to imply, not necessarily an advanced level of *vipassanā*, but understanding of impermanence, etc., rather than 'worldly' understanding of action and rebirth, etc.

'A person who has samatha of the heart within himself but no vipassanā into principles pertaining to higher understanding should approach one who has vipassanā and inquire: "How should activities be seen? How should they be explored? How should they be discerned with vipassanā?" And later he can gain vipassanā.....

'A person who has vipassanā 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 samādhi?" 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".....[70]]

'One who has both, established in these beneficial qualities should make further effort for the evaporation of the poisons[71].'

'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 vipassanā into principles pertaining to higher understanding is unfulfilled in that factor. That factor should be fulfilled by him.'[72]

So all meditators are encouraged to develop both *samatha* and *vipassanā*, employing a variety of strategies to overcome the diversity of defilements.

'By a monk established in these five principles [that is: good friendship, virtue of the code of conduct, conversation on Dhamma, energy, wisdom]*, four principles should be further developed:* [meditation on] *ugliness should be developed to abandon lust; loving-kindness should be developed to abandon anger; mindfulness of breathing should be developed to cut off thinking; the perception of impermanence should be developed to eradicate the conceit "I am".*'[73]

Bearing in mind this basic understanding of *samatha* and *vipassanā*, we now go on to examine the three frameworks for practice referred to above. Each of these frameworks contains a balance and harmony between these emotional and intellectual qualities.

'There is no jhāna for one without understanding
No understanding for one without jhāna
But for one with both jhāna and understanding
Nibbāna surely is near'[74]

Chapter 3

WINGS TO ENLIGHTENMENT

'Those principles I have taught you having directly known them - that is, the four establishings of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five spiritual faculties, the five spiritual powers, the seven enlightenment factors, the noble eightfold path - you should all train in these principles in concord, with mutual admiration, without disputing.'[75]

These seven groups, totalling thirty-seven 'wings to enlightenment', occur frequently in the *suttas*, were given unique importance by the Buddha, and became a standard doctrinal framework for all schools of Buddhism. As the most important and comprehensive of these groups, we will discuss the noble eightfold path first.

1. The Noble Eightfold Path

In the Buddha's first sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, he warned against pursuing two extremes: devotion to sensuality and devotion to self-torment. He then defined the famous 'middle way' of Buddhism which does not go anywhere near the two extremes but leads to peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, *Nibbāna*. This is precisely the noble eightfold path: right view; right intention; right speech; right action; right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; right *samādhi*. The middleness of the middle way has nothing to do with compromise; it is not the 'mediocre' way. It is rather the way that avoids seeking for a solution to life's problems in externals, in the pleasures and pains of the body, but instead turns inwards to the peace of the mind.

'Bhante, the Blessed One is not devoted to the pursuit of pleasure in sensuality, which is low, vulgar, common, ignoble, and pointless; nor is he devoted to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble, and pointless. The Blessed One is one who gains the four jhanas which constitute the higher mind, and are a blissful abiding here and now at will, without trouble or difficulty.'[76]

Not only here do the *suttas*, emphasizing that '*samādhi* is the path',[77] stand *jhānas* in the place of the path as a whole. Even the redactors of the canon gave up trying up to enumerate all of the ways *jhāna* was praised by the Buddha, merely commenting: 'The collection of connected discourses on *jhana* should be elaborated just as the collection of connected discourses on the path.'[78] *Jhāna* is not an adornment or embellishment of the 'holy vehicle', the noble eightfold path, but is the axle - the stable pivot around which revolves the wheel.[79] The detailed exposition of the path is as follows.

'And what, monks, is right view? Knowledge of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the cessation of suffering, and of the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering. This is right view.

'And what, monks, is right intention? The intention of renunciation, of non-ill will, and of non-cruelty. This is right intention.

'And what, monks, is right speech? Refraining from lying, slander, harsh speech, and frivolous gossip. This is right speech.

'And what, monks, is right action? Refraining from killing living beings, from stealing, and from sexual misconduct. This is right action.

'And what, monks, is right livelihood? Here, monks, a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood, makes his living by right livelihood. This is right livelihood.

'And what, monks, is right effort? Here, monks, a monk generates enthusiasm, tries, stirs up energy, takes hold of the mind, and strives for the non-arising of un-arisen evil, unbeneficial qualities ... for the abandoning of arisen evil, unbeneficial qualities .... for the arousing of un-arisen beneficial qualities .... for the stability, non-decline, increase, maturity, and fulfilment of arisen beneficial qualities. This, monks, is right effort.

'And what, monks, is right mindfulness? Here, monks, a monk abides contemplating a body in the body .... a feeling in the feelings .... a mind in the mind .... a dhamma in the dhammas - ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having removed desire and aversion for the world.

'And what, monks, is right samādhi? Here, monks, a monk, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities, enters and abides in the first jhana, which has initial and sustained application of mind, and rapture and bliss born of seclusion. With the stilling of initial and sustained application of mind, he enters and abides in the second jhāna, where there is inner clarity and unification, without initial and sustained application, but with rapture and bliss born of samādhi. With the fading away of rapture he abides in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending, personally experiencing the bliss of which the noble ones say: "Equanimous and mindful, one abides in bliss", he enters and abides in the third jhana. With the abandoning of bodily pleasure and pain, and the previous ending of mental bliss and suffering, he enters and abides in the fourth jhana, which is without pleasure and pain, but has mindfulness fully purified by equanimity. This, monks, is right samādhi.'[80]

The first factor, right view, includes the knowledge of the path itself. This, to start with, is wisdom in its preliminary role of providing a theoretical understanding of the path as a necessary prerequisite for setting out on the journey. A distorted understanding of the path will surely act as an effective block to successfully arriving at the destination. Indeed, there are many meditators who, starting practice with wrong views, interpret their meditation experiences so as to confirm and reinforce their misconceptions.[81]

But this intellectual understanding is not enough. It must be accompanied by some feeling for the meaning of suffering, an emotional response to the dilemmas of existence if it is to provide an effective motivation for action. Hence, the second path factor is right intention, the emotional counterpart of right view, which enables understanding to mature into wisdom rather than lapse into cunning. Endowed with these two, one can rightly undertake the virtues.

Right practice of virtue also requires two complementary qualities. Firstly, an understanding of what is right and wrong together with skill in acting appropriately; secondly, a feeling of compassion and fear of wrongdoing as motivation. These two qualities will work together in meditation as *samatha* and *vipassanā* until they culminate in the universal compassion and transcendental wisdom of the *arahant*.

A key benefit of ethical conduct is that it 'leads to *samādhi*'.[82] Of the basic moral precepts, those against killing and harsh speech counter the hindrance of ill will, those against stealing and adultery counter sensual desire, and those against lying and intoxicants counter delusion. Diligence in executing ones duties and responsibilities - an important aspect of virtue - combats sloth and torpor, while sense restraint and contentment further reduce sensual desire. Each facet of virtue eliminates stress, conflict, and suffering, giving rise to a quiet ease and confidence of heart. This curbing of gross defilements lays the groundwork for the more subtle task of *samādhi*. So it is that the Buddha declared that purity of virtue and correct view are the 'starting point of beneficial qualities' to be established before undertaking meditation.[83]

The last three factors of the path constitute the 'aggregate of *samādhi*'. Right effort, the 'requisite of *samādhi*', eradicates the hindrance of sloth and torpor. The most interesting of the four right efforts is the last. It points to the importance of non-complacency with whatever good has been achieved. The first task of the meditator who has reached a certain degree of calm is not to rush ahead to insight, but to consolidate samadhi. It may also be born in mind that 'effort' is not a synonym for 'self-torture'.

'A lazy person abides in suffering, overwhelmed by evil, unbeneficial qualities, and destroys a great deal of their own good. One with roused up energy abides in bliss, secluded from evil, unbeneficial qualities, and fulfils a great deal of their own good. It is not by the inferior that the topmost is attained; it is by the topmost that the topmost is attained. This holy life, monks, is the cream, and the Teacher is right in front of you [Remembering that the *Dhamma-vinaya* is to be the Teacher when the Buddha has gone]. *Therefore you should rouse up energy for the attaining of the unattained, for the achieving of the unachieved, for the witnessing of the unwitnessed*.'[84]

RIGHT MINDFULNESS

Right mindfulness, the 'basis of *samādhi*'[85], is the gatekeeper who lets both *samatha* and *vipassanā* enter with their message in accordance with reality. Here, *nimitta*, rendered as 'basis', may also mean 'sign', since *samādhi* is certainly characterized by unobstructed mindfulness; but the intended contextual meaning seems to be that *satipatthāna* is a crucial support for *samādhi*. We can further conclude that since pre-Buddhist yogis practiced *samādhi*, they must also have practiced mindfulness. In keeping with the theme of this essay, of the mutual harmony between all aspects of the path, it may be worth looking more closely at the relationship between mindfulness and *samādhi*.

Mindfulness may be characterized as the quality of mind which recollects and focuses awareness within an appropriate frame of reference, bearing in mind the what, why, and how of the task at hand. Mindfulness as a mental quality plays a crucial role in recollecting the teachings and applying them to the present moment, thus supporting right view. By reminding one of what is right and wrong, it supports the sense of conscience which is vital for virtue. *Satipatthāna*, the 'establishing's of mindfulness', refers to a specific and detailed set of contemplative exercises in which mindfulness plays a prominent role. The 'development of *satipatthāna'* refers to the advanced employment of the basic exercises for the contemplation of impermanence. The 'way of practice leading to the development of *satipatthāna*' is the noble eightfold path.[86] In this analysis, '*satipatthāna*' seems to have the function of supporting *samādhi*, the 'development of *satipatthāna*' that of supporting insight, while both of these in the overall context of the path lead to liberation. The idiom 'a body in the body' is elucidated as: 'the in-and-out breaths are a certain body [among the bodies].[87] It therefore implies focussing on a specific aspect of the overall framework. The explanation that the phrase means 'contemplating the body as a body (and not as a self or soul)' does not quite ring true since the phrase pertains as much to *samādhi* as to insight.

Satipatthāna and the Hindrances

Each of the contemplations in satipatthana is qualified by a set of four terms. The first term, 'ardent' refers to energy; the second, 'clearly comprehending' to understanding; the third is mindfulness itself. The fourth term indicates the abandoning of desire and aversion, which are the chief of the five hindrances.[88] The phrase is not further defined here, but the following verses may be relevant. Bearing in mind that sequence in such verses is often quite loose, we may note that these verses follow teachings chiefly on virtue, including sense restraint, but *jhāna* and *samādhi* have also been mentioned.

'And then there are these five stains in the world
For the removal of which the mindful one should train.
One should overcome lust for visible forms
Sounds, tastes, smells, and touches.

'Having removed desire for these phenomena,
A monk, mindful, with mind well released
Rightly examining Dhamma at the right time
Unified, he shatters the darkness.'[89]

A series of four 'steps of the *Dhamma*' lists freedom from desire, freedom from ill will, right mindfulness, and right samadhi. It seems that the preliminary subduing of these hindrances through sense restraint, etc., prepares the mind for mindfulness practice, which is the foundation for the complete eradication of hindrances by right *samādhi*.

'One should abide without desire
With heart free from ill will
Mindful, one should be of one-pointed mind
Well concentrated in samadhi within.'[90]

Contemplation of the hindrances present in the mind is part of the preliminary development of *satipatthāna*. But during the course of practice they must be fully abandoned if one is to realize any 'truly noble distinctions of knowledge and vision beyond human principles', which include *jhāna*, psychic powers, the stages of enlightenment, and *satipatthāna* itself as a factor of the noble path.[91]

'Monks, these five hindrances choke the mind, robbing understanding of its strength. What five?

'Sensual desire; ill will; sloth and torpor; restlessness and remorse; and doubt are obstructions and hindrances.

'Certainly, monks, that any monk with understanding thus feeble and robbed of strength, not having abandoned these five hindrances which choke the mind, robbing understanding of its strength, would know his own welfare, another's welfare, or the welfare of both, or witness any truly noble distinction of knowledge and vision beyond human principles: that is not possible.

'But certainly, monks, that any monk with powerful understanding, having abandoned these five hindrances which choke the mind, robbing understanding of its strength, would know his own welfare, another's welfare, or the welfare of both, or witness any truly noble distinction of knowledge and vision beyond human principles: that is possible.'[92]

It is a common idiom in *Pāli* that the same thing can be spoken of in positive or negative terms, as an attainment or an abandoning. For example, the process of enlightenment can be described either as the successive abandoning of the defilements of self-view, doubt, etc., or as the attaining of the stages of stream-entry, once-return, non-return, and *arahant*. What then is the positive counterpart of the abandoning of the hindrances?

'The first jhāna, friend, abandons five factors and possesses five factors. Here, friend, when a monk has entered upon the first jhāna, sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt are abandoned. Initial and sustained application of mind, rapture, bliss, and one-pointedness of mind are occurring.'[93]

The opposition between *jhāna* and the five hindrances is not a one-off or occasional teaching, but is a central doctrine, frequently reiterated. It is even enshrined in the basic cosmology of Buddhism, which sees the worlds of rebirth as corresponding to the level of development of mind. One still bound by sensual desire will be reborn in the sensual realm (*kāmaloka*), while one who attains *jhāna* will be reborn in the Brahma realm. There is no 'access' realm.

'What should be done, Anuruddha, by a clansman who has gone forth thus? While he still does not achieve the rapture and bliss that are secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities, or to something more peaceful than that, desire invades his mind and remains, ill will ... sloth and torpor ... restlessness and remorse ... doubt ... cynicism ... listlessness invades his mind and remains. When he achieves that rapture and bliss ... or something more peaceful than that, desire does not invade his mind and remain, ill will ... sloth and torpor ... restlessness and remorse ... doubt ... cynicism ... listlessness does not invade his mind and remain.'[94]

The following statement by Venerable Ānanda clarifies the standard the Buddha took for what he considered praiseworthy meditation, able to go beyond the hindrances.

'What kind of jhana did the Blessed One not praise? Here, someone abides with a heart dominated by and prey to lust for sensual pleasures ... ill will ... sloth and torpor ... restlessness and remorse ... doubt. Harbouring these qualities within, and not understanding the escape from these qualities in accordance with reality, they do jhāna, re-do jhāna, out-do jhāna, and miss-do jhāna. The Blessed One did not praise this kind of jhāna.

'But what kind of jhāna did the Blessed One praise? Here, a monk... enters and abides in the first jhāna... second jhāna... third jhāna... fourth jhāna. The Blessed One praised this kind of jhāna.'[95]

Even the transcendental wisdom of the noble ones is unable to suppress the hindrances without the support of *jhāna*.

'Even though a noble disciple has seen clearly with right understanding in accordance with reality how sensual pleasures provide little gratification, much suffering, much despair, with great danger, as long as he does not attain the rapture and bliss that are apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unbeneficial qualities, he is not uninvolved in sensual pleasures.... But when he does attain that rapture and bliss ... he is uninvolved in sensual pleasures.'[96]

The Buddha compared *jhāna* to gold. As long as the impurities have not been completely removed, gold is not soft, workable, or radiant.

'So too, there are these five taints of the mind, tainted by which the mind is not soft, nor workable, nor radiant, but is brittle, and does not have right samadhi for the evaporation of the poisons. What five? Sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt.... But when the mind is released from these five taints, that mind is soft, workable, radiant, not brittle, it has right samādhi for the evaporation of the poisons.'[97]

The phrase 'having removed desire and aversion for the world' may be replaced by '*samādhi*'.

'Monks, those monks who are new, not long gone forth, recently come to this Dhamma and vinaya should be spurred on, encouraged, and established by you in the development of the four establishing's of mindfulness. What four? "Come friends, abide contemplating a body in the body ... a feeling in the feelings ... a mind in the mind ... a dhamma in the dhammas - ardent, clearly comprehending, unified, with clarity of mind, concentrated in samadhi, with mind one-pointed for the knowledge of the body ... feelings ... mind ... dhammas in accordance with reality."

'Those monks who are trainees, not yet attained to their heart's goal, who abide longing for the unexcelled security from bondage, they too abide contemplating a body in the body ... a feeling in the feelings ... a mind in the mind ... a dhamma in the dhammas [in the same way] *for the full knowledge of these things.*

'Those monks who are arahants, they too abide contemplating a body in the body ... a feeling in the feelings... a mind in the mind ... a dhamma in the dhammas [in the same way] *but detached from these things*.'[98]

Note that the above passage, as is typical, distinguishes between individuals at various stages of development in terms of the goal, not the mode, of practice. The investigative aspect of *satipatthāna* must be balanced with the emotional qualities of joy and serenity if obstacles are to be overcome and insight is to be deepened. This process can proceed in various modes.

'Therefore, monk, you should train yourself thus: "My mind will be still and steady within myself, and arisen evil, unbeneficial qualities will not invade my mind and remain."

'When this is accomplished, you should train yourself thus: "I will develop the heart's release through loving-kindness ... compassion ... admiration ... equanimity."

'When this samādhi is thus developed and made much of, then you should develop this samadhi with initial and sustained application of mind; without initial but with sustained application of mind; with neither initial nor sustained application of mind; with rapture; without rapture; with enjoyment; with equanimity....

'When this samādhi is thus developed, well developed, then you should train yourself thus: "I will abide contemplating a body in the body - ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having removed desire and aversion for the world."

'When this samādhi is thus developed and made much of, then you should develop this samādhi with initial and sustained application of mind; without initial but with sustained application of mind; with neither initial nor sustained application of mind; with rapture; without rapture; with enjoyment; with equanimity... [And so on for feelings, mind, and dhammas].[99]

Here, *satipatthāna* is treated simply as *jhāna*. This probably refers to *jhana* developed using one of the exercises included in the four *satipatthānas*. If one's original mode of *satipatthāna* fails to lead to *samādhi*, the meditator should find some way to uplift the mind.

'Thus dwelling contemplating a body in the body [feelings ... mind ... *dhammas ...*]*, bodily disturbance arises based on the body* [feelings ... mind ... *dhammas ...*]*, or the heart is lazy, or the mind is distracted externally. That monk should direct his mind to some inspiring basis. Doing so, gladness is born in him. In one who is glad, rapture is born. In one with rapturous mind, the body becomes tranquil. One with tranquil body feels bliss. In one who is blissful, the mind enters samadhi. He considers thus: "I have accomplished that purpose for which I directed my mind; now let me withdraw." He withdraws, and neither initiates nor sustains application of mind. He understands: "I am without initial and sustained application of' mind, I am mindful and blissful within myself*." '[100]

But the simplest expression of the meaning of the phrase 'having removed desire and aversion for the world' is this:

'He understands: "As I abide contemplating a body in the body ... a feeling in the feelings ... a mind in the mind ... a dhamma in the dhammas - ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, I am blissful." '[101]

THE FOUR FOCUSES

1. *Body*

The contemplation of the body begins with mindfulness of breathing. This is therefore the most fundamental *satipatthāna* practice. If this is borne in mind, the intimacy between *satipatthāna* and *samādhi* as evidenced in the above passages becomes easily understood.

'When mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, it fulfils the four establishing's of mindfulness. When the four establishing's of mindfulness are developed and cultivated, they fulfil the seven enlightenment factors. When the seven enlightenment factors are developed and cultivated, they fulfil realization and release.[102]

Body contemplation then continues with development of awareness of the body postures, parts of the body, elements, and corpses. One who develops the contemplation on parts of the body and corpses is said to 'not neglect *jhāna*'.[103] Contemplation of body postures throughout daily activities seems insufficient to induce *jhāna*; but as the words 'again and beyond' at the start of each section of the *Satipatthāna. Sutta* indicate, each exercise contributes a part of the overall meditative development. Continuity of mindfulness through the day is crucial to both *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Of each of these contemplations it is said:

'As he abides thus diligent, ardent, and resolute, his memories and intentions based on the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind becomes steadied within himself, settled, unified, and concentrated in samādhi. That is how a monk develops mindfulness of the body.'[104]

The basic purpose of these final three contemplations is to rise above sensuality. If one believes that sensuality is an intrinsic quality of human nature, this objective will seem perverse, an unnatural repression leading inevitably to neurosis. Lust can indeed lead to neurosis if it is unacknowledged and denied. But seeing sensual desire, not as a permanent property, but as a conditioned phenomenon, one is free to investigate its effect on the happiness of the mind. Sensual lust is fuelled by the perception of the attractiveness of the body. By going against the stream of habit, focussing attention on the unattractive aspect of the body, sensual lust can be seen in sharp relief. It is in no way repressed; but deprived of its fuel it simply ceases to operate, and the bliss beyond sensuality can be experienced. Then one knows that the real repression, the real perversion, the real neurosis is the addiction to sensual gratification, locked in place by denying the futility of sense pleasures. But these contemplations do not only bestow the emotional maturity, dignity, and independence that come with

freedom from addiction. Being based on inquiry into reality, they also serve to deepen wisdom. The most suggestive description of the contemplation of the parts of the body treats this as a stepping-stone to understanding the consciousness that does not die with the body.

'There are, Bhante, these four attainments of vision. Here, a certain contemplative or brahman by means of ardour, striving, devotion, heedfulness, and right attention contacts such a form of heart-samādhi that when his mind is in samadhi he reviews this very body, up from the soles of the feet and down from the tips of the hair, surrounded by skin and full of many kinds of impurities 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." This is the first attainment of vision.

'Again, having done this and gone beyond it, he reviews a person's skin, flesh, blood, and bones. This is the second attainment of vision.

'Again, having done this and gone beyond it, he understands a person's stream of consciousness unbroken on both sides, fixated in this world and in the world beyond. This is the third attainment of vision.

'Again, having done this and gone beyond it, he understands a person's stream of consciousness, unbroken on both sides, fixated neither in this world nor in the world beyond. This is the fourth attainment of vision.'[105]

The opening phrase is unusual, but occurs again later in the same sutta and also in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*;[106] in both places 'heart-*samādhi*' definitely means *Jhāna*. The third attainment is the realization of the passing on of consciousness according to dependent origination, and may therefore pertain to stream-entry. The fourth attainment concerns the *arahant*. In the following passage, the contemplation of the four elements forms a part of the practice directed towards the 'imperturbable'.

'Again, monks, a noble disciple reflects thus: "There are sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come. Whatever physical form there is, is the four great elements and physical form derived from the four great elements." Practicing in this way and frequently abiding thus, his mind becomes clear about this base. When there is full clarity he attains to the imperturbable now or he decides upon

understanding. With the breaking up of the body, after death, it is possible that his on-flowing consciousness will pass on to the imperturbable.'[107]

Notice the order of the teaching: sensuality; body contemplation; *jhāna*; understanding rebirth. We will return again and again to the intimate connection between the mind in *jhāna* set free from the body and the understanding of the process of rebirth.

2. *Feelings*

Normally in Buddhism, 'feeling' (v*edanā*) simply refers to the hedonic or affective tone of experience. The *Satipatthāna Sutta* describes the contemplation of feelings as the understanding of pleasant, painful, and neutral feelings, both carnal and spiritual. However, the equivalent section of the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* brings in rapture - the emotional response to pleasant feeling - and mental activities (*cittasankhāra*), which are defined in the context of mindfulness of breathing as feeling and perception.[108] This seems to broaden the scope of feelings here as far as 'emotions', 'moods'.

'What, monks is carnal rapture? Rapture which arises dependent on the five cords of sensual pleasures. What is spiritual rapture? Here, a monk enters and abides in the first jhāna... second jhāna. What is even more spiritual rapture? Rapture which arises when a monk whose poisons are evaporated reviews his mind released from lust, anger, and delusion.'[109]

Pleasant and neutral feelings are described in similar terms, except pleasant spiritual feelings apply to the first three *jhānas*, while neutral spiritual feelings only exist in the fourth *jhāna*. Notice that the arahant's reviewing knowledge is, as normal, specifically distinguished from the four *jhānas*. These 'even more spiritual feelings' seem to be similar to the 'feelings based on renunciation' mentioned elsewhere, which however, since they follow on 'seeing with right understanding in accordance with reality', seem broader, pertaining to stream-entry and beyond.[110] Occasionally, 'spiritual rapture' is used prior to *jhāna*.[111]

3. *Mind*

'Mind' (*citta*), in Pali as in English, can convey a wide variety of connotations. Here, as will be clarified below, it means specifically 'cognition', that is, the faculty of awareness itself, as distinct from associated factors such as feeling, emotion, thought, volition, etc. This inner sense of knowing receives the information conveyed

through the senses, supplemented and processed by these associated factors. As the 'lord of the city seated at the crossroads' it is the core of experience; but like any ruler it can maintain its position only with the help of its auxiliaries. The quality of the information received is the critical determinant of the quality of awareness. Also like any ruler, it often seems that the auxiliaries impede rather than facilitate the flow of information. The more we try to see the 'boss', the more we are sidetracked with some underling.

The preliminary stages of this section involve contemplating the mind as colored by the presence or absence of greed, anger, and delusion. These accompanying factors are crude and domineering, and the contemplation necessarily coarse and incomplete. In the later stages the mind is contemplated in its pure form, as 'exalted', 'unexcelled', 'concentrated', 'released' - all terms for *jhāna.* Just as the contemplation of feelings culminates with the supreme equanimity of the fourth *jhāna*, here too the term 'unexcelled' implies the 'unexcelled purity of mindfulness and equanimity' of the fourth *jhāna.*[112]

This contemplation of mind, with its implicit distinction between the mind and the defilements which soil it, is reminiscent of the famous - and famously misquoted - statement about the radiant mind. The words 'original mind' or 'naturally radiant' do not occur here or elsewhere in the *suttas*. The 'radiant mind' is a term for *jhāna.*[113] Here, 'development of the mind' seems to be a synonym for 'noble right *samādhi'*. The significance of the radiant mind is simply this - when the lights are on, a clear-sighted person can see what is there.

'Monks, this mind is radiant, but tainted by transient taints. An unlearned ordinary person does not understand this in accordance with reality. That is why I say there is no development of the mind for the unlearned ordinary person.

'Monks, this mind is radiant, and freed from transient taints. A learned noble disciple understands this in accordance with reality. That is why I say there is development of the mind for the learned noble disciple.'[114]

4. *Dhammas*

What does '*dhammas'* mean here? The practices detailed below indicate a broader scope than 'mental phenomena'. '*Dhammas'* in this context appears in its catchall role, encompassing what is experienced (phenomena), how experience operates (principles), and the meaningful description of experience (teachings).

The contemplation of mental phenomena, not found in the *Satipatthāna Sutta* as such, is the realization of feelings, perceptions, and thoughts as they rise, remain, and end.[115] This 'development of *samādhi'* is taught between *jhāna* and contemplation of the five aggregates, fruiting in mindfulness and clear comprehension, but falling yet short of release. Mental phenomena are the known, not the knowing; insight frees only when the radical impermanence of consciousness itself is brought within its fold.

The contemplation of *dhammas* begins with contemplation of the five hindrances present and absent. The diversity of these hindrances demands a diversity of approaches for their elimination. Sensual desire colors the mind like water dyed vivid blue or crimson, making it attractive but opaque.[116] The most important counter measures are sense restraint and the meditation on ugliness. The relation between this hindrance and *jhana* is further discussed below. Ill will is a fire that heats the mind until it is boiling, bubbling, and steaming. It is overcome by loving-kindness.

'It is always good for the mindful
The mindful one thrives in bliss
It is better each day for the mindful one
But he is not released from enmity

'One whose mind all day and night
Finds delight in harmlessness
Who has loving-kindness for all living beings
For him there is enmity with none.'[117]

Sloth and torpor is like a mossy, slimy weed overgrowing the clear waters of the mind. It is overcome by initiative, by putting forth effort, by sustained exertion, by non-complacency; the recommended meditation subject is the perception of light. Restlessness and remorse are like strong winds that lash and stir up the mind into ripples and waves. Restlessness manifests as the inability to stay with one object for a long time.

'Samantha should be developed to abandon restlessness.'[118]

Or again:

'Mindfulness of breathing should be developed to abandon scatteredness of heart.'[119]

Remorse (literally 'bad-done-ness') is chiefly worry over breaches of virtue. Restlessness runs on to the future; remorse dredges up the past. Their antidote, keeping in mind content in the here and now, is bliss: the pervasive drenching of the whole field of awareness with serene, sublime, sustained ecstasy. Doubt makes the mind turbid, muddy, and dark. It is overcome by 'paying attention to the root'.[120] The root or basis of meditation is just the meditation object itself. Unwavering continuity of application defines the object, dispelling doubt. It is worth noting that mindfulness is nowhere singled out as a mental factor capable of effecting the abandonment of any hindrance. Only when working together with the other factors of *jhāna* can this occur.

'Having thus abandoned these five hindrances, taints of the mind which rob understanding of its strength, he abides contemplating a body in the body… a feeling in the feelings… a mind in the mind… a dhamma in the dhammas…

"Then the Tathagata leads him further on: "Come monk, abide contemplating a body in the body… a feeling in the feelings… a mind in the mind… a dhamma in the dhammas… but do not apply the mind to these things." With the stilling of initial and sustained application of mind, he enters and abides in the second jhāna….'[121]

The next section deals with the classic *vipassanā* exercise of observing the rise and fall of the five aggregates.

'Monks, develop samādhi. A monk with samadhi under-stands in accordance with reality. What does he understand in accordance with reality? The origin and ending of physical form, feeling, perception, conceptual activities, and consciousness. What is the origin of physical form?... For one who relishes, welcomes, and remains attached to physical form, relishing arises. Relishing for physical form is grasping. Due to grasping as condition there is [ongoing] *existence. Due to existence as condition, there is birth. Due to birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental suffering, and despair come to be. Thus there is the origin of this entire mass of suffering.* [And so on for the other four aggregates.]

'And what is the ending of physical form?... For one who does not relish, welcome, and remain attached to physical form, relishing for physical form ceases. Due to the cessation of relishing, grasping ceases. Due to the cessation of grasping, [ongoing] *existence ceases. Due to the cessation of existence, birth ceases. Due to the cessation of birth, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental suffering, and*

despair cease. Thus there is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering. [And so on for the other four aggregates.]'[122]

The following, closely related, practice is the observation of the six internal and external sense bases, and the fetters that bind these together.

'Monks, develop samādhi. A monk with samadhi under-stands in accordance with reality. What does he understand in accordance with reality? He understands: "The eye is impermanent. Visible forms are impermanent. Eye-consciousness is impermanent. Eye contact is impermanent. Feeling arisen due to eye contact ... is impermanent. [And so on for the ear, etc.]'[123]

The above passage stops short of connecting impermanence with the fetters of defilement. The following passage makes the connection explicit.

'What, monks, is the origin of suffering? Dependent on the eye and visible forms arises eye-consciousness. The working together of the three is contact. Due to contact as condition, there is feeling. Due to feeling as condition, there is craving. Due to craving as condition, there is grasping. Due to grasping as condition, there is [ongoing] *existence. Due to existence as condition, there is birth. Due to birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental suffering, and despair come to be. Thus there is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This monks, is the origin of suffering.* [And so on for the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.]

'What, monks, is the end of suffering? Dependent on the eye and visible forms arises eye consciousness. The working together of the three is contact. Due to contact as condition, there is feeling. Due to feeling as condition, there is craving. But due to the remainderless fading away and cessation of that very same craving, there is the cessation of grasping. Due to the cessation of grasping, [ongoing] existence ceases. Due to the cessation of existence, birth ceases. Due to the cessation of birth, aging, and death, sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental suffering, and despair cease. Thus there is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This, monks, is the end of suffering. [And so on for the ear, etc.] [124]

The contemplation of *dhammas* also includes the contemplation of the seven enlightenment factors - mindfulness, investigation of *dhammas*, energy, rapture, tranquility, *samādhi*, and equanimity, discussed in more detail below - and their 'fulfillment by development.'

The final section is the contemplation of the four noble truths.

'These four noble truths are the Dhamma taught by me which is un-refuted, undefiled, blameless, not criticized by intelligent contemplatives and brahmans.... For what reason was this said? Dependent on the six elements [earth, water, fire, air, space, consciousness] there is the reincarnation of the embryo. When there is this reincarnation, there is mentality and physical form. Due to mentality and physical form as condition there are the six sense bases. Due to the six sense bases as condition, there is contact. Due to contact as condition, there is feeling. It is for one who feels that I declare: "This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering; this is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering." '[125]

The four noble truths are described in detail in the *Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta*.[126] The first noble truth is the various kinds of suffering headed by birth, aging, and death; the second is 'that craving which generates repeated existence'; while the third is the ending of that very same craving. The fourth noble truth, the way of practice, is the noble eightfold path as detailed above, including the four *jhānas* as right *samādhi*.

INSIGHT

1. *Internal and external*

Each exercise included in the four establishings of mindfulness concludes with a passage describing three aspects of insight development. First, one contemplates 'within oneself' and 'externally.'

'Here, good man, a monk abides contemplating a body in the body within himself - ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having removed desire and aversion for the world. As he abides thus he becomes concentrated therein with right *samādhi*, with right clarity. Rightly concentrated and clear therein, he gives rise to knowledge and vision of the bodies of others externally. [And so on for feelings, mind, and *dhammas*.]'[127]

2.1 *Impermanence*

The second aspect of insight development is the contemplation of the principles of origination and dissolution. In the second noble truth and dependent origination, origin refers to how, fueled by desire for the phenomena of experience, one creates *kamma*, which propels consciousness into 'appearance in repeated existence in a womb in the future',[128] that is, rebirth. Cessation refers to cutting off the supply of fuel for the generation of new

suffering in the future. 'Ending' (*atthagama*) or 'cessation' (*nirodha*) mean 'altogether completely in every way entirely non-existing whatever and wherever.'[129] This is carefully distinguished from mere change of state.

'There are these three characteristics of conditioned phenomena: arising is found; falling is found; change while persisting is found.'[130]

Despite the best attempts of the commentarial theorists, this statement remains incompatible with any explanation of impermanence in terms of momentariness. An 'ultimate' unit of time is a conditioned phenomenon. It therefore begins, changes in the middle, and ends. But the 'sub-moments' are also conditioned, so they too must have a beginning, middle, and end, and so on ad infinitum. Moreover, if the beginning has a beginning, middle, and end; and the middle and the end also have a beginning, middle, and end, the distinction between these events is not evident - the theory lacks explanatory power.

Similar considerations apply not only in the 'horizontal' dimension of impermanence, but in the 'vertical' dimension of not-self as well. According to the commentaries, the so-called 'person' can be fully analyzed at the ultimate level into a finite set of mental and physical constituents called '*dhammas'*, with no further analysis possible. This is compared with breaking a vehicle down into its parts. But this example reveals the flaw in attempting to pin down ontological primacy to any particular level of reality. The vehicle considered in one way is a whole, but considered in another way is a part of a greater whole – 'traffic', for example. And the parts of the vehicle considered in one way are parts, but considered in another way are wholes - a whole wheel, for example - made up of their constituents. Any mental or physical event – '*dhamma'* - is a conditioned ('compounded') phenomenon. It can therefore be analyzed into its constituents. But the constituents, too, are conditioned and therefore analyzable - again we disappear into infinity. Just as any 'ultimate' moment of time turns out to be a complex, evolving process, any 'ultimate' constituent of being turns out to be a complex, conditioned conglomerate.

Impermanence and not-self no more imply ultimate units of time or being than conditionality implies an ultimate first cause. No such theories are found in or derivable from the *suttas*. '*Dhamma'* as used in the suttas does not refer to discrete entities existing in their own right, but to aspects of lived experience. The trend towards treating '*dhammas'* in terms of an immutable, definitive set of highly specialized doctrinal categories may have had the effect of 'objectifying' the domain of insight, distracting attention from the essence of awareness. Venerable *Ñāṇamoli*, the translator of the *Visuddhimagga*, once commented that by reversing the invariable sutta presentation of the five aggregates, the *Visuddhimagga* when describing consciousness in fact

mostly deals with the other aggregates. This trend might be interpreted as the theoretical counterpart of the diminution of the role of the pure consciousness of *samadhi* in the development of insight. The following passage gives a more typical example of the *suttas'* pragmatic approach to impermanence.

'Long ago, monks, there was a teacher called Araka, a ford-crosser, free from lust for sensual pleasures, with many hundreds of disciples. Araka the teacher taught Dhamma to his disciples thus: "Short is the life of humans, limited and trifling, with much suffering, much despair. Wake up by using your mind! Do good! Live the holy life! There is none born who does not die! Just as a drop of dew on the tip of a blade of grass when the sun rises.... Just as a bubble in the water appears when it rains.... Just as a line drawn on water with a stick.... Just as a mountain stream, traveling far, fast flowing, sweeping all before it, never pausing for a moment, a second, an instant, but ever going on, rolling on, surging on.... Just as a man might form a gob of spit on the tip of his tongue and spit it out easily.... Just like a lump of meat thrown on an iron griddle which has been heated all day.... Just like a cow being led to the slaughter, with each step she is closer to being killed, closer to death; in the same way the life of humans is like a cow to be slaughtered, limited and trifling, with much suffering, much despair. Wake up by using your mind! Do good! Live the holy life! There is none born who does not die!"

'Now at that time, monks, the life span of humans was sixty thousand years, and girls were marriageable at five hundred years. Humans had only six afflictions: cold, heat, hunger, thirst, excrement, and urine. And yet even though humans were of such long life, duration, and little affliction, still Araka the teacher taught Dhamma in that way.... But now who lives long lives but a hundred years or a little more.... I have done for you what should be done by a teacher seeking the welfare of his disciples out of compassion. Here, monks, are roots of trees, here are empty huts. Practice jhāna, monks! Do not be negligent! Do not regret it later! This is our instruction to you.'[131]

The distinction between the Buddha's teaching and Araka's would seem to be not in the conception of impermanence as such, but in its consistent application to worlds other than the human, including the Brahma realms to which Araka no doubt aspired. The impermanence of the body and the mind are contrasted thus:

'An ordinary unlearned person could experience repulsion, fading away, and release from this body made up of the four great elements. For what reason? Because the increase, decrease, taking up, and laying down of this body is seen....

'An ordinary unlearned person is not able to experience repulsion, fading away, and release from that which is called "mind" (citta), or "cognition" (mano), or "consciousness" (viññāna). For what reason? For a long time this has been clung to, appropriated, and misapprehended: "This is mine, I am this, this is my self"....

'It would be better for an ordinary unlearned person to regard this body made up of the four great elements as self, rather than the mind. For what reason? This body is seen to last for ... up to a hundred years or more. But that which is called "mind", or "cognition", or "consciousness"; by day and by night it rises as one thing and ceases as another, just as a monkey journeying through the forest grabs a branch, and having released it, grabs another....

'Therein a learned noble disciple carefully attends just to dependent origination....'[132]

The ordinary person's release from the body would be *jhāna*. They can then see the mind, but without understanding dependent origination they cannot see past it. 'Repulsion' towards the mind is the exclusive province of the noble ones, and therefore pertains only to the noble paths.[133] This is in line with such stock phrases as: 'Seeing thus, the learned noble disciple becomes repulsed toward physical form [etc.].' Rise and fall in *satipatthāna* are similarly described in terms of dependent origination, as a careful examination of the following clauses will show.

'The body originates due to the origination of nutriment; the body ends due to the cessation of nutriment. Feelings originate due to the origination of contact; feelings end due to the cessation of contact. The mind originates due to the origination of mentality and physical form; the mind ends due to the cessation of mentality and physical form. Dhammas originate due to the origination of attention; dhammas end due to the cessation of attention.'[134]

2.2 *Impermanence of the Body*

'Nutriment' here is material food.

'Just as if a painter or an artist with paint or resin of turmeric, blue, or crimson were to create an image of a man or a woman on a well-polished board or a canvas; in just the same way, if there is lust, relishing, and craving for material food, consciousness becomes fixated there and grows. Where consciousness is fixated and

growing, there is the reincarnation of mentality and physical form ... the growth of conceptual activities ... appearance in repeated existence in the future ... birth, aging, and death in the future ... that is sorrowful, depressing, and full of despair, I say.'[135]

2.3 *Impermanence of Feelings*

'Contact' is the normal condition for feeling in dependent origination (and is also the condition for perception and conceptual activities).[136]

[When contemplation of the five material elements is completed:] *'Further, monk, there remains only consciousness, purified and bright. And what does one cognize with that consciousness? One cognizes: "pleasure" – "pain" – "neither pain nor pleasure."*

Dependent on a contact to be felt as pleasant arises pleasant feeling. Feeling that pleasant feeling, one understands: "I feel a pleasant feeling". One understands: "Due to the cessation of just that contact to be felt as pleasant, the corresponding pleasant feeling ... ceases and stills". [And so on for painful and neutral feelings.]

'Just as from the contact and friction of two sticks, heat is born, fire appears, and due to the separation and laying down of those same two sticks that corresponding heat ceases and stills....

'And further there remains only equanimity, purified and bright, soft, workable, and radiant. Suppose a skilled goldsmith or goldsmith's apprentice were to prepare a furnace and heat the crucible, take some gold in a pair of tongs and place it in the crucible. Then from time to time he would blow air, from time to time he would sprinkle water, and from time to time he would watch over with equanimity. The gold would become refined, well refined, thoroughly refined, cleansed, rid of dross, soft, workable, and radiant, and could be used for whatever kind of adornment be desired, whether bracelets, earrings, necklaces, or golden garlands. So too, there remains only equanimity, purified and bright, soft, workable, and radiant.

'He understands thus: "If I were to apply this equanimity so pure and bright to the base of infinite space ... the base of infinite consciousness ... the base of nothingness ... the base of neither perception nor non-perception, and develop my mind accordingly, this equanimity of mine, dependent on that, grasping that as its

fuel, would endure for a long time [Rebirth in these realms is measured in tens of thousands of aeons.] *....” He understands thus: “That is conditioned* [by conceptual activities]*”*

‘He does not form any volition or act of will for existence or non-existence.... He does not grasp at anything in the world. Not grasping, he is not anxious. Not being anxious, he personally attains final Nibbana. He understands: “Birth is destroyed; the holy life has been lived; what was to be done has been done; there is no returning to this state of existence.”

‘If he feels a pleasant ... painful ... neither painful nor pleasant feeling he understands: “That is impermanent...” “That is not adhered to...” “That is not relished...” He feels it as one detached. Feeling a feeling of the ending of the body he understands: “I am feeling a feeling of the ending of the body.” Feeling a feeling of the ending of life he understands: “I am feeling a feeling of the ending of life.” He understands: “With the breaking up of the body, at the end of life, all that is felt, not being relished, will become cool right here.”

‘Just as a lamp burning dependent on oil and wick, with the finishing of that oil and wick, without any other fuel, would be quenched with no fuel ....’[137]

2.4 *Impermanence of the Mind*

'Mentality' is feeling, perception, volition, contact, and attention. ‘Physical form’ is the elements of earth, water, fire, and air, as well as derived physical form.[138] These correspond with the first four of the five aggregates (physical form, feeling, perception, conceptual activities), the ‘stations for conscious-ness’.[139] They support consciousness (*viññāna*, here equivalent to ‘mind’, *citta*) in a number of ways. Physical form directly supports consciousness as the external objects of the senses, as well as in the subtle ‘forms’ - images, etc. - which, though appearing in mind-consciousness, retain certain physical qualities, such as color and shape. In addition, physical form makes up the body, which provides a roost for consciousness. The components of mentality can support consciousness directly as object, or indirectly by performing essential cognitive functions. These factors weld the diverse elements of experience into the elaborate superstructures of language and concepts, an aspect prominent in the *Pali* word for mentality - *nama*, literally ‘name’. *Nama* in the suttas excludes consciousness, and so is not a blanket term for the four mental aggregates. All this is external, or objective, to consciousness, defining, determining, and delimiting subjective experience. This interdependent dualism forms the invariable structure of experience from the time of conception throughout life and beyond.

'If, Ānanda, consciousness were not reincarnated in the mother's womb, would mentality and physical form take shape in the mother's womb?'

'No, Bhante.'

'If, Ānanda, consciousness having been reincarnated in the mother's womb were to be miscarried, would mentality and physical form appear into this state of existence?'

'No, Bhante.'

'If, Ānanda, the consciousness of a young boy or girl were to be cut off, would mentality and physical form attain to growth, increase, and maturity?'

'No, Bhante.'...

'If, Ānanda, consciousness were not fixated in mentality and physical form, would the production of birth, aging, death, and the origin of suffering in the future be found?'

'No, Bhante.'[140]

It is simply the nature of the mind to pass away, but it is not content to leave no trace; instead, the inner world of the mind becomes amplified through the force of *kamma* into the worlds of rebirth, also called 'stations for consciousness'.[141] This is a characteristically Buddhist expression of one of the universal spiritual insights: microcosm and macrocosm. The mind is the conceiver, the mother of the 'self'. Like any good mother she dotes on her offspring, the bewitching phantasmagoria on the mind's inner screen, forgetting that all those fancyings, imaginings, and schemings are nothing more than the projections of her own delusion. She is like beautiful, pitiful Narcissus, stung by Cupid's arrow and hopelessly enchanted by his own image in the water that, when he bends to embrace it, vanishes into ripples. The concept of self in turn services his mother like a loving son, fertilizing the mind's seeds to ensure an abundant crop of suffering in times to come. It is this idea of self which sticks a label saying 'I, me, mine' on the diverse items of baggage in experience, which one then feels obliged to claim and lug around. Moment to moment, year to year, life to life, the baggage changes

but the message on the labels stays the same. Thus the incestuous fascination of the mind with its makings is the thread which weaves the fabric of time.

'Thus far, Ānanda, could one be born, age, die, pass away, and be reborn; thus far is the range of designation; thus far is the range of language; thus far is the range of concepts; thus far is the domain of understanding; thus far whirls the round for describing this state [of existence]*, that is: mentality and physical form together with consciousness*.'[142]

Some of the most refined concepts postulate a transcendent reunion of the self and the mind, conceived as some kind of 'cosmic awareness', 'ground of being', or 'original mind'. Yet even this essentially Oedipal union is seen through by the stream-enterer who, disowning the illegitimate progeny of 'self', has embarked on the journey beyond the end of the world: the ultimate cessation of consciousness with all its conceptual baggage.

'Just as when ghee or oil is burnt, neither ashes nor soot are to be found, so too when Dabba Mallaputta rose into the air and, seated cross legged in the sky, attained final Nibbāna after attaining to and withdrawing from the fire element, his body burnt up and neither ashes nor soot were to be found.'

And the Blessed One, realizing the meaning of that, was then inspired to utter:

'The body broke up, perception ceased
Feelings all disappeared
Conceptual activities were calmed
And consciousness came to an end.'[143]

2.5 *Impermanence of Dhammas*

'All *dhammas* are produced by attention.'[144] Attention as basis for *dhammas* here emphasizes the pre-eminent role of wisdom in the final *satipatthāna*, as also in the equivalent final four steps of mindfulness of breathing. Nor should it be ignored that the Buddha regularly prefaced his *Dhamma* teaching with: 'Pay attention!' Attention has the fundamental role of directing the mind skillfully or unskillfully in any situation.

'Due to not paying attention to dhammas unfit for attention and to paying attention to dhammas fit for attention, un-arisen poisons do not arise and arisen poisons are abandoned. He pays attention to the root: "This is suffering".... "This is the origin of suffering".... "This is the cessation of suffering".... "This is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering". Paying attention in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: identity view, doubt, and misapprehension of virtue and vows.'[145]

It is of no little significance that just the consistent application of common sense to spiritual problems lies at the heart of the Buddha's teaching. Before the Buddha appeared on the scene, the prevailing religious observance lay at the furthest possible remove from common sense - the sacrifice. The intimacy between birth and death is obvious, since all living things subsist on the corpses of other living things: Mother Nature is fertilized with the blood of her own children. The unquestioned addiction to creation of more life demands the creation of ever more death, and so anything from grains to ghee, from goats to elephants, from virgins to kings was enthusiastically offered up. The solace of this symbolic identification with the cycle of life and death was so meaningful that many of the human victims were volunteers. There is a logic at work here, a logic of correlation not causation, of perception not knowledge; the appalling, inescapable logic of the world, perfectly embodied in the sacrifice: death is the condition for birth. It is therefore the most seemingly mundane and obvious of the Buddha's insights, which is in fact the most radical and revolutionary.

'And then when Vipassī Bodhisatta had entered his dwelling, living privately on retreat, the reflection occurred to him: "Alas, the world has fallen into misery, in that it is born, ages, dies, passes away, and re-arises, and does not understand the escape from this suffering, from aging and death. Might there be found an escape from this suffering, from aging and death?" Then it occurred to Vipassī Bodhisatta: "When what exists is there aging and death? What is the condition for aging and death?" Then Vipassī Bodhisatta had the penetration by understanding due to paying attention to the root: "When birth exists there is aging and death. Birth is the condition for aging and death." '[146]

All the factors (*dhammas*) of dependent origination are likewise penetrated by paying attention to the root. By pointing out the suffering inherent in birth, the Buddha sets the tone for all Buddhist theory and practice, seeing the calming, stilling, ending of creation as true happiness.

'What nine dhammas are very helpful? The nine dhammas rooted in paying attention to the root. In one paying attention to the root, gladness is born. In one who is glad, rapture is born. In one with rapturous mind, the body becomes tranquil. One with tranquil body feels bliss. In one who is blissful, the mind enters samādhi.

With mind in samādhi, one knows and sees in accordance with reality. Knowing and seeing in accordance with reality, one is repulsed. Being repulsed, lust fades away. Due to fading away, one is released. These are the nine dhammas that are very helpful.'[147]

This passage suggests the meaning of 'paying attention to the root': a systematic, thoroughgoing inquiry, not distracted by superficial issues, which focuses awareness precisely where it counts, staying at that point until it opens up to wisdom, and the mind moves not onwards, but inwards; not from one leaf to another to another, but from a leaf to a branch to the trunk and all the way down to the roots.

2. *Knowledge*

The third aspect of insight development involves the establishing of mindfulness only for a measure of knowledge and mindfulness. Venerable Anuruddha details the kinds of knowledge obtainable by satipatthana. These knowledges are said to be 'for one with *samādhi*, not for one without *samādhi*.'[148]

'It is from the development and making much of these four establishings of mindfulness that I have attained such great direct knowledge.... I directly know a thousand worlds....' 'I recollect a thousand aeons....' 'I wield the various kinds of psychic powers....' 'I have the purified divine ear, which surpasses the human....' 'I understand the minds of other beings....' 'I understand in accordance with reality the possible as possible, and the impossible as impossible....' 'I understand in accordance with reality the fruits of undertaking actions past, future, and present....' '....the goals of all paths of practice....' ....'the many and various elements....' '....the various dispositions of beings....' '...the spiritual faculties of other beings....' '....the defilement, cleansing, and emergence of jhānas, liberations, samādhi, and attainments....' 'I recollect various past lives....' ....'I understand with the divine eye how beings pass on according to their actions....' '....I enter and abide, due to the evaporation of the poisons, in the poison-free release of heart, release by understanding, having witnessed it here and now with my own direct knowledge.'[149]

4. Independence

The insight section of the *Satipatthāna Sutta* concludes with the following statement:

'One abides independent, not grasping at anything in the world.'[150]

For advanced practitioners this is taught as the comprehensive detachment from any aspect of existence.[151] But another aspect of 'independence' is particularly relevant to stream-entry.

'The four *satipatthānas* are taught and described by me for the abandoning and surmounting of these dependencies on views connected with former times and dependencies on views connected with times to come.'[152]

These passages may perhaps be illustrated in the light of the famous *Kaccāyana Sutta*. This *sutta* links the same terms - dependence, grasping, world - with the contemplation of impermanence to explain the knowledge of stream-entry as a radical paradigm shift, overturning philosophical assumptions so fundamental that they are rarely even acknowledged, still less questioned.

' "Right view, right view" is said. Now what, Bhante, does "right view" refer to?'

Kaccāyana, this world is for the most part dependent on the dualism of existingness and non-existingness. One who sees the origin of the world with right understanding in accordance with reality has no notion of "non-existingness" regarding the world. One who sees the cessation of the world with right understanding in accordance with reality has no notion of "existingness" regarding the world.

'This world is for the most part shackled by approaching, grasping, and insistence. But for that approaching, grasping, standpoint of the heart, insistence, and inherent compulsion one does not approach, grasp, or take a stand on the idea "my self". What arises is just suffering arising; what ceases is just suffering ceasing. One is not uncertain and does not doubt; one has knowledge regarding this which is not reliant on another. This is what "right view" refers to.'

' "All exists": this is one extreme. "All does not exist": this is the second extreme. Avoiding both these extremes, the Tathagata teaches Dhamma by the middle method. [That is, by dependent origination.]'[153]

The extremes of 'existingness' and 'non-existingness' refer not to the simple idea that things do or don't exist, but to that attitude which assumes these concepts to interpret the world. 'Existingness' is the idea that things exist independently, in and of themselves. 'Non-existence' does not seem to imply total absence, but is a regular synonym for 'cessation'; here however implying that such self-existing entities disappear without trace,

with no continuity of cause and effect.[154] The Buddha's position regarding existence is quite clear. While he denies that there are any eternally existing phenomena, or that entities vanish without trace, he asserts that the five aggregates exist as impermanent processes driven by conditions.[155]

These theories, far from being abstruse abstractions of the intellectual dilettantes, are right at home here in the world of beings. In Buddhism, the 'world', or the 'all', also means 'that in the world by which one is a perceiver and conceiver of the world',[156] that is, the six internal sense bases. These internal sense bases only operate when stimulated by the six kinds of external sense objects, with mind objects as sixth. The world of experience therefore depends on the duality of inner and outer.[157] The inner world is the nucleus around which orbits the outside world as reported by the external sense objects. So most beings conceive themselves at the center of the world. While relying on six-sense experience it is impossible to go beyond the world; wherever we go we take our world with us.[158] Further: how we relate to or conceive the world of phenomenological experience is tangled up with how we conceive ourselves. If the phenomena of experience exist in their own right, not relying on conditions, and hence not subject to cessation with the cessation of conditions, our own self, the hub of the world, must likewise exist externally. But if the phenomena of experience just vanish leaving no trace, our self too must be cut off and annihilated. At this point philosophical musings assume a stark urgency. The fear of death - the basic motivation for spiritual practice - arises from the conception of a self (i.e. grasping, *upādāna*) existing in time (i.e. existence, *bhāva*). It depends on the ability to infer beyond the immediate sphere of experience, to imagine that one may or may not be able to have more of this pleasure - or more of this pain - in the future. The views of eternalism and annihilationism thus interpret lived experience in relation to the destiny of the individual. The eternalist longs for birth without death, an unnatural impossibility, while the annihilationist, intent on gratification here and now, has destroyed any possibility of transcendence through spiritual practice.

We may postulate an approximate correlation between the two dualities, that of existence and non-existence, and that of inner and outer. One who emphasizes the inner world, a 'spiritual' or 'religious' person, an 'introvert', is likely to hold an eternalist view, such as of an eternally existing soul. One who emphasizes the outer world, an 'objective' or 'scientific' person, an 'extrovert', is likely to lean towards such opinions as that the mind is merely an emergent property of matter or behavior and will disappear at death. But since these views only allow part of experience, they fail to account for the manifoldness of the world. The theory of a creator God, for example, is notoriously unable to explain the fact of suffering. Any such eternalist view encounters similar dilemmas. Placing the highest spiritual good, conceived as god, soul, mind, or whatever, in any kind of relation with anything in the world soils what should be free of suffering with what must be bound

up with suffering. Falling back on non-existence solves nothing. The social and environmental devastation accompanying the growth of a sophisticated technological science with little ethical or spiritual dimension is a cogent reminder that external development fails to meaningfully address the problem of suffering. Such inadequacies generate tension between theory and reality, undermining the solace afforded by these views.

Interestingly, the *sutta* does not say that the world usually depends on one or other of the extremes, but on the dualism of both. This suggests that the fact of dualism itself, inherent in the structure of experience, is even more fundamental than its expression as particular views. Dualism implies a division, a marking-off, a boundary. Language delineates this boundary, making a measurement. 'This' implies 'not that'; 'now' implies 'not then; I implies 'not you'. This dualistic paradigm, embedded in the building blocks of language, is reflected in successively more sophisticated linguistic structures, finally emerging as full-blown conceptual theorems. The views tend to be framed in terms of one or other of the extremes; but it is difficult to deny one necessary half of experience. One of the blessings of stream-entry is the relief from such tensions, as one's whole psychic structure is attuned to one coherent worldview. This occurs when the duality of the inner and outer sense bases is seen as neither existing intrinsically nor vanishing without trace but as coming to be dependent on conditions.

'All these contemplatives and brahmans who hold settled views about the past and the future, and assert on sixty-two grounds various conceptual theorems referring to the past and the future, experience these feelings only by repeated contacts through the six bases of contact. Due to feeling as condition, there arises in them craving. Due to craving as condition, there is grasping. Due to grasping as condition, there is [ongoing] *existence. Due to existence as condition, there is birth. Due to birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental suffering, and despair come to be. When a monk understands in accordance with reality the origin, ending, gratification, danger, and escape regarding the six bases of contact, then he understands what lies beyond all these views*.'[159]

The various views about the world do not arise all at once as full-blown theories, but emerge gradually. The initial encounter with the world seems innocuous enough, but the gratification sets up a desire, then an expectation, then a demand, and finally an unquestioned and absolute identification of a 'self' with that experience. But it is right at that point that the most radical tenet of the Dhamma turns the world on its head. That very 'self' in which one invests such hopes, from which one derives such solace, is nothing but suffering through and through. But suffering is itself a conditioned phenomenon, so it too must pass away. The contemplation of impermanence, by examining the world from the inside, building up a view from experience

rather than imposing it from preconceptions, rejects all simplistic abstractions. It has nothing to fear from any kind of experience.

The origin of the world is the origin of suffering, which is 'that craving which generates repeated existence'. Understanding this, one could never commit the fallacy of annihilationism. The cessation of the world is the cessation of suffering, which is the realization of *Nibbāna* as the ending of craving. Understanding this, one could never commit the fallacy of eternalism.

The contemplation of impermanence by way of dependent origination not only avoids the extremes of theory, but also the extremes of practice. By placing the conditioned, fickle, yet tamable mind at the center of the world, dependent origination avoids the complacency of indulgence and the despair of self-torment. The twofold extremes of 'existingness' and 'non-existingness' call for a twofold meditative response: *samatha* and *vipassanā*. *Samatha* is a joyous plunge into the inner waters of the mind, and together with the dissolution of the five external senses dissolves the cynical reductionism which insists that only externals are real. *Vipassanā* in its turn discloses the radical discontinuity of consciousness, dispelling the smugly naive belief in an eternal soul. Since it is only suffering that ceases, the gradual stilling of activities is experienced as exquisite bliss by the meditator. One can at last be truly independent, as one experiences for oneself the fading away of suffering. Faith in this process of peace enables the meditator to loosen, then untie the shackles binding the mind to the world, free of the fear that there could be any kind of existing 'self' to be destroyed. This is the right view of the stream-enterer.

'Activities are impermanent
Their nature's to rise and fall
Having arisen, they cease
Their stilling is bliss'[160]

Conclusion: Satipatthāna and Insight

Contemplation of rise and fall refers not to an objective, pseudo-scientific scrutiny of phenomena 'out there', independent of the observer, but to seeing the way the mind entangles itself in the world, altering what is known by the very act of knowing. This implies that it is the understanding of the mind itself, the faculty of knowing, which is the crucial element in the delicate process of disentanglement. Mind consciousness is the resort of the five senses, the functional center coordinating experience, and the subjective sense of individual identity linking

life to life. While *samādhi* plays an important role in all aspects of insight, its 'home base' is the contemplation of mind. So *samādhi* is the straight road from virtue to wisdom, focusing attention right at the heart of the matter and providing a perspective for the other aspects of insight.

RIGHT *SAMĀDHI*

'On the occasion when a noble disciple intends to go forth from the home life into homelessness, he is like the celestial coral tree of the Tāvatimsa deities when the leaves turn brown.

'On the occasion when the noble disciple shaves off hair and beard, puts on the dyed robe and goes forth from the home life into homelessness, he is like the celestial coral tree ... when the leaves fall.

'On the occasion when the noble disciple ... enters and abides in the first jhāna, he is like the celestial coral tree ... when it is budding.

'On the occasion when the noble disciple ... enters and abides in the second jhāna, he is like the celestial coral tree ... when the shoots appear.

'On the occasion when the noble disciple ... enters and abides in the third jhāna, he is like the celestial coral tree ... when the blossoms form.

'On the occasion when the noble disciple ... enters and abides in the fourth jhāna, he is like the celestial coral tree ... when the flowers are like the red lotus.

'On the occasion when the noble disciple, due to the evaporation of the poisons, enters and abides in the poison-free release of heart, release by wisdom, having witnessed it with his own direct knowledge, he is like the celestial coral tree of the Tāvatimsa deities when it is in full bloom.

'On that occasion the earth deities proclaim the news: "The venerable one of such and such a name, the student of such and such a venerable one, who went forth from such and such a village or town, has witnessed ... the evaporation of the poisons!"... And right at that moment, that instant, the news soars up

[through the various orders of deities] *as far as the Brahma realm. Such is the majesty of one who has evaporated the poisons*.'[161]

Right *samādhi* brings together the other seven path factors, issuing in right knowledge and release.

'How well described by the Blessed One who knows and sees, the arahant, the fully enlightened Buddha are the seven requisites of samadhi for the development and fulfillment of right samādhi. What seven? Right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness. One-pointedness of mind with these seven factors as requisites is called noble right samādhi with its vital conditions and with its requisites.'[162]

I take 'one-pointedness of mind' in the context of *jhāna* to imply singleness both of consciousness and of object. That is, *jhāna* occurs based on mind-consciousness only, without the diversity of sense consciousness; and this mind-consciousness knows just one thing. 'Point' (or 'acme') has superlative connotations difficult to capture in translation. It should not be taken to imply that *jhānas* are a cramped, narrow state of mind; rather, they are regularly described as 'vast, exalted, measureless'.

Doubt sometimes arises as to whether or not all activity of the five external senses must cease in *jhāna*. From the evidence of the *suttas*, this certainly seems to be the case. The *jhāna* formula begins with 'quite secluded from sensual pleasures'. *Kāma* can, in a typical *Pāli* idiom, refer to either the inner attraction to the senses, or to the sense objects themselves. Here, the following phrase 'secluded from unbeneficial qualities' obviously includes sensual desire, so 'secluded from sensual pleasures' should refer to, or at least include, the sense objects. The *suttas* regularly contrast the plurality of sense experience with the unity of *jhāna*, and so the Buddha said that: 'Noise is a thorn to the first *jhāna*'.[163] The meaning of this statement can be understood in the light of the statements which follow: 'Initial and sustained application of mind are a thorn to the second *jhāna*. Rapture is a thorn to the third *jhāna*', and so on. Initial and sustained application of mind are incompatible with the second *jhāna*, cannot exist in it, and if they arise they signify that one has fallen away from second *jhāna*. So too, sound - and by extension the other sense objects - are incompatible with the first *jhāna*, cannot exist in it, and if they arise they signify that one has fallen away from first *jhāna*. The following passage bears on this question.

And then Venerable Mahā Moggallāna addressed the monks: 'Here, friends, when I had attained imperturbable samadhi on the bank of the Sappinikā River, I heard the sound of elephants plunging in, crossing

over, and trumpeting.' [On which the Buddha commented:] *'The meaning is that that samādhi was not fully purified. Moggallāna spoke truthfully*.'[164]

This episode presumably refers to Venerable Mahā Moggallāna's brief but troubled period of striving for enlightenment. 'Imperturbable' usually means at least fourth *jhāna*. If hearing sounds in *samādhi* were normal, no explanation would be required.

The four *jhānas* may be regarded as the ultimate manifestation of the psychology of bliss. The first jhana occurs with the ending of the five external senses and the five hindrances. Relieved of these burdens, the mind is buoyant and at ease, solely preoccupied with one object, the subtle reflection of the mind derived from the basic meditation subject. Because of the nearness of sense activity and defilement, however, the mind must still actively apply itself to that object, first placing then pressing. This pressing causes the object to recede slightly, so the mind must be re-placed, and so on in an automatic process which causes a slight ripple or wavering in awareness. As the mind gains more inner confidence it no longer needs to apply itself, but can simply be at one with the object. The pulsing effect fades away, leaving the clear stillness characteristic of the second *jhāna*. The third *jhāna* is marked by a maturing of the emotional response to blissful feeling. The refined thrill of rapture deepens into the impartial watchfulness of equanimity. Mindfulness and clear comprehension, though like equanimity present from the first *jhāna*, come to the fore as one is fully immersed in bliss without being elated by it. But even that purified bliss exerts the softest of pulls and must be let go as the mind settles down into the fourth *jhāna* - pure bright awareness. Equanimity is now present as both affective tone and emotional attitude, allowing mindfulness to reach its maximum clarity and power.

The relative stability of the four *jhānas* can be gauged from the duration of the rebirth they generate. First *jhāna* - one aeon; second *jhāna* - two aeons; third *jhāna* - four aeons; fourth *jhāna* - five hundred aeons.[165] The inconceivable duration of these rebirths is a powerful affirmation of the supremacy of good over evil - it seems that the maximum period of rebirth in hell is 'only' one aeon.

Right *samādhi* is further described as having five factors: 'suffusion with rapture, suffusion with bliss, suffusion with heart, suffusion with light, it is the basis of reviewing'.[166] The 'basis of reviewing' is *samādhi* as a basis for the investigative reviewing knowledge developed upon emerging from *jhāna*.

'Just as if, monks, one should review another, or one standing should review one sitting, or one sitting should review one lying down, in the same way a monk has the basis of reviewing well apprehended, well attended, well borne in mind, well penetrated with understanding.'[167]

According to the brahman student Subha:

'I do not see such a fulfilled noble aggregate of samādhi outside of Buddhism amongst other contemplatives and brahmans.'[168]

It is associated with five knowledges:

'Monks, develop samādhi that is measureless, masterly, and mindful. When samādhi is developed that is measureless, masterly, and mindful, five personal knowledges arise. What five? The personal knowledge arises: "This samādhi is blissful now and results in bliss in the future." ... "This samādhi is noble and spiritual." ..."This samādhi is not cultivated by bad men." ... "This samādhi is peaceful and refined, tranquil, unified, not actively controlled or constrained." ... "I enter and emerge mindfully from this samādhi".'[169]

These descriptions neither imply nor are congruent with the concepts of 'momentary *samādhi*' or transcendental 'path-moment' *samādhi*. They simply refer to the practice of *jhāna* by one developing the noble path.

The conception of the path as support for noble right *samādhi* might be described in this way. The course of meditation for one on the noble path has been smoothed by the right view that has eliminated or lessened certain defilements, such as doubt or sensual desire, according to the stage of progress. Furthermore, at the actual time of developing *samādhi*, the previously developed right view manifests as a clear awareness of what is beneficial and what is unbeneficial, as well as an understanding of the causal relationships between mental factors leading to peace of mind. The path factor of right intention manifests as undistracted application to the meditation object, while the previously purified virtue gives rise to the gladness of non-remorse. Together with energy and mindfulness, these factors lead to *jhāna*. These *jhānas* as noble right *samādhi* itself are similar in their basic functions and natures to *jhāna* practiced outside the eightfold path. However, due to the exceptional purity of the factors instrumental in their attaining, they are singularly pellucid and tranquil, yielding an intuitive flowering of wisdom. Upon emerging mindfully, the noble one will review the *jhāna* with

wisdom. They will see that the bliss in that *jhāna* arose from letting go, and that continuing that process of letting go will culminate in the ultimate bliss of *Nibbāna*.

Noble right *samādhi* closes the circle: although the last factor of the path, its fruit is the perfection of the first factor, the right view of the stream-enterer. The path includes the truths, the truths include the path. The *Dhamma* is like a hologram image: when it is broken, each fragment contains not a part, but the whole of the original image.

'Monks, develop *samādhi*. A monk who has *samādhi* understands in accordance with reality. What does he understand in accordance with reality? He understands: This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering; this is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering.'[170]

2. The Bases For Psychic Power

These are: enthusiasm, energy, mind, and inquiry.

'Dependent on enthusiasm [... energy ... mind ... inquiry]*, one gains samadhi, one gains one-pointedness of mind; when endowed with active striving, this is the base of psychic power consisting of enthusiasm* [... energy ... mind ... inquiry].'[171]

Thus these are various mental qualities which predominate in gaining *samādhi*. 'Enthusiasm' is a wholesome mode of desire; not the worldly desire to 'be' or 'have', but especially in this context of samadhi, the desire to know. Both enthusiasm and energy are compassed within the path factor of right effort in its role as 'requisite of *samādhi*'. 'Inquiry' is wisdom in its mode of investigation into the reasons for progress or decline in meditation. 'Mind' here denotes samadhi itself. The word 'mind' (*citta*) is a common synonym for samadhi. It is not defined further here, but as it is a basis for psychic power, there is no doubt as to the meaning.

'That a monk without refined, peaceful, tranquil, and unified samādhi could wield the various kinds of psychic power ... or witness the evaporation of the poisons: that is not possible.'[172]

An interesting analysis details the manner of developing all four of these factors.

'Here, monks, a monk develops the basis of psychic power consisting of samādhi due to enthusiasm [... energy ... mind ... inquiry] *and active striving, thinking: "Thus my enthusiasm will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither constricted within* [due to sloth and torpor] *nor distracted externally* [due to sense pleasures]*." He abides perceiving before and after: "As before, so after; as after, so before; as below, so above; as above, so below; as by day, so by night; as by night, so by day". Thus with heart open and un-enveloped, he develops a mind imbued with luminosity*.'[173]

'As below, so above' is explained in the *sutta* with reference to the meditation on the parts of the body 'upwards from the soles of the feet, and downwards from the tips of the hairs'. 'As before, so after' probably refers to evenness in attending to the meditation subject throughout the session. The phrase 'well apprehended, well attended, well borne in mind, well penetrated with understanding' is used here just as with the 'basis for reviewing', implying that reviewing and inquiring into causes is a key to developing this evenness.

Given the importance of this inquiry into causes, we might postulate a causal relationship between the bases of psychic power themselves, in line with similar relationships described elsewhere. Enthusiasm is the wish, the motivation to do the work of purifying the mind. Effort is the actual exerting of energy to do the work. The purified mind is the result of that work. And in the clarity of the purified mind, the causes and conditions for that purity can be discerned through inquiry. The manner in which these qualities work together may be compared to an electric light. Enthusiasm is like the voltage in the circuits. Energy is like the current of electricity that flows when the switch is turned on. The mind is like the globe lighting up. And when the room is lit, it is easy to see what is there. Anyone who has ever had to search for something in a dark room would know that the quickest way, if one must grope in the dark, is to grope first of all for the light switch.

3. The Spiritual Faculties and Powers

The spiritual faculties and powers are simply different aspects of the same set of principles,[174] which are: faith, energy, mindfulness, *samādhi*, and understanding.

'Bhante, a noble disciple who is absolutely dedicated to the Tathagata, with full confidence would not doubt or be uncertain about the Tathagata or the Tathagata's dispensation. It is to be expected, Bhante, of a

faithful noble disciple that he will abide with energy aroused for the abandoning of unbeneficial qualities and the undertaking of beneficial qualities, that he will be strong, firm in exertion, not shirking his responsibility regarding beneficial qualities. His energy is his spiritual faculty of energy.

'It is to be expected, Bhante, of a faithful noble disciple whose energy is aroused that he will be mindful, endowed with supreme mindfulness and mastery [over the senses]*, able to remember and recall what was said and done long ago. His mindfulness is his spiritual faculty of mindfulness*.

'It is to be expected, Bhante, of a faithful noble disciple whose energy is aroused and whose mindfulness is established that, having made relinquishment the support, he will gain samādhi, he will gain one-pointedness of mind. His samadhi is his spiritual faculty of samādhi.

'It is to be expected, Bhante, of a faithful noble disciple whose energy is aroused, whose mindfulness is established and whose mind is concentrated in samadhi that he will understand: "Inconceivable is samsāra's beginning. For beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, a starting point of roaming on and faring on is not found. But the remainderless fading away and cessation of that dark mass of ignorance - that state is peaceful, that state is sublime, that is, the samatha of all activities, the relinquishment of all belongings, the evaporation of craving, fading away, cessation, Nibbāna." His understanding is his spiritual faculty of understanding.

'That faithful noble disciple, having thus repeatedly practiced striving, remembering, samādhi, and understanding has full confidence thus: "These principles which I had previously only heard about I now abide having personally contacted, and see having penetrated with understanding." '[175]

These principles are conveniently elaborated in groups of four, bringing them in line with the corresponding path-factors: faith should be seen in the four factors of stream-entry (faith in the Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Sangha*, and perfect virtue), energy in the four right efforts, mindfulness in the four *satipatthānas*, *samādhi* in the four *jhānas*, and understanding in the four noble truths.[176] The description of understanding in the above passage may be seen as an expansion of the usual definition as 'the noble and penetrative understanding of arising and ending which leads to the complete evaporation of suffering'[177]. The phrase 'having made relinquishment the support, one gains *samādhi*' is sometimes followed by the full *jhāna* formula.[178] The spiritual powers are defined similarly, the sole difference being the absence of the phrase 'having made relinquishment the support.'[179] Since the spiritual faculties and powers are identical, it may be

inferred that that phrase does not add anything crucial to the definition, or justify extending the scope of the spiritual faculty of samadhi beyond the four *jhānas*. Each of the spiritual faculties and powers are further described as being developed together with each of the four *jhānas*.[180] One practicing in this way, even for the duration of a finger snap, 'does the Teacher's bidding, responds to instruction, and does not waste the nation's alms food.'

Strikingly, the texts set the spiritual faculties apart from the other sets comprised within the wings to awakening by treating them under all four of the noble truths, not just the fourth.[181] This treatment foreshadows the terminological development, already nascent in the *suttas*, of 'faculty' as a general phenomenological classification parallel to the aggregates, sense bases, and elements. The spiritual faculties themselves are conditioned; considered in this way it becomes meaningful to speak of the 'origin, ending, gratification, danger, and escape' in the case of mindfulness, *samādhi*, understanding, etc. 'Origin and ending' refers to the conditioned nature of the spiritual faculties, to be understood by way of dependent origination. This is the task of the spiritual faculty of understanding itself, defined precisely as understanding rise and fall. So to possess the faculties, one must understand the faculties; and to understand the faculties, one must understand dependent origination. The faculties should be seen as arising dependent on each other, and this interdependence serves as a paradigm for understanding phenomenal actuality in general. This 'understanding in accordance with reality' is repeatedly identified with the stream-enterer.[182] Hence, although as mental qualities they are to be developed by the ordinary person, only with the entrance to the noble path do they gain control, becoming the predominating dispositions in their own field, thus meriting the title 'spiritual faculties'. (Although the term 'spiritual faculties' may be used in a more general sense, this is not identified with the group of five.[183]) Not only does the presence or absence of the spiritual faculties serve to distinguish between the ordinary person and the noble ones, the relative strength of the faculties is a key criterion for classifying the noble ones in terms of spiritual potential, level of attainment, and mode of practice.

The phrase 'having made relinquishment the support' is probably best explained in the light of such passages as the following, describing how the noble ones meditate. In this passage, 'taints of the mind' does not refer, as elsewhere, to the five hindrances, but to the manifestations of greed, anger, and delusion abandoned by the stages of the noble path.

'When he has given up, expelled, released, abandoned, and relinquished [the taints of the mind] in part, he thinks: I am endowed with confirmed confidence in the Buddha. [*... Dhamma ... Sangha.*] *"He gains inspiration in the meaning, inspiration in the Dhamma, gladness connected with the Dhamma. In one who is*

glad, rapture is born. In one whose mind is rapturous, the body becomes tranquil. One with tranquil body feels bliss. The mind of one who is blissful enters samādhi." '[184]

'Confirmed confidence' is the clarity from having undergone the experience of forever relinquishing defilements, thereby walking in the Buddha's footsteps, seeing the *Dhamma*, and becoming one of the noble *Sangha*. Here, the spiritual faculty of faith is predominant in the meditation subject; energy is implied in the undertaking of meditation; while mindfulness is the act of recollecting. *Samādhi* here is obviously 'noble right *samādhii*, equivalent to the spiritual faculty of *samādhi*. The word for 'relinquishment' (*patinissagga*) is a slightly different form than in the spiritual faculty of samadhi (*vossagga)*, but the meaning here seems substantially identical. We may understand that the unique occurrence of the phrase 'having made relinquishment the support' before the *jhana* formula in the definition of the spiritual faculty of *samadhi* is linked to the restriction of the spiritual faculties to the noble individuals. Only they have their course of meditation smoothed by the root-level eradication of defilements. In the above *sutta*, the monk next develops the divine abidings, and then wisdom is indicated:

'He understands thus: "There is this, there is the inferior, there is the superior, and beyond there is an escape from this whole field of perception." '

The phrase 'field of perception' invites comparison with such passages as the *Potthapāda Sutta*.[185] This would then refer to the divine abidings; 'the inferior' to the sensual realm; 'the superior' to the formless liberations; while 'the escape' is *Nibbāna*. So the spiritual faculties, relying on the partial relinquishment of defilements by the trainees, mature into the total relinquishment of defilements by the *arahant*.

4. The Enlightenment Factors

'They lead to enlightenment, therefore they are called enlightenment factors.'[186]

The seven enlightenment factors enjoy a prestige second only to the eightfold path itself. They are: mindfulness, investigation of *dhammas*, energy, rapture, tranquility, *samadhi*, and equanimity. Generally, they may be regarded as an articulation of the meditative component of the path complementary to the bases for psychic powers and the spiritual faculties. The very first *sutta* of the collection on the enlightenment factors, however, emphasizes the indispensability of virtuous ethical conduct as their foundation.[187]

'Mindfulness' and 'investigation of *dhammas*, though including the recollection and investigation of teachings, primarily refer to the discriminative contemplation of presently arisen mental phenomena. 'Energy' and 'tranquility' include both physical and mental aspects. 'Rapture' and '*samādhi*' occur either with initial and sustained application of mind (in the first *jhana*) or without (in the higher *jhānas*). 'Equanimity' is the crowning quality of *samatha*, reaching perfection in the fourth jhana and the fourth divine abiding.

An outstanding feature is the opposition between the enlightenment factors and the five hindrances. This is presented both as a general qualitative appraisal of the two sets as leading to or obstructing enlightenment, and as a specific analysis, especially in terms of the distinctive 'nutriment' for each factor. The gradual assimilation of the nutriments through repeated attention nurtures the growth of either good or bad qualities. Sometimes a specific enlightenment factor opposes a specific hindrance. The nutriment for 'investigation of *dhammas'* - discriminating between good and bad - is what starves the hindrance of doubt. The nutriments of energy - the elements of arousal, of exertion, of persistence - starve the hindrance of sloth and torpor. Tranquility opposes restlessness and remorse. *Samādhi* is nurtured by 'the basis of *samatha*, the basis of not-many-pointedness'.[188] The *suttas* do not directly oppose *samadhi* and rapture to particular hindrances, but elsewhere the commentaries set them against sensual desire and ill will respectively. Equanimity, along with tranquility and *samadhi*, serves to pacify the excited mind, whereas investigation, energy, and rapture rouse up the sluggish mind. Mindfulness is always useful. Mindfulness, rapture, and equanimity are not allocated specific nutriments; perhaps the Buddha is throwing us back on our own 'investigation of *dhammas'* to discern these.

Each of the enlightenment factors may be developed in conjunction with various meditation subjects: a skeleton; a decaying corpse; the divine abidings; mindfulness of breathing; and the perceptions of ugliness, death, the repulsiveness of food, boredom with the whole world, impermanence, suffering, not-self, abandonment, fading away, and cessation. Developed in this way, these meditations are of great fruit and benefit, lead to arahantship or non-returning, to great good, security from bondage, a sense of urgency, and a comfortable abiding.[189]

One passage describes the successive emergence of the enlightenment factors induced by recollecting the *Dhamma* of the noble ones. Here, 'spiritual rapture' seems to encompass rapture arisen prior to jhana, but as prelude, not surrogate.

'On an occasion when a monk abiding withdrawn remembers and thinks over that Dhamma, the enlightenment factor of mindfulness is aroused, developed, and fulfilled. Abiding thus mindfully, he investigates, explores, and inquires into that Dhamma with understanding.... His energy is roused up and persistent.... Spiritual rapture arises.... In one who is rapturous, the body and mind become tranquil.... In one whose body is tranquil, there is bliss. The mind of one whose body is tranquil and who is blissful enters samadhi.... One watches closely with equanimity the mind thus concentrated in samādhi.' [Thus all the factors of enlightenment are roused, developed, and fulfilled.][190]

Samatha and *vipassanā* are intimately interlaced through all these teachings. It is noteworthy, though, that most of these factors pertain to *samatha*, while only investigation of *dhammas* pertains specifically to *vipassana*, and even this is chiefly treated in its mode of supporting *samādhi*. Indeed, these seven *dhammas* sometimes simply substitute for *samādhi* in the grouping: virtue, *dhamma*, understanding.[191] The emphasis throughout is simply on the development of the mind. Many terms used with these principles - 'seclusion', 'fading away', 'cessation', 'relinquishment', t abandoning', 'ending', 'stilling', and others - are also used of the four *jhānas*, *vipassanā*, and even *Nibbāna* itself, underlining the essential kinship of these facets of the path and the goal.

Wings to Enlightenment:
Conclusion

Examining these thirty-seven wings to enlightenment, consistent patterns emerge. The sequences start with more basic qualities: faith, or enthusiasm, or energy. The placing of investigation of *dhammas* near the start of the enlightenment factors is reminiscent of the placing of right view at the start of the eightfold path. With energy and mindfulness in operation, the mind develops the joy that leads to *samādhi*, ripening in liberating wisdom. Fundamental principles of the nature of the mind are embodied in these formulations. At each stage the emotional and intellectual qualities are balanced and support each other, while the variations warn against taking an overly rigid approach to development. In the next chapter we will examine in more detail the relationships between these qualities.

'Thus, Ānanda, beneficial virtues gradually flow on to the topmost.'[192]

Chapter 4

DEPENDENT LIBERATION

'Monks, one who is virtuous, endowed with virtue, need not form the volition: "May I be free from remorse." It is natural that the virtuous are free from remorse.

'One who is free from remorse need not form the volition: "May I be glad." It is natural that in one free from remorse, gladness arises.

'One who is glad need not form the volition: "May I feel rapture." It is natural that one who is glad feels rapture.

'One who feels rapture need not form the volition: "May my body be tranquil.' It is natural that one who feels rapture has a tranquil body.

'One whose body is tranquil need not form the volition: "May I feel bliss." It is natural that one whose body is tranquil feels bliss.

'One who is blissful need not form the volition: "May my mind be concentrated in samādhi." It is natural that one who is blissful has samādhi.

'One who has samadhi need not form the volition: "May I know and see in accordance with reality." It is natural that one who has samadhi knows & sees in accordance with reality.

'One who knows and sees in accordance with reality need not form the volition: "May I be repulsed [from suffering]*." It is natural that one who knows and sees in accordance with reality is repulsed.*

'One who is repulsed need not form the volition: "May lust fade away." It is natural that lust fades away in one who is repulsed.

'One whose lust has faded away need not form the volition: "May I witness the knowledge and vision of release." It is natural that one whose lust has faded away witnesses the knowledge and vision of release....

'Thus, monks, dhammas flow on to and fulfil dhammas for crossing over from the near to the far shore."[193]

Causality

I have coined the term 'dependent liberation' for this doctrinal framework, elsewhere known as 'transcendental dependent origination'. Many versions occur in the *suttas*, but with a common pattern, displaying the conditional unfolding of liberation as an evolution of ever more refined qualities. All of the variations follow the sequence virtue, *samādhi*, wisdom. Often these broad categories are subdivided, revealing their inner structure as comprised of further conditional sequences. Such passages as the above, which treat the *samadhi* section in most detail, occur throughout the *suttas*. An important version explicating the virtue section is given below, starting with 'mindfulness and clear comprehension'. Variations of this version occur often, but only in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, reflecting the pragmatic orientation of that collection. Wisdom is highlighted in the seven purifications.

Some understanding of the principles of causality is helpful to fully appreciate the significance of this teaching. Causes can be analysed as two kinds: necessary conditions and sufficient conditions. A necessary condition is one whose absence makes it impossible for the result to occur. For example, a necessary condition for being a woman is being a human being; if one is not a human being, it is impossible to be a woman. A sufficient condition is one whose presence makes it inevitable that the result will occur. For example, a sufficient condition for being a human being is being a woman; if one is a woman, it definitely follows that one is a human being. The two need not, as in the examples above, be exclusive. For example, a necessary and sufficient condition for being a human being is being a featherless biped; if one is not a featherless biped, one cannot be a human being and if one is a featherless biped, it definitely follows that one is a human being. Or a condition may be neither necessary nor sufficient. For example, being a boy is neither necessary nor sufficient condition for becoming an adult human being, but merely conducive.

This distinction is critical. If in the thought-world of the *suttas* 'x is a condition for y' means 'x is a sufficient condition for y', this leaves open the question whether other things may also be sufficient. Virtue, samadhi, and understanding lead to *Nibbāna*; but there may be another, or a myriad of other paths up the same mountain. If however, 'x is a condition for y' means 'x is a necessary condition for y', we must regard all 'x' -- each of the factors subsumed within such a causal relationship -- as being indispensable. One mountain, one path. The general formula for causality in dependent origination, known as 'specific conditionality', is this:

'When this exists, that is; due to the arising of this, that arises.

'When this does not exist, that is not; due to the cessation of this, that ceases.[194]

The first pair of principles appears to imply sufficient conditionality. However, a close contextual examination reveals that this is not so.

'That noble disciple, content with the virtues beloved of the noble ones, does not try further for seclusion by day and retreat by night. Abiding thus negligent, gladness does not arise. When there is no gladness, there is no rapture. When there is no rapture, there is no tranquillity. When there is no tranquillity, he abides in suffering. The mind of one who suffers does not enter samādhi. Dhammas do not manifest in a mind without samādhi. Because dhammas do not manifest he is called an abider in negligence.[195]

If such sequences were based on sufficient conditionality, there would be no point in making an effort. Further, the phrase 'feeling is the condition for craving' would render the holy life ineffectual. There are in fact many conditions left un-stated in these contexts. The *suttas* make no claim to completeness rather than usefulness in their analysis of causality. In the context of practice, sufficiency applies only in that a noble disciple must eventually attain liberation even if, as above, they are 'mightily negligent'.[196] The second pair of clauses are explicitly identified as necessity:

'If there were not the birth of those various kinds of beings into the various states [of existence]; when all kinds of birth do not exist, due to the cessation of birth, would aging and death be found?'

'No Bhante.'[197]

Below we shall see the kinship between dependent origination and dependent liberation, like an image and its reflection, expressed in various ways in the *suttas*. All the main similes illustrating dependent liberation likewise imply necessity -- the rain filling the mountain streams, the leaves sustaining the tree, or each stage of a journey bringing one to the next.[198] This means that these passages embody an invariable law of nature: unless these conditions are fulfilled, it is impossible that the result can occur.

Our first passage above, however, shows a more active process than mere necessity, a vigorous positive inducement. The main emphasis is not that the absence of the conditions immediately destroys the resultant phenomena, but that without the supporting conditions the results are not nourished to fulfilment and completion. Although this does not apply to all causal relationships found in the *suttas*, it is an important aspect of the contexts dealing with practice -- they have a direction, a forward impetus. Following the way of the world, the sequence of dependent origination starting with ignorance, one is swept along the stream of birth, aging, and death. But the sequence starting with faith and virtue will sweep one along to *Nibbāna*.

Some writers have tried to reduce Buddhist conditionality to the 'mutuality condition', that is, when two factors act as a mutual support for each other, as when two sheaves of straw lean against one another. But this type of condition, though important, is restricted to a few contexts. In many contexts, this relation is expressly denied.[199] It would be difficult to establish from the *suttas* that the normal expressions for conditional relations can mean, in and of themselves, co nascent (or 'mutuality') condition. The few occasions where such a relation is discussed emphasize how abstruse and unusual this was regarded.[200] And even here the standard conditional clause does not alone bear the burden of expressing two-way conditionality. Co nascence is explained instead with two separate mirror image statements of one-way conditionality.

This lack of full mutuality is explicitly affirmed in the relationship between samadhi and wisdom. In the *Potthapāda Sutta*, the Buddha first describes 'perception' in terms of the successive refinement of perception through the jhanas leading to insight knowledge. Perception deals with how things seem; knowledge with how they are.

'But Bhante, does perception arise first and knowledge afterwards, or does knowledge arise first and perception afterwards?'

'Perception, Potthapāda, arises first, knowledge afterwards; due to the arising of perception there is the arising of knowledge. One understands thus: "It seems that my knowledge arose due to that condition."[201] I

This is like a mother's relationship with her child. A child as they mature may give their mother as much support and help as they are able, but can never repay the gift of life. Similarly, wisdom can act as a supporting condition to deepen clarity of awareness, but can only see its way to do so dependent on clarity already present.

Three main modes of the wisdom which precedes *samadhi* can be discerned. Firstly, conceptual understanding from hearing and reflecting on the teachings. Second, investigation into the causes of samadhi. Third, *vipassanā* proper -- the clear-eyed discernment of conditioned reality. Now obviously these three aspects are closely linked, and the mention of any one of them is a particular context should normally understood by way of emphasis, not exclusion. A thread unifying all these modes is that wisdom is described in some sort of relation to *samadhi*, not apart from it. This preliminary understanding serves various preparatory functions, but only with the ripening of the other path factors does it mature into the wisdom that really counts – 'knowledge and vision in accordance with reality'. The prevailing general paradigm -- that clarity of awareness is necessary for understanding -- for all its vagueness of application elsewhere, assumes in this highest sense a rigorous invariability.

'It is, monks, just like a house with a peaked roof. As long as the roof peak has not been set in place, the rafters are not steady, not stable. But when the roof peak has been set in place, then the rafters are steady and stable. So too, as long as noble knowledge has not arisen in the noble disciple, the [other] *four spiritual faculties are not steady, not stable. But when noble knowledge has arisen in the noble disciple, the* [other] *four spiritual faculties are steady and stable*.'[202]

The rafters of faith, energy, mindfulness, and samadhi must be set up before the roof peak of noble understanding can be set in place. They are the necessary antecedent conditions for liberating wisdom. Understanding in its turn fortifies and firmly fixes the four already existing faculties. This kind of 'feedback loop' may have quite a general application -- any subsequent quality can strengthen previously developed qualities. However, this should not distract from the prevailing paradigm of sequential conditions.

'That one could fulfil the aggregate of understanding without having fulfilled the aggregate of samadhi: that is not possible.'[203]

The Buddha did not teach causality with such philosophical pleasantries as 'Everything is interrelated.' He taught specific conditionality -- this is the cause of that. The same patterns occur over and over. Craving is the cause of suffering; but just as the lotus grows in the mud, the experience of suffering is the essential motivation for the spiritual practice which will end suffering.

In the *Upanisā Sutta*, the connection between the normal dependent origination and the liberating sequence is made explicit.[204] The sequence starts out as usual with ignorance leading up to birth and suffering; but suffering gives rise not to despair, but to faith. This is the difference made by paying attention to the root. In the spiritual faculties, virtue is included in faith.[205] This emotional conviction then triggers the same sequence of joy, rapture, tranquillity, bliss, *samādhi*, insight, and release that was described above beginning with virtue. The sequence of twelve factors, beginning with suffering, is the positive counterpart of the twelve factors of the cessation mode of the normal dependent origination. Intriguingly, dependent origination in the mode of origination is called 'the wrong way of practice', just as the wrong eightfold path, while the mode of cessation is called 'the right way of practice', just as the right eightfold path. This collapses the distinction between theory and practice, between the middle teaching and the middle way.[206]

The *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*[207] also describes the ending of suffering in positive terms, by focussing on two kinds of arahants. The first is 'released by understanding'. Here this is described as understanding the origin, ending, gratification, danger, and escape in the case of the seven stations of consciousness and two bases. These are all planes into which rebirth can occur depending on the level of development of consciousness, with particular emphasis on meditative attainments. Here the identity is clear between consciousness as a link in dependent origination, as the mind states developed in meditation, and as the stream of consciousness flowing on to rebirth in the various worlds. The second kind of *arahant* is the 'both sides released', who is distinguished by fluency in all the meditative attainments. Thus the transparent mind of *samādhi* has a key role throughout in unravelling the tangle of *samsāra*.

'This dependent origination is profound, and appears profound. Not awakening to and not penetrating this principle, this generation has become like a tangled ball of string, matted like a bird's nest, entangled like a mass of coarse grass, and does not evolve beyond lower realms, bad destinies, the abyss, and samsāra.'[208]

A tangled ball of string will never untie itself, and so too the mind entangled in worldly affairs will never loosen the knot of suffering. The key difference between enlightened and unenlightened beings is their sincerity of devotion to spiritual practice.

'For the fool [as for the sage]*, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, this* [conscious] *body has been acquired. Thus there is the duality of this body and external mentality and physical form. Dependent on this duality, there is contact. There are just six sense bases, contacted through which -- or through one of them -- the fool* [and the sage] *experience pleasure and pain. What then is the difference, the distinction, between the fool and the sage?'...*

'For the fool, this ignorance has not been abandoned and this craving has not been evaporated. For what reason? Because the fool has not lived the holy life for the complete evaporation of suffering. Therefore with the breaking up of the body, the fool passes on to a [new] *body. He is not released from birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental suffering, and despair; he is not released from suffering, I say.*

'But for the sage, this ignorance has been abandoned and this craving has been evaporated. For what reason? Because the sage has lived the holy life for the complete evaporation of suffering. Therefore with the breaking up of the body, the sage does not pass on to a [new] *body. He is released from birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental suffering, and despair; he is released from suffering, I say.*

'This is the distinction, the difference, between the fool and the sage, that is, living the holy life.'[209]

'The holy life' is usually identified as the noble eightfold path.[210] Its application in this context is illustrated in the *Mahātahāsankhaya Sutta*. This is one of the most important discourses on dependent origination, set up specifically to refute the view that it is this 'very same consciousness' which fares on through the round of rebirths. It is one of the contexts which suggests that the word 'consciousness' was established pre-Buddhist parlance for the principle underlying rebirth. As he often did, the Buddha accepted the conventional terminology, but redefined it according to his own system, insisting that consciousness arises according to conditions. We should note that although consciousness is the normal term used in the context of rebirth, this does not imply that it flows on alone, without the support of mentality and physical form.[211] Rather, consciousness is mentioned as it is of key importance here; it is the 'seed' that performs the decisive function of transferring the information necessary to establish the new organism. The Buddha adopted not only terminology but also a brahmanical idea that reincarnation of the embryo occurs concurrent with three things: the coming together of the mother and father; the mother is fertile; and the being to be reborn is present.[212] Having taken rebirth, one is nourished by the mother, plays childish games, and, as the sense faculties mature, engages in favoring and opposing feelings, giving rise to craving and future rebirth. The round of cessation is

shown with the full gradual training, from the appearance of the *Tathagata* and the going forth, to the abandoning of the hindrances.

'Having thus abandoned these five hindrances, taints of the mind which rob understanding of its strength ... he enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna. Seeing a visible form with the eye, he does not lust for pleasant seeming visible forms. He abides with mindfulness of the body established, with an immeasurable heart, and he understands in accordance with reality the release of heart, release by understanding where these evil unbeneficial phenomena cease without remainder. Having thus abandoned favoring and opposing, whatever feeling he feels, whether pleasant, or painful, or neither pleasant nor painful, he does not relish, welcome, or remain attached to it.... The relishing of feelings ceases in him. Due to the cessation of his relishing, grasping ceases. Due to the cessation of grasping, [ongoing] *existence ceases. Due to the cessation of existence, birth ceases. Due to the cessation of birth, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental suffering, and despair cease. Thus there is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.* [And so on for the ear, etc.]'[213]

Something of the profound relationship between the evolving sequence of dhammas beginning with faith or virtue and the core of the *Dhamma* is beginning to emerge, how this process is both necessary for and powerfully inductive to liberation. The term 'vital condition' has been chosen to bring out these two aspects.

'Monks, when there is no mindfulness and clear comprehension, in one without mindfulness and clear comprehension, the vital condition for conscience and fear of wrong-doing is destroyed.

'When there is no conscience and fear of wrongdoing... the vital condition for sense restraint is destroyed.

'When there is no sense restraint... the vital condition for virtue is destroyed.

'When there is no virtue... the vital condition for right samadhi is destroyed.

'When there is no right samadhi, in one without right samadhi, the vital condition for knowledge and vision in accordance with reality is destroyed.

'When there is no knowledge and vision in accordance with reality... the vital condition for repulsion and fading away is destroyed.

'When there is no repulsion and fading away... the vital condition for knowledge and vision of release is destroyed.

'Just as, monks, when a tree is without leaves and twigs, the branches, bark, sapwood, and heartwood do not come to fulfilment....'[214]

The commentaries treat 'knowledge and vision in accordance with reality' as immature *vipassana*. But this cannot be so, since vipassana may be developed prior to *jhāna*. 'Knowledge and vision in accordance with reality' regularly refers not to *vipassana* but to the stream-enterer's 'vision of the *Dhamma'*. *Vipassanā* as such seems to be one of the un-stated but implied factors in such sequences. Perhaps the advanced *vipassanā* which, empowered by *samādhi*, issues directly in penetration can be included as a preliminary stage of 'knowledge and vision in accordance with reality'. In any case, this passage is a strong support for the necessity of *jhāna* for stream-entry. It may not, however, in and of itself confirm the necessity of *jhāna* for those on the way to stream-entry, since they may not unambiguously possess 'knowledge and vision in accordance with reality'.

More on these path-attainers below.

This passage further clarifies two points in the interpretation of other descriptions of dependent liberation or the path in general. Firstly, *samādhi* as a crucial support for liberation means right *samādhi*, which is the four *jhānas*. When we came across other descriptions of the path that refer to or imply *samādhi* in less explicit terms, we can therefore infer that *jhāna* is meant. The sequence gladness, rapture, tranquillity, bliss, and samadhi in fact normally serves to introduce the four *jhānas*;[215] sometimes too the divine abidings;[216] or else it develops the spiritual faculties, powers, and enlightenment factors.[217] Secondly, this right *samādhi* is an essential component of the path, not an optional extra. In contexts such as the gradual training, which include extras such as psychic powers, we must therefore understand that *samādhi*, no less than virtue or wisdom, cannot be skipped over.

The Seven Purifications

The seven purifications shed further light on 'dependent liberation'. They occur only once in the *suttas*, and once again with two further purifications added, and are not analysed in detail. Although of slight importance in the *suttas*, they were utilized as the framework of the *Visuddhimagga*, thus assuming great importance for the *Theravādin* exegetical tradition. Here virtue and *samādhi* are treated summarily, the focus being on a more detailed breakdown of the stages of insight. This trend continues further in the *Patisambhidāmagga*, and further still in the *Visuddhimagga*. Perhaps for this reason the seven purifications have played a key role in the attempts to discover a vehicle of 'pure *vipassana'* in the *suttas*. I will endeavour to piece together what the *suttas* say about these stages.

'Purification of virtue is for the sake of purification of mind. Purification of mind is for the sake of purification of view. Purification of view is for the sake of purification of overcoming uncertainty. Purification of overcoming uncertainty is for the sake of purification of knowledge and vision of what is and what is not the path. Purification of knowledge and vision of what is and what is not the path is for the sake of purification of knowledge and vision of the way. Purification of knowledge and vision of the way is for the sake of purification of knowledge and vision. Purification of knowledge and vision is for the sake of final Nibbāna without grasping.[218]

The simile is given of a journey by means of relay carriages. The first carriage takes one as far as the second carriage, but no further. The second carriage takes one as far as the third, but no further. Each carriage has a specific role to play, which cannot be omitted.

A related teaching by Venerable Ānanda provides explanations of some factors. The stages of purification are here shown, not as self-sufficient, but as supported by a phalanx of ancillary factors. Though wisdom is at work throughout, only after 'purification of mind', i.e. *jhāna*, does it mature into 'knowledge and vision in accordance with reality'.

'And what, Vyagghapajjas, is the factor of striving in the purification of virtue? Here, a monk is virtuous; he trains in the rules of training he has undertaken. This is called purification of virtue. [He thinks:] *"I will fulfil such a form of purification when it is unfulfilled, or when it is fulfilled, I will assist it everywhere with understanding." The enthusiasm therein, the effort, the industry, the endeavour, the not holding back, the mindfulness, and the clear comprehension; this is called the factor of striving in the purification of virtue.*

'And what, Vyagghapaijas, is the factor of striving in the purification of mind? Here, a monk ... enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna. This is called purification of mind... The enthusiasm [etc] *therein; this is called the factor of striving in the purification of mind.*

'And what, Vyagghapajjas, is the factor of striving in the purification of view? Here a monk understands in accordance with reality: "This is suffering"... "This is the origin of suffering"... "This is the cessation of suffering"... "This is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering." This is called purification of view... The enthusiasm [etc] *therein; this is called the factor of striving in the purification of view.*

'And what, Vyagghapajjas, is the factor of striving in the purification of release? That noble disciple, endowed with the factor of striving in the purification of virtue ... of mind ... of view, makes lust fade from his mind regarding phenomena provoking lust, and makes his mind release from phenomena which should be released from. Having done so, he contacts right release. This is called purification of release. [He thinks:] *"I will fulfil such a form of purification when it is unfulfilled, or when it is fulfilled, I will assist it everywhere with understanding." The enthusiasm therein, the effort, the industry, the endeavour, the not holding back, the mindfulness, and the clear comprehension; this is called the factor of striving in the purification of release*.'[219]

In this sequence, purification of view is the vision of the four noble truths, which as we noted above, is normally associated with the stream-enterer [220]. Purification of view in this group of four occupies the same place as, in the seven purifications, purification of view, of overcoming uncertainty, and of knowledge and vision of what is and what is not the path. These correspond exactly with the three fetters abandoned by the stream-enterer -- identity view, doubt, and misapprehension of virtue and vows. A possible reading is that these three purifications constitute an expanded explanation of purification of view, detailing the sequence in which these fetters are abandoned during the course of vipassana culminating in the vision of the four noble truths. Having clearly seen what the path is, the stream-enterer is in a position to perfect their purification of knowledge and vision of the way. This occupies the equivalent position in this sequence as do 'repulsion' and 'fading away' elsewhere. We noted earlier that these pertain exclusively to the noble stages; and in the above passage too, the text changes from 'monk' to 'noble disciple' for the final purification, the fading away of lust after seeing the four noble truths.[221] The development of insight culminates with the purification of knowledge and vision, here surely the knowledge and vision of release pertaining to *arahantship*.[222] The commentarial notion that these seven stages are completed by the stream-enterer, and that the higher path attainers go around

again, each time repeating the sequence of *vipassanā* knowledges,[223] finds no support in the *suttas* and contradicts the basic texts and similes, which speak of a one-way, step by step progression. The purpose of developing purification of knowledge and vision is not for the further purification of insight through the higher paths, but for final *Nibbāna* without grasping. Now it is true that in real life things are not so straightforward, and Buddhist causality hinges on these ramified complexities. But this does not empower us to simply postulate interpretive paradigms without a textual basis. Such sequences express the primary conditional sequence of practice, to which other elements -- supplementary factors, feedback loops, etc. -- should be considered as subordinate. This interpretation is somewhat complicated by the nine purifications mentioned in the *Dasuttara Sutta*, which add purification of understanding and purification of release to the seven.[224] These two extras, occurring only in this late and formalistic *sutta*, may perhaps be read as an expanded explanation of purification of knowledge and vision. The exact interpretation of the stages of liberating insight, though, does not affect the necessity for *jhāna* as the purification of mind that precedes all these stages.

Purification of view can be described from different angles.

A certain monk approached another monk and asked: 'What does "well-purified vision" refer to? That monk replied: 'When a monk understands in accordance with reality the origin and ending of the six bases of contact...' Dissatisfied with that explanation, he approached another monk, who said: 'When a monk understands... the five aggregates...' and another monk said: 'When a monk understands... the four great elements...' and yet another said: 'When a monk understands in accordance with reality: "Whatever is subject to arising, all that is subject to cessation," that is what it "well-purified vision" refers to.'

Dissatisfied with all these answers, that monk approached the Blessed One, who replied: 'Each of those true men explained how vision is well purified according to their dispositions, in just the same way that their own vision had been well purified.'[225]

The Buddha then went on to present the simile of the city given above, showing that all of these modes of seeing reality are delivered to the mind by samatha and *vipassanā*.

Purification by overcoming uncertainty refers to doubts such as: 'Was I in the past? How was I? Will I be in the future?' Seeing the monk Revata the Doubter reviewing his purification by overcoming uncertainty, the Buddha remarked:

'Whatever uncertainties about here or beyond
One's own or another's feelings [about views]
The liver of the holy life abandons them all
Ardently practicing jhāna.'[226]

The Buddha's first inspired utterance after his enlightenment describes how he overcame doubt through discernment of conditions.

'When dhammas fully manifest
To the ardent brahman in jhāna
Then his doubts all disappear
Since he understands dhammas and their causes.

'When dhammas fully manifest
To the ardent brahman in jhana.
Then his doubts all disappear
Since he has realized the evaporation of conditions.

'When dhammas fully manifest
To the ardent brahman in jhana
He stands dispelling Māra's hordes
Like the sun which lights the sky.'[227]

Knowledge and vision of what is and what is not the path seems to occur in only one other passage.

'This was spoken, Bhante, by the Blessed One in the "Girl's Questions":

"The attainment of the goal, the peace of the heart
Having conquered the army, dear and pleasant seeming
Alone, doing jhāna, I awakened to bliss
Therefore I make no partners with people
Partnership with anyone is not for me."

‘Bhante, how should the detailed meaning of this brief statement by the Blessed One be regarded?’

‘Sister, some contemplatives and brahmans, excelling in the attainment of the earth kasina, came up with that as the goal. But the extent of excellence in the attainment of the earth kasina was directly known by the Blessed One. Directly knowing thus, he saw the beginning, the danger, the escape, and knowledge and vision of what is and what is not the path. For him, because of seeing these things, the attainment of the goal, the peace of the heart, is known.’ [And so on for the other nine *kasinas*, concluding with the consciousness-*kasina*.][228]

So this knowledge involves developing insight into samadhi based on direct experience. The seven purifications thus involve samadhi, not simply as the precondition for insight at purification of mind, but at each step of the development of insight, specifically including the stages of insight pertaining to stream-entry.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have delved into the nature of the conditional relations governing the path of practice. The path embodies the principles of the *Dhamma* in practical form. The practice and theory of *Dhamma* can only be provisionally separated; for the sincere practitioner their every moment is a reflection of *Dhamma*. The serenity they find in their daily life and in their meditation is the experiential proof of the drying up of the flood of defilements. The next chapter shows how these principles find expression in a life of contemplative simplicity.

‘When the sky pours down rain in big drops on the mountaintop, the water flows down and fills the mountain cracks and crevices. When the mountain cracks and crevices are full, they fill the little pools. When the little pools are full, they fill the great pools. When the great pools are full, they fill the little rivers. When the little rivers are full, they fill the great rivers. When the great rivers are full, they fill the mighty ocean.’[229]

Chapter 5

GRADUAL TRAINING

The gradual training is a practical exemplification of the path described above in abstract. Since it is an example, not a universal principle, it will naturally admit of some variation when applied to the complexities of the real world. Certainly not all practitioners will accomplish everything described here; for example, it is not necessary to develop psychic powers. Nevertheless, the prominence of the gradual training and its central role in displaying the detailed workings of the path lend it great authority. Indeed, development of all the key factors of the gradual training is necessary in order to abandon suffering.[230] The Buddha stresses that each step of the training should be accomplished in order for the practitioner to successfully progress to the next step.[231]

Of all the versions of the gradual training[232] none can rival the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*. This very long discourse is the record of a conversation between the Buddha and the newly crowned King Ajātasattu. This is a truly regal discourse, a literary classic, and a tragedy of Oedipal proportions; and yet the desperate psychological struggle of the king remains in the background, barely hinted at in the discourse. Unfortunately there is no room for a proper translation here, so we must remain content with an abridgement. The king, tormented by remorse over a terrible crime, asks the Buddha about happiness.

'Bhante, the various craftsmen and workers enjoy here and now the visible fruits of their skills, bringing themselves and their families pleasure and joy, and supporting monks, which leads to happiness in heaven. Is it possible, Bhante, to point out such a fruit of the contemplative life apparent here and now, pertaining to this life?'

'It is possible, Great King... Here, a Tathagata arises in the world, an arahant, a fully enlightened Buddha, perfect in realization and conduct, sublime, knower of the worlds, unexcelled trainer of persons to be tamed, teacher of deities and humans, enlightened, blessed. He makes known this world with its deities, Māras, and Brahmās, this generation with its contemplatives and brahmans, princes and people, having witnessed it himself with direct knowledge. He teaches the Dhamma, beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end, meaningful and well phrased, and he elucidates the holy life entirely fulfilled and purified.

'A householder hears that Dhamma and gains faith in the Tathagata. He considers thus: "This household life is cramped and dirty, but life gone forth is wide open. It is not easy while dwelling in a house to live the holy life absolutely fulfilled and purified as a polished shell. What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the dyed robe and go forth from the home to homelessness?" And after some time, having abandoned a small or large quantity of wealth, having abandoned a small or large circle of relatives, he goes forth into homelessness.

'When he has gone forth he dwells restrained in the role of the monastic code, perfect in conduct and resort, seeing danger in the slightest fault, training in the rules he has undertaken; endowed with good action of body and speech; with purified livelihood; perfect in virtue; with sense doors guarded; endowed with mindfulness and clear comprehension; content.

'And how, Great King, is a monk perfect in virtue?

'Here a monk has abandoned killing living beings, he has laid down the rod and the sword, and abides compassionate for the welfare of all living beings....

'He has abandoned theft, taking only what is given....

'He has abandoned what is not the holy life, living remote from the vulgar act of sex....

'He has abandoned false speech, speaking what is true and reliable, no deceiver of the world....

'He has abandoned divisive speech, delighting and rejoicing in harmony....

'He has abandoned harsh speech, speaking what is pleasing to the ear, going to the heart, delightful and pleasing to the many-folk....

He has abandoned gossip, speaking what is true and meaningful at the right time ....

He eats one meal a day ....

'He refrains from dancing, singing, playing music, and seeing shows....

'He refrains from accepting gold and money....

'He refrains from storing up food and material possessions....

'He refrains from hinting and suggesting, using material goods to gain other material goods....

He refrains from making a living by various trivial sciences such as interpreting omens and dreams, fortune telling, palmistry, astrology, mathematics, worldly poetry and studies, geomancy [feng shui]*, and medicine....*

'And so, Great King, a monk thus perfect in virtue, just like a warrior chief without enemies, does not see fear from any quarter. Endowed with this noble aggregate of virtue he experiences within himself a blameless bliss....

'And how, Great King, does a monk guard his sense, doors?

'Seeing a form with the eye; hearing a sound with the ear; smelling a smell with the nose; tasting a taste with the tongue; touching a tangible object with the body; and cognizing a phenomena with the mind he does not grasp at general or particular features. Since if he did not restrain his sense faculties he would be overwhelmed by desire and aversion, by evil, unbeneficial qualities, he practices for the restraint and guarding of his sense faculties. Endowed with this noble aggregate of sense restraint, he experiences within himself an unblemished bliss….

'And how, Great King, is a monk endowed with mindful-ness and clear comprehension?

'Here, a monk acts with clear comprehension when going out and returning; when looking in front and to the side; when bending and stretching the limbs; when carrying robes and bowl; when eating and drinking; when urinating and defecating, when walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, speaking and keeping silent.

'And how, Great King, is a monk content?

"Here, a monk is content with robes to protect the body and alms-food to sustain the belly. Wherever he goes, he takes just these with him, like a bird that flies, burdened only by its wings….

'And so , Great King, endowed with this noble aggregate of virtue, this noble sense restraint, this noble mindfulness and clear comprehension, and this noble contentment he resorts to a secluded dwelling place - a forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a wilderness, a cave, a charnel ground, a wood, an open space, or a heap of straw. Then after his meal, having returned from alms round he sits down cross-legged, sets his body erect, and establishes mindfulness before him

'Having abandoned desire he abides with a mind free from desire. Having abandoned ill will and anger, he is compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. Having abandoned sloth and torpor, he is percipient of light, mindful and clearly comprehending. Having abandoned restlessness and remorse he abides with mind unruffled, with mind inwardly calm. Having abandoned doubt, he is not perplexed regarding beneficial qualities. He purifies his mind from these five hindrances.

'When a debtor pays off their debt, or a sick person is cured, or a prisoner is released, or a slave is freed, or a traveler through the desert reaches a safe place, for that reason they would gain gladness and happiness. In just the same way, a monk contemplates these five hindrances when not abandoned in himself as a debt, a sickness, a prison, slavery, a desert journey. He contemplates these five hindrances when they are abandoned in himself as un-indebtedness, health, release from prison, freedom, a safe place.

'In one who contemplates the abandoning of the five hindrances in oneself, gladness is born. In one who is glad, rapture is born. In one whose mind is rapturous, the body becomes tranquil. One whose body is tranquil feels bliss. The mind of one who is blissful enters samadhi.

'Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities he enters and abides in the first jhana. He steeps, soaks, fills, and suffuses his person with rapture and bliss born of seclusion, so that nothing remains un-suffused by rapture and bliss. Just as if an expert bath-man were to knead a lump of bath-powder, the entire lump would be soaked with water and yet no water would leak out. In the same way he suffuses his person with rapture and bliss born of seclusion. This, Great King, is a fruit of the contemplative life apparent here and now, pertaining to this life, more exalted and sublime than those described previously.

'And again, Great King, a monk enters and abides in the second jhana. He steeps, soaks, fills, and suffuses his person with rapture and bliss born of samādhi, so that nothing remains un-suffused. Just as if there were a pool of water fed neither by streams nor by rain; but a spring welling up underneath would steep, soak, fill, and suffuse the entire pool with cool water, so that nothing of the pool would remain un-suffused by cool water. In the same way he suffuses his person with rapture and bliss born of samādhi. This too, Great King is a more exalted and sublime fruit of the contemplative life.

'And again, Great King, a monk enters and abides in the third jhāna. He steeps, soaks, fills, and suffuses his person with bliss devoid of rapture, so that nothing remains un-suffused. Just as if a lotus were to be born and grow underneath the water without emerging, the entire plant from the roots to the tips would be steeped, soaked, filled and suffused with cool water, so that nothing of the lotus would remain un-suffused by cool water. In the same way he suffuses his person with bliss devoid of rapture. This too, Great King is a more exalted and sublime fruit of the contemplative life.

'And again, Great King, a monk enters and abides in the fourth jhāna. He sits having suffused his person with pure bright heart, so that nothing remains un-suffused with pure bright heart. Just as if a man were to sit completely covered, including his head, with white cloth, so that nothing of his person would remain un-suffused by the white cloth, in just the same way he suffuses his person with pure bright heart. This too, Great King, is a more exalted and sublime fruit of the contemplative life.

'And so when his mind is thus concentrated in samādhi, is purified, bright, rid of blemishes, free of taints, soft, workable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he bends and inclines his mind to knowledge and vision. He understands: "This my body is material, made up of the four great elements, produced by mother and father, built up from rice and porridge, subject to impermanence, to rubbing, wearing, breaking up, and dispersal; and this my consciousness is caught up and bound up in it." Just as if a man with good sight were to examine a beryl gem in his hand, saying: "This beryl gem is beautiful, well made, clear, and transparent; and through it is strung a blue, yellow, red, white, or brown string." In just the same way he inclines his mind to knowledge and vision. This too, Great King, is a more exalted and sublime fruit of the contemplative life.

'And so when his mind is thus concentrated in samādhi, is purified, bright, rid of blemishes, free of taints, soft, workable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he bends and inclines his mind to creation of a mind-made body ... to wielding the various psychic powers ... to the divine ear...to knowledge of the minds of others ... to recollection of past lives ... to the divine eye which sees the passing away and reappearing of beings

according to their actions.... Each of these is a fruit of the contemplative life apparent here and now, pertaining to this life, more exalted and sublime than those previously described.

'And so when his mind is thus concentrated in samādhi, is purified, bright, rid of blemishes, free of taints, soft, workable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he bends and inclines his mind to the knowledge of the evaporation of the poisons. He understands in accordance with reality: "This is suffering,"... "This is the origin of suffering"... "This is the cessation of suffering"... "This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering"... "These are poisons"... "This is the origin of the poisons"... "This is the cessation of the poisons"... "This is the way leading to the cessation of the poisons." For him knowing and seeing thus, his mind is freed from the poisons of sensual pleasures, existence, and ignorance. When released he knows: "It is released." He understands: "Birth is evaporated; the holy life has been lived; what was to be done has been done; there is no returning to this state of existence."

'Just as if, Great King, there were a mountain pool, crystal clear and clean, a man with good sight standing on the bank would see the rocks, pebbles, and shells, and would see the fish swimming about or resting.... So too he knows.... "There is no returning to this state of existence."

'This, Great King, is a fruit of the contemplative life apparent here and now, pertaining to this life, which is more exalted and sublime than those described previously. And, Great King, there is no fruit of the contemplative life more exalted and sublime than this.'[233]

King Ajātasattu is an archetype for the dilemmas of worldly people searching for inner peace. He obviously had great spiritual potential, and respect for those pursuing the path of renunciation. But, goaded on by the evil monk Devadatta, he had murdered his father King Bimbisāra, a stream-enterer, for the sake of the throne, thus destroying his chance of seeing the *Dhamma*. It is because of the inevitable conflict between worldly ambitions and spiritual aspirations that the Buddha laid such stress on the way of renunciation. The gradual training is the key paradigm for monastic practice. Such meticulous care and attention to refinement of conduct, seclusion, restraint, contentment, and discipline, day in day out, year in year out, provides the optimum supporting conditions for the refined states of mind that lead to liberation. So close was the connection between meditation and the life of seclusion in the forest that often they were virtually equated, as in the Buddha's critique of the brahmans which follows, so sadly prophetic of the course Buddhism was to take. There is a pun in the Pali: the word for scholar (*ajjhāyaka*) also means 'non-*jhāna* meditator'.

'They made leaf huts in the forest and practiced jhana in them. They went to the city or village to gather alms... and then returned to their huts to practice jhana. People saw this and noticed how they meditated so they introduced the title "jhāna meditator" for them... But some of them, being unable to do jhana, settled around towns and villages and composed scriptures. People saw them doing this and not meditating, so they introduced the title "scholars" for them... At that time it was regarded as a low designation, but now it is the higher.'[234]

However, the Buddha never insisted that his followers must leave the lay life. As in all things, he relied on the maturity of the individual to choose the appropriate course of action. For those who choose to remain in the household life, he would point out how to live that life well, to restrain the defilements, and to incline gradually towards *Dhamma*. What lay people should not do is to try to incline the *Dhamma* gradually towards lay-life, watering down the teachings and making renunciation seem like unnecessary complication.

'There are five things which conduce to the disappearance of the true Dhamma. What five? When monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen live in disrespect and are un-deferential towards the Buddha ... Dhamma ... Sangha ... training...samādhi.'[235]

The distinction between laypeople and monastics pertains to moral conduct; that is, to actions of body and speech. The world of the mind, though dependent on virtue, lies beyond it, following natural principles of its own where distinctions of lifestyle, gender, race, or nationality have been left behind. Bhikkhuni Soma forcibly makes this point in her rebuke to Māra's taunt about a woman's 'two-fingered understanding.'

'What does womanhood matter at all
When the mind is well concentrated in samādhi
When knowledge flows on steadily
As one rightly sees Dhamma with vipassanā?

'One to whom it might occur
"I am woman" or "I am man"
Or "I am anything at all"
Is fit for Māra to address'[236]

It may therefore be expected that the training for the laity will embody similar principles as the monastic training, although as the training in moral discipline is less thorough, the higher training will be correspondingly more difficult to fulfill.

'Monks, I do not praise wrong practice for either householders or those gone forth... What is wrong practice? Wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong samādhi.'[237]

While the Buddha emphasized the basics of generosity, faith, and virtue for laypeople, he encouraged them to go further than that.

'Householder, you have supplied robes, alms-food, dwellings, and medicines for the Sangha of monks, yet you should not be content with just that much. Therefore you should train yourself: "Come now, from time to time I should enter and abide in the rapture of seclusion."'[238]

The practice of generosity and virtue yields its highest benefit when treated as a basis for meditation. In the following passage, the wise lady Visākhā explains to the Buddha why she has asked for the privilege of supplying the *Sangha* in Sāvatthi with eight specific kinds of requisites.

'When, Bhante, monks will come to Sāvatthi when the rains retreat is completed in order to see the Blessed One, they will approach the Blessed One and ask: "Bhante, a monk called such and such has passed away - what is his destiny, his future course?" The Blessed One will explain that as the fruit of stream-entry, once-return, non-return, or arahantship. I will approach them and ask: "Bhante, did that venerable one ever come to Sāvatthi?" If they say "Yes, he did", then I will come to the conclusion that surely that venerable one used a rains cloth, or food for those arriving or leaving, or food for the sick or those attending the sick, or medicine for the sick, or porridge. Recollecting that, gladness will be born in me. Being glad, rapture will be born in me. Being rapturous, my body will become tranquil. Being of tranquil body, I will feel bliss. Being blissful, my mind will enter samadhi. That will develop the spiritual faculties, spiritual powers, and enlightenment factors in me. Seeing this benefit, Bhante, I ask the Tathagata for these eight favors.'

'Sadhu! Sadhu! Visākhā. It is good that seeing this benefit you ask the Tathagata for these eight favors. I allow you, Visākhā, these eight favors.'[239]

Although lay people practiced *satipatthāna* 'from time to time',[240] it was never singled out as being particularly appropriate for them. The *Satipatthāna Samyutta* records *satipatthāna* being taught to lay people on only two occasions - both times to non-returners on their deathbeds.[241] More typically, lay people were encouraged to develop the divine abidings or the six recollections. The Buddha never taught lay meditation retreats or established any lay meditation centers. The intensive retreat seems to have been for monastics only. This is quite consonant with the outlook of the *suttas* as expressed in the gradual training, which sees higher state of mind emerging, not from strenuous toil for a short time in artificial conditions divorced from everyday life, but from a holistic lifestyle of simplicity, contentment, and restraint. This distinguishing feature of the Buddha's dispensation was one of the 'monuments to the *Dhamma'* proclaimed by King Pasenadi.

'Bhante, I see some contemplatives and brahmans leading a limited holy life for ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years, and then on a later occasion I see them well groomed and well anointed, with trimmed hair and beards, enjoying themselves provided and endowed with the five cords of sensual pleasure. But here I see monks leading the perfect and pure holy life as long as life and breath last.'[242]

Skipping the evening meal while on retreat is for some a grueling asceticism. Here's the Buddha's droll summing-up of the spiritual benefits of intermittent starvation.

'[Some contemplatives] *take food once a day ... or once a week ... or once a fortnight; they dwell pursuing the practice of taking food at stated intervals.'*

'But do they survive on so little, Aggivessana?'

'No, Master Gotama. Sometimes they consume various sorts of delicious food, delicacies, and drinks. Thereby they regain their strength, fortify themselves, and become fat.'

'What they earlier abandoned, Aggivessana, they later gather together again. That is how there is increase and decrease of this body.'[243]

Rather than plunging in at the deep end of spiritual life at a meditation intensive, lay people were encouraged to spend one day a week in the monastery, keeping eight precepts, listening to *Dhamma*, and practicing meditation. This practice is continued in some places today.

'Now do you Sakyans keep the observance day endowed with eight precepts?'

'Well, sometimes we do, Bhante, and sometimes we don't.'

'It is no gain for you Sakyans, it is ill-gained that in this life with its fear of sorrow, fear of death, sometimes you keep the observance day and sometimes you don't. What do you think, Sakyans?... What if a man day in, day out were to earn a hundred dollars, a thousand dollars and were to invest his earnings throughout his life of a hundred years, would he not achieve a great mass of wealth?'

'Yes, Bhante.'

'Well, would that man because of his wealth, owing to his wealth, abide exclusively experiencing bliss for one day and night? Or for half a day and night?'

'No, Bhante. For what reason? Sensual pleasures, Bhante, are impermanent, hollow, false, delusory.'

'Here, Sakyans, one of my disciples abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute, practicing according to my instructions... for one day and night would abide exclusively experiencing bliss for a hundred years, a hundred times a hundred years, a hundred times a thousand years, a hundred times a hundred thousand years. And he would be a once-returner, a non-returner, or without question a stream-enterer. It is no gain for you, Sakyans, it is ill-gained that in this life with its fear of sorrow, fear of death, sometimes you keep the observance day and sometimes you don't.'

'From this day on, Bhante, we will keep the observance day endowed with eight precepts.'[244]

Some lay disciples were skilled in even the highest reaches of meditation. Here, Uttara Nandamātā, the foremost female devotee in jhana practice, explains to Venerable Sariputta how she knew in advance of the *Sangha's* arrival. A passing deity, as a stream-enterer Nandamātā's brother in the *Dhamma*, stopped to hear her chanting.

'Having arisen in the night before dawn, Bhante, and chanted the "Way to the Beyond"[245]*, "I was silent. Then Great King Vessavana, realizing that I had finished reciting, congratulated me: "Sadhu, sister! Sadhu, sister!"*

' "But who is this of majestic countenance?"

‘ “I, sister, am your brother, Great King Vessavana.

‘ “Sadhu, Your Majesty! May this passage of Dhamma which I have chanted be my gift to you.”

‘ “Sadhu, sister! Then let this be a gift for me: tomorrow the Sangha of monks headed by Sariputta and Moggallāna will arrive here at Velukantaka without having eaten. Having fed the Sangha of monks may you dedicate the offering to me, then that will be a gift for me.”

‘So let the merit of this offering be for the happiness of Great King Vessavana.’

‘It is wonderful, Nandamātā, it is marvelous that you should converse face to face with Great King Vessavana, a deity of such great psychic power and potency!’

‘This is not my only wonderful and marvelous quality, Bhante.... When rulers for some reason took my dear beloved son by force and killed him.... I know of no change in my mind....

‘When my husband, who had passed away and re-arisen in a spirit world, revealed himself to me in his old form, I know of no change in my mind on that account....

‘Since I was a maiden brought to my youthful husband, I know of no transgression against him in thought, how then in body?...

‘Since I declared myself a lay devotee, I know of no deliberate violation of any training rule....

‘As far as I wish, I enter and abide in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna...

‘I do not see any of the five lower fetters taught by the Blessed One un-abandoned in me....’

'Wonderful, Nandamātā! Marvelous, Nandamātā!’[246]

Such advanced lay disciples attained those levels by following a comprehensive daily training as similar to the monastic path as possible.

'Ananda, clarify the practice of a trainee for the Sakyans of Kapilavatthu...'

'Here, Mahānāma, a noble disciple is virtuous, guards his sense faculties, is moderate in eating, and devoted to wakefulness. He possesses seven good qualities (faith, conscience, fear of wrong-doing, learning, energy, mindfulness, and understanding) *and he attains at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four jhānas which constitute the higher mind and are a blissful abiding here and now ...*'[247]

The opinion is sometimes expressed that times have changed and it is no longer possible to find the quiet and solitude necessary for development of deep *samādhi*. There is some truth to this, with the loss of most of the forests and the pervasive noise pollution of the 'infernal combustion engine'. However, improved transport, communications, and medicines make it in some ways easier to live in seclusion without having to endure extremes of hardship as in former times. Another advantage possessed by modern *Dhamma* practitioners is the widespread availability of the Buddha's teachings, translated and explained in various languages. Indeed, even today there are many tens of thousands of Buddhist monks, nuns, and lay people who live constantly or for extended periods in peaceful and secluded places suitable for meditation. Most of these places, right now, have empty rooms or empty huts available for anyone who wishes to practice.

'Live enjoying retreat, monks, live delighting in retreat, developing samatha of the heart within, not neglecting jhāna, possessing vipassanā, and frequenting empty places. If you do so, one of two fruits may be expected - profound knowledge here and now or, there still being some residual defilement, the state of non-returning.'[248]

Many today feel they lack the necessary accumulation of spiritual perfections (*pāramī*) to attain *Dhamma* in this life. But the very concept that the possibility of attainment is dependent on practice in past lives is refreshingly absent from the *suttas*.

'Endowed with six qualities, one hearing the true Dhamma is able to enter the fixed course of rightness regarding beneficial qualities [i.e. the way to stream-entry]. *What six? One has not killed one's mother, one's father, or an arahant, one has not maliciously shed the blood of a Tathagata, one has not caused a schism in the Sangha, and one is wise, no imbecile*.'[249]

Invariably, the Buddha stressed that it is sincerity and totality of commitment that is the decisive factor; not applying *Dhamma* to daily life, but applying daily life to *Dhamma*.

'As the crested blue-necked peacock when flying
Can never keep up with the speed of the swan
So the layperson cannot compete with the monk
The sage secluded, practicing jhana in the forest.'[250]

Rather than asking – 'How can I get the fruits of renunciation without actually renouncing?''- the Buddha's words should be pondered.

'Not apart from enlightenment and ardor
Not apart from restraint of the senses
Not apart from relinquishing all
Do I see safety for beings.'[251]

This is right view: sensuality leads to suffering, renunciation leads to peace. Those looking for a shortcut have already been offered one in the Buddha's 3-in-1 instant enlightenment program: virtue, *samādhi*, understanding. The efficacy of this course of spiritual training has been guaranteed by the Buddha and attested to by countless practitioners, lay and monastic, over the centuries.

'Whoever practices Dhamma in accordance with Dhamma
Those people will go to the far shore
Across the realm of Death
So very hard to cross.'[252]

Making the commitment to go forth as a monk or nun is not an outdated custom, but is the most efficient way to realize the full benefit of the *Dhamma*.

'Friend Sariputta, what is hard to do in this Dhamma-vinaya?'

'Going forth, friend, is hard to do in this Dhamma-vinaya.'

'But what is hard to do by one gone forth?'

'By one gone forth it is hard to find delight.'

'But what is hard to do by one who has found delight?'

'Practicing Dhamma in accordance with Dhamma is hard to do by one who has found delight.'

'But, friend, for a monk who practices Dhamma in accordance with Dhamma, will it take long to become an arahant?'

'Not long, friend.'[253]

Chapter 6

BENEFITS OF *SAMĀDHI*

A monk who develops and makes much of the four jhānas slopes, flows, and inclines towards Nibbāna.'[254]

Why is this so? The Buddha often praised the *jhānas* as 'blissful abidings here and now'. Does this imply that *jhānas* are just escapism, a refined form of solitary vice? Why are *jhānas* blissful?

Sensuality

'There are these five cords of sensual pleasures. What five? Visible forms cognizable by the eye ... sounds cognizable by the ear ... smells cognizable by the nose ... tastes cognizable by the tongue ... tangibles cognizable by the body that are wished for, desired, alluring, likeable, connected with sensual pleasure, and provocative of lust.'[255]

'Suppose, Aggivessana, there were a high mountain not far from a village or town, and two friends would leave the village or town and approach the mountain hand in hand. Having reached it, one friend would remain below at the foot of the mountain while the other would climb to the top. Then the friend who remained below at the foot of the mountain would say to the friend who stood on the top: "Well, friend, what do you see, standing on top of the mountain?" And the other replied: "I see lovely parks, groves, meadows, and ponds." Then the first friend would say: "It's impossible, friend, it cannot happen that while standing on top of the mountain you should see lovely parks, groves, meadows, and ponds."

'Then the other friend would come down to the foot of the mountain, take his friend by the arm, and make him climb to the top of the mountain. After giving him a few moments to catch his breath, he would ask: "Well, friend, standing on top of the mountain, what do you see?" And he would reply: "Standing on top of the mountain, friend, I see lovely parks, groves, meadows, and ponds." Then the other would say: "Friend, just a little earlier we heard you say: 'It is impossible, friend, it cannot happen that while standing on top of the mountain you should see lovely parks, groves, meadows, and ponds.' But now we heard you say [just the opposite]." Then the first friend would reply: "Because I was obstructed by this high mountain, friend, I did not see what was there to be seen."

'So too, Aggivessana, Prince Jayasena is obstructed, hindered, blocked, and enveloped by a still greater mass than this - the mass of ignorance. Thus it is impossible that Prince Jayasena, living in the midst of sensual pleasures, enjoying sensual pleasures, being devoured by thoughts of sensual pleasures, being consumed by the fever of sensual pleasures, bent on the search for sensual pleasures, could know, see, or witness that which must be known through renunciation, seen through renunciation, attained through renunciation, witnessed through renunciation.'[256]

'Householder, suppose a dog, overcome by hunger and weakness, was hanging around a butcher's shop. Then the butcher would cut out a skeleton of meatless bones smeared with blood and toss it to the dog. What do you think, householder? Would that dog assuage its hunger and weakness by gnawing meatless bones?'

'No, Bhante, that dog would just reap weariness and disappointment….'

'Suppose a bird grabbed a piece of meat and flew away, and then vultures, crows, and hawks flew up and pecked and clawed it. If that bird does not quickly let go of that piece of meat, wouldn't it incur death or deadly suffering because of that?'

'Yes, Bhante.'

'Suppose there was a charcoal pit deeper than a man's height and full of glowing coals... Then along came a man who wanted a happy life, and recoiled from pain and death. But two strong men seized him by the arms and dragged him towards that charcoal pit. Wouldn't that man struggle desperately?'

'Yes, Bhante.'

'So too, householder, a noble disciple considers thus: "Sensual pleasures have been compared with a skeleton ... with a piece of meat ... with a charcoal pit by the Blessed One - they provide much suffering and much despair, and the danger in them is great...." '[257]

'Suppose, Māgandiya, there was a leper with sores and blisters on his limbs, being devoured by worms, scratching the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a burning charcoal pit. The more he scratches his nails and cauterizes his body, the fouler, more evil-smelling, and more infected the openings of his wounds would become; and yet he would derive a certain amount of satisfaction and enjoyment from scratching the openings of his wounds. So too, Māgandiya, beings who are not free from lust for sensual pleasures, who devoured by craving and burning with fever, still indulge in sensual pleasures - the more they indulge, the more their craving and fever increases; and yet they derive a certain amount of satisfaction and enjoyment from the five cords of sensual pleasure....

'I have never seen or heard of a king or a king's minister in the past, future, or present, enjoying themselves with the five cords of sensual pleasure, who without abandoning craving and fever for sensual pleasures, was able to abide with mind... at peace within himself.

'On the contrary, Māgandiya, those contemplatives and brahmans in the past, future, or present, who abide with a mind at peace within themselves, all do so having understood in accordance with reality the origin, ending, gratification, danger, and escape from sensual pleasures, and having abandoned craving and fever for sensual pleasures.'[258]

'Where sensual pleasures end and those who have thoroughly ended sensual pleasures abide, certainly those venerable ones are wishless and quenched, crossed over and gone beyond with respect to that factor, I

say. Where do sensual pleasures end and those who have thoroughly ended sensual pleasures abide? Whoever should say: "I do not know or see that" should be told: "Here, friend, a monk, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities, enters and abides in the first jhāna... Here sensual pleasures end and those who have thoroughly ended sensual pleasures abide." Certainly, monks, the guileless and un-deceitful person would exclaim "Sadhu!" and rejoice and admire what was said, revering and honoring the speaker with palms joined in homage.'[259]

Sensual desire is not restricted to sexual desire, or desire for food, etc. These are only the coarse manifestations of a hunger for stimulation which constantly obsesses the minds of beings. Any interest or concern whatsoever connected with experiencing pleasure, relief, or comfort through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body, or any thoughts, memories, or expectations of such experience fall within the range of this prime hindrance. This is the defining characteristic of beings in the 'sensual world' and the chief reason for taking rebirth in this realm. Having taken rebirth here, life is for the most part dedicated to maximizing the experience of sensual pleasure. Hardly a few seconds ever go by during the course of an entire life truly free from free from harassment by concern for sensual pleasure. Even the overwhelming majority of religious practitioners - and here Buddhists are no exception - are motivated largely by sensual desire, whether it be the desire to experience refined sensual objects in a heavenly realm, or the desire to enjoy one's relationships and material comforts with mind at peace.

The pleasure of sensuality has these properties. It is narrow, occurring in only a restricted zone of the totality of awareness, thus forcing a constriction of consciousness. It is evanescent, necessitating a constant toil to seek out new pleasures. It is stimulating, agitating the mind so that it cannot experience the pleasure fully, but keeps restlessly skipping about, thus concealing the inadequacy of the gratification provided by the pleasure. It is crude, coarsening the mind and blocking awareness of subtle realities. It is always interwoven with painful feeling, pressuring the mind to reject or deny part of experience. It is selfish, obstructing relationships with others based on genuine compassion and altruism. And because of all these things, it promotes the growth of unwholesome thoughts and intentions, leading to suffering in future lives and obstructing the path to *Nibbāna*.

The bliss of the peaceful mind shares none of these faults. It permeates the whole field of awareness, so that the mind is spacious and relaxed. Though of course impermanent, it is far more stable and enduring than sensual happiness. It is peaceful, soothing the fevered mind, drawing the mind into the stillness of deep, sustained contemplation. It is of surpassing subtlety, the limits of feeling, pointing the way to the transcendence

of feeling. It is pure bliss without any admixture of pain, fostering a truly holistic awareness. It removes any motivation for relationships based on selfish desires; seeing the tenderness of one's own heart, one would shrink away from any act that would harm the heart of another. And because of all these things, it is exclusively associated with wholesome thoughts and intentions, leading to bliss not only in this life, but also to unimaginable ages of bliss in the future, and constituting the incontrovertible high road to the ultimate bliss of *Nibbāna*.

'Why am I afraid of that bliss which has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unbeneficial qualities? It occurred to me: "I am not afraid of that bliss, since it has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unbeneficial qualities." '[260]

Perception

According to fundamental principles of Buddhist philosophy, it is the mind that creates the world. The mind, fuelled with craving and attachments, cooks up the five senses to feed, distract, and entertain it, to avoid at any cost the ghastly possibility of having to confront the grisly reality behind its cozy complacency. By assailing the mind with an overload of input, the five hindrances, hand in hand with the five senses, confuse and sully the ability to clearly know.

'Ignorance has a nutriment, I say. What is the nutriment of ignorance?

' "The five hindrances" should be the reply.'[261]

The importance of this statement can scarcely be overstated. It formulates in negative terms the statement that one in samadhi knows and sees according to reality the four noble truths. The practice of *jhāna*, by cutting off the five hindrances, starves ignorance of its food. But how exactly does *samādhi* accomplish this?

One of the key factors in meditation is perception (*sāñña*). Perception is a relatively shallow mode of knowing which recognizes the surface features of phenomena, interpreting them in terms of past experience. It marks off one section of sense data so that it can be treated as a unit. For example, it is perception that generalizes and summarizes the data in a visual image, recognizing that 'This is blue, this is yellow, this is red.' It filters, simplifies, and abstracts the sheer bewildering quantity of sense data, processing it in terms of

manageable information, symbols, and labels. Perception forms the basis of concepts. While perception recognizes common features of phenomena, concepts combine a group or class of features into a mental image or idea. In order to construct something as ephemeral as a concept, the mind must be actively diverted from the clamor of sense experience and applied inwards. The formation of a concept can be analyzed in two stages. Firstly, there is the initial conception of a verbal idea, a thought (*vitakka*). Secondly, a sustained series of these thoughts is linked up to form a coherent consideration (*vicāra*). At this stage, this thinking and considering is still preoccupied with perceptions of sense experience; but the mind is able for the first time to be aware of a mental object distinct from that experience, and hence by reflection to infer the existence of a 'mind' as experiencer. This development, though crucial for both psychology and philosophy, introduces a subtle distortion in experience. By representing the world as more coherent and meaningful than it really is, it invites an insidious obsession with the fantasy realm of concepts, the fairy castles of the imagination, divorced from the uncertainties of reality.

'Dependent on the eye and visible forms arises eye-consciousness. The coming together of the three is contact. Due to contact there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one proliferates about. What one proliferates about is the source from which ideas derived from the proliferation of perceptions beset a person regarding past, future, and present visible forms cognizable by the eye [and so on].'[262]

The first steps of this passage form the basic exposition of the workings of conscious processes as analyzed in dependant origination. They constitute the 'given', the raw materials common to all sentient beings. With feeling, though, a new syntactical structure appears, signifying a change in mood. The static nouns are replaced by verbs - the momentum is picking up. The mind is adding to experience, and here perception plays a key role, under the influence of the four 'perversions of perception' - seeing permanence in what is impermanent, happiness in what is suffering, self in what is not-self, and beauty in what is ugly.'[263] By noticing shared characteristics, with each phenomenon perception suggests an association with further phenomena. These associations become verbalized internally as mental images called 'thinking'. The following verse links 'proliferation' closely with 'conceit', the idea of a 'self'.

'One should thoroughly dig up the root
Of ideas born of the compulsion to proliferate
[That is, the notion:] *"I am the thinker*." '[264]

'Proliferation seems to be a term for the way the undisciplined mind, by identifying with and delighting in this process of thinking, erupts in a profusion of trivial and repetitious inner commentaries. So at this point the passage moves on from analysis purely in terms of mental factors the 'person' is introduced. Proliferation has given birth to the full-blown concept of a 'thinker' who is being overwhelmed by the conceptual process by which they were born, which is now spinning out of control. Significantly, at the same point time is introduced. We have seen above the connection between time, concepts, and the idea of an enduring self. The 'ideas' spoken of in the passage lie close in meaning to 'concepts'; but the literal meaning 'reckonings, classifications' suggests rather more specifically the mind's calculating manipulation of the data of experience, like an inner spin doctor reaffirming the self and its place in the world. Given the integral significance here ascribed to the process of conceptual proliferation in the generation of suffering, the benefits of a meditation which can quell thought are not restricted to short term psychological ease. We have met such a meditation before.

'Mindfulness of breathing should be developed to cut off thinking.'[265]

It was seen above how perception simplifies experience into meaningful units. This essential function is undermined when proliferative thinking re-multiplies experience, so that just one word can trigger minutes or hours of discursive inner monologue. The special quality of mindfulness of breathing, shared to some degree with other meditation subjects, is to cut this process before it sprouts by staying with singleness of perception. When disciplined through meditation, the simplifying function of perception radically reduces the quantity of data in experience, allowing the development of a more refined and sensitive awareness.

What exactly is the 'breath'? There is a certain experience at the beginning of each breath, a different experience in the middle, and yet another at the end. These experiences are simply awareness of the air element; but it is perception that marks them off as the 'breath'. Only the physical impact of the air on the nerve endings is registered by body consciousness. That body consciousness 'reports' to mind consciousness, which performs the more sophisticated cognitive tasks such as recognition, interpretation, and so on. The function of *vitakka* to initiate thoughts and *vicāra* to sustain chains of thoughts is transformed by applying them not to perceptions of verbal constructs but to perceptions of the breath, actively directing the mind away from the diversity of sense experience onto the breath. Doing so over and over, the common features of the breaths become apparent. By combining the shared features of the breaths recognized by perception and by ignoring irrelevant data, the mind forms a stable and coherent concept or mental image of the breath. As contemplation deepens, the physical breath becomes very fine, so that its impact, originally overpowering, fades and the settling mind gains more appreciation of the subtle mind consciousness. Here, the meditator is going beyond

the first four steps of mindfulness of breathing which fall within body contemplation. A numinous rapture arises; the mind floats up like a balloon relieved of its ballast as the heavy burden of the body is disappearing. The subtle reflection of the mind in the breath is now almost the sole object in awareness. This refined concept, because of ignoring fluctuations in detail, has an enduring quality which outlives the changing physical phenomena it is derived from, in just the same way than the concept of 'self' has an enduring quality which outlives the body.[266] It normally appears to the meditator as a brilliant light of awesome power, yet exquisite refinement. As the fluctuations in consciousness even out, change fades away. One need no longer rely on memories of past experiences to interpret the present moment. The contrast on which time depends is not evident, and past and future disappear in the seamless flow of the present: one-pointedness in time. The contents of experience become so rarified that signs and summaries are rendered superfluous. A deeper mode of knowing emerges.

'Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities, one enters and abides in the first jhana.... One's former perception of sensual pleasures ceases. On that occasion there is a subtle and true perception of rapture and bliss born of seclusion. Thus with training some perceptions arise and some perceptions cease.... Again, one enters and abides in the second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna ... base of infinite space ... base of infinite consciousness ... base of nothingness.

'One's former perception of the base of infinite consciousness ceases. On that occasion there is a subtle and true perception of the base of nothingness.... Thus with training, some perceptions arise and some perceptions cease. Potthapāda, from when a monk gains his own [inner] *perception, he then step by step gradually contacts the peak of perception. Standing on the peak of perception it occurs to him: "Volition is evil to me; non-volition is better. If I were to form volitions and acts of will, this perception of mine would cease, and another, coarser, perception would arise. What if I were to neither form volitions nor acts of will?"...Those perceptions cease and other, coarser, perceptions do not arise. He contacts cessation. Thus, Potthapāda, there is the gradual attainment of the cessation of higher perceptions with clear comprehension.*'[267]

Knowledge

If one is disinterested in these five senses and withdraws attention from them, how would they continue to exist? They would disappear, together with their associated feelings, perceptions, thoughts, memories, intentions, and consciousnesses. When they stop, there is the first experiential understanding of 'cessation'. The path of practice is called a 'gradual cessation'. For one who lacks grounding in this experience, the

dawning realization of the frailty and emptiness of all one holds dear can precipitate a traumatic existential crisis.

'Here, monk, some have such a view: "This is the self, this is the world. After death I will be permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will remain just like eternity." He hears the Tathagata or a disciple of the Tathagata teaching Dhamma for the destruction of all standpoints for views, resolutions, obsessions, insistings, and inherent compulsions, for the relinquishing of all belongings, for the evaporation of craving, for fading away, cessation, Nibbana. It occurs to him: "Good grief! I shall be annihilated! Good grief! I shall perish! Good grief! I shall not exist!" He sorrows, grieves, and laments, beats his breast, and becomes distraught. Thus there is anxiety about what is non-existent within.'[268]

Jhanas share, to a lesser degree, the bliss of cessation which is *Nibbāna.* In fact, *jhānas* are called, with qualification, 'deathless', *Nibbāna* here and now', '*Nibbāna*', even 'final *Nibbāna*'.[269] The gradual abiding in *jhāna*, witnessing the successive stilling of activities, prepares the mind to accept that *Nibbāna* is ultimate bliss, precisely because all feelings have ended.

Venerable Sariputta addressed the monks: 'Nibbāna is bliss, friends, Nibbāna is bliss.'

When this was said, Venerable Udāyin said to Venerable Sariputta:

'But what is the bliss there, in that nothing is felt?'

'Just that is the bliss there, in that nothing is felt.... The bliss and happiness that arise dependent on the five cords of sensual pleasure; this is called the bliss of sensual pleasure. Here, a monk, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities, enters and abides in the first jhana... If perception and attention connected with sensual pleasure assail one abiding thus, this is an affliction for him, just as if pain arises in a happy person. Affliction has been called suffering by the Blessed One. By this method it should be understood how Nibbāna is bliss….'[270]

Once the mind has experienced *jhana*, it will deeply understand the suffering of sense-activity and will be reluctant to get involved, remaining free from defilements for a long time. It can then engage in contemplation of *Dhamma* without being diverted by distracting thoughts, sleepiness, or desire, and can pursue any theme of meditation as long as it wishes.

'When the mind is released from these five taints [hindrances]*, it is soft, workable, radiant, not brittle, it has right samādhi for the evaporation of the poisons. One can incline the mind to witness with direct knowledge any principle which can be witnessed with direct knowledge, and become an eyewitness in every case, there being a suitable basis*.'[271]

These direct knowledges have been met with above in the examination of *satipatthāna* and the gradual training. Although not absolutely necessary, their frequent occurrence in the *suttas* indicates that they should not be dismissed lightly. They include such important psychic powers as the ability to recollect one's past lives and to see how beings are reborn according to their actions. These confirm through personal experience the truth of action and rebirth, which constitutes non-transcendental right view. This will ripen into the transcendental right view of the four noble truths - how the process of rebirth works and how to bring it to an end. These are distinct kinds of knowledge; but the clearer is the knowledge of the details of rebirth, the easier will be the understanding of the principles of rebirth. The practice of *jhāna* will naturally lead to this kind of understanding by demonstrating how the mind can exist quite happily when relieved of the burden of the body. Perhaps this may explain the intriguing reports of near-death experiences - being drawn down a tunnel of light, meeting heavenly beings, feeling great bliss - which are so similar to experiences commonly met with on the threshold of *jhāna*. To get into *jhāna*, one has to die to the body.

It was also noted above how the ability of the mind to form concepts is the basis of both the idea of 'self' and the attainment of *jhāna*. As the unseen seer, the 'lord of the city in the center at the crossroads', the mind is the prime resort of the 'self'. Mind consciousness plays a role in the processing of all the other kinds of consciousness, and therefore can easily be mistaken for a permanent substratum of experience. Further, as it is within the mind that the idea of 'self' is born, when the mind is seeking for some aspect of experience to appropriate as 'self', it is automatically prone to turn back in on itself rather than seek outside. So we have seen that freedom from attachment to the mind is the exclusive province of the noble ones. For those who start practice with wrong views, then, the mind in jhana becomes the obvious locus for theories of the self. But one who starts practice with right view will instead use their *jhāna* as a basis for insight into the nature of awareness.

Jhānas are at 'the end of the world.[272] Five coarse kinds of consciousness have disappeared, leaving only the purified mind consciousness. Here, consciousness is directly accessible to profound contemplation. Not catching a glimpse of it here and there like a butterfly flitting in the twilight gloom of the forest, but gazing at it face to face for a long time, like a butterfly caught and pinned down under a brilliant light. Before, the

'self' could always shift its ground when challenged. But now it is like an army in retreat, besieged and surrounded in just one city. With nowhere to run, it cannot hold out long. Soon the victorious army of insight will scale the walls and storm the last stronghold of the self: consciousness itself. But why so many words?

'There are these four ways of devotion to the pursuit of pleasure, Cunda, which conduce exclusively to repulsion, fading away, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, Nibbāna. What four? Here, a monk ... enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna.

'If wanderers from other religions should say: "The monks who are sons of the Sakyan abide devoted to these four ways of pursuing pleasure", they should be told: "Yes!" since they speak rightly, without misrepresenting the truth.

'If wanderers from other religions should ask: "How many fruits and benefits are there from devotion to these four ways of pursuing pleasure?" They should be told: "There are four fruits, four benefits. What four? Here, a monk ... becomes a stream-enterer ... a once-returner ... a non-returner ... arahant."[273]

Chapter 7

JHĀNA AND THE NOBLE ONES

'The four who are on the way
And the four established in the fruit
This is the Sangha upright
With understanding, virtue, and samādhi.'[274]

We have seen that all the expositions of the path include *samādhi* as a central element. This being so, we should expect that *samādhi* as one of their intrinsic qualities ascribed to the noble individuals, those who bring

the path to life. In this chapter the key *sutta* statements about the *samādhi* of the noble ones are collected, starting with the arahant (who seems to be indicated here by 'noble one').

'Monks, there are ten ways of noble living, by which noble ones have dwelt in the past, will dwell in the future, and are dwelling now. What ten?

'Here, monks, a monk has abandoned the five hindrances; has equanimity towards the six senses; guards mindfulness; is supported by using, enduring, avoiding, or dispelling after reflection; has rejected personal speculations about the truth; has utterly dismissed all searching; has unclouded intention; having tranquilized the bodily activity [of the breath]*... he enters and abides in the fourth jhāna; has mind well released with the abandoning of lust, anger, and delusion; and has understanding well released by understanding that lust, anger, and delusion have been permanently uprooted. Whatever noble ones that lived in the past, will live in the future, or are living now, all of them live according to these ten ways of noble living*.'[275]

Elsewhere, the first *jhāna* is shown to be the minimum necessary prerequisite for *arahantship*;[276] but this sutta confirms that all *arahants* would have access to fourth *jhāna* after their attainment. Notice that this fourth *jhāna* occurs with the tranquilizing of the breath. This obviously refers to a gradual process of settling, occurring at the very least over several minutes. This rules out any 'momentary' or transcendental 'path-moment' *samadhi*. For the *arahant*, free from all defilements, there is nothing to prevent the attainment of *jhana*.

'Monk, having abandoned six things one can enter and abide in the first jhāna. What six? Sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, doubt; and the danger in sensual pleasures has been well seen with right understanding in accordance with reality.'[277]

To hold that an arahant may not attain *jhāna* is therefore tantamount to implying that they may still be subject to residual defilements. The historical context here is revealing. In virtually all other schools of Buddhism, a threefold development occurred contemporaneous with the development of the *jhāna*-less arahant in the *Theravāda*. Firstly, the Buddha was exalted from being a perfected human to being a god; secondly, the arahant was downgraded, subject, it was felt, to residual sensuality, lack of universal knowledge, even selfishness; and thirdly, the *Bodhisattva* ideal emerged from obscurity to fill the resulting gap as an alternative way of practice. These trends culminated in the *Mahāyana*. In an attenuated form, the first and third of these trends are also evident in the *Theravāda* commentaries. It should therefore come as no surprise to find the status

of the arahant being gradually eroded. Some scholars, however, attempt to derive the *jhāna*-less arahant from one described in the *suttas* as 'released by understanding'.

' "Released by understanding, released by understanding", is said, friend. What was the Blessed One referring to when he spoke of the one released by understanding?'

'Here, friend, a monk... enters and abides in the first jhāna. He understands that. This is what the Blessed One was referring to, with qualification, when he spoke of the one released by understanding. Again ... he enters and abides in the second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna ... base of infinite space ... base of infinite consciousness ... base of nothingness ... base of neither perception nor non-perception... cessation of perception and feeling. Having seen with understanding, his poisons are completely evaporated. He understands that. This is what the Blessed One was referring to, without qualification, when he spoke of the one released by understanding.'[278]

Elsewhere, however, the *arahant* released by understanding is, somewhat inconsistently, said to not dwell in the formless attainments.[279] The main point, then, is not which level of *samādhi* is achieved, but the emphasis on wisdom at each level. Nowhere in the *suttas* is it stated or implied that an arahant released by understanding does not attain the four *jhānas*.

The non-returner shares with the arahant the distinction of being 'perfected in *samādhi*'. With a typically memorable simile, the Buddha explains to Venerable Ānanda how the non-returner cuts through the five lower fetters.

'There is a path, Ānanda, a way for the abandoning of the five lower fetters. That someone, without coming to that path, that way, could know or see or abandon the five lower fetters [thereby becoming a non-returner]*: that is not possible. Just as when there is a great tree with heartwood standing, it is not possible that anyone could cut out the heartwood without first cutting through the bark and sapwood.... But that someone, by coming to that path, that way, could know and see and abandon the five lower fetters: that is possible.*

'And what, Ānanda, is that path? Here, with seclusion from belongings, the abandoning of unbeneficial qualities, the complete tranquilization of bodily disturbance, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities, a monk enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna ... base of infinite space ... base of infinite consciousness ... base of nothingness. Whatever exists in there

of feeling, perception, conceptual activities, and consciousness [also physical *form in the four jhanas only], he sees those phenomena as impermanent, suffering, a disease, a tumor, a barb, a calamity, an affliction, alien, disintegrating, empty, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena and directs it towards the deathless element thus: "This is peaceful, this is sublime; that is, the samatha of all activities, the relinquishment of all belongings, the evaporation of craving, fading away, cessation, Nibbāna." Standing on that he attains the evaporation of the poisons* [or to the state of non-return].... *This is the path, the way for the abandoning of the five lower fetters.'*

'In that case, Bhante, how is it that some monks are released of heart and some are released by understanding?'

'The difference here, Ānanda, is in their spiritual faculties, I say.'[280]

Here again the simile drives home that not only is each stage of the path absolutely necessary, it is just as necessary that they occur in the correct sequence: first the bark, then the sapwood, then the heartwood. The samadhi here occurs with the 'tranquilizing of bodily disturbance' (sometimes-rendered 'inertia', but one cannot tranquilize inertia). The remarks above on the incompatibility of 'path-moment' samadhi with the tranquilizing of the breath apply here also. This is confirmed yet again in the body of the text, which treats *samādhi* exclusively as a basis for *vipassanā*, not as an enlightenment experience. Realization then occurs after *vipassanā*.

The *suttas* do not record any similarly forceful, definitive statements about the *samādhi* required by the other 'trainees' - the stream-enterer, the once-returner, and those on the way - yet the basic position is straightforward.

'Here, a monk is endowed with the right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samādhi of a trainee. That is what "trainee" refers to.'[281]

'For a long time, Bhante, I have understood the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One thus: there is knowledge for one who has samadhi, not for one without samadhi. But which comes first, samādhi or knowledge?'

... Mahānāma, the virtue, samādhi, and understanding of both the trainee and the adept have been spoken of by the Blessed One.... And what is the samādhi of the trainee? Here, a monk ... enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna.'[282]

Although Venerable Ānanda's answer is not explicit, it seems to imply that the *samādhi* of the trainee comes before the understanding of the trainee, but the understanding of the trainee comes before the *samādhi* of the adept.

'One trains in the higher virtue, the higher mind, and the higher understanding, therefore a monk is called a trainee.'[283]

'What is the training in the higher mind? Here, a monk... enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna.'[284]

'And what is a true person? Here, someone is of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samādhi.'[285]

'How is a person an unshakeable contemplative [i.e. a stream-enterer]*? Here a monk has right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samādhi.*'[286]

'Sariputta, one who is endowed with this noble eightfold path is called a stream-enterer, this venerable one of such and such a name and clan.'[287]

Such statements should not be taken to restrict the possession of the path to the stream-enterer, for the once-returner, etc., also possess the path. 'One who' (*yo*) is indicative, not distributive (which would be *yo yo* or *yo koci*). The point is simply that the 'stream' is the practice and the 'stream-enterer' is the practitioner.

'Here, a monk has fulfilled virtue and has measure of samādhi and understanding... with the evaporation of three fetters he is a stream-enterer...'[288]

'A faithful noble disciple, having thus repeatedly practiced striving, remembering, samādhi, and understanding, has full confidence thus: "These principles which I had previously only heard about I now abide in having personally contacted, and see having penetrated with understanding." '[289]

In general, the Buddha described the wrong eightfold path as the 'bad path'.[290] Here he is more specific.

'Samādhi is the path; no samādhi is the bad path.'[291]

'Without abandoning paying attention away from the root, cultivation of the bad path, and laziness of the heart, it is impossible to abandon identity view, doubt, and misapprehension of virtue and vows.'[292]

If the 'path' by which these three fetters are abandoned by the stream-enterer is, or more modestly, includes *samādhi*, it may be inferred that those on the path to stream-entry also possess *samādhi*. Being destined for enlightenment,[293] these individuals are of great interest to the aspirant, although since the *Theravāda* tradition relegates them to the status of a 'mind moment' they are often overlooked. If they possess *jhāna* it follows as a matter of course that those at higher stages will too. They are regularly credited with the five spiritual faculties.

'One who has completely fulfilled these five spiritual faculties is an arahant. If they are weaker, he is one on the way to witnessing the fruit of arahantship. If they are weaker than that he is a non-returner... one on the way to non-returning ... a once-returner... one on the way to once-returning ... a stream-enterer... If they are weaker than that, he is one on the way to witnessing the fruit of stream-entry. But monks, I say that one in whom these five spiritual faculties are completely and totally absent is an outsider, one who stands in the faction of ordinary persons.'[294]

So the one on the way to stream-entry possesses the spiritual faculty of *samādhi*, albeit weakly. 'Weakly' is of course quite different from 'not at all'. Below we will examine several passages that describe those on the way to stream-entry in detail, clarifying what is meant by 'weakly'.

This path attainer is further described as the '*Dhamma*-follower' and the 'faith-follower'. Although these terms are most commonly used to distinguish between those on the way to stream-entry as giving chief emphasis to either understanding or faith, in a few passages they seem to be used as complementary descriptions of these 'wayfarers' treated as a single group.[295] This is reminiscent of the usage of the analogous terms 'release of heart, release by understanding' which we briefly noted above (Chapter two). In fact, the '*suttas'* treatment of the different classifications of noble individuals (apart from the standard set of four pairs) is somewhat loose, and must be sensitively judged in each context. Even when they are differentiated, the *Dhamma*-follower has the spiritual faculty of faith, while the faith-follower has the spiritual faculty of

understanding, leaving no doubt that the difference is simply a matter of emphasis, and explaining how both terms can also be applied to all the wayfarers without distinction. The following passage compares the *Dhamma*-follower and the faith-follower with the stream-enterer. 'Rightness' is the noble eightfold path.[296]

'Monks, the eye ... the ear ... the nose ... the tongue ... the body ... the mind is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. One who has faith and certainty in these principles thus is called a faith-follower, one who has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of true persons, and transcended the plane of ordinary persons. He is incapable of doing any action having done which he would be reborn in hell, an animal's womb, or the ghost realm. He is incapable of passing away without having witnessed the fruit of stream-entry.

'Monks, the eye ... the ear ... the nose ... the tongue ... the body ... the mind is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. One who thus accepts these principles after pondering with a measure of understanding is called a Dhamma-follower, one who has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of true persons, and transcended the plane of ordinary persons. He is incapable of doing any action having done which he would be reborn in hell, an animal's womb, or the ghost realm. He is incapable of passing away without having witnessed the fruit of stream-entry.

'One who knows and sees these principles thus is called a stream-enterer, not subject to [rebirth in] *the abyss, fixed in destiny, destined for enlightenment*.'[297]

While the above passage deals with the understanding of the wayfarers, the following deals with their *samādhi*.

'What kind of person is the Dhamma-follower? Here, monks, a certain person does not, having transcended forms, personally contact and abide in those peaceful formless liberations, and his poisons are not fully evaporated after being seen with understanding. But he accepts after pondering with a measure of understanding the principles made known by the Tathagata, and he has these qualities: the spiritual faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, samadhi, and understanding....

'What kind of person is the faith-follower? Here, monks, a certain person does not, having transcended forms, personally contact and abide in those peaceful formless liberations, and his poisons are not fully evaporated after being seen with understanding. But he has a measure of faith and affection for the Tathagata,

and he has these qualities: the spiritual faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, samadhi, and understanding...'[298]

In the following passage, 'laughing understanding' and 'swift understanding' refer to the *arahant* and the non-retumer, 'release' to the *arahant* only. Although the terms are not used, the first kind of person is obviously the *Dhamma*-follower, and the second is the faith-follower.

'Here, Mahānāma, a certain person is endowed neither with confirmed confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, nor with laughing understanding, swift understanding, or release. Yet he has these qualities: the spiritual faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, samadhi, and understanding; and he accepts the Dhamma made known by the Tathagata after pondering with a measure of understanding. Even this person will not go to hell, an animal's womb, the ghost realm, or to a lower realm, bad destiny, or the abyss.

'Here, Mahānāma, a certain person is endowed neither with confirmed confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, nor with laughing understanding, swift understanding, or release. Yet he has these qualities: the spiritual faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, samadhi, and understanding; and he has a measure of faith and affection for the Tathagata. Even this person will not go to hell, an animal's womb, the ghost realm, or to a lower realm, bad destiny, or the abyss.'[299]

Those on the way to stream-entry are contrasted with the stream-enterer in terms of their primary cognitive mode. The stream-enterer 'knows and sees' directly, while the wayfarers accept by faith or by pondering, i.e. with primarily emotive or intellectual acquiescence to the teachings. These kinds of acceptance are two of five ways of knowing mentioned elsewhere, which may lead to either right or wrong conclusions, and which do not constitute 'awakening to the truth'. However, if correctly apprehended - as provisional, not conclusive - they form part of the practice for awakening.[300] In fact, acquiescence in line with the teachings is necessary before one can enter the way.[301] Although this contrast is consistent with the normal ascription of 'knowledge and vision in accordance with reality' to the stream-enterer, elsewhere the noble ones as a whole are described as 'directly knowing' in contrast with the ordinary person, who merely 'perceives'.[302] Rather than describing these wayfarers as directly knowing or not, it seems more relevant to describe them as being in the process of coming to know. Like the time just before sunrise: compared with midnight it is light, but compared with midday it is still dark. When contrasted with the ordinary person, then, it may be said that they have direct knowledge, but when contrasted with the stream-enterer their knowledge is primarily conceptual. The possession of the spiritual faculty of understanding, though limited in this way, implies a degree of direct

introspective insight. Not having fully seen the *Dhamma*, they also lack 'confirmed confidence'. Earlier, we saw this as a key ingredient of the 'relinquishment' that supports the *samādhi* of the stream-enterer. The wayfarers would instead rely on their own intrinsic qualities: love of the Buddha, freedom from doubt about the teachings, and lack of remorse for doing evil.

While the texts exhibit some equivocation over the understanding and faith faculties of those on the way to stream-entry, no such hesitation is expressed regarding their samadhi faculty. The Buddha specifically addresses the question of the level of *samādhi* required for the initial entry to the path. In common with the *arahant* released by understanding (sometimes), the wayfarers do not have the formless liberations. But they are repeatedly declared to possess the spiritual faculty of *samādhi*, i.e. *jhāna*. Although the Buddha took pains to make the attainment of the way to stream-entry appear accessible, emphasizing the qualities that the *Dhamma*-follower and faith-follower lack, nowhere is *jhāna* included among the qualities that they lack. The weakness of the spiritual faculty of samadhi may be explained by the weakness of the supporting 'relinquishment'. The weakness of the faculty, it may be noted, does not necessarily imply weakness of *samādhi*. Even ordinarily people, while totally bereft of the faculties, may be highly skilled in all *samādhi* attainments. The term 'spiritual faculty' implies rather that these principles become the ascendant prevailing dispositions, dominant in their own fields, and not to be overthrown. For ordinarily people, the long-term prognosis is decline from the heights they have attained, and eventually perhaps rebirth even in hell; while for the trainees, though they may still have short-term difficulties, the long term will bring only progress.

If the wayfarers possess *jhāna*, why then, as we saw above, is *samādhi* not directly stated in the dependent liberation to be a vital condition for this attainment? Consider the structure of the noble eightfold path. One starts with conceptual right view, and then develops the remaining factors culminating in right samadhi, which includes reviewing knowledge, a wisdom practice. At this point all the path factors have been fulfilled to a degree which may for some be sufficient for entering the way. So it seems that the attainment of right *samādhi* may itself be equivalent to entering the way. It therefore could not be said that it is a condition for entering the way, since nothing can be a condition for itself. This does not necessarily imply that all those with right view who develop *samādhi* become noble ones; this would depend on one's spiritual maturity, especially one's depth of wisdom or faith.

Since the wayfarers must inevitably attain stream-entry in this very life, even if prevented from practicing by, say, grave illness or sudden death,[303] it is difficult to escape the conclusion that they need not further develop their meditation after the entry to the path. This makes sense if we understand the attainment of

the path as requiring development of all the path factors to a sufficient degree, such that the conditions for stream-entry are already fulfilled, requiring only time to bear their fruit. There does not seem to be any method given to ascertain exactly how much the path factors must be developed to reach this point. Normally, of course, the character of such individuals would be to delight in meditation, and the Buddha further exhorts them to put forth effort to minimize their time in *samsāra*.

Conclusion

All noble ones are consistently and repeatedly said to be endowed with samadhi as a path-factor and spiritual faculty, to possess the samadhi of a trainee, and to train in the higher mind. These are all defined as *jhāna*. In my opinion, the conclusion is inescapable: *jhāna* is necessary for all the stages of noble liberation. The noble path has eight factors. *jhānas* are one of those factors. Only with the fulfillment of all eight factors can one be considered to be on the path. At the end of our labyrinthine tour of the *suttas* we return to this simple, straightforward principle. Our explorations of the subtle, sometimes enigmatic, world of the *suttas* serve to illuminate this model, revealing unexpected nuances, unappreciated depths. Like a fugue, where the main theme is reflected in every note, not distorted but enhanced by the modulations and transformations; so too the keynote of peace permeates the path. As we will see below, this pervasion is so complete that the very passages which at first glance may seem to introduce a new thematic paradigm, with sensitive appraisal often turn out to enrich our appreciation of the essential theme.

'I say, monk, that the evaporation of the poisons is dependant on the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna ... base of infinite space ... base of infinite consciousness ... base of nothingness ... base of neither perception nor non-perception.'[304]

Chapter 8

COUNTER-EXAMPLES

Having completed our survey, we now turn to a discussion of some of the *sutta* passages that have been taken to indicate that *jhānas* are not necessary for liberation. We have seen that the *suttas* explain the path clearly and explicitly, approaching the subject from different angles, but always including *jhāna* as an intrinsic element. If we are to discover a *jhāna*-less path we should expect a similar approach. The principle of proportion and the principle of historical perspective, which I proposed in the first chapter, now come to the fore. Minor teachings should be seen in context. Background stories should be carefully examined for authenticity. We should ask: 'Is the Buddha here altering the eightfold path, or describing a different path? Or is he clarifying details, emphasizing particular aspects or modes of practicing the eightfold path?' As far as I can see, there are two possible outcomes of this discussion. Either the counter-examples do not, in fact, imply that *jhānas* are unnecessary, or there appears to be a contradiction in the teachings. Obviously the first alternative is preferable, so we will see if these passages can be interpreted in line with the core teachings. Normally this is straightforward. If, however, the interpretations we provide - some of which must remain tentative in the absence of definitive statements in the passages themselves, itself an indication of their secondary status - are not felt to be acceptable in some cases, this should not be taken as negating the authoritative *sutta* passages in the previous chapters.

The *Susīma Sutta* has been regularly relied on to substantiate the claim that an arahant need not possess jhana. According to the *Pāli* version of the *sutta*, the wanderer Susīma fraudulently entered the *Sangha* desiring wealth and fame. He questioned a number of monks who had declared *arahantship*, and they denied possessing psychic powers or formless attainments. This is quite in line with the general position of the *suttas*. *Jhāna* is not mentioned. Their declaration of *arahantship* included the phrase: 'The holy life has been lived'. This means they have fully developed the noble eightfold path. They say they are 'released by understanding'; we have seen above that such an attainment regularly includes *jhāna*, although, as here, it may not include the formless attainments, which are extra and beyond the four *jhānas*. Venerable Susīma is obviously puzzled by the monks' statements, and goes to the Buddha. The Buddha does not explicitly endorse the monks' claims to *arahantship*,[305] but explains the situation thus:

'First there is the knowledge of the regularity of natural principles; afterwards there is the knowledge of Nibbāna.'[306]

This statement re-emphasizes the importance of causality and the regular sequence of knowledge. Without an understanding of the causal principles underlying suffering and the causal principles of the practice to break free from suffering, it is impossible to realize *Nibbāna.* The Buddha then teaches Venerable Susīma a passage from the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* culminating in the release of arahantship.[307] This release is described in the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* as 'release of mind'. We saw above that this 'mind' (or 'heart') release is due to the fading away of lust; and the fading away of lust is due to the development of the mind through *samatha*.[308] The Buddha goes on to teach dependent origination. Venerable Susīma says that he understands those teachings, and filled with remorse, confesses his transgression to the Buddha.

Interestingly, in the Chinese version of this text, though the basic doctrinal teaching of dependent origination is similar and so original, the background story is quite different. There, Venerable Susīma, having fraudulently entered the *Sangha*, nevertheless quickly picked up enough doctrinal knowledge to expose by cross-examining some monks who had falsely boasted of being enlightened (one of the most serious *vinaya* offences). As this text shows the monks in a very bad light it is unlikely to have been forged. While the faults of monks are of necessity on display throughout the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the suttas almost always focus on the positive. We may surmise that the background story in the *Pāli* version was rewritten to whitewash faults in the *Sangha*. This must have occurred when the *Pali* canon of the *Theravāda* school had already become separated from the version later preserved in Chinese. This separation occurred no earlier than the Third Council, over a century after the Buddha's passing away.[309] Perhaps the de-emphasis on *samādhi* in the *Pāli* version of the story, though not actually contradicting the original teachings, marks an early stage in the development of the concept of 'dry insight' without *jhāna.*

In several places the Buddha talks about two 'ways of practice', which may be taken to indicate the distinction between separate meditative paths on the basis of whether or not they include *jhāna.* The 'painful way of practice' consists of the perceptions of the ugliness of the body, the repulsiveness of food, boredom with the whole world, death, and the impermanence of all activities. This 'painful way of practice' is contrasted (unfavorably) with the 'pleasant way of practice , which consists of *jhāna.*'[310] We may note that the painful mode is never identified with *vipassanā*; the basic purpose of most of these contemplations is to eradicate sensual lust, which is an aspect of *samatha*. Nor has it anything to do with contemplation of painful feelings. Moreover, the distinction between these ways of practice was clearly not meant as a hard and fast division.

Venerable Sariputta's practice was of the pleasant mode, yet he had also perfected body contemplation.[311] Venerable Moggallāna's practice was of the painful mode, yet he possessed mastery in all levels of *samādhi*.[312] The distinction is merely a matter of emphasis. The pleasant practice of *jhāna* does not supplant the other seven path factors; nor does the painful practice supplant *jhāna*. In fact, one practicing each of the contemplations of the painful way of practice is said to 'not neglect *jhāna*'[313] and to possess the five spiritual faculties, if only weakly.[314]

Again, the Buddha says to Mahānāma the Sakyan that sensuality may arise in a noble one if they do not attain *jhāna*.[315] However, this is phrased in the present tense, 'does not attain', not 'has never attained'. It seems that even after a stream-enterer has seen the *Dhamma* their samadhi may fall away unless they devote sufficient time to meditation, and therefore certain defilements may re-arise.[316] Stream-enterers and once-returners are not 'perfected in *samādhi* '. This does not imply that they have never experienced any *jhānas*, only that they may not have experienced all four *jhānas*, or may not be proficient in them.

Again, the six recollections - the Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Sangha*, virtue, generosity, and deities - are taught as a basis for *arahantship*,[317] even though according to the *Visuddhimagga* they only lead to access *samadhi*. Such suttas, which teach *samatha* for *arahantship* with no mention of *vipassana*, can hardly suffice to establish the authenticity of a path of 'pure *vipassanā*'. Moreover, the *suttas* say that these meditations will abandon the five cords of sensual pleasures, so that the meditator dwells 'with heart become in every way like space - vast, exalted, measureless, free from hatred and ill will.'[318] They are called 'blissful abidings here and now pertaining to the higher mind, for the purification of the unpurified mind, for the brightening of the dull mind.'[319] They lead to the abandoning of the 'taints of the mind'.[320] Each of these phrases implies *jhāna*. There is no distinction derivable from the *suttas* between the *samādhi* that results from these recollections and the *samādhi* that results from any other meditation subject. The Buddha simply confirms this straight-forward interpretation by saying that one who develops these recollections 'does not neglect *jhāna'*.[321] The chief reason why the *Visuddhimagga* thinks these recollections cannot induce *jhāna* is that they involve recollecting and pondering over diverse qualities of the Buddha, etc., and so can lead only to access *samādhi* (which is an incidental admission that so-called access *samādhi* is not truly one-pointed).[322] But there seems to be no reason why one could not leave off contemplating diverse qualities and focus on just one quality to arouse *jhāna*. A similar process is recommended in the *Visuddhimagga* itself for some other meditations, such as the parts of the body. This technique, based on the mental recitation of the word 'Buddho', is a favorite method for developing *jhāna* in contemporary Thailand.

Probably the most striking and influential passages, which many believe to imply the superfluity of *jhāna*, are the background stories of monastics and laypeople attaining various levels of *Dhamma* with no mention of prior meditative development, usually while listening to a talk. There is usually nothing to positively rule out the possibility of previous attainment of *jhāna*, but in many cases this seems unlikely, especially where laypeople are concerned. Regarded as extraordinary and noteworthy, such cases of 'instant enlightenment' occur in a small proportion of *suttas* (for example, about half a dozen times in the *Majjhima Nikāya*), almost always when the Buddha himself is teaching. The Buddha is, however, rarely personally credited with confirming these attainments. In fact, he is at times reluctant to do so, typically preferring to show how one can know for oneself.[323]

The most common attainment is stream-entry, so many conclude that such passages imply that this does not require *jhāna*. There are, however, a number of striking descriptions of people attaining *arahantship* in circumstances where it seems unlikely they had previously developed *jhāna*. So it seems that if such stories imply a *jhāna*-less stream-enterer we must also admit a *jhāna*-less arahant. But I prefer to reverse the logic: the texts unequivocally declare that arahants must have *jhāna*, so these stories cannot prove the existence of *jhāna*-less *arahants*. This being so, they cannot prove the *jhāna*-less stream-enterer either. Here I will advance three lines of argument to support this conclusion. Firstly, such stories are often of questionable authenticity. Secondly, they frequently describe a kind of *samādhi* gained immediately prior to the enlightenment experience that could well be *jhāna*. And thirdly, they were meant to point to the path, not replace it.

First to historical matters. Descriptions of 'instant enlightenment' are scattered through the canon, but most characteristically in the first chapter of the *Vinaya Mahāvagga*. I will therefore concentrate on this text, though I believe many of the features I note here also occur in other contexts.

This chapter tells of the founding of Buddhism. It starts under the *Bodhi* tree with the Buddha reflecting how *Dhammas* become clear to the 'ardent brahman in *jhāna'*. It goes on to tell how the Buddha converted his first followers and established a monastic order, thus serving to introduce the *Vinaya*. This text, together with the *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta* - with which it shares much in common - forms the basis of all later biographies of the Buddha. The other early schools also had their versions of this text, some of them extending it to a full-fledged biography. Although the early *suttas* spare little time for biography, later writers found that the Buddha's life story gave the teachings that 'personal touch' ideal for popularizing the teachings. The story was probably included to provide the *Vinaya* students with some background and doctrinal teachings, rounding out their education.

And, adding zest to the sometimes dry *Vinaya* material the chapter abounds in all manner of wonderful and marvelous happenings - deities appearing; displays of supernormal powers; the Buddha even does battle with a ferocious fire-breathing dragon, tames it, and puts it in his bowl! This latter event comes replete with a flowery but superfluous verse summary (mistaken for prose in the PTS Pāli and translation) - an obviously late literary feature. Accounts of miraculous events are fairly restrained in the early strata of the canon. They increase markedly in the later strata, such as the *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta* or the *Sagathavagga*, and proliferate wildly in later literature. Some of the *Mahāvagga* miracles must have had popular currency. At least one, the story of the Buddha walking on water, later served as the literary model for the well known story in the Christian Gospels.

Not least wonderful and marvelous are the 'miracles of conversion'. It is to be expected that the codifiers of a religion should ascribe the maximum possible purity to the first adherents. It seems that almost everyone the Buddha taught in those first months became a stream-enterer at least. This includes, for example, King Bimbisāra together with a hundred thousand leading householders of Magadha. (There is no mention of how such a vast multitude managed to squeeze around the woodland shrine where the Buddha was staying.) Such trends, too, proliferated in later writings; the *Milinda Panha* piously informs us that over a billion lay followers had realized the *Dhamma*. There is surely an anomaly here. Only a short while before, the Buddha, reflecting on the subtlety of *Dhamma* and the strength of defilements, doubted anyone could understand and famously hesitated whether to teach at all.

Professor AK Warder suspects a political influence at work here. Although the Buddha's main centre of operations was in the neighboring kingdom of Kosala, there are no comparable accounts of mass realizations there. During the period this text was being assembled, the star of Kosala was waning, while that of Magadha was waxing, following the aggressive expansionist policy initiated by Ajātasattu and culminating in the pan-Indian Buddhist empire of Asoka. It would have been most agreeable for the increasingly politicized *Sangha* of the time to emphasize the early Buddhist traditions of Magadha. It seems not too far-fetched to see in this chapter's emphasis on biography, missionary activity, miracles, mass lay conversion, and the liberating efficacy of listening to the teachings a close connection with the popular, urbanized, scholastic Buddhism that emerged in Asoka's time.

I suggest that this first chapter of the *Mahāvagga* was probably finalized around the same period as the final chapter of the *Culavagga*, which tells of the Third Council, that is, perhaps two hundred years after the

Buddha's passing away. Could this be connected with the schismatic thesis, disputed by the *Theravāda* at the Third Council, which claimed that the path could be induced by a word? Although the doctrinal seeds around which this text crystallized - the four noble truths, the eightfold noble path, dependent origination - spring from the heart of the Buddha's awakening, the details of the connecting biography record popular tradition as much as enlightened revelation.

As I have already noted, 'instant enlightenment' also occurs elsewhere in the *Pāli* canon. Having seen the dubious authenticity of the text where these events occur most prominently, we may well suspect that other occurrences may be tarred with the same brush. Stories come to mind such as the conversion of the assassins sent by Devadatta and the later conversion of Devadatta's entire retinue. Now I do not wish to suggest that all such stories are spurious. Some of the doctrinal passages we will examine below confirm that it is possible to realize *Dhamma* during a talk, and many of the historical accounts may be genuine. However, I do wish to suggest that the historical evidence attesting to realization without prior *Dhamma* practice is slim. It is often just those occasions when it seems least likely that the listener would have previously developed *jhāna* that turn out to be most historically questionable.

And so to my second line of argument. The passages describing 'instant enlightenment' frequently emphasize how the joy of listening to *Dhamma* purifies the mind in readiness for realization. Although the texts are not completely explicit on this point, the description of this mind state is certainly consonant with *jhāna*. The standard passage is as follows.

'Then the Blessed One gave the householder Upāli graduated instruction; that is, talk on giving, virtue, and the heavens. He explained the danger, degradation, and defilement in sensual pleasures and the blessings of renunciation. When he knew that the householder Upā1i's mind was ready, soft, free of hindrances, elated, clear of doubt, he expounded to him the special teaching of the Buddhas: Suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path. just as a clean cloth with all the stains removed would take dye evenly, so too while the householder Upāli was sitting right there, the stainless, immaculate eye of the Dhamma arose in him: "Whatever is subject to arising, all that is subject to cessation." '[324]

This passage emphasizes the gradual, progressive nature of the teaching, paralleling the gradual, progressive nature of the path. We have seen how *jhānas*, the 'bliss of renunciation', are the escape from sensual pleasures; how the freedom from hindrances is equated with the first *jhāna*; and how *samādhi* is the indispensable condition for seeing the four noble truths. We have also seen that a stream-enterer knows that:

'These principles, which I formerly only heard of, I now abide in having personally contacted, and see having penetrated with understanding.' The simile of the clean cloth further emphasizes the need for purity of mind to see the *Dhamma*. Is it possible to attain jhana during a *Dhamma* talk?

'When a noble disciple bends his ear to listen to Dhamma, paying full attention as a matter of vital concern, applying his whole heart to it, on that occasion the five hindrances are not present, on that occasion the seven enlightenment factors come to fulfillment by development.'[325]

Here, *samādhi* is signified in both the negative aspect, as abandonment of the hindrances, and positive aspect, as fulfillment - not mere preliminary arousing - of the enlightenment factor of *samādhi*. I do not see how this could be anything less than full *jhāna*. While the above passage concerns one who is already a noble disciple, the following passage concerns one who is to enter the way to stream-entry.[326]

'Endowed with these five qualities, monks, one listening to the true Dhamma is incapable of entering the fixed course of rightness regarding beneficial qualities. What five? One criticizes the teachings; one criticizes the teacher; one criticizes oneself; one listens to Dhamma as one of scattered mind, not of one-pointed mind; and one pays attention away from the root. [But if one has the opposite qualities, one is capable.]'[327]

If one-pointedness here merely implies paying full attention to the teaching, this passage might be read as implying that a pre-*jhānic* level of concentration can be sufficient to realize the *Dhamma* while listening to a discourse. But 'rightness' means the noble eightfold path, including *jhāna*; and the *samādhi* of one practicing for stream-entry is the spiritual faculty of *samādhi*, etc. We have also noted that the only passage that analyzes an unambiguously pre-*jhānic samādhi* in more detail describes it as 'not unified'.[328] This passage therefore seems to imply *jhāna* attained either before or during the talk itself. If so, this strongly supports the necessity of *jhāna* for entering the path. The following passage describes the process in more detail.

'There are, monks, these five bases for release where for a monk abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute his unreleased mind becomes released, his un-evaporated poisons become evaporated, and the unattained supreme security from bondage becomes attained. What five?

'Here, the Teacher or a respected companion in the holy life teaches the Dhamma to a monk....

'...Or a monk teaches the Dhamma he has learnt to others....

'...Or a monk recites in detail the Dhamma he has learnt....

'...Or a monk thinks over, examines, and explores with his mind the Dhamma he has learnt....

'...Or a certain basis of samadhi is well apprehended, well attended to, well held in mind, and well penetrated with understanding....

[In all of the above cases:] *'He is inspired by the meaning and the Dhamma. Being inspired by the meaning and the Dhamma, gladness is born in him. In one who is glad, rapture is born. In one with rapturous mind, the body becomes tranquil. One with tranquil body feels bliss. The mind of one who is blissful enters samadhi…. These are the five bases of release....'*[329]

These situations correspond with the development of the enlightenment factors,[330] with the basis of psychic power 'dependent on inquiry, one gains *samādhi*, one gains one-pointedness of mind', with the path which develops *vipassanā* prior to *samatha*, and with the nine *dhammas* that are very helpful.[331] The crucial conditions for *jhāna* are present exactly as normal, and *samādhi*, the regular synonym for *jhāna*, appears as usual in between bliss and liberating insight.

Unlike the previous passages, here there is no particular reason to suppose that the attainment of *samādhi* must be simultaneous with hearing the *Dhamma*, etc. Rather, hearing the *Dhamma*, etc., is the spark for the development of *samādhi*. Although we noted above that the historical records almost always associate such events with teachings given by the Buddha himself, these doctrinal passages do not distinguish between whether the Buddha or a disciple is teaching; nor do they imply that the teacher must have psychic powers. We may note that only once in the *suttas* does a monk become enlightened while teaching, and in that case the monk was already a non-returner.[332] In fact, listening to *Dhamma* is the only one of these occasions mentioned regularly for attaining stream-entry; but we should be cautious in drawing any implications from this. The *suttas* are, after all, records of oral teachings, not of meditation experiences.

This passage should be considered in conjunction with the discourse on the 'abider in *Dhamma*. There, the first four kinds of monks - the studier, the teacher, the reciter, and the thinker - are contrasted unfavorably with the 'abider in *Dhamma*'[333] who 'does not neglect retreat, is devoted to *samatha* of the heart within'. This

points back to the phrase 'diligent, ardent, and resolute' - study only yields its fruits when married to meditation.

The case of the brahman Dhānañjāni might also be mentioned in this connection. A corrupt tax collector, he was nevertheless able to develop the divine abidings on his deathbed through being exhorted by Venerable Sariputta, and through the attainment of that *jhāna* he was reborn in the *Brahm*a realm.[334]

I have left the most important line of argument until last. These passages were never intended to supplant or modify the noble eightfold path. Their purpose is to inspire, to rouse, to point to the teachings. They should encourage us to investigate the teachings thoroughly and to apply our whole hearts to the practice for the realization of the *Dhamma* in its fullness. Let us not grab the snake by its tail. Exploiting such passages to opt out of key aspects of the path surely confounds the very purpose of the teachings.

When all is said and done, though, these passages remain the most difficult to square with the integral importance of *jhana* in the path. Indeed, they rest uneasily with our basic understanding that the attainment of *Dhamma* is a direct inner realization transcending concepts. At some point in the discourse, surely, the listener must apply the conceptual knowledge they have gained to the direct contemplation of experience. This much is implied by 'paying attention to the root'. If this inner turning to *vipassanā* can occur, there seems to be no hard and fast reason why an inner turning to *jhāna* cannot also occur.[335] Certainly, there are no *sutta* passages that rule this out. Perhaps we must simply accept that these are almost unimaginable events occurring for the most extraordinary individuals.

For practical purposes, the question as to whether or not such events imply *jhāna* is perhaps not of overriding importance. At most they establish that some individuals can make extremely rapid progress on the path. They never constitute a separate path. The best way to maximize our chance of realizing *Dhamma* while listening to a talk is to assiduously develop *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Right view is assisted not just by learning, and not just by meditation, but by 'virtue, learning (or 'listening'), discussion, *samatha*, and *vipassanā '*.[336]

The above passages all mention *samādhi*. *Dhamma* is often taught, however, without any mention of *samādhi* at all. For example, neither the Buddha's second or third sermons mention *samādhi*, yet both led the audience to *arahantship*.[337] How should this be understood? Elsewhere, *Dhamma* is taught with no mention of wisdom. For example, the famous verses known as the 'Exhortation in the Code of Conduct' primarily focus on virtue, but include two phrases indicating meditation: 'brightening the mind' and 'higher mind'. These refer

specifically to *samādhi*. *Vipassanā* constitutes the 'higher understanding' not mentioned here. Having taught only virtue and *samādhi*, the Buddha sums up by saying: 'This is the dispensation of the Buddhas.[338] The *Sonadanda Sutta* exemplifies how these and similar contexts should be interpreted. A brahman tells the Buddha:

'Understanding is purified by virtue, and virtue is purified by understanding; where one is, the other is; a virtuous person has understanding, and an understanding person is virtuous, and the combination of understanding and virtue is called the highest thing in the world.'

'But, brahman, what is that virtue, what is that under, standing ....?

'Here, a disciple goes forth [as in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*] *... undertakes the virtues ... guards the senses ... develops mindfulness and clear comprehension ... is content, etc. That, brahman, is virtue.*

'He enters and abides in the four jhānas ... develops the direct knowledges ... and attains the evaporation of the poisons ... That, brahman, is understanding.'[339]

When the path is taught in brief, certain aspects may be emphasized or others omitted to suit the situation. However, the detailed explanation of these brief teachings should be given in terms of the overall framework. If *jhānas* are not specifically mentioned, they can be included under wisdom.

Many fear that *samādhi* leads to attachment. This theme finds scant support in the *suttas*. The 'danger' in *samādhi* is treated identically with the 'danger' in mindfulness and understanding; that is, they are not yet the final goal.[340] Abandoning this subtle defilement - reckoned as the fetters of lust for form and the formless, and in the craving, the poison, and the inherent compulsion for existence - is chiefly the task of the non-returner.[341] The issue of attachment to *samādhi* is addressed in the following analysis by Venerable Mahā Kaccana of an enigmatic statement of the Buddha.

'A monk should scrutinize in such a way that as he scrutinizes his consciousness is not distracted and scattered externally, is not stuck within, and by not grasping he is not anxious. If he does so, then there is no production of birth, aging, death, and the origin of suffering for him in the future....

'How, friends, is consciousness called "distracted and scattered externally"? Having seen a visible form with the eye, a monk's consciousness follows after the feature of visible form, is tied, shackled, and fettered by the fetter of gratification in the feature of visible form. [And so on.]

'And how, friends, is consciousness called "not distracted and scattered externally"? Having seen a visible form with the eye, a monk's consciousness does not follow after the feature of visible form, is not tied, shackled, and fettered by the fetter of gratification in the feature of visible form. [And so on.]

'And how, friends, is the mind called "stuck within"? Here, a monk ... enters and abides in the first jhana. His consciousness follows after the rapture and bliss born of seclusion, is tied, shackled, and fettered by the fetter of gratification in the rapture and bliss born of seclusion. [And so on for the "rapture and bliss born of *samādhi* ' of the second *jhāna*; the "bliss with equanimity" of the third *jhāna*; and the "neither pleasure nor pain" of the fourth *jhāna*.]

'And how, friends, is the mind called "not stuck within"? Here, a monk ... enters and abides in the first jhana. His consciousness does not follow after the rapture and bliss born of seclusion, is not tied, shackled, and fettered by the fetter of gratification in the rapture and bliss born of seclusion. [And so on.]'[342]

Venerable Mahā Kaccana's exposition is typically subtle and precise. The three kinds of scrutiny correspond with the threefold training. The first kind is closely linked with sense restraint, an aspect of virtue. Note that 'mental phenomena' are here treated as external to consciousness, just as the other sense objects. The section on *samadhi* then follows as the natural sequel to virtue. Here Venerable Mahā Kaccana switches from 'consciousness' to 'mind'. Although generally having the same denotation, the *suttas* tend to treat 'consciousness' in terms of the first noble truth 'to be fully known' - and 'mind' in terms of the fourth noble truth – 'to be developed'. The analysis shows that the way beyond attachment to spiritual bliss is not by avoiding *jhāna*. The monk 'not stuck within' practices *jhāna* just the same, but uses the subtle wisdom empowered by *samādhi* to avert attachment. The *suttas* consistently recommend *samādhi* as part of the practice to overcome attachment to *samādhi*.[343]

I did not include a translation of the analysis of the phrase 'by not grasping he is not anxious'. It explains how, if the five aggregates are conceived in relation to a 'self', anxiety arises when they change. Venerable Mahā Kaccana does not comment on the final phrase: 'The production of birth, aging, death, and the origin of suffering in the future'. The identical phrase occurs in the *Mahā Nidana Sutta* with reference to the

fixation of consciousness in mentality and physical form. It suggests the dual role of consciousness, as the center of lived experience and as the sense of identity flowing on in rebirths. The verse which follows the same introductory summary in the *Itivuttaka* confirms that rebirth is the issue.[344]

This ties up with the *Bodhisatta's* famous rejection of his former teachers under whom he reached the highest formless attainments.[345] When the *Bodhisatta* first practiced with these teachers, he began by studying the doctrinal theory. This is not explained in detail, but would certainly have placed the practice of *samadhi* within a conceptual framework, probably positing the eternal existence of a blissful soul in the plane of rebirth corresponding to the *samadhi* attainment. Any *samadhi* which results from such a wrong view is of necessity wrong *samadhi*. The *Bodhisatta* nevertheless credits his teachers with possessing faith, energy, mindfulness, samadhi, and understanding (here these are not called 'spiritual faculties'), disposing of any idea that mindfulness and understanding are unique to Buddhism. As well as understanding kamma and rebirth, these teachers may well have pointed out that almost everything is impermanent, suffering, and not-self, clinging only to a rarified view of self. But the *Bodhisatta* set out on his spiritual quest in search of what was not subject to birth, aging, and death, and so he rejected this wrong *samādhi* of the sectarians, which leads only to rebirth in exalted planes of existence. His respect and gratitude for his former teachers is evident however, since they were the first people he thought of teaching after his enlightenment; having long had 'little dust in their eyes' they would quickly understand the *Dhamma*. He did not extend the same honor to the self-mortifiers of the group of five monks as he did to the *samādhi* practitioners, merely commenting that 'they were very helpful'.[346]

It is interesting that when the *Bodhisatta*, immediately before his enlightenment, reflected on his past practice of samadhi, he skipped over his experience with the sectarian teachers, recalling instead an isolated episode from his youth. Perhaps this memory showed him that *samādhi* need not be imprisoned within a dogmatic metaphysical framework, but in its essence is simply a natural expression of the gracious flow of the *Dhamma*.

Conclusion

In summary, the passages that have been used to throw doubt on the necessity for *jhāna* consist of minor doctrinal statements and background stories. Even if we were to find a direct statement of the superfluity of *jhana* in such material, could this outweigh the great mass of clear teachings on the path? Better try to derail a

freight train with a toothpick. And of course, there is no such direct statement. The Buddha would hardly have fixed *jhāna* squarely in the heart of the path only to about face and declare a path of all head, no heart.

We should never forget that the thoroughgoing treatment of causality is one of the most distinctive features of the *Dhamma*, underlying the analysis of both the existential problem and the practical solution. The specific factors of the path, functioning as necessary conditions for their specific results, exemplify specific conditionality of phenomena in general, that is, dependent origination. Suggesting that one of the path factors may be optional introduces a fuzziness to the path, retreating from a causal to a correlative paradigm. The path becomes merely a collection of skilful means, not an embodiment of universal principles. It is true that some practices, such as the ascetic practices, formless attainments, and psychic powers are useful but not essential. But these do not occur in the wings to enlightenment or the dependent origination; they are not key factors of the path in the sense under consideration here.

Playing around with the key path factors unleashes a further host of theoretical difficulties. If one path factor is optional, what of the others? Perhaps there might be more than one path? Then how many? How are the many benefits of *jhāna* accomplished without *jhāna*? How to overcome sensuality when one cannot withdraw from the senses? How to overcome restlessness when the mind is still moving? How to transcend concepts when the mind is still labeling? How to perceive subtle truths with coarse consciousness? If one can go beyond hindrances with bare mindfulness, why can't one simply center the mind and go into *jhāna*? What is hindering *jhāna* if not the hindrances? Being unable to realize the preliminary samatha of *jhāna*, how can one realize the ultimate samatha of *Nibbāna*? Deleting *jhāna* from the path would take more than pointing to a few suggestive passages; it would require a comprehensive model of the path to account for such difficulties.

We should be very reluctant to draw from ambiguous passages inferences that entail modification of central teachings. The *Dhamma* has a very fine and delicate structure. Like a house of cards, removing one piece imperils the whole edifice. Or again, like a pot brimful of pure water, with neither lack nor excess - remove one cupful and every other drop must shift to fill the space, leaving a pot that can never be called 'full'.

CONCLUSION:
UNITY AND DIVERSITY

' "This Dhamma is for one with samādhi, not for one without samādhi." So it was said. For what reason was this said? Here, a monk ... enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna.'[347]

The Buddha never divided the themes of meditation into two classes: *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Nor did he divide meditators into two classes: the *samatha* practitioners and the *vipassanā* practitioners. He taught the development of the mind for the ending of suffering. As mind is diverse, so too are the means of development diverse. But hypostatizing these different means into different paths only fractures the organic unity of the *Dhamma*. Some may walk to the left, some to the right; some faster, some slower; some with ease, some with difficulty; but the path itself is one.

'This [eightfold path] *is the only path*
There is no other for the purification of vision.'[348]

As we walk the path, we should not neglect to help each other when in need. So I have written this book with the sincere wish to enhance understanding and harmony between all aspirants in our approach to the Buddha's teachings. I am well aware that by insisting that there is only one true path to liberation I court the risk of being labeled intolerant. Many, rightly wary of the spectre of religious fanaticism, seek common ground between religions or between branches of the same religion by claiming that surface differences, arising as valid responses to the circumstances of time and place, mask an underlying unity. I believe this is mistaken. Certainly, the Buddha flat-out denied that his teaching was the same as any other. While many differences do indeed float only on the surface, in my opinion an honest appraisal shows that, among many similarities, some .meaningful differences persist even in the deep structures of religions - in their philosophies, in the experiences of their sages, and in the sayings of their founders. But of course, non-identity does not mean complete separation or contradiction; it means distinct but related.

Anyway, mere tolerance is a stingy virtue. We should do more than tolerate, we should celebrate goodness wherever we find it. We should rejoice in whatever peace, wisdom, and fulfillment any spiritual

practitioner finds in their chosen way. We should be happy to live together, talk together, and practice together in an spirit of mutual respect, mutual harmony, and mutual support even if we have differing views or practices.

Saying: 'We should get along with them because, in the end, they're the same as us' is in fact intolerant. We value others because they measure up to our standard; but we should value others because of their intrinsic worth, because they measure up to their own standard. More importantly, one treats the truth shabbily. Truth is one, and bows not to the whims of fashion. Here, surely, all would agree. The rich diversity of religious and philosophical doctrines in the world are attempts to represent that truth. The view that 'It's all the same in the end' is just one more view. But it is a view perilously intolerant of reasoned inquiry. Declaring sensitive issues out of bounds for fear of disputes must be the surest way to sap religion's vitality, relegating it to stagnation and irrelevance. Undertaking a reasoned, thoughtful critique grants those views the dignity of attention, and it grants the adherents of those views the dignity of taking part in such an inquiry. If the critique is pertinent they can correct their ideas; if it is misguided they can develop a more sophisticated account of their ideas. Investigation can distinguish between trivial and important differences of opinion, and clear the way for meaningful reconciliation.

'Disputes about livelihood or the code of conduct are trifling, Ānanda. But should disputes arise in the Sangha about the path or the way of practice [the thirty-seven wings of enlightenment]*, they would be for the harm and misfortune of many*.'[349]

'Only this is right - everything else is stupid': this is one extreme view. 'It's all the same in the end': this is a second extreme view. The Buddha taught us to avoid these extremes through analysis and inquiry: 'What is the same? What is different?'

We may scour all the deserts on this broad earth and not find even two grains of sand that arc completely identical. Still less will we find two grains of sand that are utterly different. The true basis of compassion and respect is not a supposed identity of beliefs or paths, but our shared nature as sentient beings. We all feel pain. We are together in this lifeboat earth, drifting on the trackless seas, longing for a glimpse of land. As we share our sorrows, so too we share our joys. And of all joys, none compares with the joy of letting go. This joy belongs to no-one, lives in no country. It knows not name or face. It is our common heritage as children of the *Tathagata*.

' "One should know how to define bliss, and knowing that, one should pursue bliss within oneself." So it was said. For what reason was this said?

'The bliss and happiness that arise dependent on the five cords of sensual pleasure is called the bliss of sensual pleasure - a filthy, coarse, ignoble bliss. I say that this bliss should not be cultivated, should not be developed, should not be made much of, but should be feared.

'Here, a monk, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities, enters and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna. This is called the bliss of renunciation, the bliss of seclusion, the bliss of peace, the bliss of enlightenment. I say that this bliss should be cultivated, should be developed, should be made much of, and should not be feared.'[350]

Meaning does not inhere in a text. Still less can it be extracted and distilled into a definitive, universal formula. Rather, it arises in the response of the reader. Each reader will respond in their own way. But within the spectrum of response one thing is sure - *Dhamma* does not stop short with the written word.

'What, Bhante, does "abider in Dhamma" refer to?'

'Here, a monk studies the Dhamma - the suttas, chants, expositions, verses, inspired sayings, "so it was said" sayings, birth stories, marvelous teachings, and catechisms. He does not waste his days with that Dhamma he has studied, he does not neglect retreat, he is devoted to samatha of the heart within. Thus, monk, a monk is an "abider in Dhamma".

'Thus, monk, I have taught you the monk who studies a lot, the one who teaches a lot, the one who recites a lot, the one who thinks a lot, and the one who abides in Dhamma. I have done for you what should be done by a Teacher seeking the welfare of his disciples out of compassion. Here, monk, are roots of trees, here are empty huts. Practice jhāna, monk! Do not be negligent! Do not regret it later! This is our instruction to you.'[351]

Dhamma is no weekend pastime. A crash course in meditation cannot be expected to effect any substantial, lasting transformation. If we want quick results we are likely to end up either disappointed or deluded. But if we allow our lives to yield to the soft touch of the *Dhamma*, our minds will grow more and more peaceful as our attachments grow less and less. *Samatha* is not about trying very hard to scale some far-

off mountain peak; it is about being content with the wholesome happiness of the present moment. This is beyond no-one's reach. We usually underestimate the task; but we underestimate our own potential even more. Though the road may seem long, none can take more than one step at a time. Wherever we stand, forward is the only way.

'I thought of a time when my Sakyan father was working and I was sitting in the shade of a rose-apple tree, where quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unbeneficial qualities, I entered and abode in the first jhāna, with initial and sustained application of mind, and the rapture and bliss born seclusion. I thought: "Might that be the path to enlightenment?" Then following up that memory there came the awareness:

"That indeed is the path to enlightenment." '[352]

Appendix 1

ON THE TRANSLATIONS

In the interests of readability and concision I have taken some liberties with condensing and paraphrasing the translations, and have divorced the chosen passages from their original contexts. On the other hand, I have treated doctrinal terms and passages with rigorous consistency, occasionally falling back on that last resort of the inept translator - word for word literalism. Any conclusion based on such methodology can be no more than provisional. I therefore encourage the reader to check these translations with the *Pāli* or with a reliable complete translation. I have frequently relied on earlier translations, particularly the wonderful works of Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, but the final choice of rendering is in all cases my own. I have retained the *Pāli* terms for the crucial meditation terminology in all occurrences with the exception of '*satipatthāna*', which I have occasionally rendered 'establishing of mindfulness'. Otherwise, *Pāli* has been retained only for a few words probably more familiar to Buddhists than their English equivalents - *arahant* (accomplished one), *vinaya* (discipline), *sādhu* (it is good!), *bhante* (venerable sir), *kasina* (meditation device), *samsāra* (course of rebirths). I have generally dispensed with capitals for doctrinal terms as being justified neither by the *Pāli* nor

by current English. Since words such as *sutta*, *vinaya*, and *abhidhamma* may have a less specialized meaning in early *Pāli*, I capitalize only when unambiguously referring to actual texts. Following is an explanation of my approach to some of the technical terminology.

Anusaya: refers to the most fundamental mode of the defilements, which, even if not presently active, will inevitably manifest under appropriate conditions. 'Tendency', on the other hand, refers to a mere inclination. I have used 'inherent compulsion'.

Avakkanti: is usually rendered following etymology as 'descent', but it seems more sensible to follow the unambiguous contextual meaning in dependent origination and elsewhere of 'reincarnation'. The contexts should clarify that this refers to a conditioned stream of consciousness, not an eternal soul.

Āsava: has been rendered 'poison' rather than the feeble 'taint', which has been used for *upakkilesa*.

Upanisā: has been derived by scholars from *upanisīdati* (so the sub-commentary), or from *upanissāya* (so the commentary). The former supports the rendering 'proximate condition', the latter 'vital condition'. 'Virtue is the *upanisā* for *samādhi*' is an often-repeated, idiomatic usage of the term; but the proximate condition for *samādhi* is not virtue but bliss. *Upanisā* can substitute for *paccaya* as a general term for 'condition'; but its most idiomatic usage is in the dependent liberation, and there it means primarily 'vital condition'. We have met *upanisā* with this meaning in the definition of right *samādhi* at M 117.1, etc. At A9.1 good friendship, virtue, talk on wanting little, etc., energy, and understanding are said to be the *upanisās* for the development of the wings to enlightenment. Similarly, at A3.67, lending an ear (to listen to *Dhamma*) is an *upanisā* for direct knowledge, etc. These too are both necessary (*Sambuddhas* and *Paccekabuddhas* notwithstanding - the context is the training for disciples) and, as the passage emphasizes, strongly inductive, but not proximate, conditions. I therefore take this as being the basic meaning, applied with some flexibility in other contexts.

Kāya: usually means 'body', but in samadhi the five senses that make up the body have disappeared. The formless attainments, the deathless, the ultimate truth,[353] and cessation are said to be contacted 'with the *kāya*'. This last also rules out the '*nāmakāya*' (mentality body). At D27.9, *kāya* seems to be virtually synonymous with '*bhūta*': 'has become *dhamma*, become holy'. In other expressions also, for example the '*kāya*-witness',[354] *kāya* emphasizes the directness of personal engagement. This meaning fits well in the *samādhi* contexts, so I have used 'person' or 'personally'. On the other hand, the '*kāya*-tranquility'

that occurs before *samādhi* is surely parallel with the stage of breath meditation consisting of 'tranquilizing the *kāya*-activities'. This is the in-and-out breaths, and so refers simply to the physical body.

Khaya: is gentler than 'destruction', which is handled by other words in the *Pāli*. It means 'drying up' (of a stream), 'using up' (of supplies), 'waning' (of the moon), etc. I have used 'evaporation'.

Dhamma: has been left un-translated, or rendered with 'principle', 'quality', 'phenomenon', or 'teaching', rather than the incongruous 'state', which is precisely what it is not. Bhikkhu Bodhi rather curiously asks us to accept this rendering by divesting this word of both its chief denotation - the existing condition of a person or thing - and connotation - staticity (MLDB, pg. 54). The choice of this rendering may be an expression of the ontological concretization of the concept of '*dhamma'*.

Nipaka (adjective) or ***nepakk****a* (noun): appear most prominently as part of the compound *satinepakka* in the definition of mindfulness as spiritual faculty, etc. The resemblance of this compound to *satisampajaññā* (mindfulness and clear comprehension) may have influenced the commentaries to gloss *nepakka* with 'understanding'. But other contexts seem to indicate a closer connection with the Sanskrit cognate meaning 'chief, master'.

'You should abide with the doors of the sense faculties guarded (gutta), with mindfulness protected (ārakkhasati), with masterly mindfulness (nipakasati), endowed with protected mind, with heart protected by mindfulness.'[355]

The meaning as 'mastery over the senses' may also apply in the sequence virtue, *nipaka*, *satipatthāna* at M51.3, and at Sn144. As a quality of a good friend (Sn45, Sn283) *nipaka* may mean 'self-mastery, self-control'. *Nipaka* also occurs as a quality of *samadhi* at A5.27 (pg 71), and in the compound *ekodinipaka* at S1.290 and Sn962. Here too it seems to mean mastery:

'For one with constant virtue,
masterly (nipaka), practicing jhana
For one whose mind is mastered (vasībhūtta),
one-pointed in samadhi
That wise one, scattering the darkness

With the threefold realization,
is destroyer of Death.'[356]

Nimitta: in the suttas probably never means 'radiant reflex image in meditation'. This was referred to rather as 'light and vision of forms, the 'radiant mind', etc. The commentarial usage of *nimitta* for this light is possibly influenced by such passages as this.

'When, good sirs, the nimittas are seen, illumination is born, and light manifests, then Brahma will manifest.'[357]

At A5.193 the various pollutants and disturbances to water, compared with the five hindrances, prevent one from seeing 'the *nimitta* (reflection) of one's own face'. The commentarial term 'apprehending sign' (*uggaha nimitta*) was possible derived from passages such as A6.68 and S47-8; but here the meaning seems to be 'apprehending the character of the mind', how the mind responds to various 'foods'. A6.68 shows that 'apprehending the nimitta of the mind' is a preliminary stage of meditation, before fulfilling right view and then right *samādhi*. In at least some meditation contexts *nimitta* just means 'cause'.[358] It refers to some quality, aspect, or feature of experience which, when paid attention to, promotes the growth of a similar or related quality. This meaning fits in well with the contexts in this work, so I have adopted the rendering 'basis' rather than 'sign', which does not carry a causal implication. A3.19 says that a monk who does not 'carefully resolve' on their *samādhi nimitta* (here = meditation subject, perhaps *satipatthāna*) in the morning, midday, or evening cannot grow in good qualities. At M 128.28 the phrase 'I pay attention to the light-*nimitta'* occurs, but even here I would regard the term 'attention' as hinting at a causal implication, consistent with the usage earlier in the *sutta*.

Rūpa: refers to the physical world as it appears to the mind. It includes energy, the *tejodhātu*, and is thus broader than 'matter' or even 'materiality'. The rendering 'physical form' attempts to capture both the breadth and the subjectiveness of *rūpa*, and retains the connection with *rūpa* as the objects of sight, 'visible forms'.

Vitakka* and *Vicāra: do not mean 'thinking' in the context of *jhāna*. Thinking necessarily involves a succession of different mental objects and therefore cannot apply to the still one-pointedness of *jhāna*.

Jhāna is a state of altered consciousness, and it is only to be expected that psychological terms will take on new and more refined meanings. The following passage brings out this distinction.

'I understood thus: "This thought (vitakka) of renunciation ... non-ill will ... non-cruelty which has arisen does not lead to the affliction of myself, of others, or of both. It matures understanding, relieves stress, and leads to Nibbāna. But if I think on and consider on (anuvitakka, anuvicāra) for too long, my body will be strained. When the body is strained the mind is stirred up, and a mind stirred up is far from samadhi." So I steadied, settled, unified, and concentrated my mind in samādhi within myself. For what reason? So that my mind would not be stirred up...

'... My energy was roused and unflagging; my mindfulness established and unconfused; my body tranquil and relaxed.... I entered and abode in the first jhana, with initial and sustained application of mind (vitakka, vicāra).'[359]

Further, mindfulness of breathing is taught for cutting off thinking (*vitakka*),[360] Ud 4.1 and at M20 five methods for quelling thoughts are taught; both of these practices are for the development of the higher mind, i.e. *jhāna*, including the *jhāna* factor of initial application (*vitakka*). If this implicit distinction is embodied in the translation, there is no need for the un-derivable rendering of *vitakka* in such contexts as 'distracting thoughts'. All thoughts, even thoughts about the *Dhamma*,[361] must be abandoned for the mind to find peace.

Vossaggārammanam karitvā: is interpreted by the commentaries as meaning 'taking *Nibbāna* as the object [of the mind in *samādhi*]'. This is identified as the transcendental *samādhi* of the noble path (moments) and fruits. Apart from our general critique of the concept of the momentary path, there are several reasons to doubt such an interpretation. Normally the *Pāli* absolutive - here signified by 'having' - expresses a subordinate action completed before the main action of the sentence. This is the regular verb form in phrases at the start of the *jhāna* formula to signify the ending of the obstructions to *jhāna* or the fulfillment of the qualities leading to *jhāna*. For example: 'quite secluded from sensual pleasures' or 'having abandoned these five hindrances'. The sentence: *'Idha bhikkhave ariyasavako vossaggārammanam karitvā labhati samādhim labhati cittass'ekaggatam'* is syntactically straightforward, so there is no reason to propose any non-standard interpretation. Compare the formula for the bases for psychic powers: *'Chandam ce bhikkhave nissāya labhati samādhim, labhati cittass'ekoggatam...'* The commentarial explanation, however, entails the simultaneous occurrence of

the main action with the subordinate clause. This may just be grammatically possible (almost any grammatical rule can admit some exceptions), but hardly likely. Bhikkhu Bodhi (CDB page 1930), perhaps influenced by the commentary, takes *vossaggārammanam karitvā* in apposition to '*samādhiṁ* (grammatically the patient of the sentence, in accusative) rather than 'noble disciple' (the agent, in nominative). This is certainly unusual; Warder (Introduction to *Pali*, page 48) lists no such usage of the absolutive.

The phrase may be compared with the passage on the development of the six recollections: 'Having made this the support (*idam ārammanam karitvā*), some beings here are purified.'[362] Here, *ārammanam karitvā* is obviously in apposition to 'beings', the agent. This passage also gives a good idea as to the meaning of *ārammana* as 'support' or 'basis'; the previously developed good qualities that underpin further development. A related usage occurs at M21.11 - one develops loving kindness towards one person, and then, relying on that (*tadārammanam*), towards all beings. In such contexts the meaning approaches 'meditation subject'. This meaning is probably intended in the (late?) *Jhāna Samyutta*.[363] From here, perhaps, developed the usage of *ārammana* as 'object (of consciousness)', dominant in the *abhidhamma* but absent from the *suttas*, on which the commentaries rely to interpret *vossaggārammanam karitvā*.

There are other difficulties with the commentarial explanation. The definitions of some of the other spiritual faculties, for example that of mindfulness as 'memory of what was said and done long ago', has obviously nothing to do with any 'path moment'. The commentaries therefore resort to a convoluted division of the spiritual faculties as transcendental, non-transcendental, and mixed. This directly contradicts the suttas restricting the spiritual faculties to the noble individuals. Also, since 'transcendental' *samādhi* occurs before 'non-transcendental' understanding, it makes nonsense of any notion of progressive development.

Sankhāra: has an active meaning in most of its occurrences, so I have reflected this by rendering it as 'activities' rather than 'formations'. This preserves the link with its etymological sibling 'action' (*kamma*), for which it often serves as a substitute. *Sankhāras* as the second link of dependant origination and the fourth aggregate are defined as volition (*cetanā*). However, particularly as the fourth aggregate, the *abhidhamma* takes them to be broader than that, encompassing a wide range of mental phenomena, from basic functions like contact to sophisticated emotions like equanimity. While the rendering 'conceptual activities' is too narrow for this, it is broader than 'volitional activities', and it emphasizes

the conceptual, linguistic functions that are most typical of this aggregate, as well as the pregnant, causative aspect.

Sacchikaroti: has been rendered by the literal 'witnessing', thus preserving the connection with 'personal witness' (*kāyasakkhi*), and freeing up 'realization' for *vijjā* rather than the tautologous 'true knowledge', in turn enabling 'knowledge' to be consistently reserved for words based on the root *ñāna*.

Appendix 2

CONTEMPORARY TEACHERS ON *SAMĀDHI*

'Right *samādhi* as the last link of the eightfold path is defined as the four meditative absorptions [*jhanas*].'

- Bhikkhu Ñānatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*

'…the *suttas* themselves say nothing about a system of bare insight meditation....'

- Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*

'The *Pāli Pitaka* explains right *samādhi* in terms of the four *jhānas*.'

- Mahasi Sayadaw, *A Discourse on Sallekha Sutta*

'According to the *suttas*, concentration of *jhāna* strength is necessary for the manifestation of the path.'

- Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, *Path of Purification* (*Visuddhimagga*), introduction note 21

'The eightfold path includes both right view and right *samādhi*. A person who is to gain release has to develop all eight factors of the path. Otherwise they won't be able to gain release.'

- Pra Ajahn Mun Bhūridatta, *A Heart Released*

'Wisdom is the fruit of *samatha*.'

- Pra Ajahn Chah Bodhiñāna, *A Taste of Freedom*

'Right *samādhi* is the four *jhānas*.'

- Professor AK Warder, *Indian Buddhism*

'Wisdom and *samādhi* are a "*dhamma* pair" which go together and cannot be separated.'

- Pra Ajahn Maha Bua Ñānasampanno, *Wisdom Develops Samadhi*

'The wisdom that can let go of defilement is a special wisdom, not ordinary wisdom. It needs *samādhi* as its basis if it's going to let go.'

- Pra Ajahn Fuang Jotiko, *Awareness Itself*

'The wisdom of *vipassanā* is not something that can be fashioned into being by arrangement. Instead, it arises from *samādhi* that has been mastered until it is good and solid.'

- Pra Ajahn Thate Desaramsī, *Buddho*

'If the mind goes running around without stopping, it doesn't really see suffering. It has to be still if it wants to see.'

- Pra Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, *The Skill of Release*

'The four *jhānas* are invariably included in the complete course of training laid down for disciples. They figure in the training as the discipline in higher consciousness, right concentration of the Noble Eightfold Path, and the faculty and power of concentration.'

- Dr Henepola Gunaratana
A Critical Analysis of the Jhānas
in Theravāda Buddhist Meditation

End Notes

Introduction

[1] M26.21. Taking *tesam* as supplyijng the implied 'their' of the second line (cp. D18.27) and *pamuñcantu* as a poetic variant of *abhimuñcantu* (cp. Sn1146, 1149, A1.14).

[2] D16.1.12

[3] M52

[4] Key *sutta* texts include D14, D15, M9, M38, S12, A3.61, A3.76,Sn3.12. For an overview of the *suttas* on causation, AK Warder's *Indian Buddhism* is excellent. The Buddhist Publication Society offers several works on the subject; the Dalai Lama's *The Meaning of Life from a Buddhist Perspective* gives the Tibetan interpretation.

Chapter 1

[5] D16.6.1

[6] A4.180; D16.4.8-4.11

[7] A5.79

[8] In these matters the conclusions of AK Warder's *Indian Buddhism* are followed.

[9] Vin Cv11.1.8

[10] D2.1

[11] M127.17; D5.21

[12] A2.3

[13] D16.3.50

[14] Vin Mv 1.23

[15] M43.20 quoted pg 38, M111.4

[16] S40.1

[17] D18.27, M117.3, S45.28, A7.42

[18] D22.21, etc. quoted pg33

[19] Vin Cv 5.3, A5,29

[20] A4.12

[21] D33: 1.11, A4.41

[22] A5.28

[23] D16.2.25, M121.11, M122.7, S22.80, S40.9, S43.12.6-8, S41.7, A7.53, cp. M43.7ff

[24] e.g. M44.12

[25] A3.100

[26] e.g. D1.1.31, D6.6, A6.61. See too the bases for psychic power discussed below.

[27] cp D34.1.6 quoted pg 71

[28] cp A5.73, Iti 3.86

[29] M36.21ff

[30] M50.13 cp. M108.26-27 quoted pg 38

[31] A11.10

[32] see Vsm 22.15ff

[33] For a detailed exposition, see Dr Henepola Gunaratana. *A Critical Analysis of the Jhanas in Therāvada Buddhist Meditation.*

[34] Some such attainment seems to be attested to, for the arahant at least, by a number of passages, of which we have met one above. These passages, however, fall well short of justifying all the details of the commentarial theory. A detailed discussion of the fruition falls outside the scope of this essay on the path.

[35] M117

[36] See e.g. D28.18. At A5.79 quoted pg 3, 'transcendental' (*lokuttara*) is applied to the *suttas*.

[37] See Vin Pj4.3

[38] S22.101

[39] S45.31

[40] A4: 200-1 cp. Vin Cv9.1.4, Ud5.5

[41] Ibid.

[42] A4.170

[43] Sn88

[44] D16: 2.9 etc

[45] Sn227

[46] M142.6

[47] S25

[48] M34.10

[49] M65.11

[50] M70.21-22, cp. A7.53

[51] A8.22

[52] Ud6.2

[53] D5.23 cp. Vin Mv 1.20, Ud1.10

[54] M128.29

[55] D29.16

[56] S56.31

Chapter 2

[57] S35.245

[58] M104.13

[59] D14.1.37 LDB is here,as all too often, thoroughly unreliable.

[60] S12.33 cp. D28.2

[61] S12.34

[62] Cp S46.51, where samatha equals 'not-many-pointedness' (*avyagga*, unscattered), an obvious synonym for one-pointedness.

[63] A2:3.10

[64] A4.170

[65] At A5.57 however, a parallel phrase occurs, including 'the path is born', refering to one who is already a noble disciple.

[66] M106.5, 7. Although Bhikkhu Bodhi says that fourth *jhana* can be included here as 'imperturbable', the reflection on the dangers of physical form makes this unlikely (see MLDB notes 1000, 1007).

[67] M149.9-10

[68] Vsm, however, identifies 'restlessness for *Dhamma*' with the 'taints of *vipassanā*' and recommends more *vipassanā*. See Vsm 20.106, 126ff

[69] M122.7 cp. M19.8-10, M20, M4.22, S40.1

[70] A10.54

[71] A4.94

[72] A9.4

[73] Ud.4.1

[74] Dhp 372

Chapter 3

[75] D16.6.1, M103.3

[76] D28.19 Note: this paragraph in mistakenly numbered as 20 in the PTS Pali.

[77] A6.64

[78] S53

[79] see S45.4

[80] D22.21, M141.23-31, S45.8

[81] D1.1.31ff

[82] e.g. A4.52

[83] S47.3

[84] S12.22

[85] M44.12. See Appendix 1

[86] S47.40

[87] M118; bracketed phrase omitted a S54.10, 13, 16

[88] *Domanassa* = ill will at SN1106 = A3.32

[89] Sn974, 975

[90] A4.29 cp. A4.30

[91] Vin Pj4.4

[92] A5.51

[93] M43.20

[94] M68.6

[95] M108.26-27

[96] M14.4 cp. M68.6

[97] A5.13

[98] S47.4

[99] A8.63

[100] S47.10

[101] S47.10

[102] M118.15

[103] A1:20. Although I refer to this chapter a few times, it is a highly schematic passage, probably assembled quite late, and in part incongruous. For example, one who develops right speech is said to 'not neglect *jhāna'*, which does not make much sense even if we interpret *jhana* here as broadly as 'meditation'.

[104] M119.4ff

[105] D28.7

[106] D1.1.31

[107] M106.4

[108] M44.14

[109] S36.31 cp. Thag 85

[110] M137.11, 15

[111] e.g. S46.3 quoted pg 79

[112] M54.22-24, M53.20-22

[113] S46.33, A5.23

[114] A1: 6.1, 2

[115] D33.11 etc.

[116] These similes at A3.193

[117] S1.813, 814

[118] A6.116

[119] A6.115

[120] A1.2

[121] M125.22-25 condensed

[122] S22.5

[123] S35.99 cp. S35.160

[124] S12.43 cp. S12.44, 45

[125] A3.61

[126] D22

[127] D18.26

[128] Vin Mv6.31

[129] D15.4

[130] A3.47

[131] A7.70

[132] S12.61

[133] contra AA pg. 732

[134] S47.42

[135] S12.64

[136] S22.56, S22.82, etc.

[137] M140.19-24

[138] S12.2

[139] S22.55 etc

[140] D15.21

[141] D15.33

[142] D15.22

[143] Ud8.9

[144] A10.58

[145] M2.10, 11

[146] D14.2.18. Incidentally, in the phrase appearing below at D14.2.21 'the *vipassanā* path to enlightenment', the word '*vipassanā*' was inserted into the PTS Pali from the commentary despite lacking any manuscript support.

[147] D34.2.2

[148] A6.64

[149] S52.6, 11-24

[150] M10.5ff, D22.2ff

[151] e.g.M143

[152] D29.40

[153] S12.15

[154] see S44.10

[155] S22.94

[156] S35.116

[157] S35.93

[158] See S1.2.26 and Bhikkhu Bodhi's note in CDB

[159] D1.144

[160] D16.6.10 etc

[161] A7.65

[162] D18.27 cp. S45.28, A7.42, M117.3

[163] A10.72

[164] Vin Pj 4

[165] A4.123. An aeon is probably the period from one Big Bang to the next.

[166] D4.123 cp. A5.28, D2.81

[167] A5.28

[168] D10.2 cp. S45.14

[169] D34: 1.6, A5.27

[170] S56.1

[171] S51.13 condensed

[172] A6.70

[173] S51.20

[174] S48.43

[175] S48.50

[176] S48.8

[177] S48.9

[178] S48.10

[179] A7.4, A5.14, A5.15

[180] A1.20

[181] S48.2-7

[182] e.g. S48.2, 3, see too S22.109, M2.11, etc.

[183] M26.21

[184] M7.8

[185] D9.10 ff quoted pg 123. See too Iti 72.73

[186] S46.5

[187] S46.1

[188] S46.51

[189] S46.57ff

[190] S46.3

[191] This grouping occurs several times in the *suttas*, usually glossed by the commentary as '*dhammas* pertaining to *samādhi'*, but as far as I know only explained in the *suttas* at Iti 3.97 as 'the seven *dhammas* that are wings to enlightenment'. Which is often translated as 'the seven sets of *dhammas* that are wings to enlightenment'. Now it is well known that the thirty-seven are not called 'wings of enlightenment' in the *suttas*. The term is used of the spiritual faculties however, and as there are many descriptive terms common to both the spiritual faculties and the enlightenment factors, I feel it would be easier for an epithet to transfer from one set to another than from one set to the whole group of sets. Moreover, '*dhamma'* is more idiomatically used of the members of the set rather than the set as a whole.

[192] A10.1

Chapter 4

[193] A11.2

[194] S12.37 etc.

[195] S55.40

[196] Sn 230

[197] D15.4

[198] Similar similes are applied to dependent origination at S12.23, S12.55, S12.69.

[199] S14.3, 5, 8, 10

[200] e.g. D15.21-22, S12.67, M43.22

[201] D9.20; see below

[202] S48.52

[203] A5.22

[204] S12.23

[205] S48.8 cp. S55.3, etc.

[206] S12.3, S45.23

[207] D15.33ff

[208] D15.1

[209] S12.19

[210] S45.39

[211] S12.39

[212] see M93.18

[213] M38

[214] A8.81 cp. A5.24, A5.168, A6.50, A7.61, A10.3-5, A11.3-5

[215] D2.256, etc. quoted pg 103

[216] M40.8

[217] Vin Mv8.15 quoted pg 108

[218] M24.15

[219] A4.194

[220] contra Vsm 182

[221] contra Vsm 21.135

[222] contra Vsm 22.1

[223] Vsm 22.22f

[224] D34.22

[225] S35.245 condensed

[226] Ud 5.7 cp. Sn 474. Views are called feelings in D1.3.32ff

[227] Ud 1.1.3

[228] A10.26

[229] S12.23

Chapter 5

[230] See e.g. A10.76

[231] M107.3ff

[232] M27, M38, M39, M51, M53, M107, M125, etc.

[233] D2

[234] D27.23

[235] S16.13

[236] S1.523, 524

[237] S45.24

[238] A5.176

[239] Vin. Mv 8.15

[240] M51.4

[241] S47.29, S47.30

[242] M89.10

[243] M36.5

[244] A10.46

[245] Sn 1032-1123 The *Vatthugatha* in its current form is no doubt later.

[246] A7.50

[247] M53.6

[248] Iti 2.45

[249] A6.87

[250] Sn 221

[251] S1.304

[252] Dhp 86

[253] A38.16, S38.16

Chapter 6

[254] S53.1

[255] M13.7 etc.

[256] M125.9

[257] M75.17-18

[258] M75.17-18

[259] A9.33

[260] M36.32

[261] A10.61

[262] M18.16. The subtle dynamics of this passage were explored by Bhikkhu Ñānānanda in his classic study *Concept and Reality*.

[263] A4.49

[264] Sn 916

[265] Ud 4.1, etc.

[266] This does not, however, imply that concepts are not classified as conditioned and impermanent, as some suggest. See S15.20.

[267] D9.10-17

[268] M22.20

[269] A9.48ff

[270] A9.34

[271] A5.23 cp. S46.33

[272] A9.38

[273] D29.24

Chapter 7

[274] S1.916 Bhikkhu Bodhi, citing the commentarial gloss on another verse, renders '*samāhitaṁ* as 'endowed', not 'concentrated'. His reason is not compelling, and I prefer to see the phrase as a straightforward summary of the threefold training. The question is not doctrinally crucial.

[275] A10.20 condensed

[276] e.g. M64, A9.36 quoted pg 140

[277] A6.73

[278] A9.44

[279] M70.16, S12.70, cp. A4.87

[280] M64.7ff

[281] S45.13

[282] A3.73

[283] A3.84 cp. M48.12

[284] A3.88, 89

[285] S45.25

[286] A4.89

[287] S5.55

[288] A3.86, 386, 9.12

[289] S48.50

[290] M19.26

[291] A6.64

[292] A10.76

[293] M22.46

[294] S48.18

[295] e.g. M22.46, M34.10

[296] S45.21

[297] S25.1

[298] M70.20-21

[299] S55.24

[300] M95.14ff cp. S12.68

[301] A6.88, A6.98ff

[302] e.g. M1, S48.5

[303] Similar principles may be inferred of those on the way to once-returning, etc., since the *suttas* never include them when describing the passing away of the noble ones.

[304] A9.36

Chapter 8

[305] See M105

[306] S12.70

[307] S22.59

[308] A2.3.10 quoted above

[309] This information is from Richard Gombrich's *How Buddhism Began*, which includes a chapter attempting to trace the beginnings of the decline of *samādhi* to the period after the Buddha's passing away, when the teachings were being collated and organized. He uses a different logic to arrive at a similar date as I give in the text.

[310] A4.163

[311] A4.168, A9.11

[312] A4.167, S40.1.9

[313] A1.20

[314] A4.162

[315] M14.4 quoted pg 39

[316] cp S55.40 quoted pg 83

[317] A6.26

[318] A6.26

[319] A5.179

[320] A3.70

[321] A1.20

[322] Vsm 7.67

[323] D16.2.8

[324] M56.18

[325] S46.38

[326] cp. S25 quoted pg 136

[327] A5.151

[328] A3.100 quoted pg 11

[329] A5.26

[330] A5.73 quoted pg 154

[331] S46.3

[332] D34.2.2

[333] S22.89

[334] M97

[335] I have heard anecdotal evidence that seems to confirm this possibility.

[336] M43.14, A5.25

[337] S22.59, S35.28

[338] D14.3.28 cp. M128.32, A7.65 quoted pg 68

[339] D4 condensed

[340] S48.2-7

[341] see e.g. Iti 3.96

[342] M138. MLDB overlooks the phrase 'is fettered by the fetter of gratification' at M138.12. The traslation also errs in omitting *sukha* in the phrase 'follows after the bliss and equanimity'. The PTS *Pāli* has *upekkhā* at the first occurrence only; all following and parallel occurrences have the (preferable) *upekkhāsukha*.

[343] See e.g. M8.14.18, M113.21ff

[344] Iti 3.94

[345] M26.13ff

[346] M26.22ff

Conclusion

[347] A8.30

[348] Dhp 274

[349] M104.5

[350] M139.9 cp. M66.19-21

[351] A5.73

[352] M36.31, M85, M100

Appendix 1

[353] M70.23

[354] e.g. A9.43; see also S48.50 quoted pg 75, S48.53

[355] A5.114

[356] A3.58

[357] D19.15

[358] At S48.40 *nimitta = nidana, sankhāra, paccaya*, and at M128.16 *nimitta = hetu, paccaya.*

[359] M19

[360] Ud 4.1

[361] A3.100, A5.73

[362] A6.26

[363] S34.5. Incidentally, should not *gocara* at S34.6 mean *satipatthāna*, the meditator's 'native habitat'? (see S37.6).